

NBA West: Sonics ready to get things done in Seattle

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And Payton's temperament, the single biggest question mark about his game, has been as even as Stockton's.

"Gary made a couple of nice shots down the stretch for them. He did a good job," said Stockton, who has been reluctant during the series to make comparisons between himself and Payton.

Payton, too, has shied away from talking about the battle between himself and his All-Star counterpart. The two are friends off the court and have a mutual respect that keeps them from speaking negatively about each other.

"They let me get to the basket a couple of times. You have to put down those shots, and I did," Payton said.

Payton finished with 19 points, six assists and four rebounds in 46 minutes to Stockton's seven

points, eight assists and two rebounds in 36 minutes.

Payton has 83 points in the series, shooting a shade under 50 percent, and has glued himself to Stockton.

Stockton, a 53 percent shooter in the regular season, is a combined 12-of-36 from the field with only 29 points. There are whispers that his hamstring and elbow are seriously hurt, but Stockton, coach Jerry Sloan and the rest of the Jazz have refused to characterize him as anything but 100 percent.

"You don't have to lead in points, and you don't have to lead in stats," said Sonics forward Sam Perkins. "You just have to go out there and play — and that's something this team has been concerned with. Now we're just one game from the Finals because we've just been doing what it takes to win."

Game 5 is Tuesday night at Key

Arena. A victory by Seattle would put the Sonics in the Finals for the first time since 1979. A loss would send the series back to Salt Lake City for Game 6 Thursday.

"This is the farthest I've been and the closest I've been, but we still have to take care of business back home," Payton said. "We did everything together tonight, got our offense going and got the win. We did a good job."

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As the SuperSonics got off their plane Sunday, hundreds of fans screamed and waved to get their attention.

And some of the players obliged, taking time out to shake hands or have a brief chat with their well-wishers as they returned from Salt Lake City after an 88-86 victory over the Jazz that gave them a 3-1 lead in their Western Conference playoff series.

"This is the same feeling as the

first time," West Seattle resident Max Smithberg said, referring to the team's first NBA championship in 1979. "They're going all the way!"

"I can't imagine what it'll be like when we beat the Bulls," added Seattle resident Kelly Gordon.

The fans gathered at Boeing Field Sunday waved "Sonics In To Win" signs, held green and yellow balloons, or wore Detlef Schrempf masks — one even brought a dog painted with the Sonics logo.

And they all seemed convinced the Sonics will clinch their series against the Jazz on Tuesday and go on to the championship series against either the Chicago Bulls or the Orlando Magic.

"These guys are going all the way," said Graham resident Corey Brown. "When they're on, no one can beat them."

Classic:

Sunday's event saved the best for last

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said. "I had a head cold and I didn't feel good, and Jon ran well. I am running fine; I just didn't feel myself today."

Drummond enjoyed his role as the underdog.

"They got favorites, but that's why they got guys like me to spoil the fun," Drummond said. "I'm definitely the spoiler to this sport because just when you think you're on top, a guy like me will show up and beat you."

Following the men's 200 was the men's 5,000-meter run.

American Bob Kennedy kept the pace for much of the 12 1/2-lap race and was closely followed by Paul Bitok and Daniel Komen of Kenya.

But with 250 meters to go, Bitok and Komen left Kennedy in the dust, with Bitok finishing first in a time of 13:08.29. Komen was close behind with a time of 13:10.14. Bitok's time eclipsed a 16-year-old meet and field record set by Matt Centrowitz with a time of 13:12.91 in the Pre Classic.

Bitok's time was also the fastest time of year, while Kennedy's time of 13:12.14 was the fastest time ever for an American in the United States.

NBA East: Grant's injury haunted, slowed Orlando Magic

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Rodman scoring five points and Jordan and Pippen getting four each, to take the lead for good.

"The coach always says go out there and give us a spark, give us something," Rodman said. "That's my job."

Chicago led 80-76 when Jordan went to the bench for a rest with 9:55 to go and increased that to 88-81 thanks to Toni Kukoc's 3-pointer, Ron Harper's three-point play and Luc Longley's 15-footer.

Upon returning, Jordan immediately made an impact, hitting a 20-footer and a 3-pointer for a 95-85 lead, and the Magic never threatened.

Brooks Thompson, Orlando's first guard off the bench in place of Shaw (neck spasms), scored 17 points. Anthony Bowie started for Anderson (sprained wrist) and had eight points.

Once again, however, nobody could help the Magic at power forward. Grant, who excelled against Chicago in the playoffs last year, missed the last three games with a hyperextended elbow.

Without Grant to contest him, Rodman dominated the boards. He had 14 rebounds Monday, giving him a 15.8 average in the series, as the Bulls won the rebound battle all four games.

Hardaway scored 13 points and O'Neal 10

as Orlando led 31-23 after one — the first time this series that the Magic scored more than 30 points in a quarter. Jordan, who had 13 points in the period, kept the Bulls close.

O'Neal and Rodman exchanged shoves with 1:31 left in the second quarter and each was assessed a technical foul. O'Neal then made his fifth straight free throw, giving the Magic a 51-40 lead.

O'Neal was 6-of-9 from the line but still finished at 36 percent for the series and 39 percent in the postseason as Orlando set a record for lowest free throw percentage (.543) in a playoff series. Houston, which shot .567 against Utah in 1985, had held the mark.



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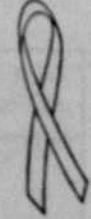



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