







NBA: Bulls still confident, Pippen says

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only thing that gets him even slightly riled is the suggestion that, at 36, he's getting too old to be expected to come up with that kind of performance on a regular basis.

"I think people want to remind you of your age all the time," Stockton said, "and I just try to forget about that. I do the same training regimen I did when I was 24. I try to get ready for the game the same way I did when I was 24. I try to basically play the same way.

"I think as you continue playing, the thing you learn is when to use your energy and when not to, and sometimes that's construed as old age."

Stockton's efficiency has been greatly enhanced by the presence of Howard Eisley, the backup point guard who played 23 highly effective minutes in Game 1. That made Stockton the freshest player on the court in the overtime.

Sloan even had Stockton and Eisley in the lineup at the same time in one stretch. The Bulls believe it's part of Sloan's effort to mask the struggles of Jeff Hornacek, who insists he's fine but certainly looks bothered by the sore Achilles' tendon that hampered him earlier in the playoffs.

"It looks to me like Jeff Hornacek's really struggling," Jackson said. "Somehow or other, they've got to patch that together. We're going to try to make them pay a little bit for that sometime or other this next game."

Since Sloan is one of the NBA's all-time tough guys, the Jazz do not complain about injuries, or even talk about them.

"Jeff's physical condition is he's like anybody else: when we suit up, he's ready to play," Malone said. "That's basically the motto of this team. When we put our uniform on, we're ready, no excuses."

There is no way that Hornacek
— or Russell or Shandon Anderson or anybody else — can guard
Jordan one on one.

"Jeff realizes he's not going to stop him. We realize that," Malone said. "But it's our job as big guys to help him out a lot more than we did last night."

Jackson said it's just a matter of how Jordan will attack Hornacek — either by posting him up or taking him to the basket on drives. If the Jazz come with the double team, Jordan will find the open man.

While so much is made of Stockton and Malone, it's Chicago that was the two-man team in Game 1. Jordan scored 33 points and Pippen 21 in Game 1. Jordan and Pippen took 51 of the Bulls' 82 shots.

The Jazz bench outscored Chicago's reserves 22-8.

"I don't think our success with the Utah Jazz has been because of two guys," Stockton said. "Hopefully we've contributed a lot but two guys can't do it. Three guys can't do it. The success of our team has been with everybody doing it."

Jordan and Pippen were seen shouting at each other late in Monday night's game. Both downplayed the incident, saying they had to holler to be heard over the notoriously noisy Delta Center crowd.

"You are talking about a veteran club that's been together a long time," Jordan said, "and there is a certain understanding between the two of us, and all of us actually. When I read that I was screaming at Scottie Pippen
— he and I are on the same wave
length. I was just yelling to get a
point across or get him to understand what I was saying."

Dennis Rodman took his sprained right thumb on a quick trip to Las Vegas after the game but was back in time for Thursday's practice.

That's no problem either, Jackson said, just business as usual for the Bulls and their wild man.

In fact, the Bulls were in a jovial mood on Thursday with Jackson, Pippen and Jordan all cracking jokes. There seemed no sense of urgency, even though they are on the brink of going down 2-0 in the best-of-seven series.

"I have an inner confidence about ourselves and what we are capable of accomplishing," Jordan said. "One game does not deteriorate that. It's the ultimate apex of the season, but don't fight that apex with anger and frustration."

He joked that some of his coach's spiritual serenity is wearing off.

"I think it's that Zen Buddhism stuff," Jordan said. "We're practicing smiling when we may be frustrated inside so we can relieve some tension. It's an art form. It takes about 10 years."

But the Bulls have only two days to shake off the tough loss, somehow gather some energy and come back to win tonight.

"I don't feel like they have a number on us," Pippen said. "I think they felt very lucky that we weren't able to get Game 1 yesterday. We had a lot of opportunity and didn't take advantage of it. The confidence is still there."



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