

Houston's 34 lifts New York off NBA Finals floor

By Chris Sheridan
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — It took 41 days for a team to beat the San Antonio Spurs, and the New York Knicks gave the NBA Finals a whole different look by doing just that.

Behind 34 points from Allan Houston in one of the best games of his career, the Knicks defeated San Antonio 89-81 Monday night in Game 3 to cut their deficit to 2-1 in the best-of-7 series.

The Knicks never trailed, never let the Spurs' numerous comebacks rattle them and played what was easily their best all-around basketball of the series. It was San Antonio's first loss since Game 2 of the first round and ended the Spurs' NBA-record postseason winning streak at 12 games.

Game 4 is Wednesday night, and another victory by New York could make this once-lethargic,

low-rated series as compelling as any.

To do so, the Knicks will need another night like the one they got from Houston — an inspired display of clutch shooting, whether on jumpers, drives or foul shots.

Houston shot 10-for-24 from the field and 12-for-12 from the line as he tied his career play-off high. Latrell Sprewell added 24 and Larry Johnson had 16 for the Knicks, who have played their best all season just when things have looked most bleak.

Nothing would have been as daunting as facing a 3-0 deficit, and the Knicks played like they knew this was their only chance to give themselves an opportunity to win the series.

New York came out fired up, opening a 14-point lead in a first quarter in which they debuted yet another new starting lineup,

replacing Chris Dudley with Marcus Camby.

"We just came out with a lot of energy," Sprewell said.

"If you can't come out with a big effort and poise, then you don't need to be out here."

The Spurs quickly cut into that lead and finally tied the game midway through the third quarter, but Houston answered with several clutch shots to restore the Knicks' comfort zone.

San Antonio made one final charge in the fourth, but never got closer than four. One big reason why was the lack of production from Tim Duncan, who was scoreless in the fourth as he missed all four of his shots.

Duncan finished with 20 points and 12 rebounds, doing little after the Knicks started triple-teaming him. David Robinson led the Spurs with 25

points.

San Antonio shot 5-for-18 in the fourth quarter and committed six of its 20 turnovers.

New York led 65-62 entering the fourth, and the lead grew to seven in the first minute as Sprewell scored on a difficult drive and Camby had a thunderous dunk off an offensive rebound for his first points of the game.

A jumper by Houston gave the Knicks a 10-point lead with 6:31 left, and the score was 80-71 with the clock ticking toward four minutes before the Spurs made their final push.

A three-point play by Robinson and a 3-pointer by Sean Elliott made it 81-77 with 3:13 left, but the threat ended quickly as Houston hit a 20-footer, Mario Elie missed a 3-pointer and Camby converted a short jumper to give the Knicks an 85-77 lead.

The Spurs had only one basket the rest of the way.

The Knicks played just about as well as they can in the first 12 minutes, not getting much of a lift from Camby but benefiting from two personal fouls each against Elie and Jaren Jackson, and technicals against Elie and coach Gregg Popovich.

The technical against Popovich came after the referees waved off a 3-pointer that would have cut New York's lead to 22-15. Instead, the Knicks steadily increased their lead to as many as 14, 32-18 on a 3-pointer by Chris Childs with 8 seconds left in the quarter.

Antonio Daniels hit a 3-pointer just before the first-quarter buzzer, and San Antonio began the second quarter with a 19-10 run to pull within two, 42-40.

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Horoscope by Frances Drake

For Wednesday, June 23, 1999

ARIES

(March 21 to April 19)

If you become slightly uncomfortable, don't let every issue rub you the wrong way. Work with what you have in order to maximize the possibilities.

TAURUS

(April 20 to May 20)

You could find yourself rather possessive of your popularity, which puts you in a precarious situation. Take heed of the reasons that got you to where you are in order to stay on track.

GEMINI

(May 21 to June 20)

Apply the uses of your calculator to more than just the budget that you aim to keep. Make your moves with caution and your decisions with extreme care.

CANCER

(June 21 to July 22)

You release a bit of the pressure that has been pushing down on you, and it lifts your spirits to the sky. Your attitude is the navigator that indicates the direction in which you soar.

LEO

(July 23 to Aug. 22)

The nature vs. nurture debate carries on, and you need to spend time on both sides. Extend the applications beyond yourself in order to supply some rewards to others.

VIRGO

(Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

You have re-entered the "why" stage and now need an explanation for everything. The best part is that you are old enough to seek out the answers yourself.

LIBRA

(Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

You find the balance between generosity and stinginess, but applying yourself to the right side becomes a bit of a struggle. It is a hard issue on which

to find a middle ground.

SCORPIO

(Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

You are unfazed by even the most shocking of situations, which makes you a fun addition to any mix. You may even be the dynamic one that is setting the standard.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

Your imagination might lead you to spend some time in contemplative solitude. You swirl through the valleys of your dreams and swim with your flow of creativity.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

Rely on the friends who watch your back, in order to move forward. They provide the push that sends you leaping into legitimacy and soaring into success.

AQUARIUS

(Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

Your ambition has you wondering about advancement in your career and in your life. Make sure that your eagerness is properly aligned with your actions.

PISCES

(Feb. 19 to March 20)

You are a zealot for your wishes and the dictator of your dreams. Your quest makes for an amazing journey. Lead yourself in a whole new direction.

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Birthdate of: Frances McDormand, actress; Roy Davies, singer; Wilma Rudolph, track athlete.

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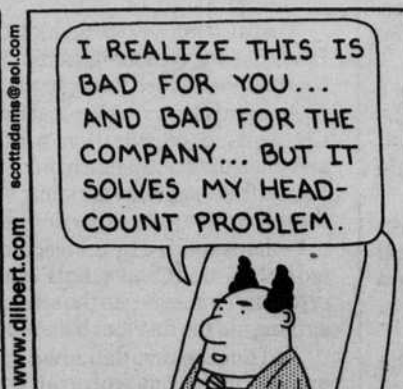
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