

Pip, Blazers put away Jazz

By Landon Hall
The Associated Press

PORTLAND — All Scottie Pippen needed was a few feet of space between him and Bryon Russell. And just like that, the Utah Jazz's season was over.

Pippen, dazed for several minutes after being inadvertently knocked down from behind by teammate Arvydas Sabonis, hit a 3-pointer with 7.3 seconds left Tuesday night, lifting the Portland Trail Blazers to an 81-79 victory. The loss eliminated the Jazz 4-1 in the best-of-seven series.

"It was my opportunity to take the shot, and I made it," Pippen said. "I was looking to go inside to Rasheed (Wallace) to try to get something quick. They played it pretty good. Russell jumped back in the passing lane, and I just looked for the shot."

Pippen created just enough room to get off the game-winner after moving Russell back with a head fake.

"He was so deep," Russell said. "And he's not a good 3-point shooter anyway, so I felt good about it. He looked like he prayed it in anyway, but it went in."

Even after that, Pippen's work wasn't done. Trailing 80-79, Utah had a chance to take the lead when Russell was fouled by Detlef Schrempf with three seconds left, but he missed both free throws.

Russell complained that someone was "shaking and jumping down on" the basket support, al-

tering his first shot. There was brief confusion as the officials decided what to do, but they didn't award him another try.

Pippen grabbed the rebound of the second miss, was fouled immediately and hit one of two free throws for an 81-79 lead.

With 1.4 seconds left, Russell inbounded the ball to Karl Malone, who gave it back to Russell, whose shot was way off. The Jazz and coach Jerry Sloan heatedly called for a foul, but no whistle came.

"You saw it. It happened right in front of me. He was definitely fouled," Sloan said.

The Jazz, beaten for the second straight year by the Blazers, have been a perennial contender, twice reaching the NBA Finals. But it was the last game for that team in its current form.

Jeff Hornacek has said he is retiring, and it's doubtful Utah can make another run without dramatically changing the team surrounding Malone and John Stockton.

"Actually, I wasn't thinking about it being my last game, but it is sad that I won't be out there anymore," Hornacek said.

Malone had 27 points and 11 rebounds. Russell had 18 points and Hornacek 10.

"This is a tough way to end the season," Malone said. "You get nothing for second place in this business."

Pippen led the Blazers with 23 points, nine rebounds and eight assists. Sabonis scored 16 points.

Pippen went down with 5:36 left in the game. Sabonis had just made a hook shot to tie it at 71, and he ac-

cidental hit Pippen with an elbow while lunging forward. Pippen was on his back on the baseline, but soon walked off, and he missed only 1:17 of game time.

Brian Grant rebounded two straight misses, including his own, and laid the ball in to tie it at 75 with 2:10 remaining. A leaning 13-foot jumper by Russell put the Jazz back ahead 77-75 with 1:46 left.

Portland turned it over on their next two possessions — on a bad pass by Pippen and an offensive foul — and Malone hit a jumper for a 79-75 lead with 47 seconds left.

Wallace hit a turnaround jumper over Malone to make it 79-77, and the Blazers got the ball back with 12.6 seconds left after Stockton was forced to take an off-balance 3-pointer with the shot clock running down. It barely caught iron, and Pippen rebounded and called timeout.

"He's been a big playmaker, shotmaker all year long," Portland coach Mike Dunleavy said. "You've got to have guys that want to take the shot, willing to take the shot and can make the shot. And he did that."

Notes: Utah lost its 14th straight playoff game in Portland. ... Only one of Portland's 17 best-of-seven series has gone the distance: a 4-3 win over San Antonio in the 1990 conference semifinals. ... Smith has missed six of his last 18 free throws in the past two games after making 42 in a row during the playoffs dating to last season with Atlanta. ... During the series, Portland outscored Utah 122-94 in the fourth quarter.

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