

Lakers outlast Kings to make the NBA Finals

By Sam Smith
Chicago Tribune

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (KRT) — This time they were tested. This time it wasn't easy. This time the Los Angeles Lakers were asked to play like champions, to show the heart and character of winners.

They'd have to do it from behind, on the road, against all odds. Coach Phil Jackson told them all season that winning a third

straight title would be harder than taking the first two.

It was here Sunday. It was also the first time a conference finals Game 7 ever went to overtime, and the Lakers matched the historic challenge with a 112-106 victory that sent them heading toward their third consecutive NBA championship.

"It was the most drawn out, the most hotly contested," said Lakers

coach Phil Jackson, who is going for his record-tying ninth NBA title as a coach. "We had to squeeze everything out of this (Lakers') ballclub to win. (Now) we are going for the one that counts."

That's the NBA Finals starting in Los Angeles on Wednesday against the New Jersey Nets.

"They're a terrific team because they play a lot of team basketball," Jackson said of the Nets. "It's pleasing to watch. They play with a lot of

motion, they play with a lot of moxie, and we had two tough, rugged games against them. But we feel confident the winner of this conference is going to win the championship. And we still believe it."

It was easy to believe after a memorable Game 7, in which the Lakers matched a stretch of brilliant Mike Bibby play at the end of regulation — Bibby scored 10 of the Kings' last 12 points in regulation and finished with a team high

29 points.

"It was a fun battle," said Kobe Bryant, who had 30 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists and shadowed Bibby at the end. "It was the most fun I've had playing against any individual all year. It was a heck of a series. They gave us a run for our money."

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Women's

continued from page 9

road since 1993 when the Heinonen's squad finished fourth, but he is confident they will be moving up in the standings in the near future.

"That's certainly what we expect," he said.

Looking ahead to next season, the Ducks are set to return all five NCAA participants — although Etter hinted that she might be red-shirted — as well as 2001 participant Niki Reed.

Final championship notes

Williams, considered one of the top runners in the NCAA and now

in collegiate history, competed in a USC uniform for the last time on Saturday and did the unthinkable. She won the 100 at a time of 11.29, giving her four NCAA titles in the event, a record.

"When I won this event as a freshman, I remember the huge roar from the crowd and how it felt to see and hear people cheering for me," she said. "When I won it tonight, there was that same reaction from the crowd and it felt to me like my career had the proper bookends."

On the team side, South Carolina made history with its first NCAA title. The Gamecocks also broke the NCAA record in the 4x400 relay with a time of 3:26.46.

"I can't put into words how I feel right now," said South Carolina 200 runner Lisa Barber. "Winning the school's first NCAA title — ever — wow! I am so proud of our entire team. We knew we had a chance if we just worked hard. We are thrilled. I am so proud of the men's and women's teams."

Oregon said it

"You'd better believe I'm going to be there," — freshman Roslyn Lundeen on the prospects of competing the 2003 NCAA Championships, slated for Sacramento, Calif.

"Since I was on the bubble for the final I couldn't watch the second flight and had to get away. I was so

nervous, I went over and watched the (New Jersey Nets) basketball game." — Etter on her final collegiate competition of the season.

"It was strange environment in that it didn't seem like a championship meet. There wasn't a lot of people here (1,495 spectators on Wednesday) or much crowd support. Early on I had to keep telling myself to focus because the NCAA championship was on the line." — junior Becky Holliday, disappointed with the lack of a crowd on the first day of the NCAA Championships in Baton Rouge.

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NCAA Women's Final Standings

	points
1. South Carolina	82
2. UCLA	72
3. USC	57
4. LSU	43
5. Kansas State	30
6. Florida	29
7. Stanford	25
8. North Carolina	22
9. Nebraska	21
10. Illinois	19
T27. Oregon	09

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (June 3). The most important lessons you'll learn this year involve compassion, emotion and caring. You're naturally curious, so this will be fascinating. Practice communicating without words.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) - Today is a 6 - Your old point of view won't suffice anymore. Letting it go will feel great. Open yourself up to new possibilities - and to love.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) - Today is a 5 - Go slowly when it comes to buying and selling. The less you do of either, the better off you'll be.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) - Today is a 6 - Prove how smart you are. This test doesn't involve the material in the book; it's about getting along with somebody you don't like. Don't try to change this person. Just listen.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) - Today is a 7 - You'll soon encounter a problem for which you won't have an immediate answer. You can eventually solve it by following through on a hunch. Your idea might not make sense, but it'll work.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) - Today is a 6 - Arguments between family and friends just make matters worse. How can you find a good deal amid all that squabbling? Remember, that's your major objective.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) - Today is a 5 - You're smart, but even you will have trouble keeping up with the changes. They're not all bad. At least one is a change for the better. Finally!

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