

Western Conference Semi-Finals

**SPORTS EDITOR
BLAKE THOMASON
GIVES
REASONS WHY THE
PORTLAND TRAIL
BLAZERS' PLAYOFF
JOURNEY WILL END
HERE.**



Trail will end here for the Blazers

by **BLAKE THOMASON**
sports editor

The Portland Trail Blazers ended the longest playoff-victory drought in the NBA last Friday in dramatic fashion. Fans finally got what they wanted for so long, but it probably took some years off their lives.

After a wild scramble for the ball, the Houston Rockets got a lucky bounce and Chandler Parsons scored what looked like the game-winning basket that would send the series back to Houston for a seventh game. Only, the Rockets left too much time on the clock for the Blazers.

With 0.9 seconds left, Blazers coach Terry Stotts drew up a play for LaMarcus Aldridge. However, Damian Lillard came open after running around a screen and clapped for the ball. Seeing how open he was, Nicolas Batum went away from the original play and inbounded the ball to the second-year star.

In one swift motion, Lillard caught the ball behind the three-point line, planted his feet and flicked his wrist. The ball splashed through the net and the crowd erupted. It was the first game and series winning buzzer-beater since John Stockton did it in 1997.

Four of the six games were decided on the last possession of the game, and three games went to overtime. These teams were so evenly matched, and all six games could've easily gone the other way. In the series, the Rockets actually outscored the Blazers 672-670. However, as I predicted, the Blazers won in six games and advanced for the first time since 2000.

Up next is the defending Western Conference champs. The San Antonio Spurs hold the league's best record and are the number one seed in the west. The veteran Spurs will provide a tough test for the young Blazers, as their experience and continuity are far superior.

Tim Duncan was playing for the Spurs while Lillard was in second grade learning basic math and cursive writing. The original "Big Three" of Duncan, Tony Parker and Manu

TEXAS TWO-STEP

Here's how the Blazers' duo matches up against their second straight Texas opponent, the San Antonio Spurs.

Damian Lillard



**AD MANAGER
ZAK LASTER GIVES
REASONS WHY THE
PORTLAND TRAIL
BLAZERS' RODEO
RIDE WILL MOVE
RIGHT THROUGH
SAN ANTONIO.**

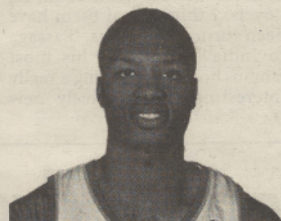
This is no country for old men

by **ZAK LASTER**
ad manager

a tough seven game series against the Dallas Mavericks. The Blazers are coached by Terry Stotts, who was the Mavericks' lead assistant for four years before joining the Blazers in 2012. It's definitely possible that Stotts will be calling up his buddy for a few tips on what worked well against the Spurs and what didn't.

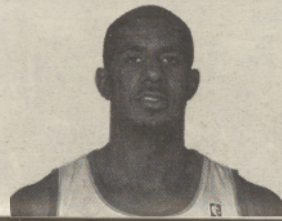
The other thing the Blazers have going for them is youth. The Spurs have four players over the age of 31, with their oldest player being 38; however, the 38 year old is Tim Duncan who is a two-time MVP that has won four titles. The average age of the Blazers however is 25.5, with their oldest starter being 28. The Blazers should be able to run circles around these old dinosaurs.

In 2000, which was the last time the Blazers advanced past the first round, the Blazers made it to the Western Conference Finals. I see Portland doing the same thing this year, beating the Spurs in six games.



25.5 points per game
6.7 assists per game

LaMarcus Aldridge



29.8 points per game
11.2 rebounds per game

Tony Parker



20.3 points per game
4.7 assists per game

Tim Duncan



17.3 points per game
8.4 rebounds per game

Manu Ginobili



17.7 points per game
4.6 assists per game

	Matchup	Date	Time/ Channel
Game 1	Blazers @ Spurs	May 6, 2014	6:30 PM Ch: TNT
Game 2	Blazers @ Spurs	May 8, 2014	6:30 PM Ch: ESPN2
Game 3	Spurs @ Blazers	May 10, 2014	7:30 PM Ch: ESPN
Game 4	Spurs @ Blazers	May 12, 2014	7:30 PM Ch: TNT
*Game 5	Blazers @ Spurs	May 14, 2014	TBA Ch: TNT
*Game 6	Spurs @ Blazers	May 16, 2014	TBA Ch: ESPN
*Game 7	Blazers @ Spurs	May 19, 2014	TBA Ch: TNT

REGULAR SEASON MATCH UP

Saturday, Nov. 2	SAS @ POR	POR W 115-105
Friday, Jan. 17	POR @ SAS	POR W 109-100
Wednesday, Feb. 19	SAS @ POR	SAS W 111-109
Wednesday, March 12	POR @ SAS	SAS W 103-90