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Sports Editor

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Dallas at Portland No. 4

Leading the series 2-1, the Portland entry into the NBA sweepstakes came away with the victory at home to move themselves into the magnificent eight, and now must face the Pacific Conference Champion Los Angeles Lakers in the second round.

Last Thursday evening was the highlight of Audie Norris' career as a Trail Blazer and his timing was perfect. When the game began Portland appeared to be heading back to Dallas because the hoop in the Coliseum was too small for the ball they were shooting. At the 6:58 mark Portland hit its first field goal on a jumper by Kiki. The good news was that the score was 12-6 Dallas. Jack decided that he needed some instant magic and inserted Steve Colter and Mychal Thompson into the lineup. The team started to move and at 2:55 Motta called a timeout to halt the Blazer surge for the lead.

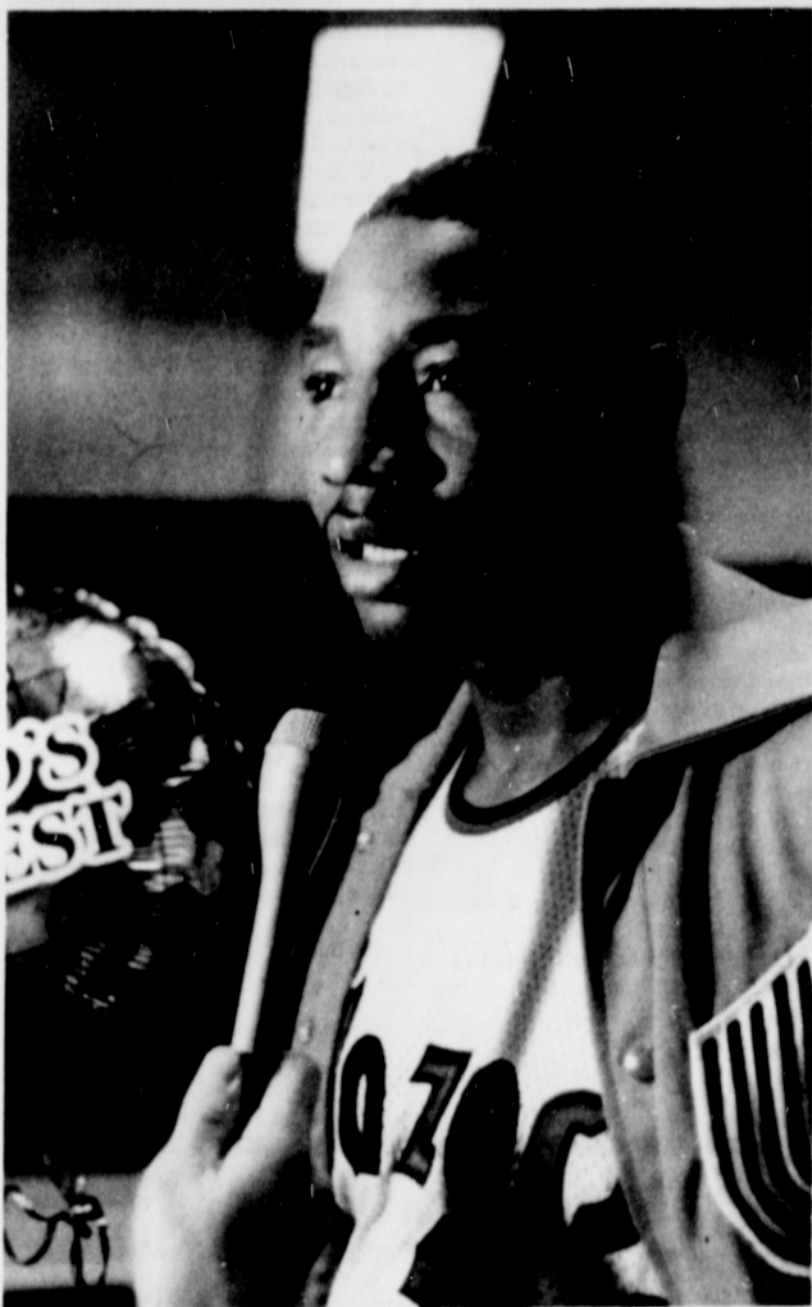
When the teams broke their huddle it was all Portland. Kiki hit two long jumpers, Clyde broke free for a jam on a sweet pass from Colter. Steve followed that pass with another slight of hand dish off to Sam for a back door jam. The lineup change quickened the pace of the game and now the Blazers' were trying to run on every opportunity.

A lob pass from Steve to Mychal on the breakaway brought the house to its feet at 1:04 with the score knotted at 24 all. The Blazers threw their offensive book at the Mavericks. Every offensive fundamental in the book was needed to get back into the game. The lob pass, back door moves to the hole, the fast break and the pick and roll were all factors in getting the Blazer offense to jell. Credit Steve Colter.

Mark Aguirre was the heart and soul of the Dallas offense throughout the first half as he just couldn't be stopped. Kiki had the defensive assignment but everyone had their chances to guard the sweet shooting forward from the Windy City. The second period was close throughout and the Blazers were in good shape to only be down 57-55 at the half when you consider their first 6 minutes of the game. Aguirre finished the first half with 24 points to lead Dallas and Kiki was high for Portland with 15.

The 3rd quarter was a running contest and the Blazers spurred their horses hardest to account for their 88-85 lead moving into the final quarter. Audie Norris came off the bench to put some muscle on Aguirre and for a time it worked but nothing short of aggravated assault was going to shut down the Dallas forward on this night. With 6:58 remaining and the Blazers leading 97-95, Jerome Kersey entered the contest and nailed a short jumper and Portland was trying to forge ahead.

When Jack gets in a bind he throws caution to the wind and scraps his offense, shades of Billy Ray. Now was the time. Many of the moves that Coach made at this point in the game were baffling to me but the players made things work in spite of the substitutions and defensive assignments. Mychal Thompson was inserted into the lineup with 5 personal fouls and Jack put him on Aguirre. That lasted a minute and Mychal was gone with his sixth foul. No matter, Audie was ready.



Audie Norris appears to be considering negotiating his contract after his last-second heroics to seal Portland's 115-113 win over Dallas.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

With :37 on the clock, Jack called a timeout with the score knotted at 111. His options were to either score quickly inside of :06 and get another possession or run down the clock and hope to score and turn the ball back over to Dallas. I would want the ball last. That must be why I'm not getting paid to coach the Blazers, because Jack chose to run down the line. Audie Norris saved him again by scoring on a play down the lane.

Brad Davis converted two from the foul line and tied the score at 113 all with :15 left. Timeout Blazers. When play resumed Clyde had control as the Blazer offense spread the floor and Clyde headed down toward the paint. When the Dallas defense converged on Clyde he dished off to Audie on the right side and it was swish with :01 remaining. The miracle didn't happen for the Mavericks and the fat lady sang her song over Dick Motta and his Dallas Mavericks. Final score: 115-113 Trail Blazers.

Lakers bombard the Blazers in L.A.

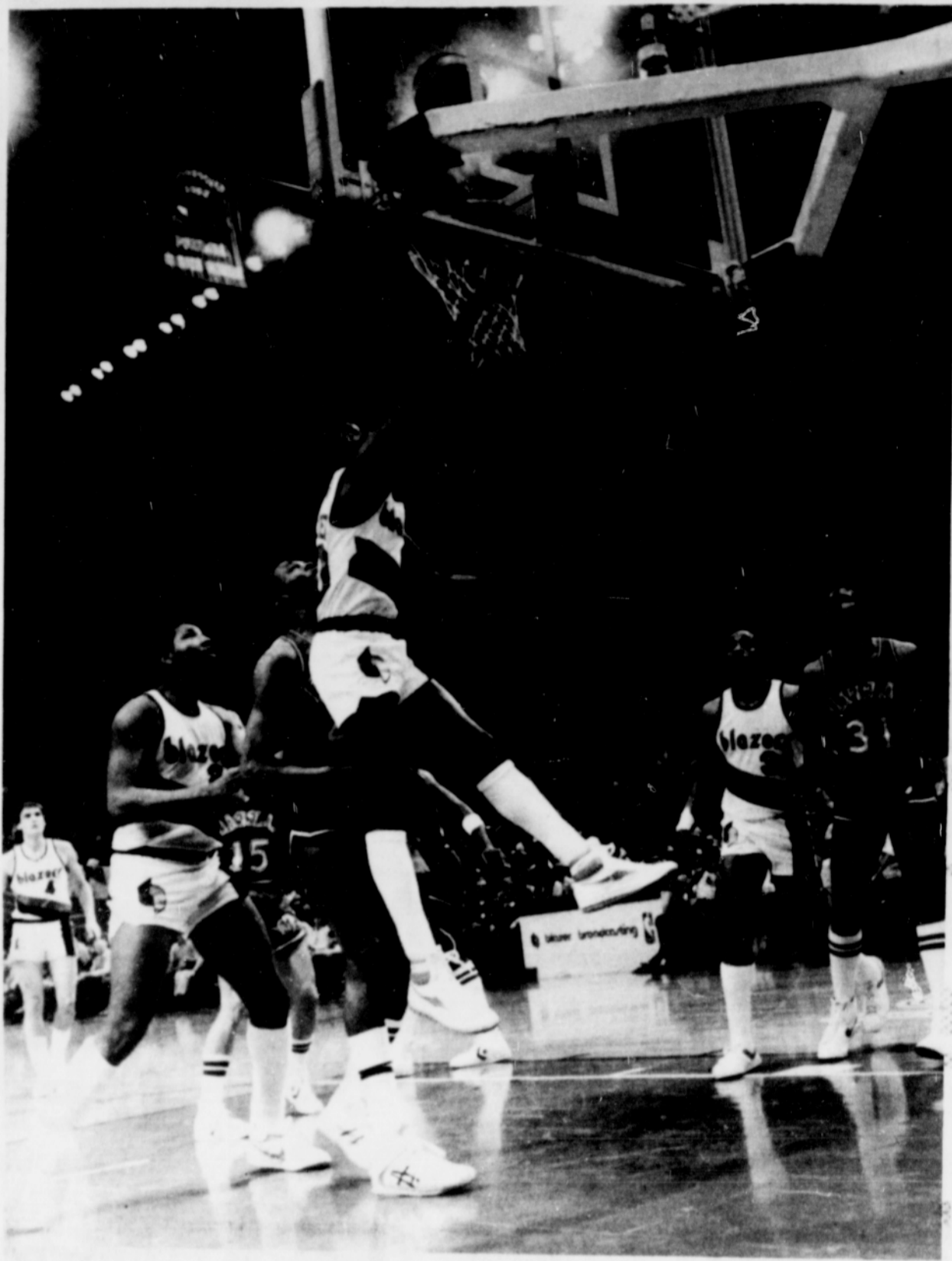
Blowouts are hard to report because you turn away so often it's difficult to report what you don't see. The bottom line is this: Jack Ramsey has placed his team in a holding pattern by playing 7 men against the Lakers and trying to run with them at the same time.

You dance with who brought you, and the Blazer bench is what has the team in the playoffs. Saturday's game in Los Angeles can be attributed to lack of rest, and that's being kind. Tuesday's game was just poor coaching. The Blazers were down by 20 points in the first half and still only 7 players were in the game for Portland. Jack didn't go past 7 men until the

4-minute mark in the fourth quarter. That's insane.

The series returns to Portland Friday night and unless Jack starts to go deeper into his bench, there's no way Portland has a chance at beating L.A. When the Blazers beat the Lakers here this season in overtime, Jack used Kersey, Thompson and Colter extensively, so how can he not use them now?

After the win over Dallas, I asked Jack if he would be going deeper into his bench and his response was, "I can't foresee that." Maybe now that he can foresee vacation, he'll change his mind.



Steve Colter penetrates the Mavericks' defense for 2 points in Blazer victory to end first round play-off action.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)



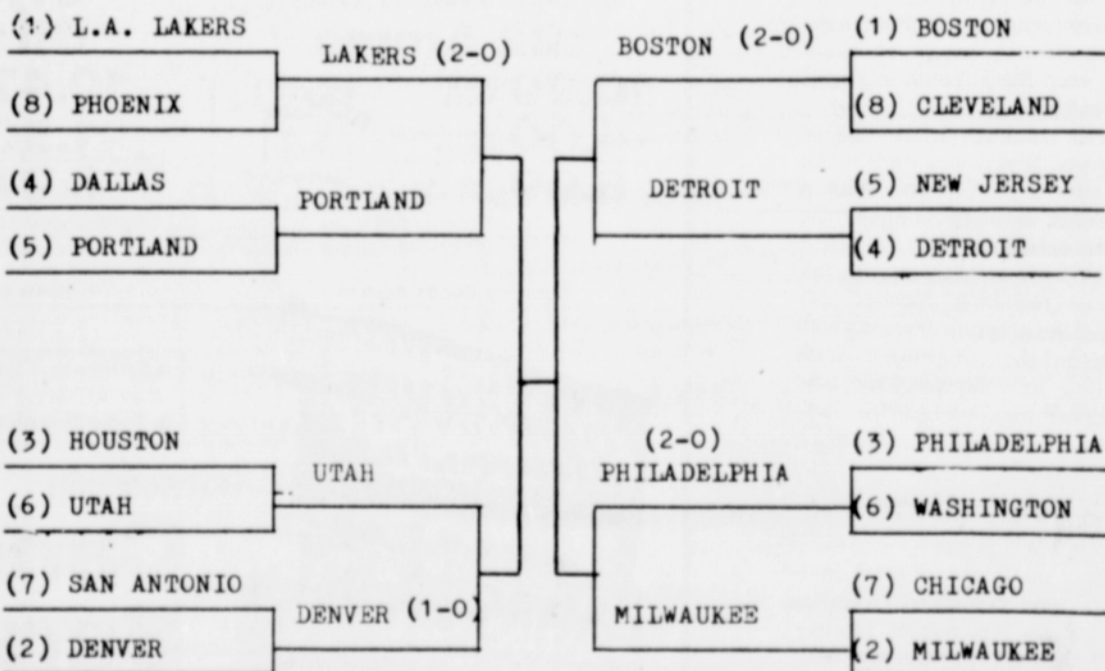
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