

SPORTS

Classic Battle Set for West

Spurs play stubborn defense

(AP) — Manu Ginobili scored 26 points in Game Seven, sending the playoff-savvy San Antonio Spurs to the Western Conference finals with a 91-82 victory over the New Orleans Hornets on Monday night.

Tony Parker added 17 points, including a crucial jumper in the final minute, as the Spurs held off a late rally to become the first team in this series to win on the road.

"It's just a lot of confidence. A lot of games under our belt," said Spurs forward Tim Duncan, who had 16 points and 14 rebounds.

With a nucleus of Chris Paul, David West and Tyson Chandler, the Hornets had appeared destined for greater things, but now is not their time.

Now the Spurs and their championship ring-laden trio of Duncan, Ginobili and Parker will be traveling to Los Angeles to face the Lakers in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals on Wednesday night.

While the Hornets managed to hold Duncan under 20 points by crowding the inside, his Spurs teammates combined for 12 3-pointers to keep alive their chance to win back-to-back titles for the first time.

The Hornets had dominated the third quarters of their three previous home games in this series. This time, the Spurs, who have won four titles in the previous nine seasons, had an answer. It was their calling card: stingy defense.



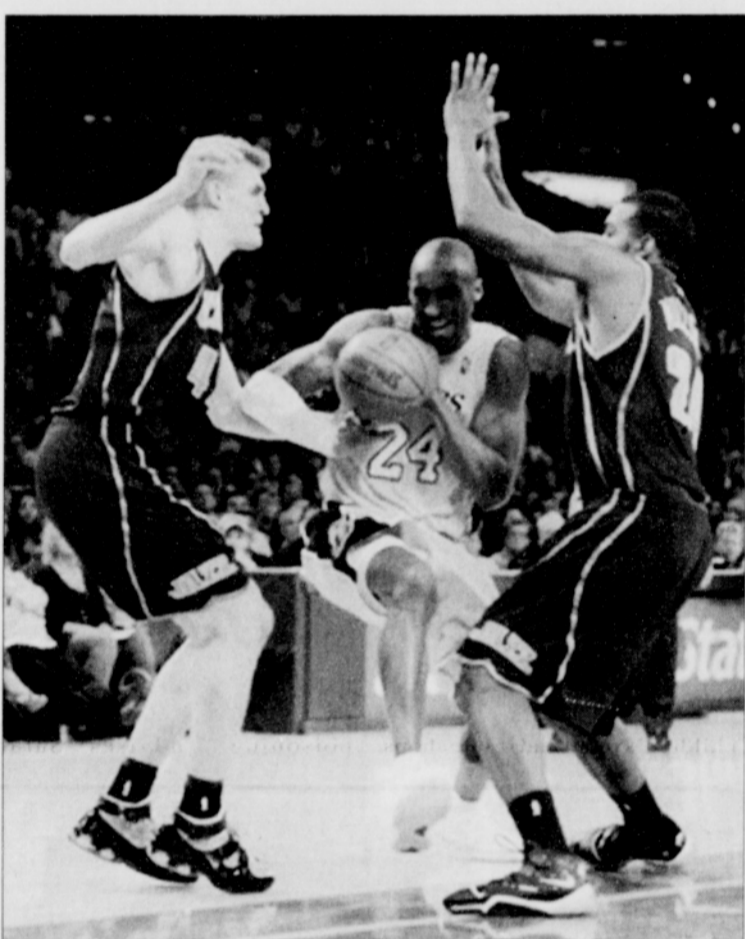
Tony Parker (left) and Manu Ginobili of the San Antonio Spurs celebrate Monday after defeating the New Orleans Hornets 91-82 to advance to the Western Conference Finals.

The Hornets, down by nine to open the period, could not manage consecutive baskets throughout the quarter, never getting closer than seven.

Buoyed by a home crowd that stood throughout the fourth quarter, the Hornets fought back to make a game of it, largely behind Jannero Pargo, who had done little in this series. He scored seven straight on four free throws sandwiched around a 3-pointer, pulling the Hornets to 81-77 with 3:10 to go.

Pargo made another 3 to cut it to 83-80 with about 1 1/2 minutes to go, then attempted another for the tie with a minute left, but it rattled out.

Parker drained a jumper on the other end with 50 seconds left to make it 85-80, and New Orleans could not recover.



Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant drives between Utah Jazz's Andrei Kirilenko and Paul Millsap.

The Lakers took 13 more foul shots than the Jazz, getting sent to the line repeatedly as the Jazz tried to make up the deficit. They finished 31-for-38.

Reserve Paul Millsap added 15 points for Utah and led the Jazz on a 14-5 run early in the fourth quarter that set up the frantic finish.

The Lakers led 101-91 with about two minutes left when the Jazz made their last-gasp push. Okur hit two 3-pointers, then Andrei Kirilenko hit an-

other to cut the lead to 103-100 after Millsap blocked a layup by Bryant. Lamar Odom hit two free throws, followed by another 3 by Andrei Kirilenko, then Bryant hit two more from the line to make it 107-103 with 15.5 seconds left.

The Jazz went for a quick two points and scored on a dunk by Williams, then got a break when Derek Fisher went 1-for-2 from the line. Utah just needed a 3-pointer and got two off, but missed both, and the buzzer sounded.

Lakers hold on to lead

(AP) — Kobe Bryant scored 34 points and held off a furious rally by the Utah Jazz for a 108-105 victory Friday night, putting the Los Angeles Lakers in the Western Conference finals for the first time in four years.

The Jazz trailed by 16 at the end of the third quarter, but hit a flurry of 3-pointers to get within two points in the final minute. The Jazz had a chance to tie it at the end, but Mehmet Okur and Deron Williams missed 3-pointers in the closing seconds.

It was the only win by the visiting team in the series and kept the Lakers from having to host a Game 7 on Monday, instead giving Bryant a chance to

rest his ailing back.

Los Angeles stopped Utah's pick-and-roll and just about everything else the Jazz tried inside until the fourth. The Jazz started hurrying outside shots, which weren't going in.

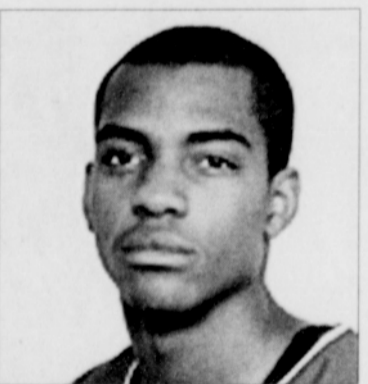
Utah finally started hitting from the perimeter and getting inside the lane for points in the fourth, but Bryant kept the Lakers from blowing the lead by scoring 12 in the period.

Bryant's back seized up on him early in Game 4 here, when the Jazz tied the series 2-2 with two straight home wins. Bryant's back was better when the Lakers won Game 5 at home, and on Friday he was showing his MVP form again.

Local Signs with UC Riverside

Bryson Hampton, a three-year varsity standout at Benson High School, has signed with the NCAA Division I program at UC Riverside.

Hampton had been playing for Seward County Community College in Kansas, where he led the team in field-goal percentage and was recognized for his strong ethic on defense.



Bryson Hampton

At Benson, Hampton averaged 12 points, eight rebounds, 3.5 assists, three blocks and two steals per game his senior season. As an All-State selection, he helped lead his team to a 26-7 record and a fourth-place finish at the state tournament.

Coaches look to the 6-foot-8-inch forward for inside play, rebounds and a high level of athleticism.

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