

Green, Parker help Spurs rally to beat Trail Blazers

By RAUL DOMINGUEZ
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — In the midst of another spirited effort, San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich decided not to yell at the Spurs — and they responded as he hoped.

Danny Green and Tony Parker each had 18 points and San Antonio overcame another listless first half to beat the Portland Trail Blazers 110-94 on Friday night.

“Sometimes I go crazy, sometimes I decide to just sit and let them figure it out,” Popovich said. “It just depends on how I’m feeling, how I think the game might go, or who’s on the court at the time. Tonight, I wanted them to see what was going on for themselves. They did a good job of it.”

The Spurs won their ninth game after trailing by 10-plus points, falling behind by 13 in the first half against the Trail Blazers.

San Antonio forward Kawhi Leonard sat out his second straight game with a stomach virus and Portland point guard Damian Lillard missed his third consecutive game with an injured left ankle.

Even when Leonard has played, the Spurs’ first-half struggles have made things difficult. San Antonio is at a loss to understand why that is.

“I don’t know,” Parker said. “If I knew, I would not do it. No idea.”

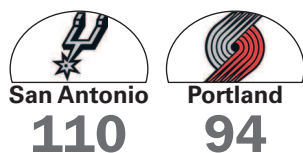
Despite the struggles, the Spurs have won four straight and 13 of 15.

San Antonio had another sluggish first half, trailing by double digits for 12 minutes and falling behind by 13 points midway through the second quarter. Portland forced 14 turnovers and shot 51 percent from the field through two quarters.

“We’ve got to do a better job of coming out with more of an edge to the game,” said Spurs center Pau Gasol, who finished with 10 points and seven rebounds. “Teams know we’ve been having the slow starts and they play with confidence. Then



San Antonio Spurs guard Patty Mills, center, is defended by Portland Trail Blazers’ Evan Turner, front, and Allen Crabbe, rear, during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, in San Antonio. San Antonio won 110-94.



we turn it up and win games, but it’s something we need to keep in mind going forward so that it’s not something that is repetitive or too repetitive.”

C.J. McCollum finished with 29 points for Portland. Maurice Harkless and Allen Crabbe were the only others in double figures, with Harkless finishing with 12, and Crabbe 11.

The Trail Blazers shot 43 percent in the third quarter after shooting 51 percent in the first half.

Spurs reserve Manu Ginobili’s second 3-pointer with 3:49 remaining in the third quarter gave San Antonio a 69-67 lead, its first since holding an 11-8 edge 3 minutes into the game.

San Antonio had seven 3-pointers in the second half to win their seventh straight at home.

LaMarcus Aldridge was held to eight points on 2-for-3 shooting, but Jonathon Simmons added 19 points for the Spurs. Green had six 3-pointers in

scoring a season high.

“Today their strategy obviously was they were not going to let LaMarcus go off,” Parker said. “In the last two games LaMarcus has been scoring a lot and been playing unbelievable. That’s their strategy and other guys stepped up.”

TIP-INS

Trail Blazers: Lillard missed his third straight game after playing in the team’s first 32. He leads the team in scoring with 27.0 points and in assists at 6.2 per game. ... Portland entered Friday allowing 111.5 points per game and 38 percent on 3-pointers, which are both 28th in the league. ... F/C Mason Plumlee had his streak of two straight double-doubles stopped. Plumlee had eight points and five rebounds.

Spurs: Green has 33 games with at least five 3-pointers, the most in franchise history. ... San Antonio finished 2016 at 66-15, its most successful calendar year in franchise history. ... The Spurs are 13-0 when Parker scores in double figures.

UP NEXT

Trail Blazers: At Minnesota on Sunday night.

Spurs: At Atlanta on Sunday night.

Seahawks seek bye, while 49ers head into uncertain offseason

By JOSH DUBOW
AP Sports Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The Seattle Seahawks are stumbling into the playoffs instead of peaking as usual at this time of year.

With three losses in the past five games, the Seahawks (9-5-1) head into Sunday’s season finale at San Francisco (2-13) needing a win and some help in order to secure a first-round bye.

Coach Pete Carroll’s teams usually are at their best down the stretch, winning five straight to end 2012, nine of 11 in 2013, six in a row in 2014 and six of seven last year to surge into the postseason.

“When you lose, you can’t look at what people are writing, you just have to believe in your teammates and believe in the organization and the coaches,” defensive lineman Michael Bennett said. “I think everyone in this organization believes that we can win a Super Bowl and believes that we can win the playoff games. That’s all that really matters. It doesn’t really matter about everything else.”

The 49ers can only wish to have problems like the Seahawks. San Francisco snapped a franchise-record 13-game losing streak by winning 22-21 last week in Los Angeles, and need another win Sunday to avoid tying the franchise record for losses in a season reached in 1978, ‘79 and 2004.

Instead of gearing up for the playoffs, the 49ers are headed into another offseason of uncertainty with questions about the job security of general manager Trent Baalke and coach Chip Kelly, and a roster overhaul expected as the Niners look to rebound.

“You know there’s going to be some kind of change,” Niners left tackle Joe Staley said. “That’s how it is. All you can concern yourself with is doing your job and holding up your end of the bargain.”

Here are some other things to watch:

RUSTY RIVALRY: What was one of the NFL’s most-heated rivalries just a few years ago when Jim Harbaugh had the 49ers going to three straight NFC title games and the Seahawks were also at the

top of the league has lost its luster. The Niners have just 15 wins the past three seasons and have had few games with any meaning.

“I think you do miss that,” Bennett said. “That game was built around the same type of team. A running quarterback, a great defense and it was just a fun game to play in because you had to match the intensity of the other team.”



Seattle Seahawks (9-5-1)



San Francisco 49ers (2-13)

• Sunday, 1:25p.m.
• At San Francisco

RUNNING RAWLS:

Seattle expects running back Thomas Rawls to play after he left last Saturday’s game with a bruised shoulder and did not return in the second half. After two lackluster weeks on the ground, Seattle

would like to get back to the run game it had for most of November and the early part of December when the Seahawks were averaging more than 140 yards per game during that stretch.

Seattle was held to 72 yards rushing two weeks ago by Los Angeles and had just 78 yards last week against Arizona.

KAP’S FINALE: After restructuring his contract earlier this season, San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick can opt to become a free agent after the season. That would make Sunday his final game with San Francisco, capping a career that began with a Super Bowl trip his first season as a starter in 2012. After going to the NFC title game the following year and losing to Seattle, Kaepernick’s career plummeted. He was benched last year and started this year as a backup, getting more notice for his national anthem protest than his play on the field.

“My focus once again is this week and making sure that I’m doing everything I can to prepare and to try to help my teammates prepare this week to get a win, and I think that’s where this whole team’s focus is,” Kaepernick said.

WAGNER’S RECORD: Seattle middle linebacker Bobby Wagner has already set a franchise record for tackles in a single-season with 155. He also leads Sean Lee of Dallas by 10 for the NFL lead in tackles going into the season finale. Wagner said one of his goals before the season was to lead the league in tackles.

“I thought I was around the ball a lot, now I feel like I’m around the

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