

NBA FINALS GAME ONE

Paul leads Suns to 1-0 lead

By Brian Mahoney
AP Basketball Writer

PHOENIX — Chris Paul waited 16 years to get to the NBA Finals, bringing with him a team starving for its first championship. The setting was entirely new.

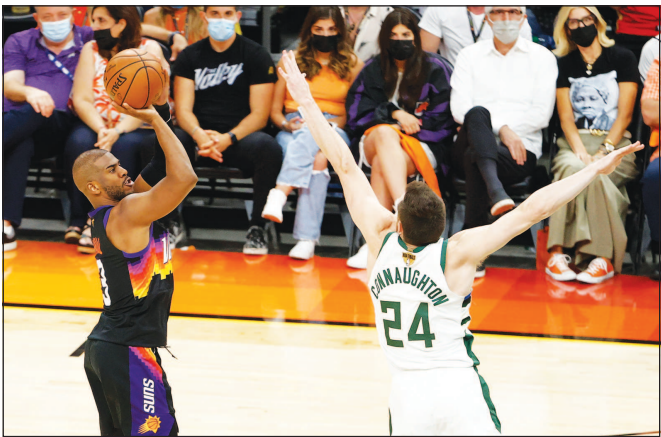
The performance was same ol' Chris Paul.

“Just knew he’s ready,” Phoenix forward Mikal Bridges said. “He’s prepared his whole life for this moment and it shows out there on the court.”

Paul had 32 points and nine assists in an NBA Finals debut that was well worth the wait, Devin Booker scored 27 points and the Suns beat the returning Giannis Antetokounmpo and his Milwaukee Bucks 118-105 on Tuesday night in Game 1.

Paul scored 16 points during a sensational third quarter that had Phoenix fans who waited 28 years to see the NBA Finals again screaming in delight.

“Every time he shoots it we think it’s going in,” Booker said.



Christian Petersen/Getty Images/TNS

The Phoenix Suns’ Chris Paul, left, puts up a shot against the Milwaukee Bucks’ Pat Connaughton (24) during the second half in Game 1 of the NBA Finals at Phoenix Suns Arena on Tuesday, July 6, 2021, in Phoenix.

It almost did in the third quarter, when Paul was 6 for 7 and made all three 3-pointers.

Finally playing for the title in his 16th season, the star point guard has the Suns in the NBA Finals for only the third time, and it sure looked as if they could make this ending different than the other two.

“We’ve been building all season long for these moments,” Paul said. “We’re

going to keep playing. This is just one game. We’ve got to stay locked in.”

Deandre Ayton added 22 points and 19 rebounds to continue his breakout stretch of play in his first postseason.

Antetokounmpo had 20 points and 17 rebounds after missing two games with a hyperextended left knee. Khris Middleton scored 29 points, but the Bucks will have to play from behind again after dropping Game 1

NBA Finals

- GAME ONE, Tuesday, July 6, Phoenix 118, Milwaukee 105
- GAMETWO, Thursday, July 8, Milwaukee at Phoenix, 6 p.m.
- GAMETHREE, Sunday, July 11, Phoenix at Milwaukee, 5 p.m.
- GAME FOUR, Wednesday, July 14, Phoenix at Milwaukee, 6 p.m.

for the third straight series.

The series opener was the first NBA Finals game in Phoenix since Michael Jordan’s Chicago Bulls won their third straight championship here in Game 6 in 1993. The Suns, who came into the NBA with the Bucks in 1968, made their only other finals appearance in 1976.

They hadn’t even made the playoffs since 2010 and just two years ago were last in the Western Conference with a 19-63 record.

BHS riders qualify for national rodeo

By Joanna Mann
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Four Baker High School students excelled at the Oregon state finals rodeo June 9 and qualified to compete at the High School Rodeo Nationals in Lincoln, Nebraska, from July 18-24.

Graduated seniors Maggie Mackenzie and Kylie Siddoway qualified for the girls’ cutting event. Siddoway finished first in state, and Mackenzie was third. Both will compete at the national finals. Siddoway has qualified for the finals three straight years.

“She is really excited to go represent her state and her city,” said Terri Siddoway, Kylie’s mother.

Incoming sophomore Clark Martin and incoming junior Dyson Robb qualified for the boys’ cutting event, although Martin is choosing not to attend Nationals this year. Martin finished second in the state and Robb finished third.

Mackenzie will attend Blue Mountain Community College in the fall, where she will compete in the rodeo for the Pendleton college. Siddoway will attend Texas A&M University, where she plans to study animal science, agriculture business and eventually marketing in graduate school.

“This is pretty much it for me,” Kylie Siddoway said. “They don’t have cutting in college rodeo, so I’m selling my horse this summer.”

Siddoway is excited about being able to compete in the National Finals Rodeo after not be able to go in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We’re all really excited to go,” she said. “But everyone’s pretty nervous.”

The Baker City trio will begin their trip to Nebraska on July 14, as it takes three days to transport their horses.

It’s hard not to root for the Suns to win their first NBA title

We have finally reached the culmination of the NBA season, as the remaining two teams battle it out to cement their legacy. We have two franchises, the Milwaukee Bucks and the Phoenix Suns, both of which have rarely made it this far. The Suns haven’t been in the finals since challenging the Bulls back in 1993, and the Bucks only NBA title was in 1971.

This NBA Finals is a breath of fresh air, as we don’t see the perennial finals contenders. And for me, it’s easy to decide who to rally behind if you aren’t a loyal fan to either team.

It’s been way too fun to watch the Phoenix Suns reach this point.



COREY KIRK

No discredit to the Bucks, but since 2016, behind their mega star Giannis Antetokounmpo, they have been perennial deep threats. The Suns, by contrast, have risen from the depths of the Western Conference cellar in 2019, when emerged from the NBA bubble in 2020 winning all eight of their games.

Though they weren’t able to make any noise in last year’s playoffs, they

continued their momentum in the offseason, trading for arguably the most underrated point guard of this millennium.

Hey Phoenix, let’s introduce you to Chris Paul.

Paul, a 16-year veteran, has been a frequent All-Star point guard. Wherever he has gone in the league, his impact on the respective team has always been felt. He carried the Hornets, turned the Clippers into Lob City, formed a scary pairing with James Harden in Houston and showed the potential of Oklahoma City.

Paul coming to the Suns was a mutually beneficial acquisition for

both sides — finding the last piece of this longstanding rebuilding puzzle.

To say the Suns are young is an understatement. Their star, Devin Booker, is just 24. Their big man, Deandre Ayton, is only in his third year of the league. Mikal Bridges, who made waves during his times at Villanova, is arguably one of the best wing defenders in the league.

Also, the most compelling coach in the league is easily Suns head coach Monty Williams. In two years he has improved Phoenix’s record from 19-63 to 51-21. After losing the love of his life, Ingrid,

back in 2016, how can you not root to see him be successful?

Now with already one win in the bag, having defeated the Bucks in game one on Tuesday, July 6, the Suns are just three wins away from their first NBA championship. Through the cementing of the legacy of CP3, the rise of two stars in Ayton and Booker, with Monty Williams calling the shots, it’s been entertaining to watch their season progress, and I hope to see them hoisting the Larry O’Brien Trophy over their heads.

Corey Kirk is sports editor for the Baker City Herald.

U.S. sprinter Richardson won’t compete in Olympics

By Eddie Pells and Pat Graham
AP Sports Writers

Banned sprinter Sha’Carri Richardson was not on the Olympic roster released Tuesday by USA Track and Field, a decision that means the American champion’s positive test for marijuana will cost her a chance at running on the relay team in Tokyo, in addition to her spot in the 100-meter individual race.

Richardson’s positive test nullified her win at Olympic trials in Eugene last month and the spot that went with it for Tokyo in the 100. Her 30-day suspension will end before the start of the relays on Aug. 5, which left open the possibility she could win a medal as part of the 4x100 relay team.

But her name was missing from the 130-person roster USATF sent out. The federation had two discretionary picks beyond the top four finishers in the 100-meter final at trials but chose not to offer a spot to the 21-year-old sprinter, who was expected to challenge for Olympic gold.

Asked about how Richardson was taking the news, her agent, Renaldo Nehemiah, re-

sponded: “We haven’t spoken about it at all. It was actually not a topic we focused on.”

In a statement, USATF said it was “incredibly sympathetic toward Sha’Carri Richardson’s extenuating circumstances” and “fully agrees” that international rules regarding marijuana should be reevaluated.

“So while our heartfelt understanding lies with Sha’Carri, we must also maintain fairness for all of the athletes who attempted to realize their dreams by securing a place on the U.S. Olympic Track & Field Team,” the statement read.

In this case, that meant offering the remaining relay spots to the sixth- and seventh-place finishers, each of whom moved up in the pecking order after Richardson’s DQ. They are English Gardner and Aleia Hobbs.

Richardson tested positive for a chemical found in marijuana after her victory on June 19. She said the stress of her biological mother’s recent death combined with the pressure of preparing for trials led her to use the drug.



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