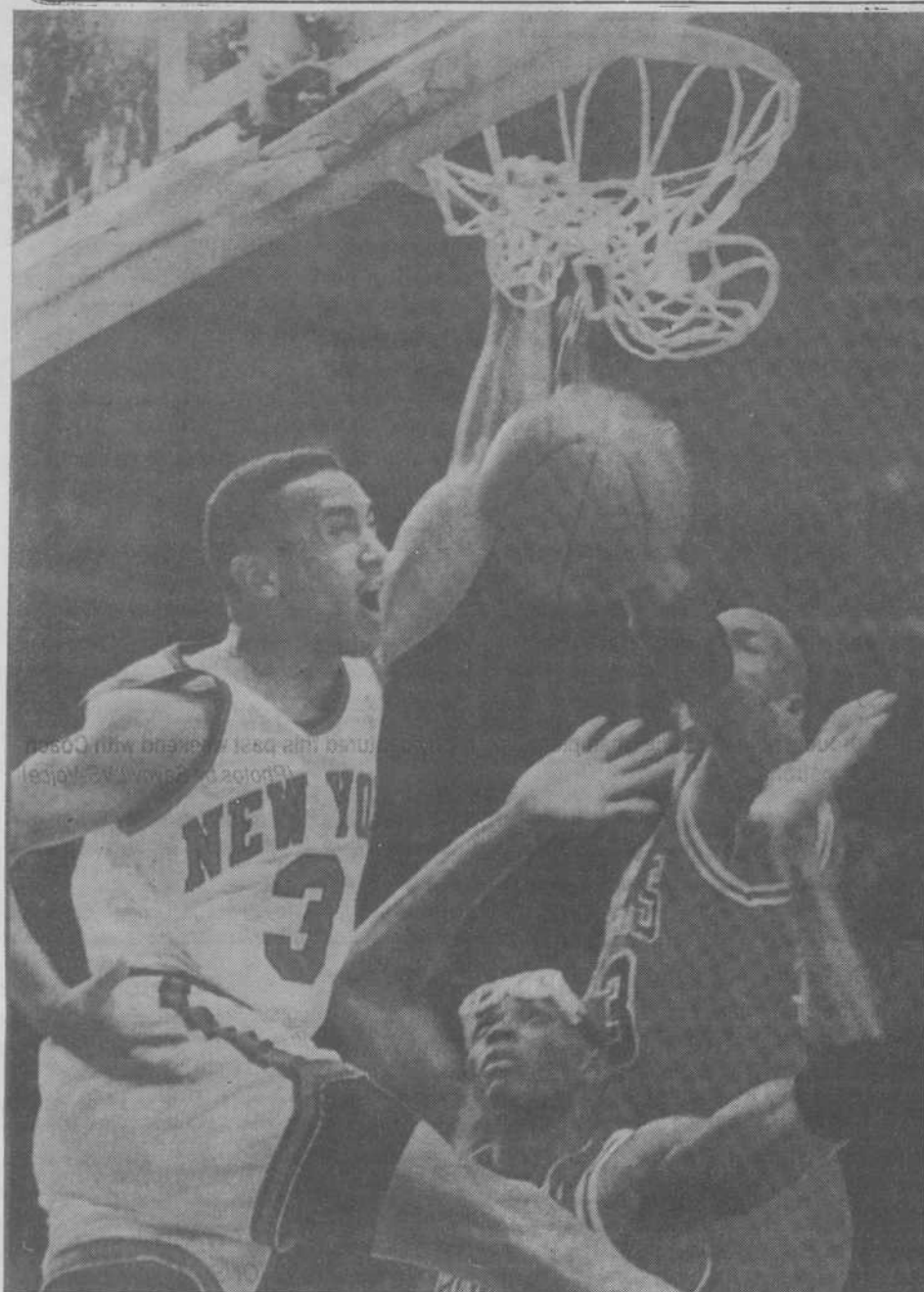




SPORTS

Phil Velasquez/AP

KNICKS TOPPLE BULLS TWICE

By W.G. Ramirez

After winning seven straight playoff games, 10 dating back to last season's NBA Finals, the Chicago Bulls looked as if they'd try to escape The Big Apple unscathed. A certain New York Knicks guard had other plans for the defending world champions though.

John Starks and the Knicks squared off with Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls this past week, in what hopes to be an exciting best-of-seven Eastern Conference Finals.

Behind center Patrick Ewing's 25 points and 17 rebounds on Sunday, the Knicks had captured Game 1 heading into Tuesday's matchup at Madison Square Garden, for Game 2. The series has been hyped as a big defensive battle, yet as far as the sports books go, the over has been the play both times.

Odds makers opened the

"I don't remember him when he was in the CBA and I don't remember him when he first came into the league, but I know who he is now," said Michael Jordan of John Starks

With :47 seconds left in Game 2, Starks made sure Jordan knew who he was, dunking over "His Airmess," and Horace Grant.

Knicks as a 2-point favorite for Tuesday night, but bettors quickly moved the number down to 1 or Pk'em. By game time the Continental Hotel had the Bulls as a 1-point favorite. Consequently, N.Y. bettors were the only ones cashing in, following the Knicks' 96-91 victory.

Game 2 seemed more like a pick-up game in the streets of New York rather than the spotlight of the Garden. It featured five technical fouls, one flagrant foul and the ejections of Chicago's Scottie Pippen, then New York's Greg Anthony.

The post-game press conference was filled with tension as Chicago Head Coach Phil Jackson more-or-less complained of the rough-style play that New York demonstrated against his Bulls.

"...they're not going to play that style in Chicago," he said, "I think it makes anybody angry who likes basketball. It's not a wrestling match."

The physical style of play didn't bother the Knicks much, especially Starks. "Physical play?" He said. "I haven't felt it yet."

Following halftime, which was deadlocked 49-49, the Knicks put the clamps on Chicago, using a 22-8 run, to take a 71-57 lead.

With about seven minutes remaining, Pippen's ejection

came about. Upset over a call that referee Bill Oakes made, Pippen argued the call while holding the ball too long. As Pippen turned and walked away, he caught Oakes in the chin with a strong pass instead of handing or just dropping the ball. Following the ejection, New York continued to harass the Bulls.

After New York's third quarter run, the Bulls looked like the pre-championship team they used to be, having to turn to only Jordan for the victory. MJ ended up with 36 points, but it wasn't enough; and neither was his supporting cast.

Anthony's ejection came after a good-hard foul on "His Airmess," was ruled flagrant. Jordan drove to the left side of the basket when Anthony met him underneath. It seemed that MJ had turned his back when the former Rancho High and UNLV star came at him. Anthony put the heat on MJ, Knicks-style, and the refs thought it was too much for Mike. Anthony argued the call and was tossed out of the game. At the post-game conference, Jordan stated that there will be a time when he would see Anthony off the court, so-on-and-so-forth. *Poor Michael couldn't hack it.*

The series continues Saturday afternoon in Chicago Stadium at 12:30 p.m. where the battle continues.

ALL EVEN IN THE WEST

By W.G. Ramirez

Following a pre-game ceremony for the 1993 NBA MVP Charles Barkley, the Phoenix Suns and Seattle SuperSonics put on quite a show for 19,023 Suns fans at the America West Arena.

The crowd was pleased for most of the game as their Suns, who held a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven series, also maintained a six point lead throughout the game. Phoenix crept past Seattle in the first quarter opening up a 24-18 lead. The next two quarters saw both teams put up identical numbers, each scoring 30 and 22 points in the second and third periods respectively.

The Sonics were paced by veteran guard Ricky Pierce, who led all scorers with 34 points, hitting 13-20 from the field and 7-8 from the free throw line. Sam Perkins added 19 points (5-18 FG, 6-6 FT) and Shawn Kemp contributed 16 points (5-5 FG 6-8 FT).

The Suns were sparked by Dan Majerle who had 29 points (10-18 FG, 5-9 FT) and Barkley with 24 points (9-19 FG, 6-8 FT). Both Majerle and Barkley led all players with 10 rebounds. Barkley also dished out six assists.

Taking their six point lead into the final period Tuesday evening, Phoenix found out quickly that

the Sonics weren't all that "green." Seattle's spirit withstood the home crowd and the Suns' tenacious defense as they crept closer and closer to the lead.

With :15 seconds remaining in the contest, Seattle put the ball into play and eventually Perkins' hand.

The seasoned veteran, who has had plenty of playoff experience, spending 7-1/2 years with the L.A. Lakers, fired a shot directly at the basket and canned a trey to push Seattle past the Suns 101-99; with now 9.7 seconds left.

Phoenix' one last chance ended with Barkley committing a foul and the Sonics going on to take Game 2 103-99. The series is now tied 1-1, and heads to Seattle with Game 3 scheduled for Friday night.

In the conference semi-finals against Houston, the Sonics won every home game en route to their 4-3 series win. If Seattle can duplicate their home performances, Phoenix would have to come home, down 3-games-to-1, for Game 5. The Suns would then have to win that, and still come back to Seattle, for Game 6, and hope to tie the series 3-3. The way these two teams are playing though, it looks like a potential seven-game series.

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