

PHOENIX

REGULAR SEASON RECORD: 62-20, 1st in Pacific Division.

PLAYOFF RECORD: 11-7

TOP SCORERS: Charles Barkley, 25.6 ppg (5th in NBA); Dan Majerle, 16.9; Kevin Johnson, 16.1; Richard Dumas, 15.8

TOP REBOUNDERS: Barkley, 12.2 (6th in NBA); Mark West, 5.6

TOP PLAYMAKERS: Johnson, 7.8; Barkley, 5.1

He said it would take a trade. He said it would take one team that needed that extra spark, that "goto guy." So while preparing to dominate the nation with the Dream Team last summer, the Philadelphia 76ers dealt Charles Barkley to the Phoenix Suns, and he has definitely responded.

Sir Charles is at the furthest point in the season that he has ever been - The NBA Finals. Now he is ready to clash with his good friend, Chicago Bulls' superstar Michael Jordan.

Phoenix, which won an NBA-high 62 games in 1992-93 and has won 11 of 18 games in the 1993 Playoffs, downed Seattle in seven games in the West finals. NBA MVP Barkley led the way against the SuperSonics, averaging 25.6 ppg (scoring over 40 points in two of the four wins) and 13.9 rpg.

"I came to Phoenix for one reason, and it wasn't just to get to the Finals," said Barkley. "I believed all year that we were going to win the championship. I'm glad we're playing Chicago because they're the best team."

Phoenix, long a Western Conference power, is making only the team's second trip to the NBA Finals in franchise history. The Suns played Boston in the 1976 championship series, eventually losing in six games. Game 5 of that series, won by Boston 128-126 at Boston Garden in triple-overtime, is considered one of the greatest in Finals history.

Barkley's determination should give Phoenix a big boost against Jordan and the Bulls. "If we don't win the NBA championship, I will be crushed," added Sir Charles.

MATCHUPS BY POSITION

POWER FORWARD

Charles Barkley v. Horace Grant

Sir Charles may find himself in trouble with Grant standing five inches taller. Grant should be able to hang tough with Barkley, who is usually able to bully past small forwards and streak past power forwards. Arguably the quickest power forward in the game, Grant's defense on Barkley will be key for Chicago. The Bulls will miss him on double-team situations though, as he won't be able to leave Sir Charles alone. Horace tends to spark the supporting cast, and kick the offense into gear, when you-know-who is cold for Chicago. Barkley's menacing defense could play a factor in the Bulls giving the ball to Grant a lot less. Barkley's overall intimidating play could eventually take its toll on Horace. **EDGE: Barkley**

SMALL FORWARD

Richard Dumas v. Scottie Pippen

Scottie Pippen will be instrumental in the Bulls quest for #3. No one on Phoenix's whole squad will be able to control Pippen, since they'll be trying to figure out what to do with MJ first. The one thing that has yet to plague Chicago in their 1993 Playoff campaign, is finding Pippen to be cold, even when MJ is off. Pippen's penetrating offense will be essential. Dumas could get lost in the midst of the intensity level that this series will reach. His low scoring average means Phoenix won't have too worry about depending on his offensive output. Due to the loss of Cedric Ceballos, he will be depended on to focus in completely on Pippen. **EDGE: Pippen**

POINT GUARD

Kevin Johnson v. B.J. Armstrong

KJ will finally be able to prove that he is a great point guard, whom is valuable to his team. His inspirational play and emotional energy keeps the Suns in the game. BJ, on the other hand, must put his quickness in effect, enabling him to get open shots. He won't take many shots, but he'll make the ones that he puts up. Both are good solid defenders, but KJ's ability to stay low on his opponents could frustrate BJ, getting the ball swiped more than a few times. **EDGE: Johnson**

SHOOTING GUARD

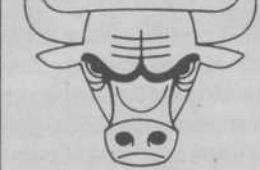
Dan Majerle v. Michael Jordan

This matchup alone will see more three pointers than the rest of the players. Majerle is an excellent defender, but the kid with the tongue can shoot with both hands in his face. In one game, Jordan nailed six against New York; Against Seattle in one game, Majerle had eight.

While trying to figure out how to guard MJ, Majerle will lose concentration on popping the J. If Michael loses his touch on

The LAS VEGAS SENTINEL-VOICE

CHICAGO
BULLS



The 1993 NBA Finals

Game 1, Wednesday

Chicago 100 Phoenix 92

Game 2, Friday

Chicago at Phoenix, 6 p.m.

Game 3, Sunday

Phoenix at Chicago, 4 p.m.

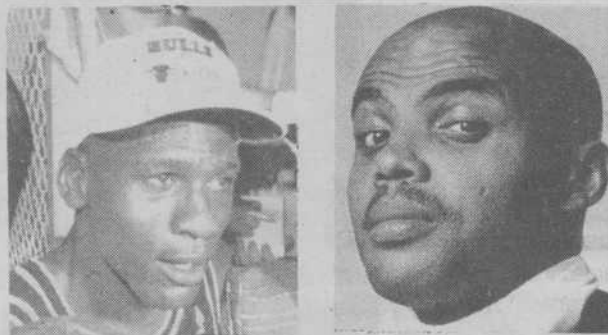
Game 4, June 16

Phoenix at Chicago, 6 p.m.

Game 5, June 18 (if nec.)

Phoenix at Chicago, 6 p.m.

Chicago leads the series 1-0



offense, his assist game will just pick up, and so will his defensive tenacity against Majerle. **EDGE: Jordan**

CENTER

Mark West v. Bill Cartwright

Cartwright will be keying on keeping West away from the basket throughout the series. West does not pose any threat to Chicago scoring-wise, but can be helpful to Phoenix defensively. He may surprise the Bulls by pulling down the occasional offensive board but still will have trouble inside. Cartwright could find himself in foul trouble against the smaller opponents, but can be productive offensively. Every so often, a scoring burst from Cartwright may prove beneficial. Phoenix might want to look into giving Oliver Miller more playing time. **EDGE: Cartwright**

COACHES

Paul Westphal v. Phil Jackson

Jackson holds the highest winning percentage (.750), in the playoffs, among all NBA coaches. He is 51-17 in four years as Chicago's coach. He may have the greatest ever wearing #23 for his team, but he needs to go ahead and take a lot of the credit for the Bulls' success. His knowledge and precise adjustments are what keep Chicago winning. Westphal may be to personable with his team at this stage of the game. The confidence he has in his team tends to let them do what they want. He needs more discipline in the NBA Finals, and when his team needs it most, he may get lost. **EDGE: Jackson**

June 10, 1993

CHICAGO

REGULAR SEASON RECORD: 57-25, 1st in Central Division.

PLAYOFF RECORD: 11-2

TOP SCORERS: Michael Jordan, 32.6 ppg (1st in NBA); Scottie Pippen, 18.6; Horace Grant, 13.2; B.J. Armstrong, 12.3

TOP REBOUNDERS: Grant, 9.5; Pippen, 7.7

TOP PLAYMAKERS: Pippen, 6.3; Jordan, 5.5

If there is anyone possible of carrying a team to three straight NBA titles, Michael Jordan is the man. With help from His Airness and the supporting cast of Airees, the Bulls hope to become only the first NBA team (and only third overall) to capture three straight league titles since the Celtics' run from 1959-66.

The Bulls will have to get by a team that has been transformed into a rough and tumble offensive machine, since acquiring the Round Mound Of Rebound - Charles Barkley, the Phoenix Suns.

Chicago, 11-2 in the '93 postseason, earned its third straight NBA Finals berth by downing top-seeded New York in six games in the Eastern Conference Finals, becoming the fifth team to overcome an 0-2 deficit in a best-of-7 Playoff series.

What the Knicks didn't realize after Game 2, was that Jordan wasn't through with the postseason just yet. The series returned to Chicago Stadium where the Bulls crushed New York 103-83 and 105-95. With everyone expecting New York to respond in Game 5, it was the Bulls that came into Madison Square Garden to take the 3-2 advantage with Game 6 heading back to Chicago. With only one more team in their way, the Bulls are charging full steam ahead.

Scottie Pippen, who averaged 22.5 ppg and 6.7 rpg to solidly support Jordan's averages of 32.2 ppg and 7.0 apg in the series over the Knicks, feels the Bulls are ready to win a third championship. "We can't look back," he said, "we have two rings and we're looking to achieve another."

HERE'S HOW THEY SEE IT

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JIMMY SPATS LOOKS AT SERIES IN DEPTH

By W.G. Ramirez

When postseason play gets down to championship time, not only does the matchup itself separate the men from boys, but it also gives sports analysts across the country a chance to show their stuff and prove their knowledge is worthy.

Local Sports Analyst Jimmy Spats tends to become untouchable when it comes to crunch time in the playoffs, and happens to like what he sees in this year's NBA Finals.

"First off, I think Phoenix will play better than most people think," says Spats. "The injury to (Cedric) Ceballos obviously hurts Phoenix, meaning (Tom) Chambers will have to play his best basketball off the bench.

"Chicago must have a strong supporting cast," added Spats. "There is no way Michael Jordan can beat Phoenix single-handedly. No one will stop him or Charles Barkley, but both teams will have to step up their game.

"Coach wise they're in trouble. I really don't think much of (Paul) Westphal.

"The problem Phoenix will have, is controlling Scottie Pippen. In order for the Suns to win this series, they'll have to win one in Phoenix and steal one in Chicago. If they manage to do both, they'll have a legitimate shot."

Spats' service has had an incredible first half of the year in 1993, dominating the NCAA Basketball Tournament, maintaining a winning record during the current baseball season, and consistently hitting NBA Playoff sides and totals.



This week's Sports Pages are dedicated to the memory of Drazen Petrovic 1964-1993