

# Sports



## Malone, Rockets avenge 'Bird talk' in 106-104 win

United Press International BOSTON — The Houston Rockets believe in the adage, "If at first you don't succeed, try again."

The Rockets returned to the Boston Garden Wednesday night for the first time since their loss to the Boston Celtics in the NBA finals and grabbed a 106-104 victory from the defending champs.

The main force in the Houston win was center Moses Malone, who netted a game-high 37 points while grabbing 11 rebounds. The triumph had a particular sweetness for the 6-10 center. In a post playoff public celebration last May, Boston's Larry Bird inferred that Malone had strange dietary habits which became the thrust of a tasteless entrepreneur who sold T-shirts bearing that infamous quote outside Boston Garden prior to Wednesday's game.

"It's always nice to come to Boston to play," said Malone, "and it's nicer when you win. The Celtics are the world champs and a classy team. Bird should have more class than he did, but he'll grow up in three or four years. Right now he's eating crow and there are a lot of ignorant people who will have to go home with Moses on their chests."

Motivation aside, the Rockets still had to overcome a 64-49 third-quarter deficit and it was Malone who did the lion's share of the work, scoring 14 points in each of the final two quarters. He was aided by newcomer Elvin Hayes, who scored seven of his 18 points in the second half.

"We felt that in the third period we had to make their defense work. They had their big men in foul trouble and we wanted to work on them, so it was up to me and Elvin and fortunately we were able to do the job," Malone said.

For his part, Hayes felt reborn with his new team. "It's a great feeling to be wanted and be back in Houston where it all started for me in college," said the 13-year veteran who was acquired from Washington in the off-season. "I

realize that I can't carry a team with 27 points and 15 rebounds a game any more. But the team can utilize my abilities and I can fulfill a role."

The role for Hayes was being the man with the ball at the end of a close game. He responded with two key jumpers in the final two minutes.

"It's great having the ball at the end," he said. "I've always wanted

the ball in those situations and I was glad it came to me."

The loss was the Celtics' second this season and the first one in front of their home crowd, but it snapped an eight-game winning streak.

Boston coach Bill Fitch said his players took the loss hard. "I was worried about how the team would take it," said Fitch. "You could have cut the bitterness with

a knife. We've lost two ball games and if they had doubleheader, I hate to face us right now. We had to do was change jerseys."

"There's no hook in here. Hang losses on. They beat us. At time we beat them, we got credit and they got the blame. They beat us tonight and they made it hurt because it looked like we had the game under control."

## Padres hope Williams can reverse recent SD trend

United Press International SAN DIEGO — Dick Williams, the guiding force behind the resurgence of the Boston Red Sox and Montreal Expos, has been asked to perform another sudden turnaround.

Williams, 52, fired Sept. 7 as manager of the Expos, agreed to a 3-year contract with the lowly San Diego Padres Wednesday. The contract calls for an annual salary of \$150,000.

Williams became manager of the Expos in 1977 after Montreal lost 107 games the previous season. He guided Montreal to 20 more victories in 1977 than in 1976 and by the third year the team was a contender in the National League East. This season the Expos came within a game of going to the World Series.

In Williams, the Padres get a manager with 14 years of experience in the major leagues. Before taking the Montreal job, he managed at Boston, Oakland and California, winning two World Series at Oakland and a surprising American League pennant at Boston in 1967.

"The situation here is similar to what I found when I went to Montreal," Williams said. "The Padres have an abundance of good young players that need to develop. I did some research on San Diego's

minor league talent and I'm impressed by what I see. I know the organization is going in the right direction by developing our own talent. And we will start developing a winning habit the first day of spring training."

Williams said he would institute a return to fundamentals for the young Padres and would make the game as simple as possible.

"It means execution of fundamentals and using the statistics in a way to help the team execute," he said. "Come down and watch us this spring. If it takes walking every player to home plate and saying, 'This is home plate,' then we'll explain it that way. We'll give them the ABCs of baseball if we have to."

Padres President Ballard Smith said the team has a proven winner in Williams.

"We want to have a man who had two qualities — one, major league experience, and two, a proven winner," said Smith. "That's what we think we have." As recently as two weeks ago, Williams said from his home in Tampa, Fla., that he was ready to "hang it up" because no club seemed particularly interested in naming him manager.

He also said that if a club did offer him a managerial job, he would insist on a multi-year con-

tract. He had only a one-year pact with the Expos when they let him go.

Williams, who had been reported in line for the New York Yankee managership, said he was not offered that job when he met "socially" with Yankee owner George Steinbrenner at the Denver-Tampa Bay football game last Sunday in Florida.

After being fired by the Expos, Williams toured the country for speaking engagements while also appearing in television commercials and playing golf.

In 1973, he signed a three-year contract with Steinbrenner after resigning as Oakland A's manager. But Charlie Finley, then owner of the A's, said Williams had two years to go on his Oakland contract and sought an injunction to keep the Yankees from hiring him.

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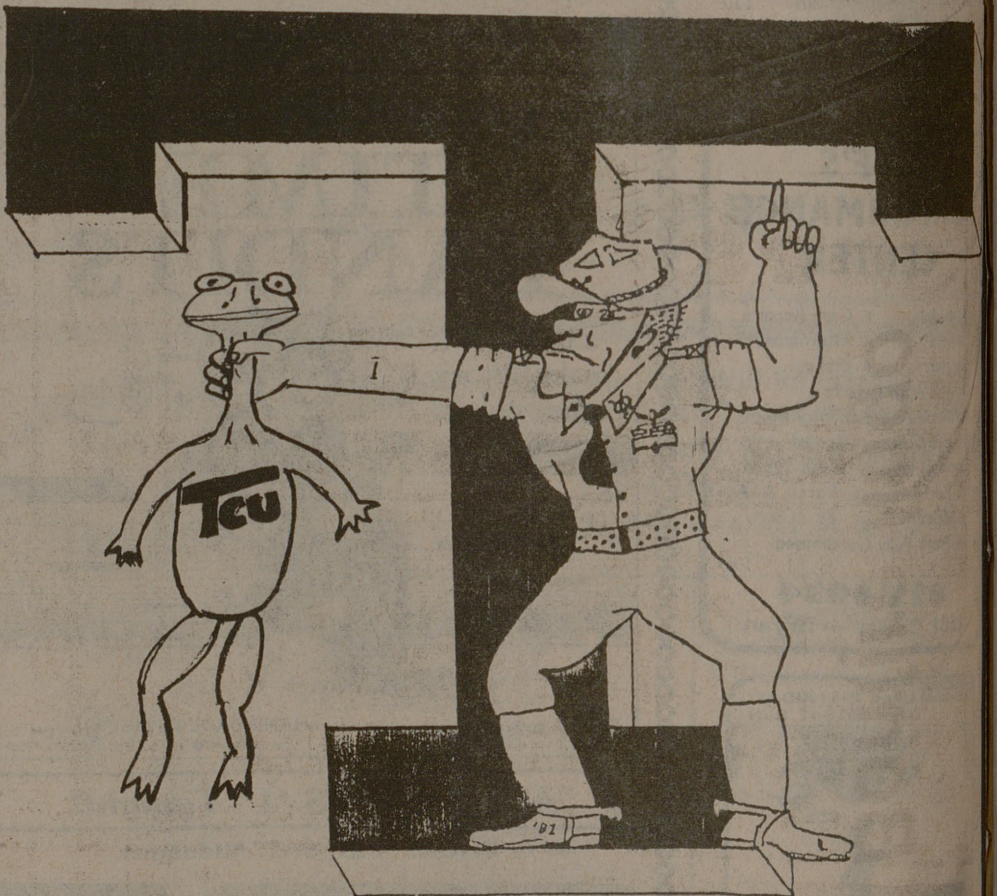
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