

**TANK McNAMARA**

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



**Nuggets rock Spurs; win series**

**Associated Press**  
DENVER — Alex English rattled in 33 points and Calvin Natt added 20 and an aggressive Denver defense cooled off hot-shooting San Antonio 126-99 Sunday night in the deciding game of their NBA first-round playoff series.

The Nuggets, who won the series 3-2, advance to the Western Conference semifinals against Utah, which defeated Houston 104-97 on Sunday to clinch that first-round series. The Utah-Denver best-of-seven series begins Tuesday night in Denver.

English had 29 points after three quarters as Denver cruised to a 97-69 lead entering the final period. San Antonio had come into the game shooting 56 percent from the floor for the series — a playoff-record pace — but the Spurs managed to connect on only 17 of 51 field goal attempts in the first three quarters.

Denver got three straight fast-break baskets to jump out to a 13-8 lead en route to a 31-24 first-quarter advantage. The Nuggets outscored San Antonio 23-6 over the last six minutes of the half for a 65-45 margin at the intermission.

T.R. Dunn's jumper from the corner gave Denver its biggest lead, 29 points, midway through the third quarter, and the Spurs got no closer than 22 points after that.

Guard Mike Evans came off the bench to score 16 points for the winners.

The Spurs were led by Artis Gilmore with 19 points and Mike Mitchell with 16.

**Jazz swing by Rockets**

**Associated Press**

HOUSTON — Utah lost its "swatter" but still had its "whopper," and that was enough to help the Jazz beat Houston 104-97 Sunday in the deciding game of their first-round NBA playoff series.

Utah's 7-foot-4 swatter Mark Eaton, who set an NBA record of 456 blocked shots this season, left the game with a knee injury shortly before the half and did not return.

But Billy "Whopper" Paultz, appearing in the NBA playoffs for the 5th consecutive year, led the shock troops off the bench to fill the void.

"It just shows what emotion and intensity can do," said Paultz, who led cheers during Utah's fourth quarter surge. "This just shows you the depth of the Jazz team."

"We played with great emotion down the stretch and it took them out of their pattern."

Paultz, Fred Roberts, Rich Kelley and John Stockton all came off the bench to contribute to Utah's winning rally.

Utah Coach Frank Layden praised Paultz's contribution to the comeback.

"I kept him because he's smart, he's huge, he has playoff experience and, believe me gentlemen, he earned his money today," Layden said.

Paultz also survived a fourth-quarter punch by Houston's Akeem Olajuwon.

"He didn't hit that hard," Paultz said. "Either he can't punch or I can really take a punch."

Houston forward Ralph Sampson said, "We let them come to life in the fourth quarter. We should have buried them early in the fourth quarter. We let them have the fast breaks and we didn't get a lot of shots."

The Jazz won the best of five series 3-2 and will meet the winner of Sunday night's game between San Antonio and Denver in a best of seven, second-round playoff.

Eaton, the heart of the Jazz defense this season, fell to the floor with 1:23 left in the half with a hyperextended knee and did not return for the second half.

Olajuwon scored 22 of his game-high 32 points in the second half but Bailey, held to five first-half points, hit 15 of his 20 points in the decisive fourth quarter to nullify Olajuwon's efforts.

Dantley led the Jazz with 25 points and Sampson added 23 for the Rockets.

Defensive efforts by Utah's Paultz and Kelley made up for the loss of Eaton.

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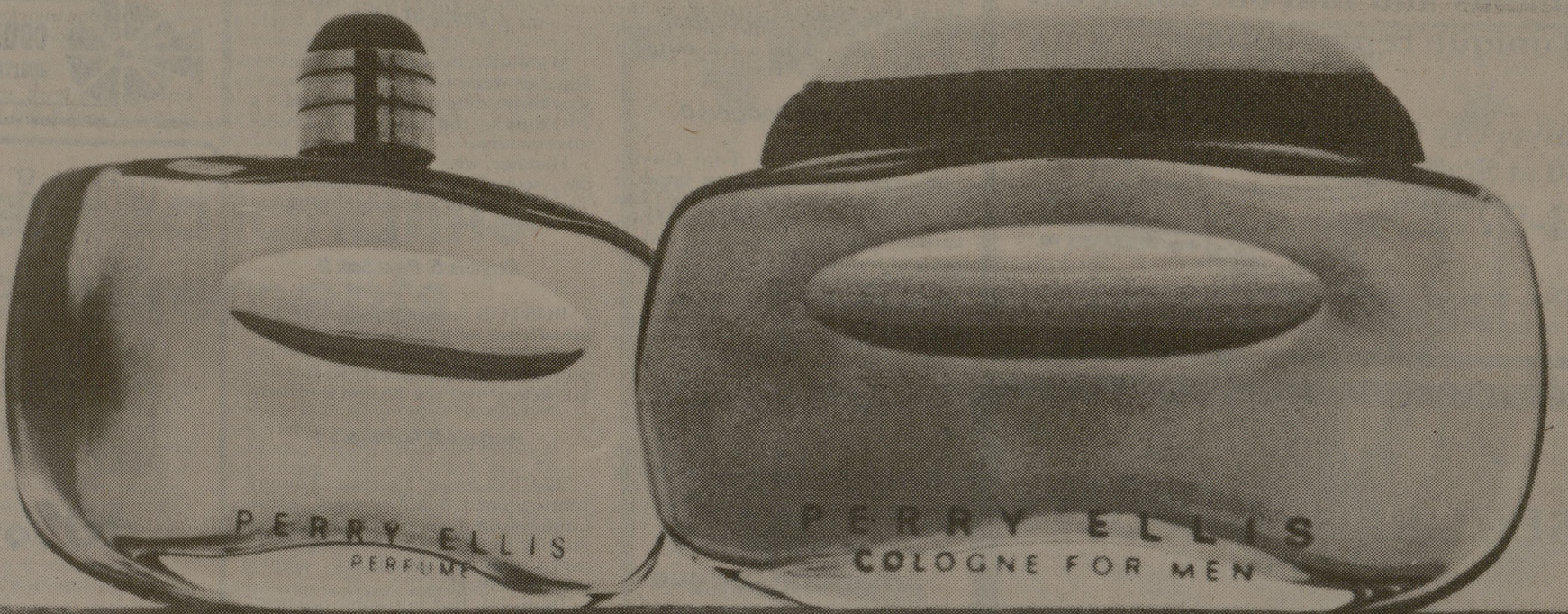
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