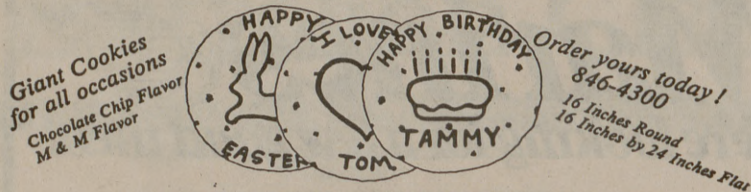


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Leafs force 7th game with 5-3 win

NHL Playoffs
TORONTO (AP) — Walt Poddubny scored the winning goal with 7:35 remaining and Dan Daoust scored into an empty net with 44 seconds left as the Toronto Maple Leafs defeated the St. Louis Blues 5-3 Monday night to force a decisive seventh game in the NHL's Norris Division finals.

Game 7 will be played on Wednesday night in St. Louis.

Steve Thomas was Toronto's scoring leader, scoring twice and setting up Tom Fergus for another. Doug Gilmour scored twice and Mark Hunter once for the Blues.

Poddubny zipped past his check, Gino Cavallini, to take a pass from Miroslav Frycer, stickhandle past goalie Greg Millen and slide the puck into the open net as he fell to the ice.

Toronto outshot St. Louis 30-24.

Oilers 5, Flames 2

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Glenn Anderson's third-period goal gave the Edmonton Oilers a come-from-behind 5-2 victory over the Calgary Flames Monday night to tie the best-of-seven series at 3-3 and keep alive their hopes for a third straight Stanley Cup championship.

Calgary had a 2-0 lead in the second period but couldn't bury the resilient Oilers. Game 7 will be played in Edmonton on Wednesday night.

The Oilers put the game away when Mike Krushelnyski scored into an empty net with 22 seconds left and Craig MacTavish closed out the scoring.

The Oilers, who had trailed 1-0, 2-1 and 3-2 in games, once again used a strong third-period to prolong the series.

They fought back to tie the game 2-2 in the second and then dominated most of the third.

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hind



Fans enjoying upstart Rangers' NHL success

NEW YORK (AP) — The sound was awesome — thunderous cheers raining down upon the New York Rangers. "It was an intense, deafening feeling out there," goalie John Vanbiesbrouck said later. "I've been in rock concerts and I've never heard noise like that."

The fans, 17,367 of them in Madison Square Garden, had been standing, clapping, screaming and gasping as the upstart Rangers clung in the closing minutes to a 2-1 lead against the favored Washington Capitals in their NHL playoff game Sunday night.

The fans had seen leads and dreams evaporate for years. The last time the Rangers won a Stanley Cup was 1940. To make matters worse, on Long Island, the New York Islanders had won four Cups in succession at the start of the decade, and their fans' disdain for their urban neighbors had been summed up in the derisive cheer: "Nineteen-forty!"

Now, as the final seconds evaporated, the Capitals scrambling in vain in their own zone for possession of the puck, the decibel level increased yet again. On the other end of the rink, Vanbiesbrouck raised his fists. "It sounded like the building was coming apart," he said.

When the final buzzer sounded and New York won the best-of-seven series, four games to two, the crowd continued to cheer — some cried — as the Rangers celebrated on the ice, as they swarmed all over Vanbiesbrouck, as the diminutive goalie swatted the air in triumph as he left the ice, as the Garden lights dimmed, as the announcer intoned: "Thank you for coming and drive home safely."

The Rangers still are two series — eight victories —

away from winning the Stanley Cup. But who expected them to get this far?

To win the Patrick Division after barely making playoffs with a fourth-place finish and a 36-38-6 record, the Rangers beat first-place Philadelphia and then the second-place Caps. During the season, the Rangers finished 32 points behind Philadelphia, 29 behind Washington.

Next, the Rangers will face the winner of the best-of-seven Adams Division final between Hartford and Montreal, tied 3-3 with the deciding game Thursday night.

"The Rangers have the advantage," Washington defenseman Rod Langway said. "They've beaten two of the better teams. They play their system, and they play to their potential."

If they play the Canadiens, it will be New York's first playoff series against them since 1979, when the Rangers reached the finals, only to lose in five games.

Those Rangers were almost as improbable contenders as these, finishing third in the division, then riding the heroics of a hot goalie farther than anyone thought possible.

Then it was John Davidson. Now it is the 5-foot-6 Vanbiesbrouck. "Beezer! Beezer!" the fans chanted when he stopped the Caps time after time Sunday night.

"We felt all along John Vanbiesbrouck would win game in each series. He almost out-and-out won the whole one," Rangers assistant coach Reg Oigis said. "That's what we didn't get," Capitals Coach Bryan Murray said. "Our goalie didn't win his game."

Mavs, Hawks look to stamina for wins

The Atlanta Hawks and Dallas Mavericks, with more time to prepare for their next games in the NBA playoffs, hope their chances and stamina will improve.

The Hawks and the Mavericks went into second-round playoff openers Sunday with only a travel day separating them from the end of their first-round series Friday night. The lack of preparation showed as Atlanta lost to Boston 103-91 and Dallas fell 130-116 to the defending champion Los Angeles Lakers.

The Hawks get another chance at Boston tonight, while Dallas is at Los Angeles in Wednesday's only game. Philadelphia is at Milwaukee for their second-round opener tonight, and Houston has a 1-0 lead over Denver as the Rockets entertain the Nuggets tonight.

The Celtics, 67-15 during the regular season, outscored Atlanta 34-17 to take a 23-point lead after three quarters of their opener.

"I'd like to give credit to Boston more than blaming it on fatigue," Atlanta Coach Mike Fratello said. "But legs do have something to do with running, with leaping, with being a step slow, with not being able to anticipate a step ahead."

Atlanta needed two overtime periods to win the final game of its first-round series with Detroit Friday night. The Hawks went into Boston Garden Sunday and found out that the Celtics, who hadn't played for five days, were more than ready for

Spurs fire Fitzsimmons

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Cotton Fitzsimmons was fired Monday as coach of the San Antonio Spurs by owner Angelo Drossos, who said the NBA team needs "a new situation, a new coach, a new start."

Fitzsimmons coached the Spurs for two seasons, compiling a 76-88 record and directing the team to the first round of the playoffs each year.

The Spurs were recently eliminated from the playoffs by the Los Angeles Lakers in three straight games.

"We felt it would be the appropriate thing to do right now, to make a change in our coaching staff for the coming season," Drossos said. "We did it quickly because the Spurs need to get

started with our planning for next year."

The decision to fire Fitzsimmons was made because "in San Antonio we need a new situation, a new coach, a new start," Drossos said.

The owner said he had no definite candidate in mind for the job but hoped to have a replacement before the NBA draft in June. Drossos refused to comment on the settlement reached with Fitzsimmons concerning the remaining year on his three-year contract with the Spurs.

"Cotton is a professional coach and had been coaching 15 years," Drossos said. "He just didn't win. I feel he will land another coaching job somewhere else and I wouldn't be surprised if he's successful somewhere else."

Dallas Coach Dick Motta was far more outspoken in his criticism of the lack of preparation time for the Lakers.

"I object to the system — finishing on Friday, traveling on Saturday, and playing on Sunday," Motta said. "It definitely didn't do our team any good."

Motta said the Mavericks still were feeling the effects of a hard-fought

117-113 victory Friday night over the Utah Jazz.

"We looked tired out there," Motta said. "We made a couple runs at them, but I feel that we were feeble. We were just drained emotionally from our win Friday night against Utah."

Los Angeles guard Earl "Magic" Johnson, who had 16 points and 14 assists against the Mavericks, agreed that Dallas' fatigue was a factor in the Lakers' fourth consecutive easy playoff victory.

"No question about it, they were tired," Johnson said. "It does make a difference, what with the travel and all, especially playing a team like ours."

The Lakers had four days to rest after a three-game sweep of the San Antonio Spurs, in which they won every game by at least 20 points.

Dallas players, however, refused to use the short layoff as a reason for the defeat.

"We can't use that as an excuse," forward Sam Perkins said. "As a professional athlete, you're supposed to deal with everything. We were ready to play, but the Lakers were up to the task."

Philadelphia is in a situation similar to Dallas and Atlanta. The team who beat Washington 134-109 Sunday in the decisive fifth game of their first-round series, had a travel day Monday before the second round opener against Milwaukee.

The 76ers learned Saturday that center Moses Malone would miss the rest of the playoffs with a broken bone under his right eye.

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