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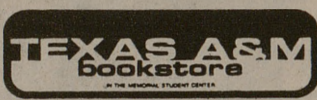
Happy 22nd Steve Oines!
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Rockets edge Sonics to avoid elimination

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston's Akeem Olajuwon scored 26 points and Rodney McCray had a triple double to defeat Seattle 112-107 Tuesday night, avoiding elimination of the Rockets in their NBA Western Conference semifinal playoff series.

Seattle leads the best-of-seven series 3-2 and could wrap it up Thursday night with a victory on its home court in Seattle.

Olajuwon's basket with 4:15 left in the game put Houston ahead for good at 104-103. The Rockets held off a Sonics' charge led by Dale Ellis, who hit 19 of his 27 points in the second half.

McCray scored 22 points, grabbed 10 rebounds and 11 assists.

Tom Chambers, who had 6 points at the half, finished with 15 points.

The Sonics never led in the game until Chambers hit a 3-point basket with 7:11 left in the game for a 97-96 lead.

Seattle's Nate McMillan set up the go-ahead basket by stealing the ball from Olajuwon, who was surrounded by three Sonics defenders.

Allen Leavell put the Rockets back into the lead with 6:57 to go, sinking two free throws for a 98-97 advantage.

Xavier McDaniel scored on a breakaway with 4:23 to go for a 103-102 Sonics lead, but Olajuwon put his team ahead with a basket with 4:15 to play, setting up the finish.

The Rockets built a 59-38 lead with 5:25 to go in the second quarter before the Sonics started a rally that continued into the third quarter.

Ellis scored 12 points in the catch-up third quarter, cutting Houston's 66-56 halftime lead to 89-86 going into the final quarter.

Four Rockets and three Sonics players had three fouls at the end of the ruggedly played first half.

The Rockets came out running to start the game and never trailed in the first half, leading by 21 points with 5:25 to go in the half.

But the Sonics cut off Houston's running over the final 5:25 and narrowed the lead to 66-56 at the half.

Ralph Sampson scored 10 first-quarter points as the Rockets broke from a 2-2 deadlock to lead by 35-22 at the end of the first quarter.

McCray picked up the Rockets scoring with 10 second-quarter points to fuel Houston's surge.

Spurs' Weiss doesn't think Motta will leave Mavericks

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — San Antonio Spurs Coach Bob Weiss said it's premature to speculate that Dallas Mavericks Coach Dick Motta would leave the team, and that Weiss would replace him.

The New York Knicks got permission from the Mavericks to talk to Motta and said a meeting with him would take place later Tuesday.

"I think Dick is going to stay," said Weiss, who was the assistant coach in Dallas six years before becoming head coach in San Antonio last season.

"I don't even know why he's doing the interviews. Maybe he wants a change, but I really doubt it," Weiss said. "I think he's got a good situation there (Dallas). It's taken a long time for him to get it where it is now."

Weiss said it is doubtful he would assume the Dallas coaching job if Motta left, despite speculation in Dallas linking Weiss to the job.

"I think it's very premature. I would seriously doubt they (the Mavs) are making plans," Weiss told the San Antonio Light Monday. "I know they would be interested in Nellie (Don Nelson, the Milwaukee Bucks coach).

Nelson said last weekend that he would not return to coach at Milwaukee next season because of conflicts with Bucks management.

Mavericks General Manager Norm Sonju said he is fond of Weiss, but said Motta is staying in Dallas.

"We still have a coach," Sonju said. "It's a waste of time to talk about this."

Before Weiss could become a candidate for any vacancy, the Spurs would first have to give another team permission to talk to him. Then, if he were hired, San Antonio would be entitled to compensation.

"I honor contracts," Sonju said. "I've known Bobby for 20 years. He belongs there."

Motta, who led the Mavericks to their first division title this season, said, "I've got a neat job, but this (the New York opportunity) is both prestigious and intriguing."

Despite compiling his best record ever (55-27), Dallas ended the season on a down note, losing three straight to Seattle in the first round of the playoffs.

Motta spoke to the Los Angeles Clippers last week about their opening before taking his name out of consideration.

Carlton's start spoiled as Rangers top Indians

CLEVELAND (AP) — Charlie Hough allowed four hits in 7 1/3 innings for his 10th straight win over Cleveland, and Pete O'Brien drove in two runs with a homer and a single as the Texas Rangers beat the Indians 6-1 Tuesday night, spoiling Steve Carlton's first start with the Indians.

Hough, 3-1, who has not lost to the Indians since April 1984, improved his career record against Cleveland to 13-4. The Indians' run came when Brook Jacoby hit his fourth homer of the season.

Carlton, 42, who had made nine relief appearances, saw his record fall to 2-3. He allowed five runs and eight hits while striking out 10 in seven innings plus two batters in the eighth.

It was the 84th time Carlton has struck out 10 or more batters, but it didn't prevent the Indians from losing for the eighth time in nine games.

O'Brien gave the Rangers a 1-0 lead in the second, lining his fifth home run of the season into the right-field stands. He added a single in the sixth after Pete Incaviglia drew a walk and stole second.

Texas made it 3-0 in the seventh when Oddibe McDowell singled, stole second — he beat the throw from first after being picked off by Carlton — and scored on a single by Scott Fletcher.

Carlton compiled a 4.91 ERA with one save before moving into the Indians' starting rotation so Scott Bailes could shore up the bullpen. Carlton's first relief appearance this year broke his major-league record string of 544 consecutive starts.

The Rangers chased Carlton in the eighth when Incaviglia and O'Brien opened the inning with singles. Rich Yeti relieved and Larry Parrish greeted him with a three-run homer, his eighth.

Astros tame Phillies to end losing streak

HOUSTON (AP) — Jose Cruz drove in two runs with a double, and Bob Knepper got his first win in a month's time, leading the Houston Astros to a 5-2 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies Tuesday night to bring to a halt a three-game losing streak.

The Astros roughed up Phillies rookie, right-hander Mike Jackson, 0-2, a native of Houston making his first major league start, with four runs in the first inning.

With one out, Bill Doran walked, advanced to third on a single by Denny Walling and scored on a sacrifice fly by Glenn Davis.

Kevin Bass walked and Cruz double down the left-field line.

Cruz scored on a single to center by Alan Ashby to give the Astros a 4-1 lead.

Knepper, 2-2, who was making his first start since April 26, went six innings, allowing two runs on eight hits and beating the Phillies for the first time since May 9, 1984.

Aurelio Lopez pitched the final three innings for his first save of the year.

The Phillies scored single runs in the first and sixth innings.

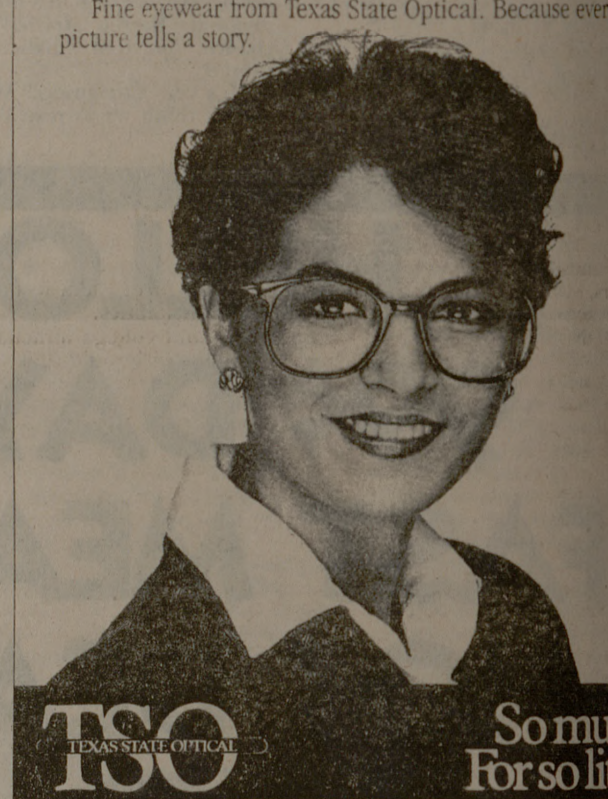
In the first, Mike Schmidt drove in Milt Thompson with a two-out single. Schmidt scored on a double by Glenn Wilson in the sixth.

The Astros added an insurance in the sixth on a double by Bass, two walks and a pinch-hit single by Mark Bailey.

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