

Sports

Scott rockets Lakers past Houston in Summit

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Rockets can't seem to adjust to the quarter blastoffs by the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Lakers outscored the Rockets 21 in the first quarter Thursday in a rout to a 111-96 victory, the seventh in a row over the Rockets.

The game mirrored Los Angeles' 41-22 first quarter in a 121-96 victory on Jan. 18.

The Lakers have won 28 of the 33 games with the Rockets and have blown 14 games open in the quarter.

Byron Scott fueled the Lakers' late-blast off with 27 points, including points in the first quarter. Magic Johnson added 26 points, 10 in the second quarter.

"We just came out ready," Scott explained. "We've got so much rest for them. We knew we had to

come out hard and get ahead early."

The Rockets tried to slow down Johnson and gave Scott his opening.

"Every team tries to take something away from us, but they can't because we have so many weapons," Scott said. "Tonight was just one of my nights."

The Rockets got a 20-point, 20-rebound performance from Akeem Olajuwon, but it wasn't enough to overcome their sluggish start.

"That was the key," Houston's Purvis Short said. "We got down and dug a hole and it took too much to try to come out of it."

"They always try to get off to a quick start and put you away early, then you have to play run and gun to try to catch up."

The Lakers hit 13 of their first 16 shots from the floor to take a 41-21 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Houston, shooting just 35 percent from the field in the first half, rallied to pull within 62-51 at halftime mark.

The Rockets got no closer than seven points after the opening period. They cut the Lakers' lead to 68-61 with 9:25 to go in the third quarter.

There's been some revolutionary technological advances in rocketery.

Engineers in Houston have changed the basic blueprint, design and even the tower structure of their program.

The control towers have been scaled down and the rockets are faster, more maneuverable and more powerful.

The Summit is their laboratory, and these Rockets aren't programmed for space travel, but they would like to travel to the top of the Midwest division and beyond.

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Rocket technology falls short

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and gained two players that can make a legitimate contribution to the team — Sleepy Floyd and Joe Barry Carroll.

Ralph Sampson, the taller and weaker of the once Twin Towers, was nothing more than a weak supporting structure for a program that couldn't get off the ground.

I, and I'm sure many other fans, have been waiting for years for Ralph to play up to his potential. We have heard since his college days that when Ralph reaches his potential he was going to be a great one.

Get over it folks — the Rockets organization finally did. The truth is Sampson is just a little better than average NBA player; if he wasn't 7-foot-4, he would be simply average.

He was hyped in college and he was hyped in Houston.

Since the All-Star break the Rockets have beaten the Celtics, Trailblazers, Clippers and, most recently, embarrassed Sampson and the rest of the Warriors on Sampson's former home court.

But the obvious question is

whether these new Rockets are ready to fly with the perennial power of the Western Conference — The World Champion Los Angeles Lakers.

Of course not.

It's going to take a lot more than trimming some dead weight for the Rockets to be a legitimate challenger for the Western Conference title.

While the best center who ever played professional basketball slowly heads toward retirement, the best point guard that ever dribbled a Wilson on a wooden floor takes up a little more offensive responsibility.

With personnel like Magic and Kareem, the Lakers fine-tuned basketball machine can make adjustments seem effortless.

The true Rocket test was Thursday night in Houston. And although the team is improved, it proved it's not ready to surpass the Western star.

The redesigned Rockets are good, but the Lakers still own all the air space over the Western Conference.



Curtis L. Culberson Sports viewpoint

Reeves wants ex-Cowboy to work as assistant coach

DALLAS (AP) — It's too soon to know for sure, but Denver Broncos coach Dan Reeves said he thinks he can hire former Dallas Cowboys teammate Charlie Waters as an assistant coach.

"I'm optimistic that we can work it out if it's something he wants to do," Reeves said Wednesday. "And it sounds like it's something he is definitely interested in doing."

"I thought at the time he re-enters that Charlie would be a great coach," said Reeves, a former Dallas running back who coached the Broncos to back-to-back Super Bowl appearances.

Waters advised to him then was if he had the inclination to be successful on the side of coaching, he should try

move "is one of those things that is talked about. It's not anything I expect any developments in any time soon."

Waters, who played safety for the Cowboys from 1970-81, met with Reeves in Denver Tuesday and will talk to him again next week.

Cowboys coach Tom Landry said he has talked to Waters about his desire to get into coaching, but said there are no openings on the Dallas defensive staff.

"Charlie will be an excellent coach," Landry said.

Waters considered offers from both Landry and Reeves in 1982, but decided to go into private business instead.

The former Dallas safety now works for former Dallas quarterback Roger Staubach's real estate company and does color and

analysis on televised Dallas Sidekicks soccer games. He also has worked in sports promotion, radio and television.

Waters told the Dallas Morning News Wednesday he started talking with both Landry and Reeves about getting into coaching last season.

"Dan and I are real good friends, and we're just exploring the possibility," Waters said. "Nothing has happened yet. It's not so much I turned the jobs down in 1982, it was more turning down the coaching profession."

Waters applied for the head coaching job at Southern Methodist, but he had no previous coaching experience. SMU eventually hired Forrest Gregg from the Green Bay Packers.

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Gooden receives \$100,000 payout

Dwight Gooden's effort to resist the New York Mets' \$100,000 payout and get a \$150,000 raise for 1988 was denied by an arbitrator Thursday, but another pitcher, Frank Tanana, won his arbitration with the Detroit Tigers.

Gooden, who was out two months for cocaine abuse rehabilitation and missed 11 starts, had to settle for \$1.4 million. Tanana, 15-10 last season, will get \$1.1 million from the Tigers, who had submitted an \$800,000 figure to arbitrator Frederick Reel.

Gooden, 23, who received \$1.5 million in 1987 when he won 15 games, lost his bid for \$1.65 million. He lost seven games and had a 3.21 earned run average as the Mets finished

second in the National League East to St. Louis.

Al Harazin, Mets vice president, said, "We felt the hospitalization, arranged and paid for, and the salary paid demonstrated that we were in his corner. . . . Support and understanding, yes; reward, no."

Asked if he was pleased with the outcome decided by arbitrator Richard Bloch, Harazin said, "It's competitive and we can't help but be pleased with a win instead of a loss."

Overall, the owners have won 10 cases, the players five.

In other activity, shortstop Steve Jeltz avoided arbitration by agreeing to a one-year contract with the Philadelphia Phillies for \$215,000 plus \$25,000 in incentives. They came to

terms just before they were to argue their cases before an arbitrator.

Two others scheduled for arbitration also settled. Mark Langston, who led the American League in strikeouts, accepted the Seattle Mariners' offer of \$820,000 plus \$42,000 in performance bonuses, while first baseman Sid Bream came to terms with the Pittsburgh Pirates for \$360,000, plus \$25,000 in award bonuses.

In St. Petersburg, Fla., Jim Neader, Gooden's agent, said, "I thought that we could win the case, but we can live with it. Dwight is upbeat and will go out and try to win 20 games and lead the Mets to the World Series."

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