

Lakers listed heavily before floundering

A fourth consecutive NBA title was improbable from the outset, despite the efforts of the Kobe-Shaq connection. **Tim Kawakami reports.**

Los Angeles

It ended where it began, at Staples Center, the last sliver of the Laker Empire that the San Antonio Spurs had not grabbed away.

The Lakers Dynasty ended quietly, as Eddie Murphy and Steve Spielberg led a parade of Hollywood elite out the doors in the final minutes of the Spurs' dominating, series-clinching 110-82 victory in Game 6 of the Western Conference semifinals Thursday.

It ended sadly. Laker Girls wept and several Lakers buried their heads in towels and swayed against each other's shoulders one last time.

"This is a foreign feeling," Kobe Bryant said 45 minutes after it was over, after he had hugged several Spurs and received a brief but warm ovation from hundreds of leftover fans. "I don't like this feeling. I hate it. I really hate it."

It ended. It finally ended.

Which is all that matters to the Spurs, led by the sublime mind and incomparable talent of Tim Duncan, simply too much for even two superstars to withstand.

But the Spurs will have their time in the spotlight. Thursday was about the Lakers, who started their exhilarating three-championship run in April 2000 and had not looked back since.

On Thursday night, at about 7:45 p.m. PDT, the NBA ceased to be Lakers property, and the Lakers themselves started to look back at where they had been, what they accomplished, and how difficult it will be to come close to duplicating it.

"We had an unbelievable run," Shaquille O'Neal said. "This is the first time we're not feeling success. We just have to suck it up and start this all over again next year."

But deep in their hearts, they know that this season foretells large complications, distractions and probably failures.



LUCY NICHOLSON, REUTERS

Kobe Bryant gives teammate Shaquille O'Neal a hug during the final seconds of the Lakers' playoff-ending 110-82 loss to the San Antonio Spurs in Los Angeles on Thursday night.

The Lakers had come to define regal, title-winning arrogance. And that, surely, is over now because:

• O'Neal is 31, suffered from several weight- and conditioning-related injuries this season and has no history of offseason discipline.

"It tells us how much dedication and discipline is required to win four," said coach Phil Jackson, probably referring to O'Neal, whose decision to de-

lay toe surgery caused the Lakers' early-season woes.

"We couldn't make the correct steps from the beginning of this season. We stumbled, we fell, we were forced to play catch-up constantly. And we paid the price for it."

• Kobe Bryant, whose anxious, willful play in Game 6 dribbled him directly into the Spurs' hands and into seven crucial turnovers, can opt out of his contract after next sea-

son and shows no enthusiasm for playing under Jackson or with O'Neal into the distant future.

"Teams reload and they re-stock. We've had a good run," Bryant said. "Now it's time to re-up."

• The supporting cast got old this season, and the young players added recently did not provide much help.

"I think in losing, sometimes you clarify," Jackson said. "We didn't feel like we provided that right amount of overall talent. And that bore itself out."

Jackson wants to return

LOS ANGELES — Phil Jackson's most difficult season as an NBA head coach will not be his last — health permitting.

Barring the unforeseen, the 57-year-old Jackson said he'll return to coach next season.

"I have to be optimistic with my own personal health and the direction I'm going," said Jackson, who had an angioplasty last Saturday to unblock an artery to his heart.

San Jose Mercury News (San Jose, California) with files from The Associated Press

Billups leads Pistons drive into final

Pistons 93, 76ers 89 (OT)
(Detroit wins East semifinal 4-2)

PHILADELPHIA — Chauncey Billups returned just in time to put the Detroit Pistons into the Eastern Conference finals.

Billups, who missed Games 2, 3 and 5 with an ankle injury, scored nine of his 28 points in overtime to lead the Pistons to a series-ending 93-89 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers last night.

The Pistons advanced to the East final for the first time since 1991. Detroit will play the defending East champion New Jersey Nets, beginning tomorrow afternoon.

Billups gave the Pistons a 92-89 lead with 15.2 seconds left in overtime on his third three-pointer of the extra session. He scored Detroit's first six points of OT on three-pointers.

After Allen Iverson missed a layup with 10 seconds to go, Chucky Atkins made a free throw to ice it with six seconds left.

The Associated Press

Wells leads attack as Jays rip Royals

Blue Jays 18, Royals 1

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — Vernon Wells homered, doubled twice and singled last night as the Toronto Blue Jays rapped 22 hits and trounced the Kansas City Royals 18-1.

Wells drove in four runs and scored three. Every Blue Jays starter had at least one hit and scored a run.

The Blue Jays set season highs for runs and hits. The Royals hurt themselves by throwing five wild pitches, three of them allowing runs to score.

Shannon Stewart and Tom Wilson each had three hits. Stewart left after seven innings and his replacement, Reed Johnson, had two hits.

It was 5-0 before Toronto broke open the game by getting four runs in the sixth inning and seven more in the eighth.

Mark Hendrickson (4-4) limited the Royals to one run in seven innings.

Chris George (4-3) pitched a perfect first inning for the Royals, but struggled from there on. He gave up five runs on seven hits in five innings, and also was hit by two line drives.

Wells hit an RBI double in a three-run third and Carlos Delgado lined a shot off George for a run-scoring groundout.

Jason Gilfillan made his major-league debut for Kansas City, relieving in the sixth inning. He gave up singles to the first three batters he faced before striking out Mike Bordick.

However, two consecutive wild pitches gave the Blue Jays a pair of runs, and Wells hit a two-run homer, his 11th of the season.

Wells doubled to start the big eighth and also had a run-scoring single. He leads the AL with 43 RBI.

Gilfillan gave up four runs on five hits and a walk in one inning. Royals relievers Albie Lopez and Sean Lowe were tagged in the eighth.

Expos' Armas to have surgery

DENVER — Montreal Expos right-hander Tony Armas Jr. will have surgery next week to repair slight tears in his rotator cuff and shoulder.

A timetable for his return will not be set until after doctors can evaluate the extent of the damage.

Armas is to have the operation May 23 in Los Angeles. He has been on the disabled list since April 21 after he experienced pain following a start against the Cincinnati Reds.

Armas did not allow a homer in first four outings, but gave up four in his last start, a 7-5 loss to the Reds in the Expos' final game of a 10-game homestand in Puerto Rico. He woke up the next day with a sore shoulder, and an MRI revealed the tears.

He has a 2-1 win-loss record with a 2.61 earned-run average in five starts this season.

Citizen news services

Lynx cap trip with big night at plate

Lynx 13, Braves 6

Luis Matos had four hits and Brian Roberts knocked in five runs as the Ottawa Lynx ended an eight-game road trip with a bang, blasting the Richmond Braves 13-6 last night in an International League contest at Richmond, Virginia.

The Lynx scored six runs in the top of the second inning against Braves starter Chris Fussell (3-4), who walked in two runs before allowing three more on Roberts' bases-loaded triple.

Roberts then scored on a sacrifice fly by Eddy Garabito.

Ottawa (22-19) added four more runs in the third against reliever Derrick Lewis, including one on a single by Roberts, two on a double by Garabito and another on Matos' single.

Billy Sylvester replaced Lewis, but he allowed three runs in the fourth inning. Roberts clinched the outburst with an RBI single.

Three more relievers and infielder Stubby Clapp — who had tripled twice as the Braves (20-21) won 12-2 on Thursday — held the Lynx off after that.

The beneficiaries of the massive attack were Ottawa starter John Stephens (1-2) and three relievers.

The Lynx returned home to begin a nine-day homestand, starting with a contest tonight at 7:05 p.m. against the Norfolk Tides.

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Benefiting Prostate Cancer Research, Patient Care, Education and Awareness.

Run Events

- Ottawa Police Association
5km Timed Run 8:00 a.m.
- CS Alternia Bank
10km Timed Run 8:15 a.m.
- Trinity Development Group Inc.
2km (non-timed) Family Fun Walk 8:45 a.m.

Bridgewater Systems in partnership with Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. Father's Day Breakfast
For a small fee, you and your family can enjoy a great pancake breakfast from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Carleton University Anniversary Park.



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