

Spurs rout Grizzlies 105-83 in West finals opener

Written by Nancy Spencer
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By JEFF LATZKE

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The San Antonio Spurs opened the Western Conference finals resembling the past champions who've been there so many times before.

The Memphis Grizzlies looked like the first-timers still trying to adapt to their first conference finals appearance.

Tony Parker had 20 points and nine assists, Kawhi Leonard scored 18 points and the Spurs struck first by beating Memphis 105-83 on Sunday.

San Antonio raced out to a 17-point lead in the first quarter, then came up with a response when Memphis rallied to get within six in the second half. Both teams pulled their starters with over 5 minutes left and the Spurs leading by 21.

"I can promise you this: Nobody's happy in our locker room because we were up 2-0 (in the West finals) last year and we lost," Parker said. "It's just one game. It means nothing. We still have a long way to go."

The Spurs avoided a repeat of their Game 1 loss when the teams met two years ago in the first

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round. The Grizzlies went on to knock San Antonio out of the playoffs as the top seed that time.

Memphis has lost its opener in each round in this year's playoffs, recovering from an 0-2 hole in the first round against the Los Angeles Clippers and an 0-1 deficit against Oklahoma City in the West semifinals.

Game 2 is Tuesday night in San Antonio.

"We just didn't play well. It's not anything specific," coach Lionel Hollins said. "It's just that we were running too fast, we missed some layups, we were taking bad shots and our defense was really awful. And the Spurs played well."

The NBA's stingiest defense wasn't up to its usual standards, allowing the Spurs to hit 53 percent of their shots and a franchise postseason-record 14 3-pointers while All-Star power forward Zach Randolph struggled. Randolph had just two points, getting his only basket with 9:26 left in the game.

He had a playoff-best 28 points and 14 rebounds in his last game, as Memphis eliminated defending West champ Oklahoma City in Game 5 on Wednesday night.

The Grizzlies started to rally as soon as Randolph came out of the game for the first time in the second half. Quincy Pondexter made a baseline cut for a layup off Darrell Arthur's pass, then hit back-to-back 3-pointers during a 10-0 burst. Jerryd Bayless' 2-handed fast-break dunk off a steal got the Grizzlies within 62-56 with 3:43 left in the third quarter.

The comeback was short-lived, though.

Bayless missed a 3-pointer on the next trip and Manu Ginobili made one at the opposite end to spark an 11-1 response that immediately restored the Spurs' lead to 16 by the end of the quarter. Leonard hit a pair of 3-pointers and Gary Neal had one as San Antonio kept pouring it

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on in the fourth.

The four regular-season meetings were all won by the team with more points in the paint but perimeter shooting proved to be a bigger factor in the playoff opener. Memphis, which was second in the NBA by holding opponents to 33.8-percent shooting on 3-pointers, let San Antonio make 13 of its first 24 from behind the arc and finish 14-of-29.

Danny Green connected three times and scored 16 and Matt Bonner hit four of his five attempts for 12 points.

Pondexter led Memphis with 17 points, Marc Gasol scored 15 and Mike Conley had 14 points and eight assists.