《马刺39分大胜火箭晋级西决》

导读:大起大落的火箭对马刺，从双方的第一场比赛开始剧情走向就让人捉摸不透。本以为这场比赛面对没有莱昂纳德的马刺火箭能够扳回一城，谁知最后竟然输了40分…

Mike D’Antoni is a realist.

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So when the Houston Rockets head coach took a step back to evaluate this Western Conference Semifinals against the San Antonio Spurs, he wasn’t afraid to speak some truth.

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“It could be said that (the Spurs) should win,” D’Antoni told USA TODAY Sports last week before Game 3. “They’re better than us right now. We’re a little bit ahead in our progression.”

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Except for one thing: He said that when Kawhi Leonard was actually playing.

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The Leonard-less Spurs handed the Rockets a humiliating end to their surprise season on Thursday night at the Toyota Center, closing out the series with a 114-75 win that pits them against the vaunted Golden State Warriors in the Western Conference Finals that will start on Sunday. With Leonard sidelined by a left ankle injury suffered in Game 5, his much-maligned co-star, 31-year-old forward LaMarcus Aldridge, had just the sort of game the Spurs had in mind when they added him in free agency in the summer of 2015.

??114-75??
??????31????????-????????????2015????????????????

"He’s been like that through these first two rounds," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said after the win. "He’s really turned it on and demanded the ball."

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The final inspired line: 34 points on 16 of 26 shooting to go with 12 rebounds. It was Aldridge’s best offensive game since May 2, 2016 when he scored 41 points in a playoff win against the Oklahoma City Thunder. More than that, it was the latest reminder that the Spurs aren’t going away anytime soon.

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They lost Tim Duncan to retirement last summer, then saw veteran point guard Tony Parker go down with a season-ending quadriceps tendon tear in Game 2. The lone remaining member of their old-school trio, 39-year-old Manu Ginobili, pulled off a vintage performance in Game 5 that brought them to this point.

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One game after his game-saving block on James Harden, with Harden himself having a disastrous finish (10 points on two of 11 shooting, seven assists, three rebounds, and six turnovers), the Spurs turned to their younger crew.

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"I don’t know what it was," Harden said. "I know they played well, and we didn’t."

“??????????”????“???????????????”

San Antonio rookie point guard DeJounte Murray gave them 11 points, 10 rebounds and five assists off the bench (good for a plus-33 mark). Jonathon Simmons, the 27-year-old point guard who played his way to the Spurs through the NBA Development League, added 18 points on eight of 12 shooting.

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"It happens," D’Antoni said. "I just told the guys, they had an unbelievable year. ... We’ll figure that out and get better this summer and then come back and do it again. It was a pleasure coaching them. They tried to do everything they could to make it a great year. I’m proud to be their coach. I know they feel as bad as I do."

“????????”??????“??????????????????…??”

It would have been one thing for the Rockets to fall in this series with both sides at full strength, a respectable finish after their surprise campaign in which they had the league’s third-best record just one season after sneaking into the playoffs as the Western Conference’s eighth seed. After all, only the Warriors were better than the Spurs (61-21) this season. But this? It was as bad as season-ending exits get.

??61-21????????????????????????????

简答网 —jiandongshicai.cn—