

Clippers rally to beat Mavs 109-103

Written by Administrator
Friday, 28 March 2014 11:26

DALLAS (AP) — The Los Angeles Clippers have not tired of inflicting fourth-quarter pain on the Dallas Mavericks.

The Clippers rallied from a 10-point deficit in the final period to beat the Mavericks 109-103 on Thursday night. Los Angeles has won all three meetings thus far, with second-half rallies in each game.

Each meeting has also featured plenty of emotion. On Thursday, the teams combined for six technical fouls charged to players on the floor, three on each team.

"We need to start playing like that more often, to tell you the truth," Chris Paul said after leading Los Angeles with 31 points, a night after going 0 for 12 in a two-point loss in New Orleans.

"We knew it was going to be a playoff-type game. They're not just playing for their playoff lives; we're trying to gear up for the playoffs, too."

The Clippers got double-doubles from Blake Griffin (18 points, 13 rebounds) and DeAndre Jordan (16 points, 15 rebounds).

Los Angeles maintained its one-game lead over Houston for third place in the Western Conference.

Vince Carter scored 23 points off the bench for the Mavericks, going 4 for 5 on 3-pointers. Dirk Nowitzki had 21 points but only two in the fourth quarter.

"It's tough. It's very frustrating," Carter said. "But we fought like hell to give ourselves a chance to win, and that's all you can do."

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Samuel Dalembert was questionable going into the game for Dallas because of a stiff back. He started, played 22 minutes and led the Mavericks with 11 rebounds — all in the first half.

The loss dropped Dallas a half-game behind Phoenix and into ninth place in the tight race for the final playoff berths in the West.

The score was tied at 81 going into the final period before the Mavericks ran off the first 10 points. Los Angeles chipped away and tied it at 101 on a drive by Griffin. Dallas then committed a backcourt violation when a pass from Nowitzki back to Jose Calderon near midcourt went astray. Griffin followed with a spinning runner to give the Clippers the lead for good at 103-101.

Griffin was pleased with the defense that he played on Nowitzki, who was 7 for 15 from the floor.

"For the past how many years, everything I've heard is the things I couldn't do," he said. "One of the many things I can't do is play defense.

"I take pride in the things I can't do. I just use that as motivation."

The Clippers' victory Thursday was their least dramatic in the series so far. They outscored the Mavericks 16-2 down the stretch to win by seven points in the first meeting on Jan. 5. Twelve days later, they rallied from 17 points down to win by two.

A shoving match broke out early in the third quarter after the Mavericks brought the ball into the forecourt. Paul pushed Dallas' Shawn Marion, who knocked into the Clippers' Matt Barnes while falling over the end line. Barnes and Marion then had words, and Barnes shoved Marion. Paul, Marion and Barnes were all assessed technical fouls.

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"I just think it's been a heated battle," Barnes said. "They had us down in the fourth three times, and they're playing for the playoffs."

Clippers coach Doc Rivers noted his team responded after Wednesday night's last-minute loss to the depleted Pelicans.

"You could see our guys were fresh," Rivers said. "In a joking way, we should have been fresh because we didn't use a lot (Wednesday) night."

The Mavericks are 3-3 on a franchise-record, eight-game homestand, having opened the stretch in seventh place with a 1½-game cushion on ninth-place Phoenix.

"It's basically the next game becomes the most important game of the year," Dallas coach Rick Carlisle said. "That's just how it is going to be, every one down the stretch."

The Mavericks will then close the season with five road games among their final seven. That includes one more game against the Clippers, at Staples Center on April 3.

"We have one more chance," Calderon said. "Hopefully, next week maybe we can beat these guys."

NOTES: The Clippers' J.J. Redick, out since early February with a back injury, said he hopes to return before the end of the season. . Nowitzki, a 91.8 percent shooter from the free throw line going into the game, was 6 for 10, equaling his most misses this season.