

Spurs looking to finish off Mavericks in Dallas

Written by Administrator
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DALLAS (AP) — Dirk Nowitzki is having flashbacks to the epic playoff series between Dallas and San Antonio in 2006.

Now would be the time for the Spurs to put any more similarities to rest.

Top-seeded San Antonio controls the first-round, best-of-seven series with the upstart Mavericks after taking a 3-2 lead with a 109-103 victory at home. The Spurs need to win Game 6 in Dallas on Friday night to avoid a winner-take-all scenario in South Texas.

Nowitzki remembers the only Game 7 between these Texas rivals well. His last-second, three-point play forced overtime in a second-round Dallas win that led to the franchise's first trip to the NBA Finals.

"The way you've got to look at it is you've got to win one home game," said Nowitzki, whose Mavericks were up 3-2 when they lost Game 6 in Dallas eight years ago. "We worry about everything else after that. Fun setup tomorrow, one game to win at home."

San Antonio's Big Three of Tony Parker, Manu Ginobili and Tim Duncan don't want to revisit 2006, and they took a big step toward not having to with some help from Tiago Splitter in Game 5 on Wednesday.

Parker followed a crucial miss on an open jumper by Nowitzki with a 3-pointer that put the Spurs up seven with less than 2 minutes remaining. Before that, Splitter was a big part of a pick-and-roll offense that Dallas simply couldn't stop.

Duncan and Splitter both had double-doubles for the second straight game — a pair of San Antonio wins after the heavily favored Spurs fell behind 2-1 in the series. It was the third in a row for Splitter, who also had five assists.

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Parker led the Spurs with 23 points and Ginobili, San Antonio's leading scorer in the series, had another strong game with 19.

The Spurs swept Dallas during the regular season mostly because of 3-point shooting. The Mavericks have done everything they can to keep from getting beat at the arc in this series, so San Antonio is averaging 49 points in the paint the past two games.

"We're taking what they give us," Duncan said. "So we have a little more of an ability to get in the lane, especially with Tony, and once he gets in there he is drawing a lot of attention, which leaves Tiago and I an opportunity to try and hit the glass and try and finish things up."

Asked about San Antonio's loud crowd, Nowitzki immediately remembered a deafening sound from 2006 when a 3-pointer from Ginobili looked like it had given the Spurs a series victory before Nowitzki's improbable layup and free throw after a Ginobili foul.

The big German had to be prompted for another memory from that year — Jason Terry's one-game suspension for punching former Dallas star Michael Finley.

The similarity this time is DeJuan Blair, just a year removed from playing for San Antonio. He was banned from Game 5 for kicking Splitter in the head, and the Mavericks missed him while the Spurs were repeatedly getting layups.

"Everybody in the world knows how anxious I am to get back out there and compete and try to get us to a Game 7," said Blair, who was having his best game of the series when he was ejected in Game 4. "I feel like I can bring that energy and toughness."

Nowitzki is coming off his best game of the series with 26 points and 15 rebounds. Vince Carter, who won Game 3 with a 3-pointer at the buzzer, kept Dallas in the game with 28 points on 7-of-9 shooting from long range.

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And the Mavericks still didn't win.

"When guys have breakout games, we've got to turn them into Ws," Dallas defensive ace Shawn Marion said. "That's been the hardest thing to adjust to. The offense has been there. It's been up and down. But for the most part, you get stops, you can win."

And if the Mavericks win Friday night, the Spurs might be the ones having flashbacks.

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