

Jazz beat Rockets 99-86

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SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The way the Utah Jazz were playing defense, they didn't need much of a lead to pull away and end Houston's four-game winning streak.

The Jazz had a season-high 12 blocks, made six steals and forced 12 turnovers while winning their third straight, 99-86 over the Rockets on Tuesday night.

"That shows how we were playing good help defense," said Utah's Ronnie Brewer, who scored 12 of his 17 points in the third quarter. "We really defended well tonight."

With the win, Utah pulled within one-half game of Denver in the Northwest Division with just 12 regular season games left. The Jazz also kept the Rockets' stay on top of the Southwest brief, beating Houston two days after it moved into first place with a win at San Antonio.

Deron Williams had 19 points and 12 assists for the Jazz, whose defense compensated for a poor night on the boards, getting outrebounded 52-42.

"They were aggressive and aggressive teams usually win the game," Houston coach Rick Adelman said. "They don't usually block a lot of shots."

Still, Utah coach Jerry Sloan wasn't about to proclaim this the best defensive performance he had seen from the Jazz.

"I'm not totally going to buy all that. I thought it wasn't too bad," Sloan said. "They went in and missed some shots underneath the basket."

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Aaron Brooks scored 20 points and Yao Ming added 14 points and 13 rebounds for the Rockets.

The Jazz went 19-for-25 from the foul line and limited the Rockets to 12 of 14 free throws.

The Rockets had taken over first place in the Southwest on Sunday night by beating the Spurs in San Antonio, but Houston's time on top was brief. The Spurs edged Golden State earlier Tuesday and Houston could not rally past the Jazz in the second half.

"We were very impatient offensively and it cost us. I thought we forced the issue in the second half," Adelman said.

Carlos Boozer had 13 points and eight rebounds and Mehmet Okur finished with 12 points, six rebounds and four blocks. Paul Millsap spelled Boozer when he got in foul trouble and finished with 15 points, nine rebounds and three blocks. Brewer and Andrei Kirilenko added two blocks each.

"We did a good job," Boozer said. "We tried to plug that paint up and make them take jump shots."

Shane Battier scored 18, Ron Artest had 13 points and 11 rebounds and Luis Scola added 10 points and 12 rebounds as all five Houston starters scored in double figures.

The Rockets opened the third 4-for-5 and took a 53-50 lead on a 14-foot jumper by Yao, then the Jazz took off on a 15-4 run. Boozer scored six during the spurt, which included a 3-pointer by Brewer, who capped it by driving around the right side and slipping under the rim for a reverse dunk that put the Jazz up 65-57 with 3:53 left in the third.

Utah led 75-67 entering the fourth and pulled away again after a brief comeback by the Rockets. Battier made two free throws, then a 3-pointer to get Houston within 88-82, but Okur

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and Kirilenko answered with jumpers and Millsap hit two free throws to stretch Utah's lead to 92-82.

Kirilenko added a free throw after getting Yao into the air on a fake and drawing his fifth foul with 3:14 left and the Jazz weren't threatened again.

Notes:@ Williams and Boozer received their Olympic team rings during a pregame ceremony. Both were part of the U.S. gold medal winners. ... Houston opened the game on a 7-2 run. ... The Rockets went 10-for-26 from 3-point range. ... Utah and Houston have met in the first round of the playoffs the last two years.

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