

## 2005 NBA Finals Quick Recap: BY MATTHEW HATFIELD --- Friday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005

It was not an all-time great series, but it provided us with its share of moments, memories and a sterling performance by the San Antonio Spurs at the end.

Game 7 means everything in sports and Tim Duncan no longer will have to live with his rough Game 5 in Detroit, in which Robert Horry bailed him out. Early on it appeared that Horry might have to do it again as he and Brent Barry combined for ten of San Antonio's 18 first quarter points. Detroit, meanwhile, only had two points from its bench in the first period, watching Chauncey Billups pick up two quick fouls in the first quarter.

The shooting on the night by both teams for the most part (note: Spurs picked it up in the fourth quarter) was weak. The Pistons got inspired play from center Ben Wallace all night long. Big Ben scored 12 points in the first half, grabbed four rebounds and had a key shot rejection. His team went into intermission up, 39-38, but as mentioned earlier nobody took control because of lackluster shooting nights from the guards. Both sets of starting guards shot 5-13 from the field through two quarters of play, forcing the big guys like Duncan and Rasheed Wallace to have to come up big when the game was on the line.

In the third quarter Detroit went on the commanding run they so desperately wanted to go on, taking a 48-39 lead only to watch it whittle away. San Antonio then scored seven straight points before Larry Brown took a time-out. To end the half, the Spurs 18-9 run, going into the fourth and final quarter with things all knotted up at 57-apiece.

**The Finals... Where Legends are born.** Fact is Duncan is one and Billups, still a very good point guard, isn't. B-b-b-b-illups hit his second field goal of the entire game late in the fourth quarter. Duncan and Manu Ginobili exquisitely ran the two-man game, and even though nobody was flawless for the Spurs, San Antonio played as good defensively as they have these entire playoffs. At one point every Piston not named Rasheed Wallace, who had a horrendous game scoring wise and rebounding leading up to the fourth period, was 0-6 from the field in the 4<sup>th</sup> with 4:37 to go.

Finally, Duncan showed he was worth of a third Finals MVP. And before I forget, did you see that dinky trophy he got. Shows the league is trying its best to save money! Anyway, he should let Mr. Horry share it for a couple nights. The Spurs won with a total team effort, no question. From Nazr Mohammed, the inconsistent yet quick Tony Parker, Barry, Ginobili and others - the Spurs won as a team. Nobody, though did more positive things from my viewpoint than Horry - the team's scoring leader at half-time of Gm. 7 - in limited minutes. Without his shot at the end of Game 5, there is no Game 7. He's now got a sixth ring and San Antonio has it's third since the 1998-99 season.

**This Spurs team, which lost to LA in last year's Western semis, has greatly improved its perimeter shooting from a season ago. It reminds me of the 2000-01 Lakers that beat Philly in how they greatly improved their perimeter defense from the previous season. A big reason why they are World Champs!**



**Tim Duncan didn't choke, joining the likes of Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, and Shaquille O'Neal as the only players in NBA history to win Finals MVP honors three times. (NBAE/Chris Covatta)**