

HATFIELD SPORTS SOUNDS OFF!

Nowitzki, albeit talented, needs to put a sock in it: 5-11-05

Who's Dirk Nowitzki to be talking about someone's ineffectiveness on the basketball court? Following the Mavericks' Game 1 loss to Phoenix in the second round of the Western Conference playoffs, Nowitzki lashed out at center Eric Dampier. Yes, Dampier was given about, oh I don't know, \$10 million dollars after a productive season in Golden State. And yes, he hasn't lived up to it at all, as indicated when Amare Stoudemire outscored him 40-zilch.

Still, the bottom line is Nowitzki hasn't been much better. Dirk was ridirkulous in a bad way in Game 1 - playing 42 minutes and scoring 13 fewer points than Houston's Tracy McGrady in defeat. Nowitzki shot a putrid 5-19 from the field in that ball game and did not hit a single trey. Not to mention the fact, Nowitzki played absolutely no defense in that game, and very little D' for the series, and his rebound total was a grand four.

Fact of the matter is, if it weren't for Jason Terry, the Mavericks would've been eliminated a long time ago. Terry tied the series up with the Rockets at two games apiece by scoring 32 points on 6-8 shooting from beyond the arc. To describe Dirk's defense in that game - the words lost and soft come to mind. Hey, all you people out there calling Yao Ming soft... gimme a break. I don't care how 'soft' he supposedly is - the guy scored 33 and hit 13 of 14 shots in Game 2. In fact, I do not believe Ming is soft. Wasn't it Yao blocking Nowitzki's shots on a number of occasions throughout the series? True, it was the other way around too, but I saw more return to sender by Yao.

There's no getting around it - Houston flat out choked vs. Dallas when once leading two games to none. Just don't put the blame on Yao or T-Mac. I think the other guys failed to step up like Dallas' supporting cast, primarily consisting of Jerry Stackhouse, Michael Finley, and Josh Howard. Dallas' record when Dirk scores 30+: 20-3. How many times has he done it in eight playoff games? **ZERO**. Plus, Nowitzki shot a well below average 35% from the field through the first six games of the Rockets series.

Of course, he's got to be due for a break-out game, right? He better be, or Mark Cuban's team will be gone fishin real soon!