## 1987-88 Vintage Basketball Association Finals Preview



72-29 Western Conference Champion Buffalo Blizzard vs 85-6 Eastern Conference Champion Fresno Stars

**Regular Season:** Coming off a miraculous 81-1 regular season en route to their first VBA Championship last year, the Fresno Stars find themselves in the Finals for the 3<sup>rd</sup> straight year. They went 77-5 during the regular season and are 8-1 so far in the playoffs. They finished with the league's 2<sup>nd</sup> best offense (127.7 ppg), 7<sup>th</sup> best defense (104.8 ppg) and best differential (22.9). Magic Johnson led the way with a 23.5 scoring average (7<sup>th</sup> in league) and 9.8 assists/game (4<sup>th</sup> in VBA). Alvin Robertson added 19.7 points and tied Michael Jordan for the league's top thief with 3.5 takeaways per contest. Patrick Ewing scored 17.7 points and swatted 2.4 balls to tie Akeem Olajuwon for 2<sup>nd</sup> in the league. The Buffalo Blizzard finished 60-22, just one game behind the division leading El Paso Scorpions. It's their 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive trip to the VBA Playoffs, their only two appearances in their 9-year history as an original VBA franchise. They led the league in scoring with a 133.8 average that earned them the league's 3<sup>rd</sup> best point differential at 9.7. They were led by the terrific trio of Clyde "the Glide" Drexler (22.7 ppg), Mark "Fat Daddy" Aguirre (22.5) and Karl "The Mailman" Malone (21.9). Tom Chambers wasn't far behind at 17.1. Malone was 3<sup>rd</sup> in rebounding at 11.4 per game and Drexler was 4<sup>th</sup> in steals (2.6 avg).



**Early Playoffs:** Fresno earned a bye for winning the Robertson Division. In Round Two, the Stars swept the Callaway Kings with the closest game being game 2, 132-118. Magic averaged 28.0 and Robertson 27.0. Magic dished out 9.8 assists as well. El Paso won the Chamberlain Division so Buffalo, who finished one game out, had to start their playoff journey in Round One. They faced Bucks County and took the series 4-1. Aguirre averaged 23.0 points and Drexler 20.2. Malone was a 19.4 point-14.0 rebound guy. They took on El Paso in Round Two and won game 7 by holding Michael Jordan to 29 minutes and 22 points (he averaged 36.6 during the regular season and had scored 40.5 ppg in the first 6 contests). Aguirre led the way with 20.7. Drexler was good for 19.6 and The Mailman delivered 18.9 points and 10.7 rebounds.

**Conference Finals:** In the **Eastern Finals**, Fresno bettered the Mount Dora Hurricanes 4-1. Fresno "held" Kevin McHale to a 23.4 average after watching him destroy the Rocky Mountain Express in Round Two. Magic Johnson was the series MVP with 26.0 pts, 8.4 asts, 6.0 reb and 2.0 stls. Doc Rivers contributed 18.4 points and Patrick Ewing 17.8. The **Western Finals** saw the home team win all seven games. Game one was the highest scoring game in VBA Playoff History as Costa Mesa had a huge 4<sup>th</sup> quarter comeback to tie and force OT. They were out of gas though and Buffalo escaped with a 4-point win. The series would have 2 one-point victories and a 5-point affair before the Blizzard blew out the Condors in game 7, 156-130. Akeem Olajuwon topped CMC with 21.0 points, 11.4 rebounds, 3.4 blocks and 2.7 steals. Clyde Drexler took home the MVP Trophy, posting 24.7 pts, 9.0 ast, 7.3 reb, 4.0 stl and 1.5 blks. Malone added 26.1 points and 12.3 rebounds. Aguirre tallied a 23.3 average.

**Head-to-head:** Fresno won both games against Buffalo, but it took double OT to win the contest in Buffalo on February 11th. Drexler averaged 31.5 and Malone 31.0 in the head-to-head games. Magic Johnson countered with 31.0 points and 15.0 assists.

| Buffalo<br>Fresno | 1 2<br>32 32<br>30 49 | 18     | 4<br>10<br>18 | Final<br>92<br>135 |       |     |    |    |     |    |     |                   |       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------|---------------|--------------------|-------|-----|----|----|-----|----|-----|-------------------|-------|
| Buffalo           | Min                   | FG     | 3PT           | FT                 | Reb   | Ast | То | St | Bk  | Pf | Pts | +/-               | GS    |
| Threatt           | 20:57                 | 5-12   | 0-1           | 0-0                | 1-1   | 2   | 3  | 1  | 0   | 4  | 10  | -6                | 2.1   |
| Drexler           | 25:52                 | 9-17   | 0-0           | 2-3                | 2-6   | 4   | 6  | 2  | 0   | 4  | 20  | -10               | 11.1  |
| Chambers          | 19:46                 | 5-11   | 0-0           | 4-6                | 3-3   | 2   | 2  | 0  | 0   | 4  | 14  | -4                | 7.4   |
| Malone            | 26:09                 | 4-14   | 0-0           | 7-8                | 6-11  | 3   | 4  | 0  | 0   | 4  | 15  | -10               | 8.6   |
| Cartwright        | 26:14                 | 4-10   | 0-0           | 4-4                | 2-8   | 0   | 1  | 0  | 0   | 3  | 12  | -10               | 7.6   |
| McNealy           | 26:34                 | 0-7    | 0-0           | 0-0                | 1-4   | 1   | 0  | 2  | 0   | 2  | 0   | -37               | -1.4  |
| Holton            | 23:49                 | 1-7    | 0-1           | 1-2                | 1-4   | 4   | 5  | 1  | 1   | 2  | 3   | -36               | -1.6  |
| Thompson,L        | 23:11                 | 2-7    | 0-0           | 0-0                | 0-3   | 1   | 0  | 1  | 1   | 2  | 4   | -37               | 2.4   |
| Duckworth         | 14:19                 | 1-7    | 0-0           | 0-0                | 3-6   | 0   | 1  | 0  | 0   | 2  | 2   | -19               | -1.3  |
| Free              | 13:01                 | 3-11   | 0-1           | 0-0                | 0-0   | 1   | 2  | 0  | 0   | 4  | 6   | -16               | -3.4  |
| Donovan           | 12:22                 | 2-5    | 0-1           | 2-2                | 1-2   | 1   | 1  | 0  | 0   | 2  | 6   | <mark>-1</mark> 4 | 3.2   |
| Engler            | 7:47                  | 0-3    | 0-0           | 0-0                | 2-3   | 0   | 1  | 0  | 0   | 1  | 0   | -6                | -1.8  |
| TOTAL             |                       | 36-111 | 0-4           | 20-25              | 22-51 | 19  | 26 | 7  | 2   | 34 | 92  | -43               | 66.2  |
|                   |                       | .324   | .000          | .800               |       |     |    |    |     |    |     |                   |       |
| Fresno            | Min                   | FG     | 3PT           | FT                 | Reb   | Ast | То | St | Bk  | Pf | Pts | +/-               | GS    |
| Rivers            | 25:22                 | 5-9    | 0-1           | 6-9                | 1-5   | 4   | 0  | 2  | 0   | 4  | 16  | +2                | 15.6  |
| Johnson,M         | 34:21                 | 10-19  | 0-0           | 6-6                | 2-7   | 12  | 7  | 0  | 1   | 1  | 26  | +32               | 21.3  |
| Kersey            | 8:20                  | 4-10   | 0-0           | 1-1                | 3-3   | 1   | 1  | 0  | 1   | 3  | 9   | +3                | 4.9   |
| Cage              | 29:10                 | 4-10   | 0-0           | 2-5                | 2-14  | 0   | 1  | 4  | 1   | 3  | 10  | +24               | 10.9  |
| Ewing             | 30:51                 | 5-15   | 0-0           | 4-7                | 2-9   | 1   | 4  | 2  | 4   | 4  | 14  | +21               | 7.7   |
| Pressey           | 36:47                 | 4-11   | 0-2           | 9-10               | 3-10  | 8   | 6  | 3  | 0   | 4  | 17  | +38               | 15.7  |
| Robertson,A       | 28:33                 | 8-11   | 0-0           | 1-4                | 2-4   | 6   | 4  | 1  | 1   | 3  | 17  | +37               | 14.0  |
| Rasmussen         | 24:13                 | 10-13  | 0-0           | 0-0                | 2-6   | 0   | 1  | 1  | 3   | 4  | 20  | +27               | 18.0  |
| Nealy             | 12:34                 | 2-3    | 0-0           | 0-0                | 2-5   | 2   | 0  | 0  | 0   | 1  | 4   | +15               | 6.0   |
| Acres             | 9:49                  | 1-2    | 0-0           | 0-0                | 1-3   | 1   | 0  | 0  | 0   | 1  | 2   | +6                | 2.6   |
| TOTAL             |                       | 53-103 | 0-3           | 29-42              | 20-66 | 35  | 25 | 13 | _11 | 28 | 135 | +43               | 146.6 |
|                   |                       | .515   | .000          | .690               |       |     |    |    |     |    |     |                   |       |

## <sup>12.13.87</sup> Buffalo 92 Fresno 135

## <sup>2.11.88</sup> Fresno 185 Buffalo 182

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|-------------|----|-----|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-----|-------|----|----|----|------|-----|-------|
| Fresno      | 43 | 35  | 33     | 37    | 16   | 21    | 185   |     |       |    |    |    |      |     |       |
| Buffalo     | 40 | 29  | 36     | 43    | 16   | 18    | 182   |     |       |    |    |    |      |     |       |
| Fresno      | Mi | n   | FG     |       | 3PT  | FT    | Reb   | Ast | То    | St | Bk | Pf | Pts  | +/- | GS    |
| Rivers      | 24 | :06 | 3-6    |       | 0-0  | 7-10  | 0-5   | 7   | 5     | 2  | 0  | 4  | 13   | 0   | 10.6  |
| Johnson,M   | 48 | :29 | 12-25  |       | 1-3  | 11-12 | 0-6   | 18  | 1     | 2  | 0  | 2  | 36   | -5  | 37.5  |
| Kersey      | 26 | :51 | 10-12  |       | 0-0  | 4-6   | 0-3   | 3   | 1     | 1  | 2  | 6  | 24   | +2  | 20.8  |
| Cage        | 42 | :01 | 6-11   |       | 0-0  | 6-10  | 3-11  | 0   | 3     | 0  | 1  | 6  | 18   | -11 | 10.9  |
| Ewing       | 26 | :04 | 5-14   |       | 0-0  | 1-3   | 5-11  | 4   | 4     | 1  | 2  | 6  | 11   | +10 | 6.5   |
| Robertson,A | 43 | :24 | 17-25  | a   1 | 0-0  | 2-5   | 2-6   | 6   | 5     | 11 | 3  | 5  | 36   | -1  | 37.0  |
| Pressey     | 30 | :55 | 6-10   |       | 1-1  | 3-3   | 3-5   | 3   | 4     | 0  | 0  | 5  | 16   | +4  | 10.2  |
| Rasmussen   | 23 | :53 | 10-13  | s.    | 0-0  | 3-4   | 1-3   | 0   | 1     | 0  | 5  | 5  | 23   | -14 | 19.3  |
| Oldham      | 13 | :24 | 3-6    |       | 0-0  | 2-2   | 0-4   | 0   | 1     | 0  | 0  | 4  | 8    | +3  | 3.6   |
| Nealy       | 7  | :46 | 0-1    |       | 0-0  | 0-0   | 1-1   | 0   | 2     | 0  | 0  | 2  | 0    | -8  | -2.8  |
| Acres       | 3  | :05 | 0-0    |       | 0-0  | 0-0   | 0-0   | 0   | 0     | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0    | +5  | 0.0   |
| TOTAL       |    |     | 72-123 | 3     | 2-4  | 39-55 | 15-55 | 41  | 27    | 17 | 13 | 45 | 185  | +3  | 190.5 |
|             |    |     | .585   |       | .500 | .709  |       | 84  | 70-00 |    |    |    | in a |     |       |

Final

| Buffalo    | Min   | FG          | 3PT  | FT    | Reb               | Ast | То | St | Bk | Pf | Pts | +/- | GS    |
|------------|-------|-------------|------|-------|-------------------|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-------|
| Free       | 24:54 | 2-11        | 0-1  | 4-4   | 0-1               | 3   | 4  | 0  | 0  | 6  | 8   | +1  | -2.9  |
| Drexler    | 40:14 | 20-38       | 0-3  | 3-3   | 6-8               | 3   | 4  | 4  | 2  | 6  | 43  | +8  | 30.3  |
| Malone     | 43:33 | 18-31       | 0-0  | 11-15 | 9-25              | 2   | 4  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 47  | -6  | 40.5  |
| Chambers   | 39:26 | 5-18        | 0-1  | 12-13 | 5-8               | 5   | 3  | 1  | 0  | 6  | 22  | +7  | 14.5  |
| Cartwright | 31:30 | <b>5-11</b> | 0-0  | 12-15 | 5-12              | 3   | 3  | 0  | 2  | 6  | 22  | +6  | 18.8  |
| Holton     | 25:49 | 4-7         | 0-0  | 4-4   | 1-2               | 9   | 3  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 12  | -6  | 12.2  |
| Donovan    | 25:04 | 4-10        | 0-0  | 1-2   | 1-1               | 6   | 3  | 2  | 0  | 4  | 9   | +4  | 5.5   |
| Duckworth  | 21:01 | 5-9         | 0-0  | 3-3   | <mark>4-</mark> 6 | 0   | 2  | 0  | 0  | 1  | 13  | +2  | 9.7   |
| Tyler      | 20:11 | 1-3         | 0-0  | 0-0   | 0-2               | 2   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2   | -6  | 2.3   |
| Crite      | 15:29 | 2-4         | 0-0  | 0-0   | 1-6               | 1   | 2  | 2  | 0  | 4  | 4   | -1  | 3.3   |
| Wilson,N   | 2:49  | 0-0         | 0-0  | 0-0   | 0-1               | 0   | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   | +6  | -0.7  |
| TOTAL      |       | 66-142      | 0-5  | 50-59 | 32-72             | 34  | 30 | 11 | 5  | 39 | 182 | -3  | 175.1 |
|            |       | .465        | .000 | .847  |                   |     |    |    |    |    |     |     |       |

