



1990-91 Eastern Conference Finals

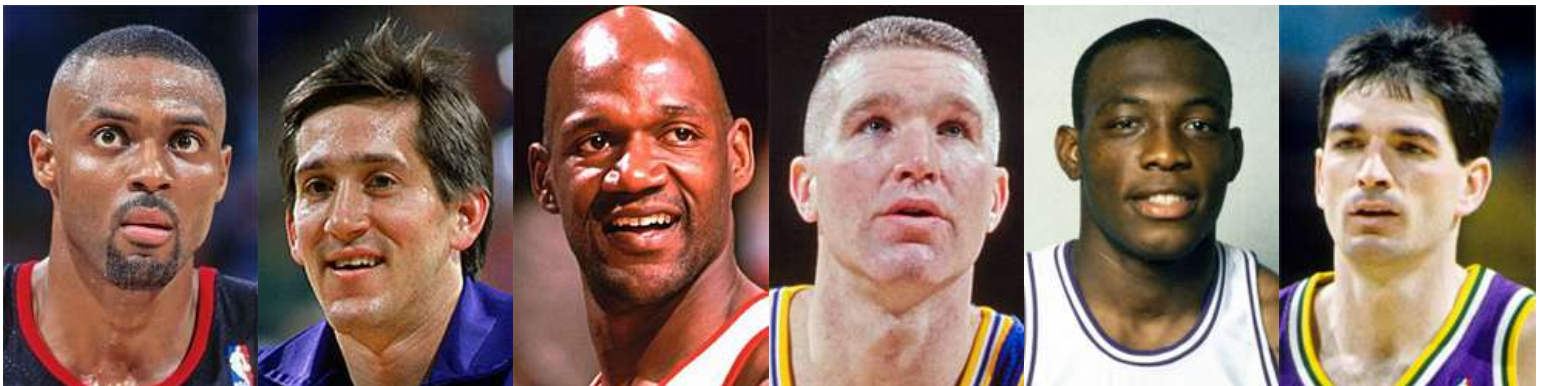
54-28 Robertson Division Runner-Up Oklahoma Noodlers

vs

60-22 Robertson Division Champion So Cal Surf

Regular Season: The So Cal Surf and Oklahoma Noodlers arrive at the Eastern Conference Finals with two distinctly different formulas for winning basketball games. So Cal put together one of the VBA's better offensive attacks, averaging 111.4 points (6th in VBA) per game while shooting an even .501 from the field, led by Chris Mullin's 24.7 points per contest and Mitch Richmond's 21.7. Mullin was the unquestioned centerpiece of the Surf attack, while John Stockton averaged 15.3 points and an incredible 12.0 assists per game (3rd in league), giving So Cal one of the league's premier playmakers. Orlando Woolridge contributed 18.6 points in 53 games, while Danny Manning added 13.2 points and 5.6 rebounds per contest. The Surf also had plenty of experience underneath, with Moses Malone pulling down 7.6 rebounds per game and Jack Sikma contributing on the glass and defensively. Overall, So Cal outscored its opponents by 7.0 points per game and held them to a .480 shooting percentage.

Oklahoma, meanwhile, was built around balance and defense, scoring 103.0 points per game while allowing just 95.6. The Noodlers held opponents to a .456 field-goal percentage and owned a 7.4 point average scoring margin, while also enjoying a significant advantage on the boards. Harvey Grant led Oklahoma in scoring at 18.6 points per game, followed closely by Jeff Hornacek at 18.4 and Terry Porter at 17.7. The Noodlers had another major presence inside in Horace Grant, who averaged 14.8 points and 8.4 rebounds, while Dennis Rodman was a force on the glass with 11.9 rebounds per game. Porter also handed out 10.0 assists per contest, giving Oklahoma a second outstanding floor leader alongside its balanced scoring attack.



Playoffs: So Cal enjoyed a first-round bye before facing the Callaway Kings in the Eastern Conference Semifinals, and after dropping the first two games at home, the Surf responded in impressive fashion by winning four straight to take the series in six games. The turnaround began with a 124-106 road victory in Game 3, followed by a convincing 114-84 win in Game 4 and a 118-100 triumph back at The Fabulous Forum. So Cal then closed things out on the road with a hard-fought 95-87 victory in Game 6, a game tied at both halftime and after three quarters before the Surf pulled away in the fourth. Chris Mullin was the star of the series, including a 32-point Game 6 performance in which he was constantly double-teamed but still earned Game MVP honors. Stockton was also a major factor throughout the series, while Moses Malone made his presence felt on the boards, grabbing 15 rebounds in just 21 minutes in the clincher.

Oklahoma has had a much longer road to the Conference Finals, first defeating Missoula in six games after the Smokejumpers tied the series at two games apiece. The Noodlers won the opening two games at home, dropped Games 3 and 4 in Missoula, then regained control with an 85-73 Game 5 victory before completing the series with a remarkable 112-109 road win in Game 6. Oklahoma then faced the Chandler Wolves in the Conference Semifinals and once again won the series in six games. The Noodlers took the first three games, including two road victories at Chandler Square Garden and a 115-107 win at home, before Chandler fought back with wins in Games 4 and 5. Oklahoma answered with a dominant 116-94 Game 6 victory to eliminate the Wolves, giving the Noodlers an 8-4 overall playoff record entering the Conference Finals. Jeff Hornacek, Terry Porter and the two Grants have carried much of the scoring load, while Dennis Rodman's rebounding has continued to give Oklahoma a major presence around the basket.

Head-to-head: During the regular season, So Cal won five of the eight meetings with Oklahoma, outscoring the Noodlers by an average of 106.9 to 99.0. The series was anything but a one-sided affair, however, as Oklahoma proved it could beat the Surf, winning 120-107 on January 19 and 108-95 on January 28 before capturing the final meeting 111-110. So Cal's biggest statement came February 27, when the Surf demolished Oklahoma 102-69 behind 26 points from Manning, while the Noodlers also suffered a 30-point loss at So Cal earlier in the season. Mullin led the Surf against Oklahoma with a 22.0 scoring average, while Richmond averaged 18.9 and Woolridge scored 20.0 per game in his six appearances. Stockton averaged just 12.0 points against the Noodlers but nearly recorded a double-double every night with 9.9 assists per contest. For Oklahoma, Porter was the biggest problem for the Surf, averaging 18.0 points and an impressive 11.8 assists in the eight games, while Hornacek contributed 15.9 points and 6.8 assists. Horace Grant averaged 14.6 points and 6.8 rebounds, while Rodman controlled the boards at an 10.9 rebound clip. The season series gives So Cal the edge on paper, but Oklahoma won the most recent meeting by a single point, providing a reminder that these two clubs know each other very well and that the Eastern Conference championship may be decided by which team can make the biggest adjustment.