

Lakers in NBA finals after four years

Los Angeles Lakers rallied to beat defending-champions San Antonio Spurs and advance to the National Basketball Association (NBA) Finals after a gap of four years.

Kobe Bryant scored 39 points, 26 of them coming in the second half, as Lakers bridged a 17-point second-quarter deficit at the Staples Center in Los Angeles Thursday to beat the Spurs 100-92.

The Lakers will now play the winners of the Eastern Conference finals between the Boston Celtics and Pistons. The Celtics have a 3-2 lead and can wrap it up in Detroit with a win. The finals will start June 5.

This will be Lakers' 29th appearance in the finals in the franchise history and the first since 2004, when it lost in five games to the Detroit Pistons.

The Lakers won the last of their 14 NBA championships in 2002, when they took the title for a third straight year.

Pau Gasol added 12 points and 19 rebounds for the Lakers, and Lamar Odom had 13 points and 8 rebounds as Los Angeles won the best-of-seven Western Conference playoff series in 5 games.

Tim Duncan had a triple-double with 19 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists to lead San Antonio, while Tony Parker had 23 points. Michael Finley finished with 13 points for the Spurs, while Kurt Thomas and Brent Barry both had 11.

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