

## SPORTS



AP Photo/David Zalubowski

Denver Nuggets forward Nene, left, of Brazil, is fouled while driving the lane by Dallas Mavericks guard Jason Terry in the first quarter of Game 2 of an NBA Western Conference semifinal in Denver on Tuesday, May 5, 2009.

## Mavs out of answers, down 0-2 to Nuggets

JAIME ARON  
AP Sports Writer

**DALLAS (AP)** - Jason Terry is the Dallas Mavericks' mood-lifter, the guy who pumps up teammates and fans every chance he gets.

Yet after enduring a second straight pounding in Denver, Terry couldn't even fake being positive.

"Not tonight," he said, declining to be interviewed. "I don't have anything tonight."

The Mavericks went into this second-round series convinced they could hang with the Nuggets, pointing to three narrow losses in the regular season as proof of how close they were. Besides, they proudly noted, they were on their best roll of the season, having blown through the San Antonio Spurs in five games.

So far, Denver has toyed with Dallas. Long, strong and athletic throughout their roster, the Nuggets have made the Mavericks look like a club team they're warming up against on their way to the conference finals.

Both games have played out the same: Dallas playing well early, Denver grabbing control in the second quarter, things tightening up around the start of the fourth quarter. Then Carmelo Anthony and the Nuggets kick into an extra gear just as the Mavericks start wearing out, the gap between the teams exposed in a series of defensive stops that turn into electrifying baskets.

Denver is up 2-0 in the series and 6-0 for the season. For Dallas to advance, Dirk Nowitzki and friends must win four of the next five. Game 3 is Saturday in Dallas.

Returning home should help the Mavs, especially since they've won 17 of the last 18 at their arena. Of course, the Nuggets were the lone outsiders to win there.

"Do we need a perfect game?" point guard Jason Kidd said. "We've had some collapses in the fourth quarter twice now and they capitalized. ... I think we do get rattled, but the big thing is we've got to take care of the ball."

The Mavericks cut down their turnovers in Game 2 and were more physical than in the opener. But the result was the same. Now, with three days off before Game 3, Dallas coach Rick Carlisle has plenty of time to find other areas of emphasis.

Better yet for the Mavs, forward Josh Howard has several days to heal the right ankle sprain sustained in Game 1 and

that limited him to a few early minutes in Game 2.

"We'll just see how Mother Nature treats us here," Carlisle said. "He's been taking injections and doing everything else, whether it's his wrist or his ankle or his good ankle. If he can play, he'll play. I know that because that's what he's done all year for us."

Howard is the most Nuggets-like player in Dallas' rotation. Without him, the Mavs are left with Nowitzki, Terry ... and not much else. No other player is averaging 10 points this series. Kidd has offset 11 assists with 10 turnovers and the role players who came through against San Antonio hardly have been a factor.

The Nuggets, meanwhile, have five guys averaging at least 10 points. Nene set a career playoff high with 24 points in the opener, then topped it in Game 2. Chauncey Billups is averaging only 12 points, but his backup Anthony Carter is chipping in 8 more, making it 20 per game from the point guards.

Denver is 6-1 this postseason, with every win by at least 12 points and the loss by two. It's impressive to everyone but the Nuggets, who see room for improvement.

"It's unbelievable to say that, but we do have a window where we can get better," Billups said Wednesday. "Sometimes we play really hard but not really smart. But I think that comes with experience."

Denver coach George Karl notes that all his club has done against Dallas is protect home court. He's falling back on the old line about things changing once someone wins on the road.

"I'm not thinking this is as overbalanced and out of sync as (the scores indicate)," he said.

Then again, Karl also realizes how close he and the Nuggets are to reaching the conference finals; just winning their remaining home games would get Denver there for the first time since 1985. Karl last made it in 1993, while coaching Seattle.

"This is a stage where coaches get excited," he said. "It's easy. It's the best basketball, it's the best players, it's the best referees. Every night is a challenge. To have as much success as we've had, there's a reward to that. The reward is having a bigger challenge. The bigger challenge is going to start on Saturday afternoon."



Photos courtesy of David Barrack

Kayla Litton tags out an Otero base runner in the championship game on Sunday at Southside Park

## Lady Trojans fall in Region IX championship game

By MIKE SALBATO  
Special to The Chronicle-News

The final role for the 2008-09 Lady Trojan Softball team would be that of a bridesmaid and not as the bride, as they fell in the Region IX championship game losing to Otero Junior College by the score of 6-5.

Trinidad State (27-23) went 3-2 in the tournament defeating Dawson Community College 4-2, Lamar Community College 12-6, losing to Otero 9-1 and then defeating Western Nebraska 7-6 to face Otero again in the championship game.

In the championship game, Trinidad jumped out to a quick 1-0 lead when sophomore Tanisha Bradford led off the game with a single and scored on a single from freshman Leah Hanson. Otero would answer back with a run of their own and then take a 3-1 lead going into the fifth inning. Trinidad cut the lead to 3-2 when freshman Jessica Apodaca hit a double and scored off a single from Bradford. Otero increased their lead to 6-2 heading into the seventh inning. With two outs, Trinidad's Leah Hanson worked a bases loaded walk

making the score 6-4. Sophomore Nikole Morgan then hit a single past a diving Otero second baseman, scoring Tanisha Bradford from third. The tying run, Samantha Butler, was called out in a Matt Holiday like/did she touch the plate, bang-bang play at home to end the game.

"I am very proud of how my team played in this tournament," TSJC coach Steve Swazo said. "They believed they would be in that championship game and they made it, just the outcome of the game didn't go our way. They played as a team and played hard every inning and didn't quit. In my book, they had a great year despite not winning the title."

TSJC opened the tournament defeating Dawson Community College by the score of 4-2. In that game, sophomore pitcher Rachel Lovato picked up the win as Tanisha Bradford had the hot bat going 3-for-4 in the game. Alyse Billick, Leah Hanson, Julia Diehl had doubles in the game and Nikole Morgan added a triple in the victory.

In the second game of the

tournament, Trinidad faced top seed Lamar and came away with a 12-6 victory. In that game TSJC hit four homeruns. Leah Hanson hit two of the long balls and had 6 RBI's to lead the Trojans. Also hitting homeruns were Nikole Morgan and Tanisha Bradford as Julia Diehl picked up the victory on the hill.

In the winner's bracket, TSJC faced Otero and lost 9-1. This game was a lot closer than the score indicated as Otero used a 5-run sixth inning to break open a close game. Trinidad had its chances in the fourth and sixth innings with runners in scoring position but could not bring a run in. Julia Diehl and Leah Hanson each were 2-for-4 in the game.

On Saturday evening, Trinidad faced Western Nebraska in an elimination game and came away with a hard fought 7-6 win. The game was close throughout as each team countered with runs through five innings of play. The winning run for Trinidad came in the sixth inning when Samantha Butler led off the inning with a double and

scored off a single from Julia Diehl to give Trinidad a 7-6 lead. Winning pitcher Kelsey Apodaca kept the Lady Cougars in check the final two innings to advance Trinidad into the championship game. Nikole Morgan (2-for-3, 2 RBI) and Tanisha Bradford (3-for-4) had homeruns in the contest while Samantha Butler was 3-for-3 in the game and Leah Hanson was 3-for-4.

"These young ladies played their hearts out this whole tournament and this whole season," Swazo said. "They have nothing to be ashamed of and represented Trinidad State very well throughout the year. I am going to miss this sophomore bunch. In their two years here they accumulated 57 wins. I am excited to see some move on and play at the next level."

Julia Diehl (Metro State College), Samantha Butler (New Mexico Highlands University), Kayla Litton (Friends University) and Tanisha Bradford (University of Alabama A&M) have committed to play softball next year at these fine institutions.



The Trojans pose with their second place trophy.