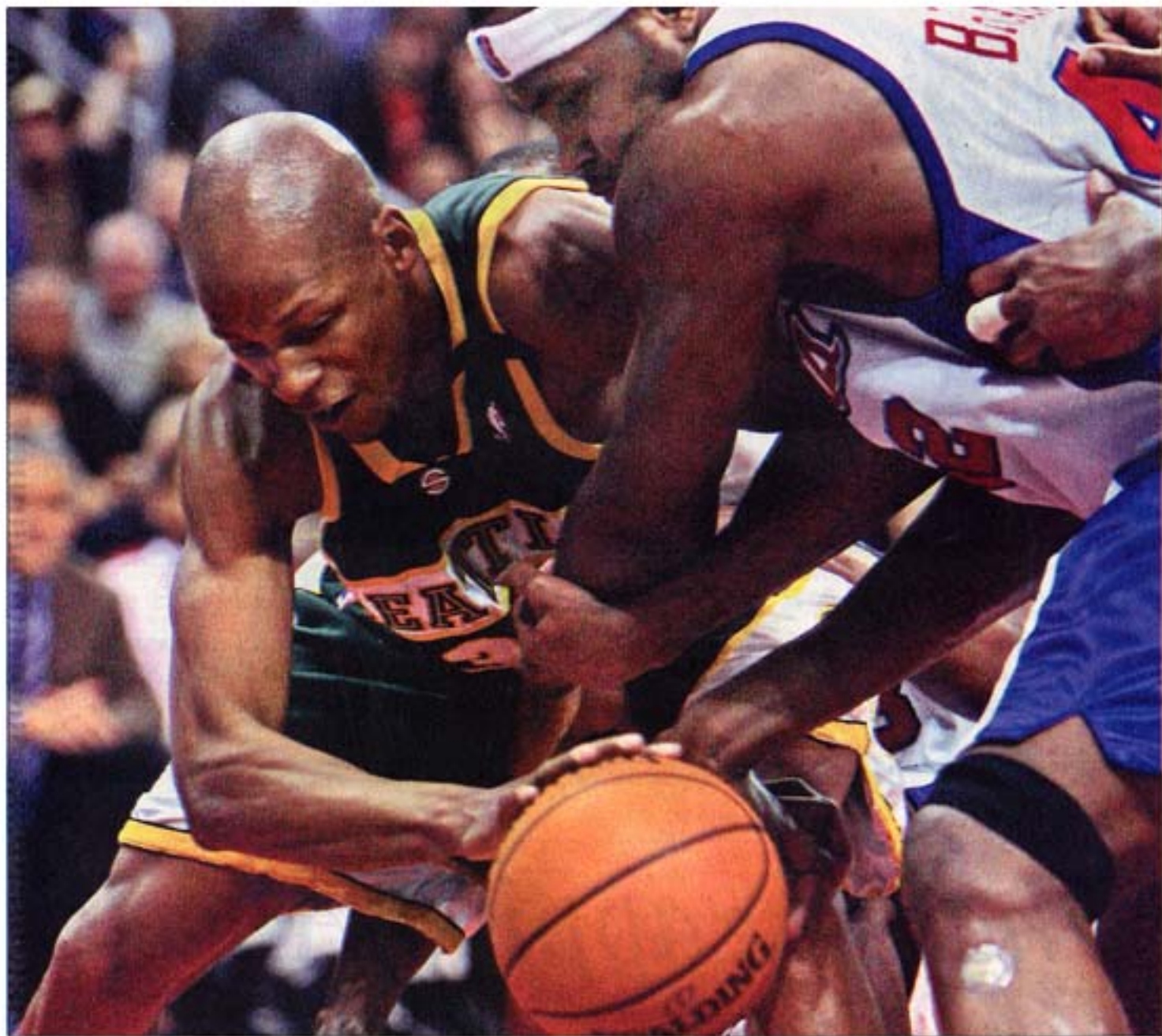


Los Angeles Times

SPORTS

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ALEX GALLARDO/Los Angeles Times

POSSESSING SPIRIT: Ray Allen of the SuperSonics, left, and Elton Brand of the Clippers do their best to control the ball.

Clippers step forward

J. A. ADANDE

This is what's known as a costly injury for everyone

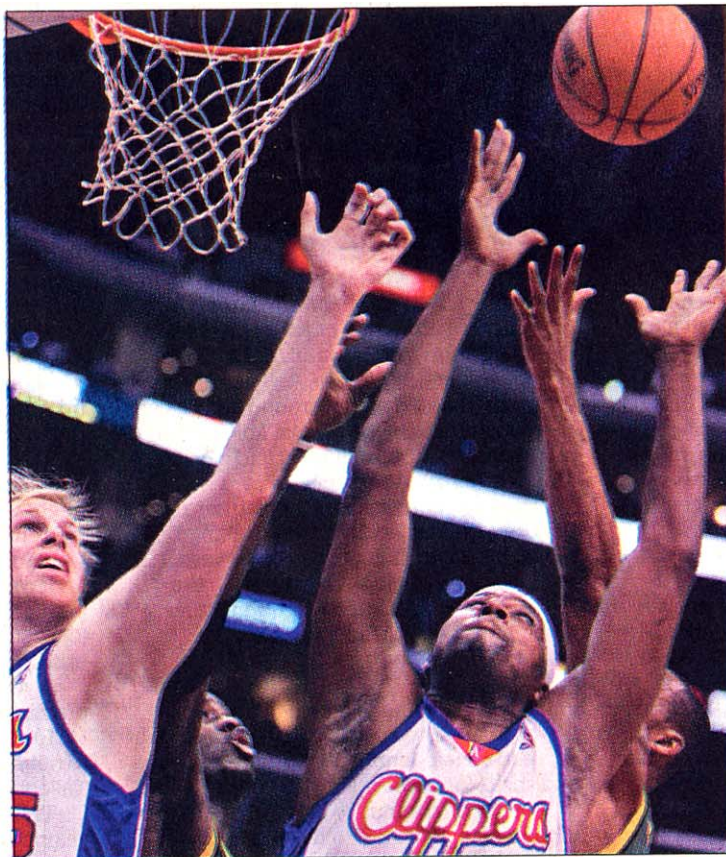
Watching Shaun Livingston blow out his left knee Monday night was the most heartbreaking scene since Bambi's mother got shot in the meadow.

If the sight of the likable Livingston writhing in pain wasn't discouraging enough, there's this harsh realization: The fate of the franchise hit the deck along with him.

The cold facts: Both sides could lose substantial money from this horrific injury.

As Livingston's displaced kneecap told Coach Mike Dunleavy what the MRI would confirm the next day — Livingston was done for the season — Dunleavy also thought about how well the young point guard had played in recent practices where he looked ready to make that long-awaited leap. He even allowed a "poor us" thought for the team. One other thought crossed his mind: Livingston's coming up on a contract year.

The Clippers can sign Livingston. [See Adande, Page D5]



ALEX GALLARDO/Los Angeles Times

RAISE YOUR HANDS: Clippers center Chris Kaman, left, and Brand appear in the best positions to grab a rebound.

Tonight's game: Clippers at Seattle, KeyArena, 7:30, TNT

Lakers report: Radmanovic is expected to be fined after lying to team about shoulder injury he suffered while snowboarding. **D4**

Clippers report: Team physician says age and work ethic are in Livingston's favor as he seeks opinions on fixing knee. **D5**

In their first game since losing Livingston for the season, they defeat Seattle, 96-91, their third win in a row. But Cassell suffers a strained groin.

By MARK HEISLER
Times Staff Writer

Oh by the way, the Clippers are on a winning streak.

It didn't feel that way when Shaun Livingston was lost during their victory over Charlotte on Monday, and it didn't look as if it was going to get any longer after they blew a 12-point lead Wednesday night over the Seattle SuperSonics before rallying to win their third game in a row, 96-91, at Staples Center.

Corey Maggette broke a 91-91 tie with 27 seconds left, jumping between two SuperSonics on a drive, getting the call while Seattle Coach Bob Hill protested, and making two free throws to put the Clippers ahead to stay.

Maggette and Elton Brand had 18 points each to lead the Clippers.

Sam Cassell, moving back into the starting lineup at age 37, had 16 points. However, as if to illustrate their predicament, he started the game with an abdominal pull, then strained his groin on a driving layup late in the game and is questionable for tonight's rematch in Seattle.

"We're pretty much a MASH [See Clippers, Page D4]