After trading Clint Capela to the Atlanta Hawks, the Houston Rockets were left with a gaping hole at starting center. Now it appears that the Houston Rockets will not be replacing the 4th leading rebounder in the league with another traditional big man. In their first game since trading Capela, the Rockets started 6’5 PJ Tucker at center against the Los Angeles Lakers. In Thursday's showdown against the Lakers, the Rockets became the first team since the 1963 Knicks to not play anyone taller than 6’6 in an entire NBA game.

In the Rocket’s first game with an unprecedentedly small lineup, they went on the road and defeated the Lakers, the team with the best record in the Western Conference. The Rockets Thursday night were even more impressive when you consider the fact that their best player, James Harden, only scored 14 points, which is 21 short of his per game average.

It was only one game, but Thursday's showdown against the Lakers should give you reason to believe that the Rockets can consistently win with their small lineup. Given that the Lakers have the league’s best big man in Anthony Davis, and Lebron James, who is almost unstoppable when driving to the basket, you’d think that they’d be the team that would best be able to exploit Houston's lack of size. Despite their apparently ridiculous advantage, the Lakers ended up losing on Thursday night. The Rockets aren’t just going to let teams post up PJ Tucker all game. When the ball gets thrown into the paint, the Rockets will send double teams which will make it much tougher on the opposing offense.

The Rockets will now have shooters on the floor at all times with Russell Westbrook and James Harden at all times. Because of that, the two dynamic guards will have more open driving lanes to the basket. Westbrook is at his best when driving to the basket. In his first game in this new-look lineup, Westbrook had 41 points, 8 rebounds, 5 assists while shooting 60% from the field. In January, Russell Westbrook averaged 32 points per game, 8 rebounds per game and 8 assists per game while shooting 52% from the field. With Russell Westbrook and James Harden playing at a high level, this small Rockets team can win an NBA championship.