

## Sports

# James floats in buzzer-beating dagger as Cavs stun Raptors

## Celtics edge 76ers to reach brink of NBA playoff sweep

WASHINGTON: LeBron James banked in a running floater as time expired to cap off a 38-point effort, and the Cleveland Cavaliers took a commanding 3-0 series lead with a dramatic 105-103 victory over the visiting Toronto Raptors on Saturday night at Quicken Loans Arena.

Kevin Love recorded 21 points and 16 rebounds as fourth-seeded Cleveland defeated Toronto for the ninth straight time during the postseason. Kyle Korver made four 3-pointers while scoring 18 points, George Hill had 12 points and Jeff Green tallied 11 for the Cavaliers.

Kyle Lowry had 27 points and seven assists for the top-seeded Raptors, who are one defeat away from being eliminated by Cleveland in the playoffs for the third straight season. Sidekick DeMar DeRozan had an off night with just eight points on 3-of-12 shooting and didn't play in the final quarter.

Game 4 of the Eastern Conference semifinal series is Monday in Cleveland. On the decisive play, James received the inbound pass with eight seconds left under the opposite basket. He drove the length of the floor, headed slightly to the left of the lane and smoothly kissed the midrange jumper off the glass.

"The game, down 1 or whatever the case may be, I live for those moments," James said. "Like I told y'all in the Indiana series, that mental clock of being a kid and kind of telling myself, '3, 2, 1' and making the noise of the net, that 'woosh' sound, I've been doing that since I was 6, 7, 8 years old. Maybe even before that."

James added seven assists, six rebounds and three steals in his latest stellar effort. "It's my job in the fourth (quarter) to close it," James said in a postgame interview with ESPN. "We could play so much better, but it was a gutsy win."

OG Anunoby scored 18 points and CJ Miles added 13 for Toronto, which committed 17 turnovers. Serge Ibaka had 11 points, eight rebounds and four blocked shots, and Jonas Valanciunas added 10 points and 11 rebounds for the Raptors.

Toronto recovered from a 17-point, third-quarter deficit to make it a one-possession game. Anunoby

drained a 3-pointer to tie it at 103 with eight seconds remaining before James reached into his extensive bag of tricks.

James opened the second half with a dunk to give Cleveland a 57-40 lead before Toronto answered with 12 consecutive points to move within five.

The Cavaliers again pushed the lead back into the double digits, and Love's three-point play made it 73-59 with 3:21 to play. Love scored nine straight Cleveland points, including two free throws that accounted for a 77-61 edge.

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The Raptors trailed by 14 entering the final stanza, but Lowry's 3-pointer and ensuing layup helped cut the Cavaliers' lead to 85-80 with 8:12 left. James scored the next five points to push the Cleveland lead right back to 10 points.

The Raptors eventually trimmed their deficit to 97-95 with 2:52 remaining thanks to Anunoby's 3-pointer and Lowry's two free throws. James scored 15 first-half points as the Cavaliers established a 55-40 advantage.

Cleveland led 16-4 less than seven minutes into the game as the Raptors missed 10 of their 12 shots. The Cavaliers later finished the half with a 16-2 surge to take the 15-point lead into the break.

DeRozan, who averaged 23 points per game in the regular season and was producing 25.8 points per game in the playoffs, never got going.

He said of sitting out down the stretch, "It was extremely hard. Extremely hard. I never want to be over there watching, especially the competitor I am. I just want to be out there helping my team way more than anything. So it definitely sucks to be watching. ... We've got to give credit to (the Cavaliers). We fought hard and gave ourselves a chance to win."

Jayson Tatum scored 24 points and Terry Rozier added 18 as the Boston Celtics beat Philadelphia 101-98 in overtime Saturday, reaching the brink of the NBA Eastern Conference Finals. The Celtics seized a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven second-round series and could complete a sweep of the 76ers by winning game four Monday at Philadelphia.



CLEVELAND: LeBron James #23 of the Cleveland Cavaliers battles with DeMar DeRozan #10 of the Toronto Raptors during the second half in Game Three of the Eastern Conference Semifinals during the 2018 NBA Playoffs at Quicken Loans Arena on Saturday in Cleveland, Ohio. Cleveland won the game 105-103 to take a 3-0 series lead. — AFP

In Washington, Jaylen Brown came off the bench to add 16 points for the Celtics while Al Horford contributed 13 points and Australian Aron Baynes grabbed 10 rebounds.

Joel Embiid had 22 points and 19 rebounds to lead the 76ers, while J.J. Redick added 18 points and Aussie playmaker Ben Simmons contributed 16 points, eight rebounds and eight assists.

A steal by Rozier set up a basket by Brown that gave

the Celtics an 89-87 lead with 1.8 seconds remaining in regulation time, but the 76ers equalized when Italy's Marco Belinelli sank a jumper off a pass from Simmons with 0.3 of a second remaining, sending the contest into overtime.

A Belinelli basket and Redick 3-pointer put the Sixers up 94-87, but the Celtics closed on a 12-4 run, Horford scoring the final five points to bring Boston the victory. — Agencies

## Golovkin destroys Martirosyan to retain WBA, WBC belts

LOS ANGELES: Gennady Golovkin equalled the record of 20 straight world middleweight title defences with a devastating second-round knockout of Vanes Martirosyan on Saturday to retain his WBA and WBC belts.

Golovkin ended the fight with a vicious series of right and left combinations that floored the heavy underdog Martirosyan, who appeared doomed from the outset of the hastily arranged fight at the StubHub Center. "The first round I was just looking, because I know he is a good fighter," the 36-year-old Golovkin said. "The second round it was true business." Martirosyan was in big trouble from the beginning of the second round as Golovkin rendered the challenger helpless by landing a right uppercut on the chin.

He followed with a few stinging jabs and then a full throttle left hook and straight right on the ropes that put Martirosyan down for good at 1:53 of the round. The American tried to get up before the 10 count but slumped forward, ending up face down on the canvas. Golovkin, who is boxing's longest-

reigning current world titleholder, is now unbeaten in 39 fights, including 34 by knockout.

Martirosyan was a last-minute replacement following the cancellation of the Kazakh's much anticipated rematch with Canelo Alvarez of Mexico. The rematch was cancelled because of Alvarez's two failed drug tests in February, followed by his suspension by the Nevada State Athletic Commission on April 18. Alvarez will be free to fight once his suspension ends in August. Saturday's event was moved from Las Vegas to south central Los Angeles and Golovkin fought for a fraction of the money he would have received for a fight against Alvarez.

With the victory he now joins Bernard Hopkins for the division record of 20 successful title defences. Golovkin (38-0-1, 34 KOs) is now in line to surpass Hopkins in the fall when he hopes to finally get that rematch with Alvarez. "I want everybody," said Golovkin. "It doesn't matter to me. I am still the champion .... guys come and take my belts."

The 31-year-old Martirosyan, who



CARSON: Gennady Golovkin poses with his belts with referee Jack Reiss after a second round knockout win over Vanes Martirosyan during the WBC-WBA Middleweight Championship at StubHub Center on Saturday in Carson, California. — AFP

normally fights at light middleweight, was completely outclassed as he stepped up a division to face the hard-hitting Golovkin. "It was like being hit by

a train," Martirosyan said. "That is the hardest puncher I have ever faced. He surprised me with his power. He is a hell of a fighter." — AFP

## Larsen, Ashok, Lopez top storm-hit LPGA Texas Classic

CHICAGO: Denmark's Nicole Broch Larsen seized a one-stroke lead with three birdies and no bogeys in the first 14 holes of her second round Saturday at the storm-hit LPGA Texas Classic. Only nine players finished their second rounds at The Colony before darkness fell on the event, which was trimmed to 36 holes by officials after heavy rain wiped out almost all play Thursday and Friday. Round one ended late Saturday.

Larsen, a 24-year-old Dane seeking her first LPGA title, opened with a four-under 67 and began on the back nine in round two, making birdies at the par-5 11th, par-4 17th and par-5 fourth holes to reach 7-under par with four holes to play in her second round. India's Aditi Ashok and Mexico's Gaby Lopez were at 6-under in their second rounds while South Koreans Jenny Shin and Park Sung-hyun had yet to start their final rounds after opening on 6-under 65.

Ashok, seeking her first LPGA title sank a 12-foot par putt at the par-3 14th

to stand on 6-under when play was halted, also needing to finish four holes on Sunday. After answering a bogey at the third with a birdie at the fourth, Ashok made five birdies in six holes to leap into contention for her first LPGA victory.

The 20-year-old from Bangalore birdied the par-3 seventh and par-5 eighth before closing the front side with a bogey, then began the back side with three birdies in a row.

Lopez, who fired a first-round 68, made a day-ending birdie at the par-5 11th to reach 6-under after opening the back nine with a bogey. She began the second-round bogey-birdie but followed with birdies at the fourth, fifth and eighth. A pack of 11 players shared sixth on 4-under, including five players who will have to play 18 holes today-China's Liu Yu, Germany's Sandra Gal, American Jane Park and South Koreans Kim Seiyoun and Ko Jin-youn. Six others had from three to six holes remaining in their second round, including Canada's



THE COLONY: Aditi Ashok of India plays her tee shot at the eighth hole during the second round of the 2018 Volunteers of America LPGA Texas Classic at Old American Golf Club on in The Colony, Texas. — AFP

Brooke Henderson, American Katie Burnett and Australian Minjee Lee through 15 holes, Thailand's Moriya

Jutanugarn and South Korean Chun In-gee after 13 holes and American Mo Martin after 12. — AFP

## Bellew beats Haye again in British heavyweight grudge match

LONDON: Tony Bellew appeared to have all but ended David Haye's career with a fifth-round stoppage win over his rival British heavyweight in their grudge re-match in London on Saturday. The pair had become as well-known for their pre-match dust-ups and verbal taunts as their boxing but there was no denying the comprehensive manner of Bellew's second successive victory over the 37-year-old Haye. "Tony boxed a great fight," Haye told Sky Box Office. "He did some really clever stuff. He boxed really good. I didn't, plain and simple. He had a great game plan and I had no answer."

"You have to let your fists do the talking, it didn't go my way even though I'm fully healthy. I'm taking nothing away from." An emotional Bellew said: "David Haye is an amazing fighter, he just got caught in a slugfest. He's a great fighter, he has got crazy power but speed and power always decreases. He is a legend, a credit to the sport and I'm just happy I've got the win against the odds."

Bellew was only a light-heavyweight when Haye was at the peak of his career as the World Boxing Association heavyweight champion. Haye had billed this non-title bout as the make or break contest of a fading career, having been stopped by Bellew, two years younger at 35, in the 11th round after suffering an Achilles injury when the pair met in March last year.

But Saturday's bout at London's O2 Arena rarely looked like lasting as long. In the third round, Bellew twice sent Haye to the canvas thanks to a pair of powerful right-hand punches. The bell saved Haye from further punishment that round and he tried to regroup in the fourth.

The end, however, was near and with Haye desperately looking for the knockout blow that could have turned the contest on its head, he was open to attack. As both boxers swung, it was Bellew who landed with a powerful left hook that sent Haye tumbling to the deck. He managed to regain his feet but referee Howard Foster was so concerned about his ability to defend himself, he then stopped the fight two minutes and 14 seconds into the fifth round.

Haye had hoped a win on Saturday might propel him to a lucrative bout with Britain's reigning world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua, but that dream was ended in brutal fashion by Bellew. — AFP