

Sports

Penguins rally for wild win

PITTSBURGH: Kris Letang's one-timer from the right circle with 3:06 left in regulation broke a tie for good Wednesday to give the Pittsburgh Penguins a wild 8-6 win over the visiting Vancouver Canucks. The Penguins erased a three-goal deficit in the third, a period that featured a total of eight goals, six by Pittsburgh. Matt Murray gave up four goals on 14 shots before being pulled. Tristan Jarry made six saves on eight shots. Pittsburgh's Evgeni Malkin had two goals, including an empty-netter, and three assists. Jake Guentzel had two goals and two assists, Bryan Rust a goal and three assists, and Dominik Kahun and Zach Aston-Reese also scored for the Penguins. J.T. Miller and Adam Gaudette each scored twice, Elias Pettersson and Jake Virtanen each had a goal and assist, and Quinn Hughes had three assists for Vancouver.

BRUINS 2, SENATORS 1

Brad Marchand and Zdeno Chara scored third-period goals as Boston rallied to top host Ottawa and post a fifth consecutive victory. The veteran Bruins duo scored 3 1/2 minutes apart to erase a 1-0 lead that the Senators grabbed in the first minute of the third period. Goalie Tuukka Rask stopped 33 of 34 shots for Boston, which won both games of its back-to-back and beat Ottawa for the second time. The Senators' Thomas Chabot opened the scoring in the first minute of the third period.

FLAMES 3, SABRES 2 (OT)

Elias Lindholm scored 1:17 into overtime as Calgary salvaged the finale of its four-game road trip with a victory against Buffalo. The Flames, who went 2-1-1 on their road swing, were without coach Bill Peters, who is being investigated by the team and the NHL after allegedly using racial slurs against one of his players a decade ago in the minor leagues. Associate coach Geoff Ward took command of Calgary's bench. TJ Brodie and Matthew Tkachuk also scored for the Flames, who won for just the second time in their past nine games (2-5-2). Calgary goaltender David Rittich made 34 saves. Jimmy Vesey

and Victor Olofsson scored for the Sabres.

MAPLE LEAFS 6, RED WINGS 0

Andreas Johnsson had two goals and an assist, Frederik Andersen made 25 saves to notch the shutout, and visiting Toronto rolled past reeling Detroit. The Leafs are 3-0-0 since Sheldon Keefe replaced Mike Babcock as head coach. Tyson Barrie, William Nylander and John Tavares each had a goal and an assist for the Maple Leafs. Travis Dermott also scored for Toronto. Detroit's winless streak increased to seven games (0-5-2). Red Wings goaltender Jimmy Howard left the game in the opening period due to injury. He was replaced by Jonathan Bernier, who was battling an illness. Bernier made 37 saves on 40 shots after Howard made 11 saves on 14 shots.

RANGERS 3, HURRICANES 2

Mika Zibanejad scored a power-play goal in his return from an upper-body injury, and Henrik Lundqvist made 41 saves as New York built a three-goal lead in the opening period and held on to defeat visiting Carolina. Zibanejad scored his fifth goal of the season but the first since getting a hat trick at Ottawa on Oct. 5. Brendan Smith and Fox also scored for the Rangers, who won a third consecutive game for the first time this season. In Lundqvist was appearing in his 1,000th career appearance for the Rangers, counting the regular season and postseason. Ryan Dzingel and Warren Foegele scored in the second period for Carolina, which is 1-14-3 in its past 18 trips to Madison Square Garden. Despite the loss, the Hurricanes are 6-2-0 in their last eight games.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 4, PREDATORS 3 (OT)

Paul Stastny scored at 1:52 of overtime after teammate Max Pacioretty had tied the game with three-tenths of a second left in regulation as visiting Vegas rallied over Nashville. Vegas got into overtime by pulling goaltender Malcolm Subban for an extra attacker with 1:05 remaining, and Pacioretty tied it



MONTREAL: Nick Cousins #21 of the Montreal Canadiens and Torey Krug #47 of the Boston Bruins skate for the puck while goaltender Jaroslav Halak #41 defends the net during the second period at the Bell Centre in Montreal, Canada. —AFP

with a shot from the bottom of the right circle off a feed from Mark Stone that just beat the buzzer. Pacioretty, Stone and Reilly Smith each had a goal and an assist, and Schmidt added two assists for Vegas, which snapped a three-game losing streak as well as a five-game road losing streak. Mikael Granlund, Ryan Ellis and Matt Duchene were the Predators' goal-scorers.

KINGS 4, ISLANDERS 1

Dustin Brown, Jeff Carter, Matt Roy and Alex Iafallo scored goals as Los Angeles overcame a brief first-period deficit to earn a victory over visiting New York. Jonathan Quick had 24 saves as the Kings won for just the second time in their last five games and earned the victory after losing consecutive

games at home. Derick Brassard scored a goal for the Islanders, who not only saw their 17-game point streak end Monday at Anaheim, but they lost all three games in their trip to California.

FLYERS 3, BLUE JACKETS 2

Tyler Pitlick, Scott Laughton and Claude Giroux each scored a goal and Philadelphia got a rare win in regulation in Columbus. It was the Flyers' first road win in Columbus in regulation since Dec. 13, 2005. The Flyers also won for just the second time in the last 15 games in Columbus. Nick Foligno and Seth Jones had one goal apiece for the Blue Jackets, who had won four of five entering this game. Blue Jackets goaltender Joonas Korpisalo made 19 saves but had his four-game winning streak snapped. —Reuters

Pacquiao: Philippines scouts hunting for boxing's next big thing

MANILA: In the boxing-obsessed Philippines, scores of young fighters dream of becoming the next Manny Pacquiao, but it takes a sharp eye and vast experience to pick out a potential world champion. That expertise comes from the scouts and trainers who scour amateur matches at dusty town "fiestas", rely on spotters' referrals or size up hopefuls as young as eight training in well-worn gyms. They are the lesser known but vital cogs in the Philippines' boxing machine, which has produced dozens of world champion fighters, many of whom were born into poverty.

It's a risky way to make a living — some coaches have faced ruin when the fighters they have backed, pouring money into their training and upkeep, didn't win. But when victory comes, the pay-off can be big, or at least enough to keep going in the sport they love. The shining example is, of course, Pacquiao. Born into a poor family, he quit school at 14 and ended up on the street. Pacquiao, now also a Philippine senator, declared assets worth some \$59 million in 2018. His career, including an unparalleled eight world championships in different weight divisions, is a tempting incentive to boys born into similarly bleak circumstances.

While in real life they may be impoverished and ignored, in the boxing world they are a precious element to be forged into winners. "We, the coaches, are looking for boxers who would become the next Manny Pacquiao so we teach them everything, including discipline and humility," said Anthony Ornopia, a former boxer who is now a trainer.

Spotting them is more art than science, but the scouts are looking for

more than just the ability to pummel opponents with their fists. "The number one trait I look for in a boxer is the attitude," trainer Joven Jimenez told AFP, saying his fighters need to be "determined, obedient and disciplined". "It's a bonus if the boxer looks good, too," he quipped, saying it helps in the promotion of a match.

A dozen fighters train under his guidance in a rough outdoor camp south of the capital Manila, spending hours a day sparring and lifting weights. Jimenez's star, and partner in the gym, is 27-year-old Jerwin Ancajas, who is set for an IBF junior bantamweight title defence in December.

The boxers are a significant investment — and gamble — as they are fed, housed and given a modest allowance. Years of training expenses and no wins drained Jimenez's savings, and by 2013 he was forced to sell his properties to stay afloat.

But exercising the same determination they demand of their fighters, Jimenez and Ancajas kept going — even if they had to train in vacant lots and in the street. Then in 2016 came what they had hoped and prayed for: Ancajas's IBF junior bantamweight belt. A defence of the title a year later netted enough cash to invest in their own gym.

The enormous popularity of the sweet science in the Philippines means scores of children gravitate to gyms, but just a handful stick it out. "Out of 10 children, there will only be one or two of them who really wants to pursue boxing," said trainer and coach Edito Villamor.

"I hope just one of two of them will (succeed)," he added. "Just one or two of them and we're good." One of the hotspots of boxing in the Philippines is Pacquiao's hometown, General Santos City in the nation's south.

Regular tournaments put plenty of contenders on display, and serve as a magnet for fighters from other areas. "We look for the potential of the boxer whether he wins or loses in a fight," said promoter JC Manangquil of Sanman Promotions, which has 40 fighters including 12 who have won international titles. —AFP

India's Mirza set for tennis comeback

NEW DELHI: Indian tennis star Sania Mirza yesterday announced her return to competitive tennis at the Hobart International in January, two years after taking a maternity break. The 33-year-old, who last played at the China Open in October 2017, will team up with Ukraine's Nadiia Kichenok — ranked 38 in the WTA doubles chart. Mirza, who married former Pakistan cricket captain Shoaib Malik, gave birth to her first child — a son the couple named Izhaan. "I am playing in Hobart, then I am playing the Australian Open," Mirza was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India news agency. "I am planning to play a tournament in Mumbai, which is a \$25,000 (ITF women's event) next month, but I am 50-50 about it, so let's see how my wrist behaves. We will see, but Hobart and Australian Open (for sure)." She added that she had experienced "a lot of change" after having a baby. "Your routine and sleep pattern changes. I (now) feel fit, my body is where it used to be before I had the baby," Mirza said. The Hobart WTA takes place between January 11-18 and is a key lead-in tournament to the Australian Open. Mirza, regarded as India's best-ever women's tennis player, will partner American Rajeev Ram for the mixed doubles at the Australian Open. Mirza in 2005 became the first Indian to win a WTA tournament singles title. —AFP



Sania Mirza