

**14** Gritty Williamson lifts NZ after early Pakistan strike



**15** Oldest Olympic champion Agnes Keleti to turn 100



**15** Lakers rout Mavericks as Nets, Bucks and Heat roll



## Man United miss out on second

Aston Villa soar into English Premier League top six



**LEICESTER:** Leicester City's English striker Jamie Vardy (center) shoots to score their second goal during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Manchester United at King Power Stadium in Leicester yesterday. — AFP

**LONDON:** A late Axel Tuanzebe own goal prevented Manchester United moving up to second in the Premier League after a 2-2 draw at Leicester, as Aston Villa moved into the top six with victory over Crystal Palace yesterday. A share of the spoils between the sides in second and third at the King Power Stadium means Chelsea have the chance to move into second when they visit Arsenal later, with the Gunners desperately in need of a win to ease their fears of a relegation battle at the other end of the table.

United missed out on equalling a Premier League record of 11 straight away wins as for once this season they paid for not finishing strongly. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men had come from

behind in each of their previous away league games this season, but twice went in front through Marcus Rashford midway through the first half and Bruno Fernandes 11 minutes from time. "One point is not the worst result but we are disappointed we didn't get away with three," said Solskjaer.

"We had loads of big chances and we could've finished it off. They are a very dangerous side." Harvey Barnes's blistering strike leveled for Leicester before half-time and United were undone by Jamie Vardy's movement in the box late on as the veteran striker latched onto Ayoze Perez's cross and his shot deflected in off the unfortunate Tuanzebe. "It's important for the development of us as a

team and as a squad that we can come from behind against a really, really good side, a top side, and get the result," said Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers.

### Villa transformed

Villa's transformation from just staying up on the final day of last season to contending for Europe continued as they held on a man down for the full second half to beat Palace 3-0.

The Eagles were thrashed 7-0 by Liverpool last weekend and got off to another dreadful start as Bertrand Traore turned in the rebound after Vicente Guaita saved Ollie Watkins's first effort. A tussle between Tyrone Mings and Wilfried Zaha resulted in a yellow card

for both and moments later when Mings blocked off Zaha, the England international was dismissed in first-half stoppage time. However, Villa soaked up the pressure and the 10 men extended their lead when Kortney Hause forced the ball home from close range after Watkins's header came off the bar.

Watkins also played a part in the third as he teed up Anwar El Ghazi to fire in off the far post for his fourth goal in four games. Fulham edged to within a point of safety with a 0-0 draw at home with Southampton.

The Londoners were without manager Scott Parker as he was isolating due to a family member testing positive for coronavirus. However, Fulham did their

absent boss proud as they matched a Southampton side flying high at the other end of the table.

Fulham needed a sensational save from Alphonse Areola to claw away James Ward-Prowse's first-half free-kick, while Shane Long and Theo Walcott had late goals ruled out for offside for the visitors, who missed the killer instinct of the injured Danny Ings. Everton also have the chance to move into second behind Merseyside rivals Liverpool later on Boxing Day when they visit winless Sheffield United. Manchester City are also in action at home to Newcastle, badly needing to win to keep their title hopes alive as they trail Liverpool by eight points with a game in hand. — AFP

## Kamara runs for six touchdowns as NFL Saints rip Vikings

**WASHINGTON:** Alvin Kamara ran for 155 yards and an NFL record-tying six touchdowns to lead the New Orleans Saints in routing Minnesota 52-33 on Friday in an NFL Christmas contest. Kamara carried 22 times and caught three passes for 17 yards while scoring on runs of 40, 7, 6, 5, 3 and 1 yards then credited his offensive line blockers for opening holes in the Vikings defensive line. "It's a good day," Kamara said. "The O-line, kudos to them. They get the game ball for sure. I did a small part. They did the rest." Kamara matched the all-time NFL record for rushing touchdowns in a game set by Ernie Nevers of the Chicago Cardinals in 1929 in a 40-6 victory over the Chicago Bears.

The Saints (11-4) clinched a fourth consecutive NFC South division title, having already secured their place in the NFL playoffs, while the Vikings fell to 6-9 and were eliminated from post-season contention. "We still have got so much more room to grow," Kamara



**NEW ORLEANS:** New Orleans Saints players celebrate a touchdown during the fourth quarter against the Minnesota Vikings at Mercedes-Benz Superdome on December 25, 2020. — AFP

said. "Every week we're looking to get better. We want to do more. We're tasting greatness. We've still got a long way to go." Kamara has 21 touchdowns this season, including a team-record 15 rushing touchdowns. He opened the scoring with a 40-yard touchdown run but the Vikings answered on the next possession on Dalvin Cook's 15-yard touchdown run.

Kamara's 1-yard touchdown run capped a 66-yard Saints march and Wil Lutz kicked a 30-yard field goal to give New Orleans a 17-7 edge early in the

second quarter. Minnesota's Mike Boone responded with a 4-yard touchdown run but Kamara scored on a 5-yard run with 38 seconds remaining in the second quarter to lift the Saints ahead 24-14 at halftime.

A deflected Drew Brees pass was intercepted by the Vikings' Hardy Nickerson, giving Minnesota the ball at the Saints' 18-yard line, and that set up a 2-yard touchdown pass from Kirk Cousins to Irv Smith, although a missed conversion kick left the visitors trailing 24-20. — AFP

## Breaking the ice: Israel-UAE hockey match makes history

**JERUSALEM:** In the world of ice hockey, the Bat Yam Chiefs and Dubai Mighty Camels are big unknowns. Yet both clubs have written a little page of history in recent days, taking part in the first sports match between teams from Israel and the United Arab Emirates. The Israeli city of Bat Yam, south of Tel Aviv, on the shores of the Mediterranean, is better known for its sandy beaches, an idyllic climate and its retired Mossad agents, than for its ice hockey club.

Indeed, Bat Yam doesn't even have an ice rink. Yet the town does have The Chiefs - the same name as the failing team that finds success in the 1970s film Slap Shot, a comedy classic for ice hockey - which played two matches last week against the Mighty Camels in Dubai. In September, the UAE became only the third Arab country to normalize ties with Israel, following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, signing the deal in a ceremony at the White House. Before this agreement, cyclists with dual nationality - including Israeli - had already

travelled to the Emirates. But the ice hockey clash, with two matches played on December 18 and 19, was the "first game" played by an Israeli team on Emirati soil, the organizers say.

They even received the blessing of Gary Bettman, commissioner of The National Hockey League (NHL). "We are proud of the fact that hockey can bring people together," Bettman said, in a video message, in which he sent "greetings for this most historic occasion... the first professional match between a team from Israel and a team from the Emirates." Bettman, who heads the professional ice hockey league in North America, said he hoped it would be the "first of many such events".

"The attitude was friendly because it was the first match between teams from the two countries," Josh Greenberg, co-organizer of the matches and a player for The Chiefs said. Bat Yam Chiefs won both the games. After the "first leg", the Israeli club now wants to welcome their sporting rivals for a return match. "Eventually the Dubai Camels will come to Israel to play a game here," said Greenberg, an Israeli from the United States. "There is no timeline yet - it all depending on COVID."

Israel currently has three ice hockey arenas - in Holon, where the Bat Yam Chiefs train near Tel Aviv, Metula in the north of Israel and a new ice rink in Tvunot near Jerusalem - but Greenberg thinks even bigger. — AFP