

CELTICS CLAIM TOP SEED IN THE EASTERN CONFERENCE

PACERS, BULLS GRAB PLAYOFF SPOTS

BOSTON: Gerald Green scored 18 points as the Boston Celtics clinched their first Eastern Conference title in nine years with a 112-94 win over the Milwaukee Bucks on the final night of the NBA regular season. The Celtics finished with a 53-29 record as they claimed the top seed in the East for the first since the 2007-08 season, when they won the last of their NBA best 17 championships. Green scored 10 of his 18 points during a 25-2 fourth quarter surge by the Celtics on Wednesday, as there was plenty to be decided on the last night of the regular season.

The win, and a loss by the Cleveland Cavaliers earlier in the evening, gives Boston home court advantage through the first three rounds of the postseason. The Cavaliers could have taken the No. 1 seed in the East with a combination of a Cleveland win and a loss by the Celtics. However, Cleveland waved the white flag Wednesday as they sat out their stars, including LeBron James, in their final game against the Toronto Raptors.

Norman Powell tallied 25 points to power the Raptors to a 98-83 win over the Cavs. Cleveland is 0-8 without James in the lineup. "I think there's a pride in being consistent," coach Brad Stevens said. "It's a real positive. We'll talk about what was accomplished later. We'll focus on whenever we play this weekend to get ready." The Celtics will face the Chicago Bulls in the first round of the playoffs while the Cavaliers battle the Indiana Pacers, who routed the Atlanta Hawks 104-86.

The Bulls manhandled the Brooklyn Nets 112-73 to help punch their ticket to the postseason. Jae Crowder and Amir Johnson each had 16 points, Isaiah Thomas finished with 13 points and eight assists, and Al Horford added 12 points for Boston. "It's very special to me. I've never been a number one seed," said Thomas, who was picked last in the 2011 NBA entry draft but finished third in the NBA in scoring with 28.9 points per game behind Russell Westbrook and James Harden.

Spencer Hawes and Michael Beasley each had 15 points for Milwaukee, who had already claimed the sixth seed in the East following a Hawks victory Tuesday. Rashad Vaughn had 14 points and Malcolm Brogdon added 11 for the Bucks, who will face the third-seeded Raptors in the first round. Thomas, who extended his franchise record by making a three pointer in his 57th straight game, promised the Boston crowd a postseason they would remember. "We got a big playoff run coming for you guys," he said.

Bulls 112, Nets 73

Jimmy Butler scored a team-high 25 points as the Chicago Bulls clinched a berth in the Eastern Conference playoffs with a 112-73 victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Wednesday. Rookie forward Paul Zipser added a career-high 21 points off the bench as the Bulls (41-41) earned the number eight seed. They will meet top seeded Boston. Archie Goodwin scored 20 points to lead the Nets, who benched a half-dozen players in their final game. Brooklyn (20-62) finished with the worst record in the NBA and the fourth-most losses in franchise history.

Pacers 104, Hawks 86

Paul George tallied 32 points and 11 rebounds, and Jeff Teague added 19 points and seven assists before rolling his left ankle late in the fourth quarter, leading Indiana to a playoff-



MIAMI: Miami Heat guard Josh Richardson (left) and Washington Wizards guard Trey Burke battle for a loose ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game on Wednesday, April 12, 2017. — AP

clinching victory over Atlanta. The Pacers earned the seventh seed in the Eastern Conference and will open against the second-seeded Cleveland Cavaliers. Teague went directly to the locker room after being injured with 2:06 to play. Having clinched the number five spot in the East on Tuesday, Atlanta rested Kent Bazemore, Tim Hardaway Jr, Dwight Howard, Paul Millsap and Dennis Schroder. The Hawks will begin the playoffs against the fourth-seeded Washington Wizards.

Jazz 101, Spurs 97

Gordon Hayward scored 14 points and Rudy Gobert, George Hill and Shelvin Mack added 13 apiece to help Utah extend its home winning streak to a season-best nine games with a victory over San Antonio. LaMarcus Aldridge scored 18 points and Kawhi Leonard and Tony Parker added 14 apiece to lead the Spurs, who have lost four straight as they prepare to open the playoffs against the Memphis Grizzlies. The fifth-seeded Jazz will oppose the fourth-seeded Los Angeles Clippers in a first-round Western Conference playoff series.

Heat 110, Wizards 102

Goran Dragic scored 28 points but Miami fell short of reaching the playoffs despite a win over Washington. The Heat became the first team in league history to finish .500 or above after being at least 12 games below parity. Miami reversed an 11-30 record the first half of the season with a 30-11 finish. Trey Burke scored 27 points for the playoff-bound Wizards, who played without John Wall and Bradley Beal. Otto Porter Jr, who was inactive in Washington's previous two games, scored 11 points in 15 minutes.

Raptors 98, Cavaliers 83

Norman Powell led all scorers with 25 points as Toronto pounded Cleveland. Cleveland was without LeBron James, Kyrie Irving and Kevin Love. Iman Shumpert was the Cavs' leading scorer with 11 points. The Cavaliers will be the second seed entering the Eastern Conference playoffs. The Raptors are the third seed.

Magic 113, Pistons 109

Aaron Gordon had 32 points and 12 rebounds in leading Orlando over Detroit. Elfrid Payton scored 21 points, including six in the final 1:10 to ice the victory. The Pistons trailed throughout the night and never led by more than two points.

Knicks 114, 76ers 113

Maurice Ndour's step-back jumper with 18.3 seconds remaining lifted New York over Philadelphia. The Knicks trailed by nine entering the fourth quarter and tied the score three times before Ndour's game-winner. Carmelo Anthony, who may have played his final game with New York, scored 17 points.

Mavericks 100, Grizzlies 93

Dallas snapped a five-game losing streak with a season-ending win over Memphis. Nicolas Brussino scored 15 points and Devin Harris had 15 points and eight assists off the bench for the Mavericks. The Grizzlies will be the seventh seed in the Western Conference playoffs, where they will meet the second-seeded San Antonio Spurs in the first round.

Rockets 123, Timberwolves 118

James Harden recorded his 22nd triple-double and Houston tuned up for the post-season

with a win over Minnesota. Harden posted 27 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists to pace a balanced scoring attack for the Rockets (55-27), whose win total matched the fourth-most in team history.

Nuggets 111, Thunder 105

Nikola Jokic scored 29 points to lead Denver over Oklahoma City. Jokic went 9-of-14 from the field and 11-of-14 from the free-throw line and had 16 rebounds and eight assists. Jamal Murray added 27 points for the Nuggets.

Clippers 115, Kings 95

It took until the final night of the season to make it official but Los Angeles secured home-court advantage for the first round of the playoffs with a win over Sacramento. DeAndre Jordan tallied 18 points and 17 rebounds. J.J. Redick added 18 points, and Chris Paul 17 for the Clippers, who will host the Utah Jazz in the opening round.

Warriors 109, Lakers 94

Kevin Durant stamped himself ready for the post-season with 29 points in 27 minutes, lifting Golden State over Los Angeles. Stephen Curry added 20 points for the Warriors, who will begin the playoffs with home-court advantage in any matchup based on their best-in-basketball 67-15 regular-season record.

Pelicans 103, Trail Blazers 100

New Orleans erased a nine-point deficit in the final eight minutes to beat Portland. Jordan Crawford came off the bench for 15 points and Cheick Diallo contributed 12 points and 16 rebounds for the Pelicans, who ended a five-game losing streak. — Agencies