

NHL SEEKS TO PUT JOHN SCOTT ALL-STAR ROW IN THE PAST

LOS ANGELES: The National Hockey League's all-star game has returned to showcasing the league's top talent after last year's controversy in which fans voted enforcer John Scott to the Pacific Division team.

Today's game at Staples Center arena in Los Angeles doesn't have the strife from a year ago because the NHL established the so-called "John Scott Rule." Last year, fans could nominate any player in the league. But this year, the NHL changed that by not allowing players on the ballot who had been demoted to their minor league teams unless it was

for short term conditioning purposes. Scott, who is known more for pounding on the heads of his opponents than putting pucks in the net, was chosen captain of the Pacific team despite scoring just four goals in parts of six seasons heading into his first all-star appearance. The league tried but failed to exclude him.

This year instead of the focus being on the brute strength of the game's ice guardians it is on the youth and speed of second year star Connor McDavid — the Pacific Division captain-and rookies Auston

Matthews and Patrik Laine, the first two selections in the 2016 draft.

"It's a huge honor, you want to soak it all in," said Matthews when named to the team earlier this month. The legitimate best of the best will be facing them up for the three-on-three contest between representatives of all four divisions, including league-leading scorer Sidney Crosby, reigning MVP Patrick Kane and last year's top defenseman Drew Doughty. The usual slew of last-minute defections are absent, only Pittsburgh's Evgeni Malkin will miss the game due to an

injury. The biggest controversy this year centers around the absence of John Tortorella.

The Columbus Blue Jackets head coach is skipping the game because his adult son's pit bull is sick. Tortorella also had to miss coaching in the Blue Jackets' game against the Nashville Predators on Thursday. He had been picked to coach the Metropolitan Division all-star team.

The game will return to last year's three-on-three tournament with the format dividing the game into three 20-minute contests. The rosters are composed of 11 players-

six forwards, three defensemen and two goaltenders. The league is moving away from the traditional five-on-five format in an attempt to create more scoring for the fans.

The winners of each semi-final game will meet in the tournament final to determine the overall champion. The fan-elected captains are McDavid, Crosby, Nashville's P.K. Subban and Montreal's Carey Price. "It's a little bit more exciting than when I went the first time," said Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Justin Faulk. Columbus skater Cam Atkinson was named to replace Malkin. — AFP

WANG WINGS WAY INTO QATAR MASTERS LEAD

DOHA: South Korea's Wang Jeung-Hun broke from the pack at the Qatar Masters yesterday, shooting a faultless seven-under-par 65 to lead by three shots going into the final day.

The 21-year-old hit three birdies on the opening nine and followed that up with four more after the turn to card the lowest score of the third round. He finished on fifteen-under-par, three ahead of his playing partner Jaco Van Zyl of South Africa and Spain's Nacho Elvira, both of who shot rounds of 68. One shot further back is South Africa's Thomas Aiken, who scored 69. All four had started the day on eight-under-par.

"My iron player is really good today and my putting was really good," said Wang, who already has two European Tour victories to his name. "So I shoot seven-under and I'm so happy I don't make any bogeys today." He added: "I don't want to think about winning, I just want to focus on my own game." "My irons and putting (have been) really good this week. So, I think I have a good chance to win."

Cheered on by a sizeable South Korean contingent, Wang showed no nerves especially towards the end of his round, where he birdied 16 and 18, and narrowly missed another chance on the 15th.

It was testament to the quality of Wang's play that he was able to put clear daylight

between himself and the rest of the field after yesterday started with nine players sharing the lead, unprecedented for a European Tour competition heading into day three. There were 44 players within four shots of the lead heading into Saturday, that has now been whittled down to four. Van Zyl said he was "excited" about the final day and was sure he had a chance of victory. "Obviously it's a good score but I really felt like I left quite a lot out there," he said. "I hit it quite nicely today and just couldn't capitalise. "I'll obviously try and get them back tomorrow."

Wang secured his first European Tour victory last year at the Hassan II Golf Trophy, where he beat Elvira in a play-off. A similar scenario is not out of the question tomorrow. Elvira birdied the last two holes and would have been closer to the South Korean but for a disastrous double bogey at the par-four 15th, following a wayward drive. "I'm three shots back. I'm happy with where I am," said Elvira.

"I think tomorrow is going to be a great day." Beyond the top four is a group of five players on ten-under-par including England's Nathan Kimsey and Spain's Rafa Cabrera Bello, who both carded rounds of 66 to move up more than 20 places in the field. France's Romain Langasque and Mike Lorenzo-Vera are a shot further back alongside Ireland's Paul Dunne. — AFP

TIGER WOODS LEAVES TORREY PINES EARLY

SAN DIEGO: Tiger Woods returned to the PGA Tour after 17 months and lasted only two days. Woods never got anything going after starting with a birdie Friday in the Farmers Insurance Open and didn't come close to making the cut. He missed a 12-foot birdie putt on his final hole on the North Course for an even-par 72 and missed the cut at Torrey Pines for the first time in his career.

He finished at 4-over 148, missing the cut by four shots. It was the third straight

Tour in August 2015 at the Wyndham Championship, where he tied for 10th. He played in the Bahamas the first week of December in an unofficial event with an 18-man field and no cut.

Woods at least kept good company. Jason Day, the No. 1 player in the world, again struggled to make cuts and shot a 74 to miss the cut for the first time since the Farmers Insurance Open last year. Also in his group was U.S. Open champion Dustin Johnson, who shot 74 and missed the cut.

Phil Mickelson was on the bubble until making a birdie on the 18th for a 72 to make the cut with one shot to spare. Brandt Snedeker saved par from a shot that nearly went out-of-bounds on No. 12, rammed in a birdie putt on the 13th and held on for a 69. He was one shot behind as he tries to join J.C. Snead, Woods and Mickelson as the only back-to-back winners since this event began in 1952. Adam Hadwin of Canada, coming off a 59 and a runner-up finish in the California desert, shot a 71 and joined Snedeker at 7 under.

PURE SILK BAHAMAS CLASSIC

Brittany Lincicome and Lexi Thompson led a US Solheim Cup breakaway in the LPGA Tour's season-opening Pure Silk Bahamas Classic. Lincicome shot an 8-under 65 to reach 17-under 129 at Ocean Club Golf Course, and Thompson had a career-best 61 to pull within a stroke. Lincicome broke the tournament 36-hole mark, and Thompson shattered the course record of 64 that Lincicome set Thursday. Lincicome had a hole-in-one on the par-3 12th, using a 7-iron from 161 yards. Thompson had the second-lowest round in relation to par in LPGA Tour history, following only Annika Sorenstam at 13-under 59 in the 2001 Standard Register Ping. Thompson had an eagle and 10 birdies. Gerina Pillier (65) was third at 14 under, and Stacy Lewis (67) completed the Solheim Cup quartette at 13 under. Second-ranked Ariya Jutanugarn made the cut on the number with rounds of 75 and 69. Michelle Wie dropped out, shooting 73-74. — AP



SAN DIEGO: Tiger Woods reacts to the crowd after finishing in the 11th hole of the North Course during the second round of the Farmers Insurance Open golf tournament Friday, at Torrey Pines Golf Course in San Diego. — AP

time that he failed to complete 72 holes at Torrey Pines, the course where he has won eight times on the PGA Tour. Woods missed the 54-hole cut in 2014 and withdrew after 11 holes with tightness in his back in 2015. Justin Rose rolled in a 10-foot birdie putt on the par-5 closing hole on the South Course for a 1-under 71. Rose, who was at 8-under 136, now gets two more cracks at the South Course, where the average score for two days was 73.8.

Woods was coming off the longest lay-off of his career as he recovered from two back surgeries. Woods last played the PGA



PARADISE ISLAND: Maria Parra of Spain hits a tee shot on the fourth hole during round three of the Pure Silk Bahamas LPGA Classic yesterday in Paradise Island, Bahamas. — AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid, top, dunks the ball against Houston Rockets' Nene Hilario during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, in Philadelphia. Houston won 123-118. — AP

HARDEN SCORES 51 TO LEAD ROCKETS PAST EMBIID, 76ERS

PHILADELPHIA: James Harden scored 51 points and had 13 rebounds and 13 assists to lead the Houston Rockets to a 123-118 victory over Joel Embiid and the Philadelphia 76ers on Friday night. Harden has at least 30 points and 10 assists in 18 games this season. The NBA's third-leading scorer entering the game, Harden finished two points shy of tying his career high. He was 16 for 28 from the field, including 6 for 11 from 3-point range, and made 13 of 14 free throws. Harden scored 19 points in the third quarter. Nene added 21 points to help the Rockets snap a two-game skid and win for just the fourth time in 10 games. Embiid had 32 points and seven rebounds in his return to the lineup after missing the last two games with a knee contusion.

HEAT 100, BULLS 88

Goran Dragic had 26 points and 11 assists, Willie Reed scored 20 points and Dion Waiters added 19 to lead Miami past the Chicago for its sixth straight victory. Dwyane Wade had 15 points to lead the Bulls, who began the day with a team meeting and ended it with a second straight frustrating loss. Wade and Jimmy Butler started the controversy when they questioned the desire of the team's younger players following a loss to Atlanta on Wednesday. Rajon Rondo fired back a day later, criticizing Wade and Butler in an Instagram post. All three players were fined, and Wade and Butler were held out of the starting lineup as punishment. Butler was the first off bench and received a loud ovation from the United Center crowd when he checked in with 6:53 remaining in the first quarter. Wade also received a loud ovation when he entered 28 seconds later. Rondo, though, was greeted by some boos when he checked in with 5:05 to go in the first.

CAVALIERS 124, NETS 116

LeBron James scored 31 points, Kyrie Irving added 28 and Cleveland ended a turbulent week with a victory over Brooklyn. The NBA champions had lost three straight and six of eight while James questioned whether the organization was fully committed to winning a second title. The Cavaliers took advantage of a timely visit from the NBA's worst team. Irving scored 20 points, and James added 10 in the third quarter when Cleveland built an 86-62 lead. Kevin Love, named to the All-Star team Thursday, had 13 points and 14 rebounds. Sean Kilpatrick led Brooklyn with 18 points, and Bojan Bogdanovic had 17. The Nets have lost four straight and 15 of their last 16.

PELICANS 119, SPURS 103

Jrue Holiday scored 23 points, Anthony Davis had 16 points and tied a career high with 22 rebounds, and New Orleans snapped San Antonio's five-game winning streak. The Spurs had been winning lately despite having starters Kawhi Leonard and Tony Parker sidelined with nagging injuries.

San Antonio fell with both back on the floor. Leonard, returning from sore left hand, scored 23, but showed some rustiness from the field, missing 10 of 16 shots. Parker hit only two of seven shots and one missed was a momentum stalling air ball 3 inside the final five minutes. Terrence Jones scored 21 points, and Solomon Hill added 16 points for New Orleans.

CELTICS 128, MAGIC 98

Isaiah Thomas had 21 points and eight assists in just three quarters, extending his streak at least 20 points to 30 games and helping Boston beat Orlando. Rookie Jaylen Brown added a career-high 20 points, Jae Crowder had 19 and Kelly Olynyk made all seven shots he attempted, finishing with 16 points. Nikola Vucevic and Damjan Rudez each had 14 points for the Magic.

KNICKS 110, HORNETS 107

Carmelo Anthony shook off some boos and a rough shooting night to score 18 points, Courtney Lee added 16 against his former team and New York beat Charlotte. Anthony finished 8 for 26 from the field and had just one basket in the fourth, but it was a big one, a jumper with 13 seconds left and the Knicks clinging to a two-point lead. Kemba Walker had 31 points and 10 rebounds for Charlotte.

PACERS 115, KINGS 111, OT

Paul George scored 12 of Indiana's last 16 points and finished with 33 and the Pacers overcame a 16-point third-quarter deficit to beat Sacramento. Jeff

Teague had 17 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for Indiana. The Pacers won their second straight and swept the season series with the Kings for the first time since 2013-14. DeMarcus Cousins had 26 points and 16 rebounds, and Darren Collison also had 26 points for Sacramento. The Kings have lost six of eight.

TRAIL BLAZERS 112, GRIZZLIES 109

Damian Lillard scored 33 points, including 13 straight for Portland late in the fourth quarter, and the Trail Blazers held off Memphis. Allen Crabbe had 23 points to help the Blazers win three straight for the first time since early December. Marc Gasol, coming off a career-high 42 points Wednesday night in a victory over Toronto, scored 32 points for the Grizzlies. Zach Randolph added 17 points and 13 rebounds.

RAPTORS 102, BUCKS 86

Kyle Lowry had 32 points, Norman Powell added 19 and Toronto beat Milwaukee to snap its longest losing streak of the season at five games. Still without injured star DeMar DeRozan, Toronto rolled to its seventh straight victory against the Bucks and 13th in the last 14 meetings. Jabari Parker had 21 points and 13 rebounds for the Bucks.

WIZARDS 112, HAWKS 86

Otto Porter Jr. had 21 points and 11 rebounds, John Wall scored 19 points and Washington beat Atlanta. Washington has won three straight and 10 of 12, improving to 20-8 since Dec 5. Kent Bazemore scored 15 for the Hawks. — AP

NBA results/standings

Portland 112, Memphis 109; Houston 123, Philadelphia 118; Washington 112, Atlanta 86; Miami 100, Chicago 88; New Orleans 119, San Antonio 103; Toronto 102, Milwaukee 86; NY Knicks 110, Charlotte 107; Boston 128, Orlando 98; Cleveland 124, Brooklyn 116; Indiana 115, Sacramento 111 (OT).

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division			
	W	L	PCT
Toronto	29	18	.617
Boston	28	18	.609
NY Knicks	21	27	.438
Philadelphia	17	28	.378
Brooklyn	9	37	.196
Central Division			
Cleveland	31	14	.689
Indiana	24	22	.522
Chicago	23	25	.479
Milwaukee	21	25	.457
Detroit	21	25	.457
Southeast Division			
Atlanta	27	20	.574
Washington	26	20	.565
Charlotte	23	24	.489
Orlando	18	30	.375
Miami	17	30	.362

Western Conference

Northwest Division			
	W	L	PCT
Utah	30	18	.625
Oklahoma City	28	19	.596
Denver	20	25	.444
Portland	21	27	.438
Minnesota	17	29	.370
Pacific Division			
Golden State	39	7	.848
LA Clippers	30	17	.638
Sacramento	18	28	.391
Phoenix	15	31	.326
LA Lakers	16	34	.320
Southwest Division			
San Antonio	36	10	.783
Houston	35	15	.700
Memphis	27	21	.563
New Orleans	19	28	.404
Dallas	16	30	.348