

Sports

Pistons roll to end six-game skid, halt Celtics' winning streak

Suns beat Wolves to complete rare season feat

DETROIT: Blake Griffin had 27 points, eight rebounds and six assists and the host Detroit Pistons snapped a six-game losing streak while ending the Boston Celtics' eight-game winning streak with a 113-104 victory on Saturday. Andre Drummond posted 19 points, 20 rebounds, five blocks and three steals for Detroit. Reggie Bullock, returning after a five-game absence due to an ankle sprain, supplied 15 points while Langston Galloway tossed in 14 off the bench and Reggie Jackson chipped in 12. Luke Kennard added 10 points and three assists. Kyrie Irving's 26 points, eight rebounds, four assists and three steals led the Celtics. Marcus Smart had 21 points, eight rebounds, three assists and three steals while Jayson Tatum contributed 17 points and eight rebounds. Boston led 66-63 early in the second half but the Pistons scored the next 13 points. Jackson got the outburst going with a putback. Drummond contributed a layup and a dunk, and Kennard hit a 3-pointer and assisted on another basket.

SUNS 107, TIMBERWOLVES 99

Deandre Ayton scored five straight points during an 11-0 fourth-quarter run to spark Phoenix to a win over visiting Minnesota. Derrick Rose scored five straight to end the Minnesota drought and cut the Suns' lead to 96-89, but the Phoenix defense clamped down. Phoenix was happy to welcome back Devin Booker, who was averaging 23.5 points, 6.7 assists and 3.6 assists per game. Playing in his first game after missing the previous six with a hamstring injury, he led the Suns with 28 points on 10 of 16 shooting from the field. He also recorded seven rebounds and seven assists.

BULLS 98, SPURS 93

Kris Dunn scored 24 points, and Lauri Markkanen added 23 as Chicago recovered from a 21-point, second-quarter deficit to stun host San Antonio. Ryan Arcidiacono tallied 12 points for Chicago, which won for just the second time in the past 12 games. Robin

Lopez added 10 points for the Bulls, who limited San Antonio to 31 second-half points. LaMarcus Aldridge recorded 29 points and 12 rebounds, and DeMar DeRozan scored 21 points for the Spurs, who had a four-game winning streak halted. Marco Belinelli scored 17 points, and Rudy Gay added 12. The Bulls played without leading scorer Zach LaVine (23.8 average), who injured his left ankle in Thursday's game against the Orlando Magic.

LAKERS 128, HORNETS 100

LeBron James notched a triple-double with 24 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists before sitting out the entire fourth quarter, and visiting Los Angeles rolled to an easy win over Charlotte. The Lakers led by as many as 16 in the first half, then turned the game into a rout with a 19-2 surge early in the third quarter. They led by as many as 36 in the second half. For James, it was the continuation of a personal domination over teams from Charlotte. James now has a record of 47-6 against the Hornets and Bobcats during his 16-year career with the Lakers, Cleveland and Miami. Lonzo Ball also enjoyed a triple-double for the Lakers with 16 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists.

MAGIC 96, JAZZ 89

Nikola Vucevic stuffed the stat sheet in powering Orlando past Utah in Mexico City. Vucevic had 15 points, 19 rebounds and five assists, and Evan Fournier added 24 points and seven rebounds for Orlando. The Magic won both games in Mexico City after losing three straight. Donovan Mitchell led the Jazz with 24 points, and Derrick Favors had 21 points and eight rebounds for Utah, which has lost three of its past four. Rudy Gobert leads the NBA in field-goal percentage but made just 2 of his 6 shot attempts. The Jazz shot only 31.5 percent from the floor as a team.

ROCKETS 105, GRIZZLIES 97

James Harden recorded his second consecutive



DETROIT: Marcus Smart #36 of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball against the Detroit Pistons on Saturday at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan. — AFP

triple-double while Gerald Green supplied heroics off the bench as visiting Houston earned its third consecutive win and climbed back to .500 with a victory over Memphis. Harden finished with 32 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists, sinking three free throws with 1:16 remaining to extend the Houston lead to 101-91 and halt the Grizzlies for good. Memphis had sliced a 21-point deficit to six points on two Mike Conley free throws but got no closer. Green scored 17 points with 4-for-4 shooting on 3-pointers. The Grizzlies have dropped four of five games, including back-to-back contests at home. Conley finished with 22 points and six assists,

while Marc Gasol added 17 points and nine rebounds.

THUNDER 110, CLIPPERS 104

Paul George had yet another big game, scoring 33 points as Oklahoma City snapped a two-game losing streak with a win over visiting Los Angeles. George has scored 30 or more points in four of his last six games and is shooting 57 percent from the floor over the last four games after going 11 of 19 from the field against the Clippers. Los Angeles hit 13 3-pointers, including four by Danilo Gallinari, who led the Clippers with 28 points. — Reuters

Ronaldo penalty sees off Torino, Icardi gets Inter back winning

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo scored from the spot as unbeaten Italian champions Juventus saw off city rivals Torino 1-0 to hammer home their domination in Serie A on Saturday. Juventus travelled to the Stadio Olimpico after their year-long unbeaten record away from home ended with a shock 2-1 Champions League defeat by Young Boys in Bern.

Ronaldo slotted in his 11th league goal this season, and 5,000th for Juventus in Serie A, after 70 minutes after Torino goalkeeper Salvador Ichazo fouled Mario Mandzukic. Juventus are now 11 points ahead of second-placed Napoli, who travel to Cagliari, with Inter Milan 14 points behind the leaders after captain Mauro Icardi scored from the spot in a 1-0 win over Udinese.

"It was a complicated game, played on a difficult pitch and against a tough opponent," said Ronaldo. "We put in a good performance, played better than Torino, had more scoring opportunities and deserved the victory."

"The 5,000th goal? I'm happy, but the important thing was to help the team." Torino's hopes of a rare 'Derby della Mole' victory took a knock when goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu hobbled off with a hip injury after 20 minutes, to be replaced by Ichazo.

And the match was decided by a poor backpass from Simone Zaza to Ichazo which resulted in the Torino goalkeeper fouling the onrushing Mandzukic. Five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo made no mistake from the spot, despite Ichazo getting his hand to the ball, with the pair locking horns afterwards with the Portuguese striker receiving a yellow card.



TURIN: Juventus' Italian defender Leonardo Bonucci (L) and Torino's Italian forward Simone Zaza go for the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Torino vs Juventus on Sunday at the Olympic stadium in Turin. — AFP

"He did well to get a hand to it, but I hit it hard and it went in. That's the most important thing," said Ronaldo, who joined Serie A's top scorer Krzysztof Piatek of Genoa on 11 goals. Croatian World Cup runner-up Mandzukic thought he had scored a second four minutes later when he had the ball in the back of the net, but was ruled offside.

It was the seventh straight league win for unbeaten Juventus since being held by Genoa. "Today was a great victory to keep Napoli at a distance," said Juventus

coach Massimiliano Allegri. "We played three days after the Champions League a derby against a team that are coming off a strong period of form on a difficult pitch." Torino stay sixth, four points off the Champions League berths, after their fourth defeat of the season.

Earlier, Icardi got third-placed Inter Milan back to winning ways with a 1-0 victory over Udinese. Luciano Spalletti's side were reeling after their midweek Champions League exit and falling 1-0 to Juventus last weekend in Turin. — AFP

Dortmund edge Bremen 2-1 to stay unbeaten

BERLIN: Paco Alcacer and Marco Reus continued their hot scoring form to propel Borussia Dortmund to a 2-1 home victory over Werder Bremen that extended their lead at the top of the Bundesliga.

The win makes Dortmund 'Herbstmeister', or winter champions, the unofficial award given to the team on top of the Bundesliga table at the season's halfway point.

Dortmund could have gone 1-0 up in the seventh minute after Alcacer chipped the goalkeeper only for Davy Klaassen to intervene just before the ball crossed the line. Remarkably, it was Alcacer's first shot on target to be saved since his arrival in Dortmund.

Dortmund fans didn't have to wait long to see Alcacer get on the scoresheet however, with the Spaniard heading a Reus free kick past Bremen keeper Jiri Pavlenka in the 19th minute. It was his 11th goal of the season, most in the Bundesliga.

Reus is tied for second. He hit his 10th when he doubled the Dortmund lead 10 minutes later. He converted an expert assist from Jadon Sancho by skidding a low shot inside the left post. Bremen fought back 10 minutes from halftime, with Max Kruse's shot from outside of the box gliding over the outstretched arms

of Dortmund keeper Roman Burkki.

Earlier, Bayern Munich continued their recent run of form, easing to a 4-0 win away at Hannover 96. The Bavarians led early after Joshua Kimmich hit a second-minute volley to convert an awkward-looking flick from Thomas Mueller.

Mueller had a frustrating night in front of goal, missing several chances in his 300th Bundesliga game for the club.

Bayern doubled their lead in the 29th minute when David Alaba rocketed a strike into the top of the goal which threatened to tear the net from the woodwork.

Interviewed after the match, Alaba said nonchalantly "yeah, I struck it pretty well."

Kimmich turned provider for the last two goals. In the 53rd minute, he played a low cross for Serge Gnabry who weaved through traffic before toe-poking home from close range. Ten minutes later, Kimmich floated a perfectly-weighted cross into the path of Robert Lewandowski who headed his 10th goal of the season.

Hanover sit dead last with 10 points from 15 games. "We can say today was a top match," Mueller said. Pirmin Schwieger said Bayern's win was a warning to the rest of the league that the real Bayern are back.

"The Lamborghini was full of gas today," said the Hannover midfielder. Elsewhere, Borussia Moenchengladbach, who started the day in second drew 0-0 at wasteful Hoffenheim. The home team dominated throughout, racking up 22 shots to four for the visitors, but were unable to convert. — AFP

Afghanistan asks FIFA for evidence of abuse against women footballers

KABUL: Afghanistan's attorney general yesterday called on football's world governing body FIFA to share evidence about allegations of sexual and physical abuse against the women's national team.

The request is part of an ongoing investigation into claims of abuse by male officials against players in Afghanistan's female football team, Jamshid Rasuli the attorney general spokesman told reporters in Kabul. "We officially ask FIFA to provide us with any evidence that may help the investigation," he said.

FIFA on Wednesday suspended the president of the Afghanistan Football Federation (AFF) Keramuddin Karim for 90 days over allegations of sexual and physical abuse against the women's team.

The move came days after the attorney general's office said it also suspended five officials, including the president of AFF, to facilitate the investigation into the case.

Allegations were first reported in November by Britain's Guardian newspaper, which cited what it described as senior officials associated with the women's team who said the abuse had taken place in Afghanistan-including at the AFF headquarters-and at a training camp in Jordan last February.

Former captain Khalida Popal-who fled the country after receiving death threats and has spoken out previously about the discrimination women face in Afghanistan-was quoted as saying male officials were "coercing" female players. Rasuli said Popal had been contacted to provide evidence for her claims. —AFP

Madrid keep winning but fans and media remain unimpressed

MADRID: With nine wins out of 11 since Santiago Solari replaced sacked coach Julen Lopetegui, Real Madrid should be full of optimism yet there was evident apathy from supporters and local media as they flew out to Abu Dhabi to defend their Club World Cup title.

Only 55,000 supporters made it to the 81,000-capacity Santiago Bernabeu stadium for Saturday's 1-0 win over Rayo Vallecano, despite it being a local derby and the club's final home game of the year. The low attendance was not a one-off: according to newspaper Mundo Deportivo, Real have registered their worst average attendance this season since the 2001/02 campaign.

Those who made it to the ground saw a laboured victory and turned their ire on their own players with a cacophony of boos when goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois was forced to perform a double save to prevent a late equaliser for relegation-fighting Rayo.

Rayo were hammered 10-2 on their last visit to Real in 2015. "The Bernabeu is fed up of Madrid," said Spanish newspaper Marca. Daily AS added: "This Madrid team is boring," after a second consecutive narrow win for Solari's side after last week's 1-0 victory at basement club Huesca, in which they also had to withstand a late storm of chances. Saturday's scrappy win came three days after a 3-0 home defeat to CSKA Moscow in the Champions League, which prompted more loud whistles from supporters. That was Real's heaviest ever home European defeat, although they had already qualified for the knockout stage as group winners.

Real midfielder Marcos Llorente said he and his team mates were satisfied with their recent performances, while adding that there was room for improvement. He urged fans to show their support rather than getting on the players' backs.

"Of course we can improve but inside the dressing room we're happy," he said. "I don't agree with booing, it makes us weaker. I'd prefer them to cheer us on. This is Real Madrid, people are used to us winning all the time, and when things don't go well they put us under pressure, that can sometimes help but it'd be better if they cheered us instead." — Reuters

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE
Deportivo Alaves v Athletic de Bilbao. 23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE
Atalanta v SS Lazio 22:30
beIN SPORTS