

Sports

Bucks overpower Raptors as Rockets, Cavaliers win

Pelicans overcome Heat 124-123

LOS ANGELES: The Milwaukee Bucks turned the tables on Eastern Conference leaders Toronto on Friday, winning 122-119 in overtime to snap the Raptors' seven-game NBA winning streak. Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 26 points and pulled down 12 rebounds for the Bucks. "We did a really good job just moving the ball, defending, just playing together," Antetokounmpo said. "We were able to stay calm down the stretch and get a tough win." Raptors center Jonas Valanciunas slammed down a dunk at the buzzer in regulation to send the game to overtime. But the Bucks, with 21 points apiece from Eric Bledsoe and Khris Middleton, emerged with the victory over a Raptors team that had won 15 of their 17 prior encounters.

"You've got to understand, this team sent us home last year," Bucks guard Jason Terry said in a halftime television interview. "This game is personal. This is a pride thing." Toronto and Milwaukee also went to overtime on January 1, when DeMar DeRozan set a Toronto franchise record with 52 points in the Raptors' 131-127 victory. It looked like the Raptors would pull it off again when Toronto scored the first five points of overtime, but Terry and Middleton made three-pointers in an 8-0 Bucks scoring run that gave Milwaukee a 118-115 lead with 1:58 remaining and they wouldn't fall behind again. "We showed growth as a team tonight," Antetokounmpo said. The Raptors remained one game ahead of the Boston Celtics atop the East. The Celtics returned from the All-Star break with a 110-98 victory over the Pistons in Detroit.

The Celtics were hurting heading into the break, losing three straight and four of five to fall two games behind the Raptors. It appeared the break, and the return of guard Marcus Smart, who missed 11 games with hand lacerations, were just what the Celtics needed. Leading 77-73 with 2:47 left in the third quarter, Boston mounted a 22-6 scoring run to seize control, limiting the Pistons to three field goals in the span.

Cavaliers 112, Grizzlies 89

LeBron James recorded his 11th triple-double of the season to lead Cleveland past host Memphis. James had 18 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists to help the Cavs avenge a 110-103 loss to Washington on Thursday, which snapped a four-game winning streak. Playing in its first game since the All-Star break, Memphis has now lost eight in a row.

Pelicans 124, Heat 123 (OT)

Jrue Holiday made the game-winning basket with seven seconds left in support of Anthony Davis' 45 points as New Orleans edged visiting Miami in New Orleans. Dwyane Wade's jumper gave the Heat a one-point lead with 21 seconds left, but Holiday answered with a jumper from the lane. Miami had another chance, but Wade missed a jumper and Josh Richardson missed a tip. Davis added 17 rebounds, five blocks and five steals as the Pelicans won their fourth straight. The Heat lost their third straight in a battle of teams that began the night clinging to the final playoff spot in their respective conferences.

Rockets 120, Timberwolves 102

Clint Capela was a stabilizing force in the paint as Houston extended its winning streak to 11 games with a victory over Minnesota in Houston. Capela finished with 25 points and 11 rebounds. The Rockets also received strong performances from guards James Harden (31 points, nine assists) and Chris Paul (14 points, 10 boards, eight assists) in improving to 3-0 against the Timberwolves this season. Andrew Wiggins paced Minnesota with 21 points while Jeff Teague added 18 points, four assists and two steals. Jimmy Butler was carried off the floor in the third quarter after injuring his right knee on a non-contact play.

Celtics 110, Pistons 98

Daniel Theis scored a career-high 19 points, and Boston used a strong effort from its bench to snap a three-game losing streak and top host Detroit. Theis was one of four Boston reserves to reach double figures. Marcus Morris had 15 points, Marcus Smart tossed in 12 and Terry Rozier chipped in 11 as the Celtics bench outscored its counterparts 65-21. Smart had missed the previous 11 games with right hand lacerations. Kyrie Irving led Boston's first unit with 18 points, five rebounds and six assists. Jayson Tatum contributed 15 points in the first game for both clubs since the All-Star break. Ish Smith led the Pistons with 20 points and six assists while Blake Griffin scored 17 points but committed six turnovers.

Hornets 122, Wizards 105

Frank Kaminsky scored 25 points while Kemba Walker celebrated his 500th NBA game with 24 as Charlotte defeated Washington in Washington D.C. The Wizards had won eight of their last 10 games before this contest, but Washington has had trouble with Charlotte all season. The Hornets now are 3-0 against the Wizards. Kaminsky came off the bench to score his 25 points, including hitting six 3-pointers, while Walker got 20 in the second half alone.

Pacers 116, Hawks 93

Thaddeus Young scored 20 points and Victor Oladipo showed off his playmaking abilities on an off-shooting night as Indiana hammered visiting Atlanta. Oladipo hit just five of 16 shots for 14 points, but made an impact all over the court. The All-Star finished with nine assists, seven rebounds and four steals. Domantas Sabonis came off the bench to score 21 points and grab 13 rebounds, and Lance Stephenson added 13 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Pacers, who have won four in a row and 10 of their last 13. Isaiah Taylor scored 17



CALIFORNIA: Giannis Antetokounmpo of Team Stephen scraps for the ball during the NBA All-Star Game 2018 at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

points, and Taurean Prince added 14 points for the Hawks.

Nuggets 122, Spurs 119

Gary Harris scored 23 points, including six in the final minutes during a crucial, decisive run, as Denver outlasted visiting San Antonio. Harris' jumper with 3:05 to play and the game tied at 114 were the first points of a 6-1 run (with all those points scored by Harris) that sent the Nuggets to a 120-115 lead with 45.3 seconds remaining. Denver was able to hang on from there, winning its fourth straight contest and its 10th in its past 13 games. Nikola Jokic led the Nuggets with 28 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists, recording his third straight triple-double before fouling out with 1:46 to play. Wilson Chandler added a double-double with 18 points and 16 rebounds. San Antonio's LaMarcus Aldridge led all scorers with 38 points, his 12th 30-plus-point game this season.

Clippers 128, Suns 117

Lou Williams had 35 points off the bench and Tobias Harris had 30 points and 12 rebounds as Los Angeles blitzed host Phoenix early and rolled to victory. Harris and Williams took turns personally dismantling the skidding Suns, who have lost eight straight and 13 of 14. Harris scored 16 points in the first quarter, and the Clippers scored the first 19 points of the game. They led 24-2 en route to a 40-point first quarter. Williams had 23 points in the second quarter.

Trail Blazers 100, Jazz 81

CJ McCollum scored 26 points and Damian Lillard added 24 to lead visiting Portland past Utah. Jusuf Nurkic scored 15 points and collected seven rebounds and Al-Farouq Aminu added 12 points and eight boards for Portland. The Blazers beat Utah for the first time this season after losing two previous meetings. Utah had its league-leading 11-game winning streak snapped after being undone by turnovers. — Agencies

NBA results/standings

Boston 110, Detroit 98; Indiana 116, Atlanta 93; Charlotte 122, Washington 105; Milwaukee 122, Toronto 119 (OT); Houston 120, Minnesota 102; Cleveland 112, Memphis 89; New Orleans 124, Miami 123 (OT); Denver 122, San Antonio 119; LA Clippers 128, Phoenix 117; Portland 100, Utah 81; LA Lakers 124, Dallas 102.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	41	17	.707	-	Minnesota	36	26	.581	-
Boston	41	19	.683	1	Oklahoma City	34	26	.567	1
Philadelphia	31	25	.554	9	Denver	33	26	.559	1.5
New York	24	36	.400	18	Portland	33	26	.559	1.5
Brooklyn	19	41	.317	23	Utah	30	29	.508	4.5
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	35	23	.603	-	Golden State	45	14	.763	-
Indiana	34	25	.576	1.5	LA Clippers	31	27	.534	13.5
Milwaukee	33	25	.569	2	LA Lakers	23	34	.404	21
Detroit	28	30	.483	7	Sacramento	18	40	.310	26.5
Chicago	20	38	.345	15	Phoenix	18	42	.300	27.5
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Washington	34	25	.576	-	Houston	45	13	.776	-
Miami	30	29	.508	4	San Antonio	35	25	.583	11
Charlotte	26	33	.441	8	New Orleans	32	26	.552	13
Orlando	18	40	.310	15.5	Memphis	18	39	.316	26.5
Atlanta	18	42	.30	16.5	Dallas	18	40	.310	27

Arsenal stand in way of Pep's first City silverware

LONDON: Pep Guardiola is anxious to play down suggestions that winning his first piece of silverware for Manchester City in today's League Cup final against Arsenal would herald a period of dominance. The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich coach takes his side to Wembley with the Premier League title virtually in the bag and a place in the Champions League quarter-finals looking certain. But despite City's dominance this season, Guardiola will be eager to get his hands on a trophy, even if it would have been fourth on the list of his priorities when the campaign began.

City are clear favourites to beat Arsenal but Arsene Wenger's men have made a habit of cup success in recent years, winning the FA Cup in three of the past four seasons. "Not even in Barcelona when we won the first title in the cup did I expect to win 14 titles in four years," said Guardiola, anxious not to over-burden his players. "I'm more pragmatic. I think in football it's a big mistake to think what might happen in the next three years. It's a big mistake for our heads, our targets, it makes no sense."

"When people asked in the beginning, about winning four titles (this season), I said of course we'll try, but the big teams have not been able to do that—the big Liverpools, the big Uniteds, the big Arsenals, the big Chelseas." Defeat for City could lead to a certain feeling of anti-climax at the Etihad as it would follow hot on the heels of their FA Cup exit at the hands of lowly Wigan Athletic—ending their quest for an historic quadruple.

Shock Jesus return?

Striker Gabriel Jesus could make a shock return at Wembley after being out with a knee injury since the end of December, although there are doubts over Raheem Sterling's fitness. Guardiola confirmed second-choice goalkeeper Claudio Bravo will start, having done so in all domestic cup matches this season, but Fabian Delph is suspended after being sent off against Wigan. The Catalan boss earlier this season questioned the value of the League Cup, saying "you waste a lot of energy" but it could serve as a springboard to further success, as it has done previously for the likes of Jose Mourinho.

Wenger has won the FA Cup a record seven times since he took the helm at Arsenal but has twice been beaten in the final of the League Cup, by Chelsea in 2007 and Birmingham City in 2011. The French manager was asked at his pre-match press conference what the key was to beating City. "To first of all have a strong belief that we can do it, be well-organized and take every opportunity to go forward and



WIGAN: Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola gestures during the English FA Cup fifth round football match between Wigan Athletic and Manchester City at the DW Stadium in Wigan. — AFP

play our offensive game," he said. He acknowledged the threat from players such as Sergio Aguero and Kevin De Bruyne but said it was difficult to focus on shutting down individuals. "One of the big strengths of Man City is De Bruyne of course, because he has become a very complete player," Wenger said. "He is a modern midfielder for me, he can be decisive in the final third, he works very hard, he is right-footed, left-footed and he is a fighter as well so overall I am not surprised he has done well."

"They have so many players that you have to stop that it is better to focus on the team plan rather than on any individual." Alexandre Lacazette is unavailable because of injury and Henrikh Mkhitaryan is ineligible because he played in the competition for Manchester United earlier this season. Wenger said David Ospina would play in goal at the expense of Petr Cech, continuing his role as the go-to 'keeper for cup matches. He said Mesut Ozil was likely to play and he would make a decision on Aaron Ramsey yesterday. — AFP

Conte-Mourinho feud

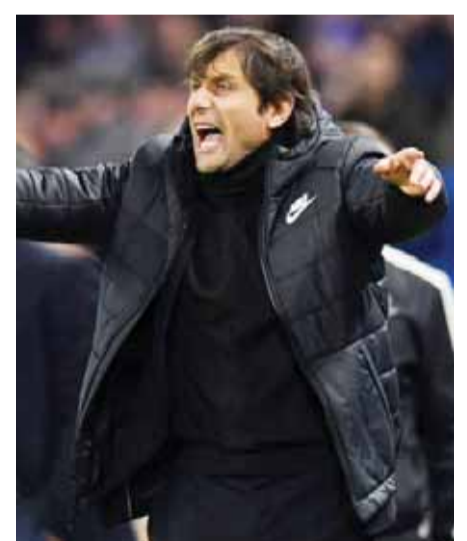
MANCHESTER: Jose Mourinho and Antonio Conte renew hostilities when Chelsea visit Manchester United in a mouthwatering Premier League clash today spiced up by bad blood between the two managers. Former Chelsea boss Mourinho and Conte have not hidden their disdain for each other in a series of clashes in the press and on the touchline since Conte arrived at Stamford Bridge in 2016. And there is plenty more than personal pride at stake, with both clubs locked in a battle for a top-four place in the Premier League. AFP Sports looks at the best of Mourinho and Conte's war of words.

Humiliating homecoming

Mourinho returned to Stamford Bridge for the first time in October 2016 after his second spell in charge of Chelsea ended in his sacking 10 months earlier. The Portuguese was given a mixed reception by the Chelsea fans in the stands but shown no mercy on the pitch as Conte's men dished out a 4-0 thrashing of United. Mourinho was unhappy with Conte's wild celebration of N'Golo Kante's fourth goal. "You don't celebrate like that at 4-0, you can do it at 1-0, otherwise it's humiliating for us," Italian TV reported Mourinho as saying when he confronted Conte at full-time.

Avoid the 'Mourinho season'

On Chelsea's pre-season tour of Asia, Conte cited Chelsea's collapse in Mourinho's final season in charge just months after being crowned champions as a warning to his squad. "Two years ago, the team finished 10th place in the league and we want to avoid this," said Conte. "I want to avoid, and the players want to avoid, the last season with Mourinho." Chelsea were 16th when Mourinho was sacked in December 2015, having lost nine of their first 16 Premier League games.



LONDON: Chelsea's Italian head coach Antonio Conte gestures during the first leg of the UEFA Champions League round of 16 football match between Chelsea and Barcelona at Stamford Bridge stadium. — AFP

No clowning around

The spat between the two managers accelerated in January when Mourinho, who made his name in England sprinting down the touchline at Old Trafford to celebrate a late goal as Porto coach in 2004, claimed he was still as passionate without acting like "a clown". "I prefer to behave the way I am doing it, much more mature, better for my team and myself," he said. "I don't think you have to behave like a crazy guy on the touchline to have that passion." The remark was read as a jibe not only at Conte, but at Mourinho's other rival managers at Liverpool and Manchester City, Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola. Conte responded by suggesting Mourinho had "senile dementia" and had forgotten his behaviour as a younger manager. — AFP