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TORONTO: Pascal Siakam #43 of the Toronto Raptors shoots the ball against the Philadelphia 76ers during Game Five of the Eastern Conference Semifinals at the Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. —AFP

# Raptors crush Philadelphia 76ers

## Nuggets rout Blazers to gain NBA series edge

**LOS ANGELES:** The Toronto Raptors dismantled the Philadelphia 76ers and the Denver Nuggets dominated Portland Tuesday to take commanding leads in their NBA playoff series.

The Raptors overpowered the 76ers 125-89 to take a 3-2 lead in their best-of-seven Eastern Conference second-round series. With 76ers star center Joel Embiid ailing, Toronto took full advantage on their home floor and can book a place in the Eastern Conference finals with a victory in game six in Philadelphia today.

The Nuggets, led by Nikola Jokic's 25 points and 19 rebounds, defeated the Trail Blazers 124-98 for a 3-2 series lead and will also try to wrap up their Western Conference clash on the road today. Six Nuggets players scored in double figures and four scored at least 16 points.

Paul Millsap scored 12 of his 24 in the first quarter as Denver bolted to a 31-25 lead. Jamal Murray scored 11 of his 18 in the second quarter, helping Denver

break open the game with a burst of three straight baskets that pushed the Nuggets' lead to 61-43 and Denver, who never trailed, were away.

"In this series he's been phenomenal," Denver coach Mike Malone said of Murray. "He's impacted the game in so many ways: scoring, playmaking and rebounding, and I think he's playing some pretty good defense as well."

Damian Lillard scored 22 points for the Trail Blazers, who face an elimination game for the first time in this post-season. Rodney Hood and Zach Collins scored 14 points each off the bench, but CJ McCollum was the only other Portland starter in double figures with 12 points.

Portland missed 12 straight shots in the third, connecting on just seven of 28 from the floor in the period to head into the fourth quarter trailing 93-65. They couldn't get the deficit below 20 points in the final frame.

In a hard-fought series between closely matched

teams, Malone said, it was a notable achievement. "For us to come out here tonight and build a 30-point lead and play the defense that we did for three and a half quarters was remarkable," he said.

In Toronto's big win, forward Pascal Siakam scored 25 points to lead six Raptors players in double figures. Star forward Kawhi Leonard scored 21 points and grabbed 13 rebounds and was able to rest the majority of the fourth quarter as the Raptors dominated every phase of the contest.

The outcome was enough to make Philadelphia's center Embiid feel even worse than the upper respiratory infection that appeared to hinder him. Embiid scored 13 points with six rebounds and also coughed up a game-high eight turnovers. With their star struggling, none of his teammates could fill the void.

Toronto led 64-43 by halftime—thanks to a 37-17 second quarter. The 76ers showed signs of life when they opened the second half on a 10-2 scoring run, but the challenge proved short-lived.

Leonard, who punctuated the second quarter with a massive dunk, delivered another big jam to close out the third and send the Raptors into the final frame up 92-70. Toronto would stretch the lead to 40 points — 123-83 — on Norman Powell's dunk with 2:24 to play.

"I was certainly not expecting that kind of game tonight," said Raptors coach Nick Nurse. "Obviously we're certainly happy with the result. We did a lot of good things."

Kyle Lowry scored 19 points, Danny Green had 17 and Spanish big man Marc Gasol contributed 11 for the Raptors, who can clinch the series on Thursday in Philadelphia. Serge Ibaka scored 10 points for Toronto, despite needing stitches after taking an inadvertent elbow to the forehead from Leonard in the first quarter.

Jimmy Butler scored 22 points and handed out seven assists for the 76ers. Sixers guard Ben Simmons connected on three-of-five shots from the field to finish with seven points and five turnovers. —AFP

## Russian athlete Savina gets 12-year ban

**MOSCOW:** Russian middle distance runner Kseniya Savina has been suspended for 12 years after she was found to have taken a banned substance and then provided false medical documents to avoid sanctions, the Athletics Integrity Unit said yesterday.

The 29-year-old Savina, whose ban essentially ends her career, tested positive in an out-of-competition test for the banned blood-boosting hormone EPO last year and was provisionally suspended.

She claimed at the time it was her

coach and husband Alexei Savin who had needed the medication to treat what she said was chronic renal failure, and that it must have been mixed up with her own back pain medication, the AIU said.

After Savina provided medical documents to support the claim that her husband had chronic renal failure, further investigation by the Russian anti-doping agency (RUSADA) for the AIU showed the documents had been forged.

"The Athlete failed to respond as required by the specified deadline of 17 April 2019 and she is therefore deemed... to have admitted the first and second anti-doping rule violations and to have acceded to the consequences specified in the notice of charge," the AIU said in a statement.

Savina's suspension period is 12 years and all her results since May 2018 are void, the AIU said. Such lengthy bans are uncommon but the athlete's

attempts to shift blame and avoid sanctions by providing false documentation added another anti-doping rule violation in her case.

Savin, her coach, received a four-year ban for violating anti-doping regulations, the AIU said in a separate statement. Russia has been rocked by several sporting bans in recent years after international investigations found evidence of widespread, state-sponsored doping in athletics and a string of other sports.

Russian anti-doping agency RUSADA and Russia's athletics federation were suspended after a 2015 report commissioned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) found evidence of state-sponsored doping in Russian athletics.

RUSADA was reinstated last year, while Russia's athletics federation remains suspended by the global athletics governing body IAAF. —Reuters

## FIFA upholds Chelsea transfer ban

**ZURICH:** The ban on Chelsea signing players over the next two transfer windows remained largely in place after FIFA issued their ruling on the London club's appeal yesterday.

In February, the Blues were banned from signing players for their men's teams for the next two transfer windows after being found guilty by FIFA's disciplinary committee of breaching regulations relating to the recruitment of minors.

Chelsea denied any wrongdoing and

appealed. Yesterday, the governing body of world soccer announced that its appeal committee had "decided to partially uphold the appeal".

The committee lifted part of the ban, but only for players under 16 who are not "international transfers and first registrations of foreign minor players".

That means Chelsea will still not be able to sign male players over the age of 16 when the summer transfer window opens.

Chelsea had been eager to have the ban lifted, or suspended pending the appeal, so they could be in a position to sign a replacement for Belgium Eden Hazard, who is being touted as a possible £100 million (116 million euros, \$131 million) transfer target for Real Madrid. The appeal committee also confirmed the fine of 600,000 Swiss francs (526,000 euros, \$590,000). —AFP