

Sports

Bucks spoil Drummond debut, Mavs hold on to beat Boston

LOS ANGELES: Giannis Antetokounmpo made it a family affair yesterday night by scoring 25 points and joining his two brothers on the court as the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Los Angeles Lakers 112-97 at Staples Center arena. Giannis joined forces with Bucks teammate Thanasis Antetokounmpo against the Lakers Kostas Antetokounmpo to become just the second brother trio in NBA history to play in the same game.

Jrue Holiday scored a game-high 28 points for the Bucks who snapped a three game losing skid. Khris Middleton added 17 points and eight assists, and Holiday also added eight rebounds and six assists for the Bucks. Montrezl Harrell led four Lakers players in double-figures scoring with 19 points, followed by Dennis Schroder (17), Kyle Kuzma (16) and Markieff Morris (15).

Milwaukee was down 30-24 heading into the second quarter but turned that around to lead 57-49 at halftime. They cruised to victory from there. The Bucks also spoiled the Lakers debut of Andre Drummond as the American center finished with just four points. He started in place of Marc Gasol but did not start the second half, and he re-entered the game briefly in the second half before pulling himself. The Lakers said that Drummond suffered a right big toe contusion.

In Boston, Luka Doncic scored 36 points, including seven three pointers, as the Dallas Mavericks held

on for a 113-108 win over the Celtics. The Celtics clawed their way back in the contest after being down by 23 points in the third quarter. They trailed 90-73 at the end of the third before cutting the deficit to single digits in the fourth quarter.

"I thought when things got a little hairy down the stretch, the great thing we did was keep our poise," Mavs coach Rick Carlisle said. "We were able to get fouled, make free throws and get a key basket when we needed." Doncic shot 11-of-15 from the field while Jalen Brunson finished with 21 points for the Mavs, who won for the fourth time in their past six games.

Kristaps Porzingis had 19 points, and Dorian Finney-Smith scored 11 with nine rebounds in the win. Jayson Tatum had 25 points, Jaylen Brown 24 and Kemba Walker 22 for Boston, who have lost seven of their last 10 games. Marcus Smart chipped in 17 points in the loss.

'We've got to respond better'

Doncic and Brown traded threes pointers as Dallas led by eight with 36 seconds left in the fourth. Walker sank a three and Tatum finished off a tip in to make it a two-point game with under 10 seconds left. But a badly missed free-throw attempt by Smart thwarted any chance of the Celtics forcing overtime. "We've got to respond better in the middle of a game. And we just haven't," Celtics coach Brad Stevens said.



LOS ANGELES: Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 of the Milwaukee Bucks scores a basket against Andre Drummond #2 of the Los Angeles Lakers during the first half of the game at Staples Center on Wednesday. —AFP

Elsewhere, Kyrie Irving scored 31 points and finished with a season-high 12 assists as the Brooklyn Nets stormed back in the final quarter to beat the Houston Rockets 120-108 despite losing James Harden to an injury in the third quarter. Joe Harris added 14 of his 28 points in the fourth and nailed seven three-pointers as the Nets moved into first

place in the Eastern Conference. Harden was forced to leave the contest with just under five minutes left in the third with tightness in his right hamstring. He scored 17 points before exiting with the Nets well behind at that point. Nets coach Steve Nash said doctors will see how Harden feels Thursday before their game against Charlotte. —AFP

China defies boycott calls with Beijing 2022 Olympic tests

BEIJING: The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics launched a series of test events yesterday as China ploughs on with preparations despite calls for a boycott over its treatment of the Uyghur minority. There are also doubts about how the Games in February next year will deal with the coronavirus - a top Beijing 2022 official recently admitted that the pandemic makes it "a big challenge to host a smooth Winter Olympics". Organizers plan to run 10 days of testing at five locations in Olympic and Paralympic sports including ice hockey, speed skating, figure skating and curling. All athletes are Chinese because of virus-related travel curbs. Among measures at venues to thwart the coronavirus were plastic screens sealing competitors off from the media in the "mixed zone" where interviews are usually done at close quarters.

The testing, seen as an important step in getting ready for 2022, comes after IOC president Thomas Bach said in mid-March that a "boycott of the Olympic Games has never achieved anything". Campaigners have urged countries to skip the Games and on Thursday a coalition of 200 rights organizations called on confectionery giant Mars Wrigley to pull Snickers - the official Olympic chocolate - from Beijing 2022 "or risk being tainted by association".

China has come under increasing fire from rights groups and some governments amid claims that actions towards Uyghur and other minority groups in the northwestern region of Xinjiang amount to genocide. —AFP

Biden says teams should follow science to beat pandemic

LOS ANGELES: US President Joe Biden says sports teams are making a mistake if they ignore the science and allow fans back into stadiums at full capacity and without aggressive COVID-19 restrictions. Biden said the Texas Rangers are not being "responsible" by allowing 100 percent capacity at Globe Life Field on Major League Baseball's opening day yesterday, following a decision by the National Football League earlier this week to play games beginning in early September at full capacity.

"Well, that's a decision they made. I think it's a mistake," Biden said of the Rangers filling their 40,300 seat stadium. "They should listen to Dr [Anthony] Fauci, the scientists and the experts. But I think it's not responsible." Biden made his comments as part of an interview with US sports broadcaster ESPN which aired Wednesday night. He also emphasized the importance of wearing masks and continuing to follow restrictions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which has killed over 550,000 Americans so far.

The state of Texas has seen almost 50,000 people die - more than Canada and Sweden combined. "In terms of it being responsible [for stadiums to open at full capacity] — you see what's happening in Europe now when they lifted the mandates. I don't know why we don't just follow the science and beat this," Biden said. Europe has seen rising infections, with leaders discussing reimposing virus restrictions. The Washington Nationals said this week that five players would miss Thursday's season opener against the New York Mets because of Covid-19 protocols, including one undisclosed player who tested positive. The Nationals plan to open their stadium to 5,000 fans, at 12 percent capacity. When asked what he would tell athletes who are reluctant to get the vaccine, Biden remarked, "I'm president of the United States and I got vaccinated. I don't have an unimportant job. Would I take the vaccine if I thought it was going to hurt me?"

He said vaccine research had been conducted that demonstrated their



Joe Biden

effectiveness, adding that the United States needed to get enough people inoculated to diminish the possibility for the virus to spread.

'Jim Crow on steroids'

Tennis players Elina Svitolina and Aryna Sabalenka, who are in Florida this week competing in a WTA tournament, have said they are reluctant to get the vaccine because of various concerns, including how fast it was rolled out. Biden also said he is in favor of moving the July 13 MLB all-star game out of Georgia, describing the newly passed voting law in the southern state as "Jim Crow on steroids." He said Georgia's new election law restricts access to voting for Americans. "Imagine passing a law saying you cannot provide water or food for someone standing in line to vote. Can't do that? Come on," he said. Biden went on to note professional athletes immense potential for social change, referring to the civil movement within the NBA that established a coalition to advance equality and social justice. "People look to them. They're leaders," he said. And addressed the anti-mask contingent, he said: "Some people think they are being tough guys by not wearing masks, but guess what, they are just hurting themselves and other people." —AFP