Sport|Times

Suns extend winning streak

Nets sink Knicks in NBA, secure a 112-110 victory

PHOENIX: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors passes the ball around Mikal Bridges #25 of the Phoenix Suns during the second half of the NBA game at Footprint Center on November 30, 2021. The Suns defeated the Warriors 104-96. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: The Phoenix Suns shrugged off an early injury to Devin Booker to extend their winning streak to 17 games with a 104-96 victory over the pace-setting Golden State Warriors on Tuesday. The much-anticipated showdown between the NBA's two best teams did not disappoint as Phoenix shut down Stephen Curry with a superb defensive effort.

The victory vaulted Phoenix to the top of the Western Conference alongside Golden State, who entered Tuesday's contest in Phoenix on the back of a seven-game winning run. Phoenix and Golden State now lead the Western Conference with 18 wins and three defeats each. The Suns' victory was all the more impressive given that star shooting guard Booker departed with a hamstring injury in the second quarter.

With Booker absent, it was left to veteran Chris Paul to shepherd the Suns over the line in the second half. Paul finished with 15 points, 11 assists and six rebounds. DeAndre Ayton led the Suns scorers with 24 points and 11 rebounds, but it was Phoenix's defense which proved the difference, restricting the Warriors scorers to just 18 points in the fourth quarter. "We're an improving defensive team for sure," Suns coach Monty Williams said. "To me this was just will and toughness... our guys just willed themselves to victory."

Williams had special praise for Paul, the 36-year-old point guard who contributed 39 minutes on court after the injury to Booker. "Chris playing 39 minutes speaks to his will and his dedication to the game," Williams said. "We just had a number of guys step up." Jordan Poole led the scoring for the Warriors with 28 points but Curry was restricted to just 12 points on a night when his usual accuracy from beyond the arc deserted him. The Warriors star made only three of 14 attempts from three-point distance.

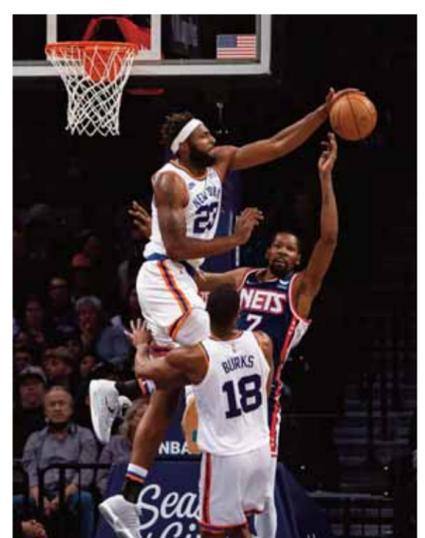## Brooklyn Nets held off a fierce challenge

Harden cuts loose

In New York, James Harden produced a gem to finish with 34 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists as the Brooklyn Nets held off a fierce challenge from the New York Knicks to secure a 112-110 victory. Harden gave Brooklyn the early initiative with 15 points in the first quarter while Kevin Durant showed his class with 27 points overall. Durant missed all of his five three-point attempts but was crucial in engineering looks for the red-hot Harden. Cam Thomas added 12 points and Patty Mills 10 for

Brooklyn. The Knicks stayed in touch with five payers in double figurers led by Alec Burks with 25 points and Julius Randle with 24 points. Evan Fournier set up a thrilling finale with a three-pointer to tie the game for the Knicks at 110-110 with 17.7 seconds remaining.

But Durant cleverly created space on the game's final possession to set up James Johnson, who was fouled and then nailed two free-throws to clinch victory. Johnson's winning points came from a Nets free-throw tally of 25, compared to the Knicks' total of 12. That gulf in free-throw numbers irked Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau, who felt his team were not treated evenly throughout the game. "There's a big discrepancy in free throws, I can tell you that," Thibodeau said. "I don't really care how the game's called, I really don't. You can call it tight, you can call it loose - but it's got to be the same."

In Sacramento, the Los Angeles Lakers overcame the absence of LeBron James to rout the Kings 117-92. James was ruled out of the game early Tuesday after entering the NBA's COVID-19 protocols. The Kings appeared to be poised to exploit the reorganized Lakers line-up after leading by nine points at half-time. But a Lakers scoring blitz after the interval - overwhelming the Kings 67-33 in the second half - completed an impressive turnaround by the 2020 NBA champions. Anthony Davis led the Lakers scorers with 25 points while Russell Westbrook added 23. Malik Monk had 22 off the bench. — AFP

BROOKLYN: Mitchell Robinson #23 of the New York Knicks blocks shot against Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets at Barclays Center on November 30, 2021 in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. — AFP

Norwich deny Newcastle first win of the season

NEWCASTLE: Teemu Pukki denied 10-man Newcastle a first win all season as Norwich earned a 1-1 draw at St James' Park on Tuesday, but wasted a huge chance to deepen the Magpies' relegation fears. Newcastle were a man short for more than 80 minutes after Ciaran Clark saw red for pulling down Pukki. However, Norwich were largely wasteful in trying to make that advantage count and fell behind to Callum Wilson's penalty on the hour mark.

Pukki smashed home on the volley to equalise 11 minutes from time and Norwich should have claimed a massive three points in stoppage time when Martin Dubravka saved from Pierre Lees-Melou. A point does little for either side's hopes of beating the drop as Leeds' 1-0 win over Crystal Palace moved them five points clear of the bottom three. Newcastle are six points off safety in

their bid to minimise the damage before they can turn to the Saudi sovereign wealth fund to strengthen in the January transfer window.

Howe was on the sideline as Newcastle boss at St James' Park for the first time, having missed the 3-3 draw with Brentford 10 days ago after testing positive for coronavirus. The former Bournemouth boss could not have asked for a worse start to a crucial clash between the bottom two before kick-off when Clark inexplicably hauled down Pukki as he threatened to burst clear on goal. "I felt the players showed real resilience, which we're going to need for the upcoming matches," said Howe. "If we can do that 11 against 11, we're definitely going to win some matches."

No side has conceded more goals in the Premier League than Newcastle this season, but Norwich are also the lowest scorers and their lack of quality in the final third was obvious as they labored to create chances despite dominating possession. Newcastle looked to have snatched a first win under Saudi ownership when Billy Gilmour was penalized for handball inside his own box after a

VAR review. Tim Krul nearly denied his former club as he got a hand to Wilson's spot-kick, but saw the ball rebound in off the underside of the bar.

Norwich finally produced a moment of quality to ensure they remain just three points off safety. Dimitris Giannoulis helped the ball back into the box after Dubravka flapped at a cross and Pukki smashed home a volley into the top corner. Norwich then piled on the pressure in the closing stages, but failed to find the winner as Dubravka made amends for his part in the equalizer with a crucial late save.

Leeds gave themselves some breathing space from the bottom three by edging out Palace in stoppage time thanks to Raphinha's penalty. Palace wasted the biggest chance of the game from open play when Christian Benteke headed Wilfried Zaha's pinpoint cross wide. Leeds got the break their season needed deep into added time when Marc Guehi handled from Liam Cooper's header and Raphinha coolly slotted home the resulting spot-kick to move Marcelo Bielsa's men up to 15th. —AFP

Man Utd's Glazer buys T20 franchise in new UAE league

LONDON: Manchester United co-chairman Avram Glazer has acquired a franchise for a new T20 professional cricket league in the United Arab Emirates, organizers announced yesterday. Glazer, also an owner of NFL Super Bowl winners Tampa Bay Buccaneers, completed the purchase in his role as chairman of private equity firm Lancer Capital. The UAE T20 League is a professional six-team competition sanctioned by the Emirates Cricket Board which is set to take place for the first time in February and March 2022.

Yesterday's announcement comes after the Glazer family were outbid in their attempt to buy one of the two new franchises in the money-spinning Indian Premier League - the forerunner of all current global T20 franchise cricket events. "I am very

excited to be a part of UAE T20 at its formation," Avram Glazer said. "UAE T20 promises to be a world-class event that will be transformative to the growth of cricket in the Emirates.".

Khalid Al Zarooni, UAE T20 League chairman and vice-chairman of the Emirates Cricket Board, added: "I am very excited to welcome Mr Glazer to the UAE T20 Family. "To have a partner who has invested into sports properties with a long-term perspective is a testament to the strength of the UAE T20 League's business model and its value proposition to fans and its stakeholders, and an ode to the UAE as the destination of choice for global sports events." The names of the franchises have yet to be announced. — AFP