

## Sports

# Breno heads late winner as Palmeiras sink Santos to win Copa Libertadores

## Palmeiras earn spot in Club World Cup in Qatar

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Breno Lopes scored in the ninth minute of injury time as Palmeiras won their second Copa Libertadores title on Saturday with a 1-0 victory over Brazilian rivals Santos at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium.

Traditionally decided over two legs, for the second edition running the final — delayed two months by the COVID-19 pandemic — was played as a one-off contest, kicking off in sweltering heat and inside a largely empty ground.

Breno came on as a late substitute and planted a magnificent header beyond Santos goalkeeper John Deep into stoppage time to settle a scrappy encounter and earn Palmeiras a spot in this month's Club World Cup in Qatar.

"I can't describe the emotion," said Breno, calling it an "unforgettable day" as Palmeiras added to their 1999 triumph, when they overcame Colombia's Deportivo Cali on penalties. "We wanted this title, I was rewarded with the goal and we're the Libertadores champions."

Palmeiras coach Abel Ferreira, 42, became just the third European manager to win the tournament, emulating Portuguese countryman Jorge Jesus who masterminded Flamengo's 2019 triumph. Croatia's Mirko Zocic also won with Colo Colo in 1991.

Palmeiras will pocket \$15 million (12.4 million euros) in prize money after winning South America's top club competition, with cash-strapped Santos earning \$6 million as runners-up in what was just the third all-Brazilian final. Palmeiras now face a Club World Cup semi-final on February 7 against either Tigres of Mexico or Asian champions Ulsan

Hyundai before a potential final against European champions Bayern Munich.

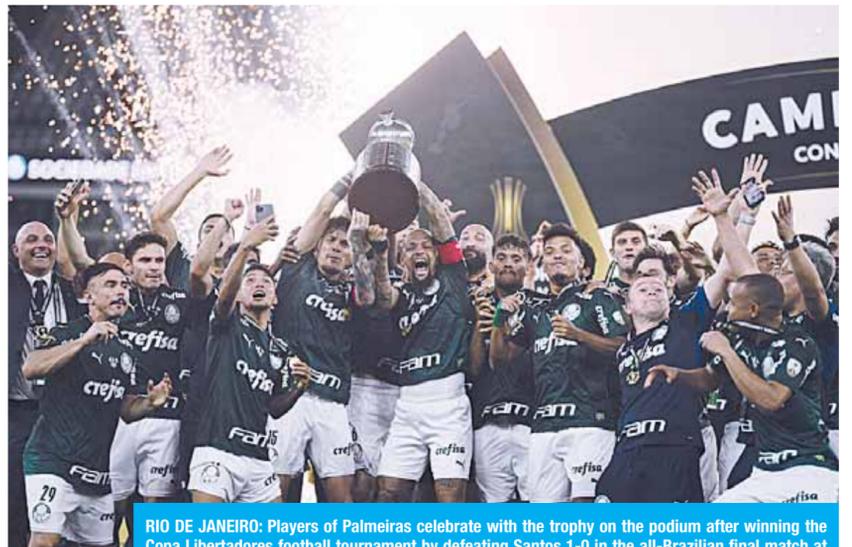
### Santos left with 'no answer'

Santos, who last won the tournament a decade ago when a teenaged Neymar scored in the final, missed out on the opportunity to become the first Brazilian club to lift the trophy for a fourth time. "We had no answer. It was the last shot," said despondent Santos forward Marinho. "I'm sad not to bring this title home, but we fought until the end."

Despite the ban on supporters from the iconic 80,000-capacity Maracana stadium, the site of one of the city's coronavirus field hospitals, local authorities agreed to grant entry to a few thousand invitees. Palmeiras, who held on to overcome River Plate in the semi-finals, were without the injured Gabriel Veron, the highly-rated 18-year-old linked to a number of Europe's top clubs.

As for Sao Paulo rivals Santos, who won two of their three Libertadores titles with Pele in the side in the early 1960s, in Kaio Jorge, 19, they have one of the country's most exciting young strikers. With attacking flair in limited display in the first half, it wasn't until Santos midfielder Diego Pituca's speculative drive on 76 minutes that either team genuinely threatened.

Palmeiras keeper Weverton shoved the strike away and a fizzing follow-up shot from Felipe Jonatan flashed narrowly wide. Kaio Jorge then sent a tame overhead kick straight at Weverton, but with the game seemingly destined for extra time there was late drama after Santos coach Cuca was sent



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Players of Palmeiras celebrate with the trophy on the podium after winning the Copa Libertadores football tournament by defeating Santos 1-0 in the all-Brazilian final match at Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Saturday. —AFP

off for a touchline tussle with Marcos Rocha.

Santos briefly lost focus as the eight minutes of stoppage time initially allotted elapsed, and Breno

peeled off his marker, hanging in the air to head in a deep right-wing cross from Rony to spark jubilant Palmeiras celebrations. —AFP

## Lakers end losing streak with win over Celtics

**LOS ANGELES:** Anthony Davis scored 27 points to fuel the Los Angeles Lakers, who ended their two-game NBA losing streak in dramatic style Saturday with a 96-95 victory over the Celtics in Boston. A well-rested Davis, who sat out the Lakers' loss to the Pistons in Detroit on Thursday with a bruised thigh, added 14 rebounds for the reigning NBA champions.

LeBron James finished with 21 points, seven rebounds and seven assists for the reigning NBA champions, who bounced back after defeats in Philadelphia and Detroit. "We're a team that takes pride in not losing two in a row and we lost two in a row," Davis said. "For damn sure we weren't losing three in a row."

It was a close-run game, however. Jayson Tatum scored 30 points and pulled down nine rebounds for the Celtics and Jaylen Brown added 28 points. It was a one-point game when Boston's Marcus Smart departed with 10:28 remaining after a fall that left him with what the Celtics said was a calf strain.

James drained a three-pointer to put the Lakers up 88-85 with 5:25 remaining and the Lakers pushed the lead to as many as seven points before the Celtics again narrowed the gap. Tatum cut the deficit to 96-95

with 32.8 seconds remaining. Boston's Kemba Walker blocked a Davis shot but missed at the other end. Teammate Daniel Theis grabbed the rebound but couldn't get his follow-up effort to fall.

The victory was especially satisfying, Davis said, not necessarily for the long history between two clubs that own 17 NBA titles apiece but because of what happened the last time the Lakers played in Boston in March. "We got a little revenge," Davis said. "This team beat us by 30 the last time we were in this building."

### Lillard lifts Blazers

It came down to the buzzer in Chicago, where Portland's Damian Lillard drained a three-pointer as time expired to give the Trail Blazers a 123-122 victory over the Bulls. Lillard finished with 44 points on eight 3-pointers. Chicago appeared headed for victory when Coby White made a pair of free throws to put the Bulls up 122-117 with 11.5 seconds remaining.

But Lillard, whose 44 points included eight three-pointers, closed the deficit to 122-120 with a strike from beyond the arc with 8.2 seconds left. The Blazers then forced a jump ball with 6.2 seconds left and Lillard was able to snag a loose ball and make the winner. It was a narrow escape for a Blazers team that led by 19 in the third quarter. Forward Lauri Markkanen scored 31 points and guard Zach LaVine added 26 for the Bulls.

And it was close in Miami, where Jimmy Butler returned from a 10-game absence due to the league's



**BOSTON:** Anthony Davis #3 of the Los Angeles Lakers handles the ball against the Boston Celtics on Saturday at the TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. —AFP

coronavirus protocols to score 30 points in the Heat's 105-104 victory over the Sacramento Kings. "You simply cannot put a modern-day analytic to Jimmy's will to win," said Heat coach Erik Spoelstra, who still had to make do without injured Goran Dragic, Avery Bradley and others.

Butler scored 20 points in the first half, but Miami couldn't get ahead by more than one and trailed by two at the break. The Heat led by 11 early in the fourth, before the Kings mounted a rally that would fall just short.

The Charlotte Hornets, with a career-high 27 points from rookie point guard LaMelo Ball, out-last two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo and the

Milwaukee Bucks 126-114. Antetokounmpo scored 34 points with 18 rebounds and nine assists. But with Ball's effort off the bench, and 27 points from Gordon Hayward, the Hornets followed up their victory over the Indiana Pacers on Friday with another win over a top-five Eastern Conference team.

And the Memphis Grizzlies, back after having five games postponed because of coronavirus issues, picked up right where they left off with a 129-112 victory over the Spurs in San Antonio. De'Anthony Melton led the Grizzlies with 20 points off the bench and point guard Ja Morant added 19 points and 11 assists as Memphis posted a sixth straight win. —AFP

## Ovechkin returns from virus with OT goal for NHL milestone

**WASHINGTON:** Washington's Alex Ovechkin scored 28 seconds into overtime in his return from a four-game COVID-19 absence to reach an NHL milestone Saturday in the Capitals' 4-3 victory over Boston. The 35-year-old Russian star netted the game-winning marker on a wrist shot for his 708th career NHL goal, matching Mike Gartner for seventh on the league's all-time scoring list.

Gartner, a Canadian, spent most of his 19-year career with the Capitals in the 1980s. The next player beyond him in NHL goals is former 1970s Boston star Phil Esposito on 717. Ovechkin, the Capitals captain, was playing in his first game after missing Washington's past four contests due

to NHL COVID-19 health and safety protocols. "For me it was my first game after a 10-day break, so it was kind of weird," Ovechkin said. "But it's nice to get a win."

Ovechkin and three Russian teammates were sent onto the COVID-19 list and the Capitals were fined \$100,000 by the NHL for "social interactions among team members who were in close contact and who were not wearing face coverings" after players reportedly gathered without masks in a hotel room.

The Capitals played their fifth game without forward Evgeny Kuznetsov and goaltender Ilya Samsonov, who remain in the COVID-19 protocol. Defenseman Dmitry Orlov was cleared to return but not in the lineup. Washington improved to 6-0 with three overtime losses for 15 points, matching Toronto for the league best in the early season.

Vitek Vanecek made 40 saves for the Capitals. It was Washington defenseman Zdeno Chara's first game against his former team. The Bruins,



**WASHINGTON:** Alex Ovechkin #8 of the Washington Capitals scores the game winning goal in overtime in front of David Pastrnak #88 of the Boston Bruins at Capital One Arena on Saturday in Washington, DC. —AFP

5-2-2, saw their four-game win streak ended but welcomed back forward David Pastrnak, who had an assist and played more than 20 minutes in his

season debut after having hip surgery in September. Ovechkin and Pastrnak shared last season's NHL goal scoring title with 48 each. —AFP

## Lukaku double helps Inter keep pressure on leaders AC Milan

**MILAN:** Romelu Lukaku scored a second-half double as Inter Milan kept the pressure on Serie A leaders AC Milan with a 4-0 win over Benevento on Saturday. Antonio Conte's Inter sit two points behind their city rivals, who beat Bologna 2-1 ear-

lier. A Riccardo Improbato own goal put the hosts ahead early on against 11th-placed Benevento at the San Siro. Lautaro Martinez scored 12 minutes after the break before Lukaku added two more.

Champions Juventus moved into third, seven points off top spot with a game in hand, after a 2-0 win over Sampdoria. Milan bounced back after losses to Atalanta in the league and to Inter in the Italian Cup on Tuesday, a game in which Zlatan Ibrahimovic was sent off.

"It was a strong response from the team. A victory that gives us confidence at the end of a difficult week," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli. The

midweek Milan derby was overshadowed by a clash between Ibrahimovic and former Manchester United teammate Lukaku.

Ibrahimovic on Saturday drew a blank for a second straight league game for the first time this season. Bologna goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski made a brilliant double save from the Swede early on. The visitors were awarded a penalty when Mitchell Dijks brought down Rafael Leao, with Ibrahimovic stepping up to take it. But the 39-year-old's poor record from the spot continued with his fourth penalty miss in all competitions this season. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Ganguly discharged from hospital

**KOLKATA:** Indian cricket great Sourav Ganguly was discharged from hospital yesterday after undergoing a second heart operation in a month, with doctors optimistic that he will make a full recovery. The 48-year-old, who now heads the country's powerful cricket board, was admitted to hospital in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal state, on Wednesday after complaining of chest pains. It was the second time this year that the former batsman had to be hospitalized, after being admitted in early January when he suffered a heart attack while exercising. He underwent an angioplasty and had a stent inserted to open up his clogged arteries. —AFP

#### Garcia wants Pacquiao

**LOS ANGELES:** Up and coming US lightweight Ryan Garcia said on Instagram Saturday that he wants to get in the ring with Philippine icon Manny Pacquiao in an official bout. With Yahoo among the outlets reporting such a fight is in the works, Garcia said he wanted to make it absolutely clear that it wouldn't be an exhibition. "Hey everybody, I just want to make it real clear: My fight with Pacquiao would not be an exhibition," Garcia said in a video posted on his Instagram story. "It will be a real fight, shooting for 12 rounds, all on the line. Our records will be on the line. I just want to make that very clear for everybody." —AFP

#### Plant retains title

**LOS ANGELES:** Undefeated Caleb Plant retained his International Boxing Federation super middleweight crown with a unanimous 12-round decision over former champion Caleb Truax in an all-American showdown on Saturday. Plant dominated every round, winning by perfect totals of 120-108 on the scorecards of all three judges in the matchup at Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, staged without spectators due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was the third time Plant defended the title he took from Venezuela's Jose Uzcategui in January 2019, the 28-year-old improving to 21-0 but disappointed he suffered a hand injury in the fourth or fifth round. —AFP

#### Rams trade Goff

**LOS ANGELES:** The Detroit Lions are trading quarterback Matthew Stafford to the Los Angeles Rams in exchange for quarterback Jared Goff, according to multiple reports on Saturday. The Los Angeles Times, NFL Network and ESPN, all citing unnamed sources, said the Rams also sent Detroit a third-round NFL Draft selection this year and two future first-round selections. The Rams made Goff, 26, the top draft pick five years ago. He has led the Rams to three playoff appearances in four seasons, reaching the Super Bowl in 2018. Before the 2019 season, he inked a \$134 million contract extension. But in 2020, he passed for a career-low 20 touchdowns, with 13 interceptions and the Rams finished 10-6. —AFP

#### Hertha eyes Khedira

**BERLIN:** Bundesliga strugglers Hertha Berlin have confirmed they are in talks with Sami Khedira and could sign the former Germany midfielder before the transfer window closes today. "We are talking to him, there are a few things to clear up and a few questions to answer before Monday at 1800 (1700GMT)," when the transfer window closes, Hertha CEO Carsten Schmidt told Sky yesterday. According to magazine Kicker, Khedira arrived in Berlin on Saturday and was due to undergo a medical check yesterday. The 33-year-old is under contract at Juventus until the end of the season, but head coach Andrea Pirlo has yet to play him in 2020/21. —AFP