

Sports

Durant powers Nets to top in East as Bulls flop

Hornets sting Wizards; Bucks too much for Magic

NEW YORK: Kevin Durant scored 27 points as the Brooklyn Nets defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers on the road to claim top spot in the Eastern Conference on Monday while the Chicago Bulls suffered a surprise reverse against the Indiana Pacers.

Durant's points tally included a perfect 10-from-10 free throws while the Nets star also chipped in with six rebounds, nine assists and three blocks as Brooklyn overturned a 12-point third quarter deficit to claim a third straight win.

LaMarcus Aldridge backed Durant with 21 points and 11 rebounds while Patty Mills had 17 points and James Harden 14. The win gave Brooklyn sole ownership of the Eastern Conference table with 13 wins against five defeats. Nets coach Steve Nash expressed satisfaction at how his team had clawed their way back into the contest in the second half.

"They find themselves in a hole and they're proud guys and they respond, and that's the most important thing," Nash said. "They responded tonight. We kind of shut them down in the second half. That's what we told them — we have to win this game on defense. And they did it. The spirit was not great in the first half but it was exceptional in the second half. The defense led to the offense."

Nash also singled out Japanese-born 2021 draft pick Cam Thomas for praise. The 20-year-old stepped up with 11 points including two three-

pointers to help the second-half fightback. "Cam was great," Nash said. "He stepped up with confidence to take shots. He's a kid who has a bright future. Tonight he really hung in there. Made some big shots and stepped up defensively. I was proud of him."

Durant was also impressed by Thomas's cameo. "He gave us the boost we needed - somebody who can score off the dribble and off the catch like that," Durant said. "They obviously left him off the scouting report — they left him open and he made plays."

In Chicago, the Bulls were handed a surprisingly one-sided beatdown to lose ground on the Nets at the top of the East, slumping 109-77 against the Pacers. Domantas Sabonis led the Pacers scorers with 21 points while Malcolm Brogdon had 16 points and Justin Holiday 14. Myles Turner and Caris LeVert finished with 12 points apiece. The Bulls meanwhile finished with only two players in double digits, DeMar DeRozan adding 18 and Zach LaVine 17, as the Pacers defense dominated.

"There is a standard and an expectation we try to play to and certainly tonight was not that," Bulls head coach Billy Donovan said. "How we learn from this is really important. Over an 82-game schedule, nights like this happen. If it catapults going forward to make us better, then great. If it doesn't then it's a wasted opportunity."

In Washington, the Wizards were downed 109-



CLEVELAND: Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets drives on Lauri Markkanen #24 of the Cleveland Cavaliers during the first half at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse on Monday in Cleveland, Ohio. —AFP

103 by the Charlotte Hornets, who were sparked by a 32-point display from Terry Rozier and 28 points from LaMelo Ball. Gordon Hayward added 16 points. Montrezl Harrell led the Wizards scoring with 24 off the bench, while starter Bradley Beal had 18 points for Washington.

In Milwaukee, the Bucks produced a superb all-round offensive effort to blitz the Orlando Magic 123-92. Victory was never in doubt for Milwaukee after a franchise record first-half performance that saw them race into a 77-36 lead at the break — the largest halftime lead in Bucks history. —AFP

Brady halts Tampa losing streak as Giants stumble

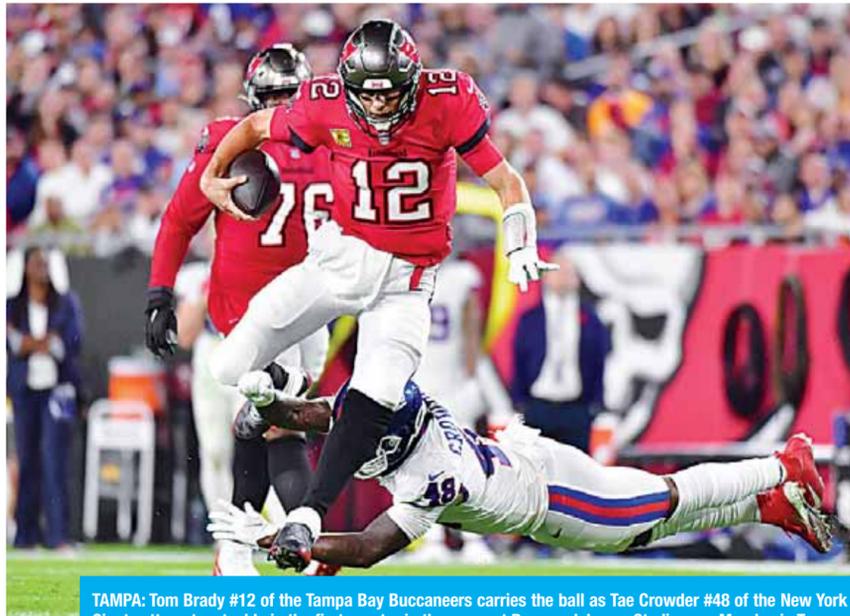
MIAMI: Tom Brady threw for two touchdowns and 307 yards as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers halted their two-game losing streak with a 30-10 defeat of the New York Giants on Monday. The reigning Super Bowl champions had been left reeling after back-to-back defeats to Washington and New Orleans in recent weeks, but got back to winning ways with a comfortable home win at Raymond James Stadium.

The Bucs' task was made easier after an erratic display from Giants quarterback Daniel Jones, who tossed for just 167 yards and gave up two interceptions. Jones was also sacked twice as the Giants fell to 3-7 to remain rooted to the foot of the NFC East. "Losing two straight really sucks in the NFL, just glad it's not three straight," said Brady, who was buoyed by the return of favorite receiving target Rob Gronkowski.

Gronkowski had not played since injuring his ribs in a loss to the Los Angeles Rams in week three. "He's amazing in every way — as a player, team-mate, leader, friend. Love being out there with him and he really sets the tone for that group. He had a great night."

"We executed a little bit better, but still left a few scores out there I thought. But overall it's a good win for our team," said Brady, who admitted he had been bothered by the Bucs' losing streak over the past month.

"A lot of bad nights sleep. But that's part of just playing football — every year has its different challenges and you've seen this year a lot



TAMPA: Tom Brady #12 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers carries the ball as Tae Crowder #48 of the New York Giants attempts a tackle in the first quarter in the game at Raymond James Stadium on Monday in Tampa, Florida. —AFP

of crazy things happen. An old coach of mine used to say 'It's not who you play, it's how you play when you play them'. We've played some good teams that are playing well, and we've got another tough one coming up on Sunday."

Brady had tossed the first of his two touchdowns in the opening quarter, finding Chris Godwin who jinked over to cap an eight-play, 73-yard drive. Giants kicker Graham Gano and Bucs counterpart Ryan Succop traded field goals to make it 10-3 Tampa early in the second

quarter, but a freak interception then gifted New York great field position to set up a touchdown pass from Jones to Andrew Thomas.

That made it 10-10, but the Bucs responded swiftly with Ronald Jones rushing over to restore Tampa Bay's lead just before half-time. Mike Evans gathered a touchdown pass from Brady to make it 24-10 midway through the third quarter before two more Succop field goals completed the Tampa Bay scoring. —AFP

Dortmund without Haaland, Hummels in Lisbon showdown

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund will be without both Mats Hummels and Erling Haaland when they head to Portugal for tonight's potential Champions League Group C decider against Sporting Lisbon. Level on points with two games to play in the group stage, Sporting and Dortmund meet today in a clash which could decide which of them joins group leaders Ajax in the knockout stages.

Yet Dortmund will be deprived of two of their best players in Hummels and Haaland as they look to steer their Champions League campaign back on course after back-to-back defeats. Veteran defender Hummels is suspended after he was controversially sent off in Dortmund's 3-1 defeat to Ajax three weeks ago. The club had said they would appeal the red card, but coach Marco Rose admitted last week that he did not expect the 2014 World Cup winner to be available. "We all know that Mats is suspended in Lisbon," he said, and hinted that Dan-Axel Zagadou could take his place in central defense.

Haaland, meanwhile, has been out for the last four weeks with a hip injury. Dortmund are hoping the Norwegian striker, who has nine goals in just six league appearances this season, will return to action in time for their top-of-the-table clash with Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich on December 4. Rose's side head to Lisbon in good



ALCOCHETE: Sporting Lisbon's Portuguese coach Ruben Amorim (center) speaks with his players during a training session at Cristiano Ronaldo Academy training ground in Alcochete near Lisbon yesterday, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League, Group C, football match against Borussia Dortmund. —AFP

spirits, having moved to within a point of Bayern with a narrow win over Stuttgart at the weekend. Sporting have had longer to recover since their 2-1 cup win over Varzim last Thursday.

The victory was their ninth in a row in all competitions, a run which goes back to their last meeting with Dortmund, a 1-0 defeat in

Germany in September. Donyell Malen, who scored the winner for Dortmund in that game, is likely to lead the line again tonight in Haaland's absence. The 22-year-old Dutch talent is in good form, having netted his first Bundesliga goal with a blistering strike against Stuttgart on Saturday. —AFP

News in brief

LeBron suspended one game

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James has been suspended for one game following his bloody clash with Detroit Pistons player Isaiah Stewart, the NBA said Monday. Los Angeles Lakers star James was ejected for only the second time in his career after wildly lashing out at Stewart during Sunday's victory over the Pistons. Stewart was left with blood pouring from a facial injury following the flashpoint, and needed to be restrained repeatedly by team-mates and staff as he attempted to confront James. The 20-year-old Stewart was given a two-game suspension for his part in the altercation. The NBA said Stewart had been given a two-game ban for "escalating an on-court altercation by repeatedly and aggressively pursuing (James) in an unsportsmanlike manner." James' suspension was for "recklessly hitting Stewart in the face and initiating an on-court altercation."

Ramos poised for PSG debut

PARIS: Spanish great Sergio Ramos could make his long-awaited first appearance for Paris Saint Germain in tonight's Champions League group match with Manchester City. The 35-year-old defender has not played for the French side since joining from his long-time club Real Madrid in July due to a recurring problem with a calf muscle. Ramos is likely to be on the bench for the clash between the top two in the group with Marquinhos and Presnel Kimpembe starting in central defense. Ramos arrived at PSG with a glittering CV, having won the 2010 World Cup, two European Championships and four Champions League trophies with Real. City top the group on nine points, a point clear of PSG with Belgian outfit Club Brugge four points further adrift with two matches remaining.

Lyon to play behind closed doors

PARIS: Lyon were on Monday ordered to play home games until at least December 8 behind closed doors after their Ligue 1 fixture against Marseille on the weekend was abandoned after Dimitri Payet was hit in the head by a bottle. The Marseille captain required treatment after being struck on the side of the head as he prepared to take a corner for the visitors in the fifth minute of Sunday's match at Lyon's Parc OL stadium, prompting both teams to return to the changing rooms. Payet, who did not train on Monday, has lodged a complaint with the Lyon public prosecutor investigating the incident, a Marseille club official told AFP. "He was very scared and he's fed up," the official said.

Lewandowski, Benzema nominated for FIFA's Best award

LAUSANNE: Robert Lewandowski is in the running to retain his Best FIFA Men's Player award after he was named Monday on an 11-man shortlist alongside Karim Benzema and Jorginho. Perennial candidates Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo feature among the nominees, with Neymar, Mohamed Salah and Kylian Mbappe also up for a prize first awarded in 2017. Erling Haaland, N'Golo Kante and Kevin De Bruyne complete the list of potential winners.

Four Barcelona players are included on the women's best player shortlist - Alexia Putellas, Jennifer Hermoso, Aitana Bonmati and Caroline Graham Hansen. Chelsea, beaten by Barcelona in last season's Women's Champions League final, also have four representatives with Sam Kerr, Ji So-yun, Magdalena Eriksson and Pernille Harder. Lucy Bronze, who took home last year's award, was nominated with fellow England international Ellen White. —AFP