

Sports

Grizzlies clinch playoff victory after Wolves collapse again

LOS ANGELES: Desmond Bane scored 23 points as the Memphis Grizzlies stunned the Minnesota Timberwolves with another late fourth-quarter rally to score a series-clinching 114-106 victory in the NBA playoffs on Friday. Bane made nine of 15 shots from the field including a crucial go-ahead three-pointer late in the fourth quarter as the second seeds completed a 4-2 series win to silence Minnesota's Target Center crowd in Minneapolis.

It was another shattering loss for Minnesota, who for the third time in the series were unable to close out a victory after building a double-digit lead in the fourth quarter. Minnesota had pulled into an 84-74 lead at the end of the third quarter but were blown away down the stretch by the Grizzlies, who outscored the Timberwolves 40-22 in the final period to snatch a dramatic win.

Bane nailed a three-pointer to give Memphis their first lead of the second half while Jaren Jackson Jr. added 12 points in the fourth to help the Grizzlies get over the line. Memphis star Ja Morant had been effectively bottled up by the Minnesota defense in the first half with just four points, but ultimately finished with 17 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds. The Grizzlies now face a mouthwatering Western Conference semi-final series against the resurgent Golden State Warriors starting on Sunday.

"It's big-time for us man, super excited," Morant said afterwards. "We got it done. It was ugly but we battled through, battled back and got the win. We

got the four wins, but we've got to be better in the next round—we can't come out again like we did in this series." Morant said the Grizzlies' ability to overturn a hefty fourth-quarter deficit once again was testimony to the resilience of his team.

"We've got a lot of dogs on this team, guys who want to prove stuff, and have got a chip on their shoulder," Morant said. "We've got that never-satisfied mindset and we know that the game's not over until the clock is showing all zeroes at the end of the fourth. We just stick together, battle back and we were able to come out with some big-time wins. We'll enjoy this moment in the locker room tonight and then we'll flip the page and start getting ready for Golden State."

Bane said the latest in a series of Memphis Houdini acts was too close for comfort. "I don't want to be in that hole, I promise you," Bane said. "We don't mind it but we'd like to start games a little bit better." Our resiliency really showed in this series. I think pretty much every game we won we were trailing at some point. It's a gritty group."

Bane's 23-point haul was matched by 23 from Dillon Brooks, while Jackson Jr. finished with 18. Morant and Brandon Clarke finished with 17 points apiece, Tyus Jones chipping in with 10 points off the bench. Anthony Edwards led the Minnesota scorers with 30 points while Karl-Anthony Towns had 18 with 10 rebounds and four assists. Jaden McDaniels added 24 off the bench. — AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: Brandon Clarke #15 of the Memphis Grizzlies goes up for a shot while Karl-Anthony Towns #32 of the Minnesota Timberwolves defends in the third quarter during Game Six of the Western Conference First Round at Target Center on April 29, 2022. — AFP

Ramadan bowling tourneys a success



KUWAIT: Winners of the bowling tournament are awarded.

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: As part of its plans to popularize bowling and improve the technical and physical level of players, Kuwait Bowling Club organized three Ramadan tournaments, from the start of the holy month until the end.

KBC President Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Secretary Mohammad Al-Farsi attended the closing ceremony and rewarded the winners. Tournament Director Khalid Habeeb lauded the support of the board of directors headed by Sheikh Talal, adding that such tournaments help in the development of

the game and discovery of new talents.

He said that 120 players of both genders from all age groups participated in singles and doubles. Habeeb was pleased with the attendance of fans, along with players' parents, to encourage the players to go further in the future.

Sevilla up to second despite Perez strike

MADRID: Sevilla moved up to second in the table after Friday's 1-1 draw at home with Cadiz despite Lucas Perez' sublime second half free-kick for the La Liga strugglers. Julen Lopetegui's men go a point above Barcelona, who host Mallorca on Sunday, thanks to Youssef En Nesry's early effort. The point gained by the visitors doubled their advantage over Granada, who are in the final relegation spot.

Morocco attacker En Nesry scored his first goal of the campaign since September as he headed home from Ivan Rakitic's seventh minute corner. A victory would have sent Sevilla three points clear of Barca but Perez's equalizer put those hopes to bed. The home side's midfielder Joan Jordan was penalized for a clumsy tackle before 33-year-old Perez whipped in his third goal in as many games after a drought stretching back six months.



SEVILLE: Sevilla's Spanish midfielder Oliver Torres is challenged by Cadiz's Uruguayan defender Pacha Espino during their Spanish League match at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium on April 29, 2022. — AFP

Cadiz host Elche next weekend in their attempt to stay in the top-flight after promotion in 2020. Sevilla head to Champions League semifinals

Villarreal on May 8 and also have a tricky trip to Atletico Madrid during their final four games of the season. — AFP

Resurgent Monaco back in Champions League reckoning

PARIS: That Paris Saint-Germain would win the Ligue 1 title this season was never really in doubt at any point, but behind them the battle for European places remains open with a resurgent Monaco now hoping to snatch Champions League qualification. PSG clinched their eighth title in 10 years, and a record 10th French championship altogether, with four games to spare last weekend thanks to a 1-1 draw against Lens.

Their season effectively over, the capital club are now fully focused on trying to persuade Kylian Mbappe to sign a new contract and stay, while the superstar striker's former side motor towards a return to Europe's elite club competition. Monaco, the club owned by Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev and where Mbappe broke through and won the title in 2017, were eighth in the table in mid-March, nine points adrift of the top three.

The decision to sack coach Niko Kovac midway through the season and replace him with the Belgian Philippe Clement appeared to have backfired, but then they beat PSG 3-0 and everything changed. That was the start of a winning run which stretched to six matches when the principality side beat struggling Saint-Etienne 4-1 last week.

With only the top three going into the



STRASBOURG: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe fights for the ball with Strasbourg's French defender Lucas Perrin during their French L1 match at La Meinau stadium on April 29, 2022. — AFP

Champions League, Monaco are now fourth but sit behind Rennes only on goal difference. They have the momentum and should be too strong for struggling Angers this weekend. "We are reaping the

benefits of all the hard work we have been putting in but there is still lots to do and we have four finals still to come," said Aurelien Tchouameni, the France midfielder. — AFP

IBAK Masters Cup 2022 from May 5

KUWAIT: The 9th Indian Badminton Association- Kuwait (IBAK) Masters Cup 2022 will kick start on May 5 (Thursday) at the IBAK Gym, Salwa. The championship will feature over 250 players contesting in the following categories:

- Men's singles
- Flight 1 - professional men's doubles
- Flight 2 - advance men's doubles
- Flight 3 - intermediate doubles (open for all)
- Flight 4 - lower intermediate doubles (for Ibakians only)
- Above 50 men's doubles
- Above 40 men's doubles (non-professional)
- Ladies doubles

The IBAK was founded in April 2010 as a non-profit organization committed to the popularization and development of the game of badminton in Kuwait. In the short span of 12 years, IBAK has grown to over 1,500 registered members, where more than 300 active regular members are using this facility. IBAK offers its members regular playing sessions in the evenings between 5.30 pm to 10.30 pm every day at the IBAK Salwa gym.

Can Nicola pull off another great escape?

MILAN: Davide Nicola is in sight of pulling off the second miraculous escape act of his coaching career as his buoyant Salernitana side travel to Atalanta on Monday believing they can defy the odds and retain their place in Serie A. Three straight wins in the space of a week have catapulted Salernitana to within three points of safety with a game in hand, bringing back memories of Nicola's first famous escape act with another unfashionable southern club five years ago.

With 29 matches played of the 2016/17 season, Nicola's Crotona had picked up just 14 points but an incredible run in their final nine, of which they won six and lost just one, allowed them to climb out of the drop zone on the final day of the campaign. Nicola had promised he would cycle the length of Italy to his hometown of Turin should his team stay up and he was as good as his word, making the 1,300 km trip from the deep southern region of Calabria to Piedmont in the far northwest.

Now Nicola has five matches to save Salernitana from a fate which looked sealed just over a fortnight ago, when they were nine points from safety, albeit with two games in hand, after losing 2-1 at Roma. It was their third loss in as many games - extending their run without a win to 11 matches-and came following two goals in the final 10 minutes for the hosts which turned what would have been a stunning victory into Salernitana's 20th defeat of a bruising season.

"Winning three matches in a row doesn't mean everything suddenly gets easier, now comes the really tricky stuff," Nicola said after last weekend's enthralling 2-1 win over Fiorentina, during which he got so emotional with his players he whipped off a shoe and threw it to the ground in fury. "It's hard to make yourself heard in the stadium because our fans are so passionate, so I needed to come up with other ways to communicate with my players."

In the top flight for the first time in over two decades, Salernitana have had a bumpy ride pretty much from the get go. In June Salernitana were placed in trust as Lazio president Claudio Lotito owned the club and Italian FA rules banned ownership of two teams in the same division. Given a New Year's Eve deadline to find a new owner or be kicked out of the league, Salernitana were saved at the last minute when Danilo Iervolino's bid to buy the club was accepted.

New sporting director Walter Sabatini then brought in 11 players in the January transfer window before sacking Stefano Colantuono and hiring Nicola in February with the team on 13 points. In the meantime a spike in coronavirus cases during the winter led to them not playing two matches, one of which, against Udinese, was originally given as a 3-0 defeat which also came with a one-point penalization. — AFP