

Sports

76ers humble Nets; Bridges, Booker lift Suns over Lakers

Simmons endures defeat in his emotional NBA return

WASHINGTON: Brooklyn's Ben Simmons endured a defeat Tuesday in his emotional NBA return to Philadelphia as a 76ers' squad lacking three top stars humbled the Nets 115-106. The pre-game focus was on ex-Sixer Simmons playing his first game in Philadelphia since being traded to the Nets in February, but the shorthanded hosts-playing without injured starters Joel Embiid, James Harden and Tyrese Maxey-stole the show.

Tobias Harris scored 18 of his 24 points after halftime, De'Anthony Melton added 22 points and Paul Reed came off the bench to add 19 points and 10 rebounds to spark the 76ers. Shake Milton and Georges Niang each contributed 16 points. "I just needed to get into a rhythm, and once I was able to find that flow, I just stuck with it and made the right play," Harris said. "That was a huge win for us." Sixers fans loudly booed Simmons when he was introduced and every time he touched the ball, spite born of a bad breakup with the 26-year-old Australian after four seasons in Philly.

"I thought it was going to be louder," Simmons said. Simmons, taken by the 76ers with the first overall pick in the 2016 NBA Draft, played 32 minutes and scored 11 points, dished out 11 assists, grabbed seven rebounds, blocked three shots and made three steals. "I thought he did a great job of just handling it and playing his game," Nets forward Kevin Durant said. "There are a lot of emotions. You just want to play well. You know the fans are going to be involved and get excited."

Simmons, who made 4-of-7 shots from the floor and 3-of-6 from the free throw line, signed autographs for a few supportive fans. "It was nice to see I had support in Philadelphia still," Simmons said. "I don't think we had all bad times." The Sixers outre-

bounded the Nets 46-35 and made 16 of 32 from 3-point range, powered by Melton's 6-for-11 and Niang's 4-of-5 shooting from beyond the arc.

"We just said we're going to need everybody's effort and we need everybody to be as confident as ever," Harris said. "For us, it's just figuring out ways to make sure everybody has that impact." Kyrie Irving led the Nets (8-10) with 23 points while Durant had a season-low 20. "Just got to go through it and stay confident," Irving said of Simmons handling the boos. "I think he did well. It's good to hear their loud voices, hear their boos. Next time, hopefully that motivates us to go out there and get that win a little bit more."

Philadelphia began the fourth quarter with an 11-5 run for a 96-87 lead. The Nets came no closer than seven after that. "Everybody wants to see our team fail," Durant said. "It's just something we've got to deal with." The 76ers (9-8) lacked Embiid, out with a left foot strain; Harden, sidelined with a right foot sprain; and Maxey, who has a broken left foot. "Anytime we're down that many starters, it's everybody just coming together and realizing we needed each other," Harris said.

Ayton felled, Suns win

At Phoenix, Mikal Bridges and Devin Booker each scored 25 points to lead the host Suns over the Los Angeles Lakers 115-105. Anthony Davis had 37 points, 21 rebounds, five blocked shots, five steals and two assists to lead the road-winsless Lakers, who were without injured LeBron James. Lakers guard Patrick Beverley was ejected late in the game after he ran four steps and slammed into the back of Deandre Ayton, knocking the Suns center over fallen Laker Austin Reaves and onto the court. Teammates



PHILADELPHIA: Ben Simmons #10 of the Brooklyn Nets controls the ball against Tobias Harris #12 and Paul Reed #44 of the Philadelphia 76ers in the fourth quarter of the game at the Wells Fargo Center on November 22, 2022. —AFP

prevented the bodycheck from sparking a melee.

"Pat needs to stop pushing people in the back," Booker said. "Push them in the chest." At Memphis, De'Aaron Fox scored 32 points to power Sacramento over the hosts 113-109 despite 34 points by Grizzlies guard Ja Morant, making a sur-

prise return from an ankle sprain. At Denver, Bojan Bogdanovic scored 22 points, the last on two free throws with 8.2 seconds to go, as Detroit won 110-108. Reigning two-time MVP Nikola Jokic had 31 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds for the Nuggets. —AFP

Australia's coach takes aim at cricket 'cowards'

SYDNEY: Former Australia coach Justin Langer Wednesday hit out at the anonymous "cowards" who leaked against him in the lead-up to his resignation, while admitting he should have cultivated a better relationship with the sport's governing body. The 52-year-old walked away from his job in February after failing to secure the public support of key players and following acrimonious contract talks with Cricket Australia.

He was unhappy at being offered only a six-month extension despite steering Australia to a 4-0 Ashes victory over England in 2021 and then to Twenty20 World Cup glory the same year. In the run-up to his departure, disgruntled players complained anonymously to Australian media about his intense "headmaster-like" coaching style, something he still bristles about. "Everyone was being nice to my face but I was reading about this stuff, and half

of it ... I could not believe that is what was making the papers," he told Code Sports.

"A lot of journalists use the word 'source'. I would say, change that word to 'coward'. A coward says, not a source. "Because what do you mean 'a source says'? They've either got an axe to grind with someone and they won't come and say it to your face, or they're just leaking stuff for their own agenda." Langer took the job in 2018 with Australian cricket at its lowest ebb for decades in the wake of a cheating affair, and was credited with restoring pride in the beloved baggy green cap.

But grumblings about his micromanaging began to surface about 12 months out from his eventual sacking. Langer, who will commentate on TV during the Australian Test summer that starts against the West Indies next week, insisted he listened and improved his ways, but was still forced out. "The hardest thing for me of all of it was: I got the feedback (and) I did something about it," he said. "We won the T20 World Cup, we won the Ashes. We were number one in the world. I've never enjoyed coaching more and I've still got sacked. That's the hardest thing."

Langer said his biggest regret was his lack of relationship with Cricket Australia's board. "I talked to the Cricket Australia board three times in



Australian coach Justin Langer

four years. That's craziness. And that's the only thing I'd do differently," he said. "Because when you know people haven't got your back, there is no lonelier place in the world. When you do know people have got your back, there's no more powerful place in the world. And that's what I would have done differently." —AFP

Asia's Rugby chief apologizes in HK for anthem mix-up

HONG KONG: The president of Asia Rugby apologized in person in Hong Kong on Tuesday after a democracy protest song was played instead of the Chinese national anthem at a South Korean tournament, the city's government said. Hong Kong police also said they would press charges against a local man for making "seditious" online posts that included thanking South Korea for the anthem mix-up. The city's sports teams play the Chinese national anthem but the protest song was broadcast before Hong Kong played South Korea in the final of the Asia Rugby Sevens Series in Incheon on November 13.

The Hong Kong government reacted with fury, with the city's leader John Lee ordering a police probe and the number two official meeting South Korea's top diplomat to request Seoul conduct its own investigation. It said in a statement on Tuesday Qais Abdulla Al Dhalai, the president of Asia Rugby, flew to the city to apologize to Chief Secretary Chan Kwok-ki. "He said that the incident was due to a human error, entirely without any political or malicious intent, from a junior member of the local organizer concerned," the statement said.

Dhalai also undertook that all tournament organizers must obtain the national anthems of competing teams from a centralized archive managed by Asia Rugby. A statement by Asia Rugby offering the same explanation last week failed to mollify many critics, including some nationalist legislators who called for the disbanding of Hong Kong's rugby team. Two other anthem mix-ups were found in the past week at Rugby World Cup matches this month and in July, when the correct anthem was played but the protest song's title appeared on screen.

The protest song "Glory to Hong Kong", written by an anonymous composer in 2019, urges residents to strive for freedom and democracy. It became a rallying cry during huge and sometimes violent protests that year but has since been declared effectively illegal by Hong Kong authorities. Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on Hong Kong to quell dissent after the 2019 protests and created a new national security unit within the Hong Kong police to enforce it. —AFP

Wright named as new England cricket selector

LONDON: Luke Wright has retired from professional cricket to become the new selector for the England men's team, it was announced Tuesday. The 37-year-old batsman made 101 white-ball international appearances and was a member of the England squad that won the 2010 T20 World Cup in the Caribbean. Wright was playing for south coast club Sussex, for whom he made over 400 appearances in all formats, scoring over 16,000 runs, including 30 centuries, until the end of this year's county season.

He has also featured in overseas T20 leagues including Australia's Big Bash League and the Indian Premier League. The post of national selector was abolished by former director of cricket Ashley Giles, who sacked Ed Smith in 2021 and concentrated his power into the hands of then England head coach Chris Silverwood. Giles' replacement Rob Key, however, has repeatedly stated he want-

ed to reintroduce the position, even though he enjoyed a successful spell while temporarily in charge.

Wright, who recently had a brief spell working as a coach with New Zealand, won't have Smith's title of "national selector" but will be involved in decisions concerning squad composition and central contracts. "It's a huge honor and privilege to take on this role, one that I am incredibly excited about," said Wright in an England and Wales Cricket Board statement. "With the Ashes and ICC men's 50-over World Cup next year, I can't wait to get started and try to contribute after what has been a fantastic year for England men's cricket."

Former England batsman Key has had a dream start to his time in charge, having picked Ben Stokes as captain and Brendon McCullum as coach of a Test side that have won six out of seven matches under the pair, and appointed Matthew Mott as coach of a white-ball team that have just won the T20 World Cup. Key, explaining Wright's appointment, said: "With his significant experience of playing in England and overseas as well as his in-depth knowledge of county cricket, he will be an important voice in squad selection while also helping to identify the next generation of England stars." —AFP



England's Luke Wright

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Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
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Rawda	22517733
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Emergency

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