

Sports

Kings leave Warriors in a hole as Sixers beat Nets to take 2-0 lead

LOS ANGELES: The Sacramento Kings defeated the Golden State Warriors 114-106 to take a 2-0 lead over the NBA champions after a bruising game two in their best-of-seven Western Conference playoff series on Monday. After edging a thrilling game one on Saturday, the Kings once again proved too much for the Warriors in another pulsating postseason battle between the two Northern Californian rivals in Sacramento.

De'Aaron Fox and Domantas Sabonis led the Sacramento scoring with 24 points apiece in a stormy encounter that saw Warriors stalwart Draymond Green ejected after stamping on the chest of Sabonis in the fourth quarter. The victory leaves the Kings on pole position as the series heads to San Francisco for game three on Thursday. "We came out here tonight and everyone fought, we were locked in," Sabonis told TNT television. "It's playoff basketball. We're here to fight. Every time we step on the floor we're going to give everything for our team-mates and our franchise."

Sabonis was reluctant to be drawn on the explosive fourth-quarter tangle with Green that led to the Warriors veteran being tossed. Green was ejected after appearing to aim a stamp on Sabonis's chest as the Kings player held on to his ankle as he lay on the court. "We were both fighting for the rebound, we fell on each other, stuff happens, it's basketball. We've got to move on to the next play," Sabonis said.

Green pinned the blame on Sabonis. "I've got to land my foot somewhere," Green said. "I can only step so far when I'm pulling my leg away. It is what it is." Steph Curry led the Warriors scoring with 28 points while Andrew Wiggins finished with 22 and Klay Thompson 21. However the Warriors were left ruing a litany of 20 turnovers that gave up cheap

points to Sacramento, who led from early in the second quarter.

Golden State clawed their way back from a 14-point third-quarter deficit to tie it at 93-93 midway through the fourth. But Sacramento responded to pull clear down the stretch and close out a gutsy win. "We didn't play well enough to win a playoff game on the road," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "With that said, it was a tie game with a few minutes left. We know we have to play better, and we will play better. These guys are champions. The way our guys fought showed what they're made of."

Sixers dominate Nets

In Monday's other playoff game, Tyrese Maxey scored 33 points as the Philadelphia 76ers defeated the Brooklyn Nets 96-84 to take a 2-0 lead in their Eastern Conference series. Maxey's haul from 13-of-23 shooting included six from three-point range as Brooklyn finally succumbed after making a bright start that saw them lead by 10 points in the second quarter.

Brooklyn were left ruing their inability to make the most of their first-half dominance against a sluggish-looking Sixers, who nevertheless restricted the Nets to just a five-point advantage as the teams went in for half-time at Philadelphia's Wells Fargo Center. Philadelphia's adjustments paid dividends in the third and fourth quarters, with the Sixers outscoring Brooklyn 24-14 in the third before wrapping up victory in the fourth.

Joel Embiid, double-teamed throughout, finished with 20 points and 19 rebounds while laying on seven assists as Maxey and Tobias Harris (20 points) shouldered the offensive responsibilities. "He trusts in me, and he trusts in Tobias to make the big shots tonight, and that's what we did,"



PHILADELPHIA: Mikal Bridges of the Brooklyn Nets shoots the ball during the game against the Philadelphia 76ers on April 17, 2023 at the Wells Fargo Center. —AFP

Maxey said of Embiid's selfless performance.

Philadelphia coach Doc Rivers admitted his team had been lucky to face only a five-point deficit heading into half-time. "I thought we wasted the whole first half," Rivers said. "We were fortunate. At half-time they could have been up more with the way we played. We're a better team than the way we played

in the first half. "But this is what the playoffs are all about — it's gonna test your trust. This was an early test for us, and we came through it." Cameron Johnson led the Brooklyn scoring with 28 points while Mikal Bridges finished with 21 and Spencer Dinwiddie 12. Game three in the series takes place in Brooklyn on Thursday. —AFP

N Zealand survive Iftikhar onslaught to win 3rd Pak T20

LAHORE: All-rounder James Neesham held his nerve in the final over to give New Zealand a dramatic four-run win over Pakistan in the third T20 international in Lahore on Monday despite Iftikhar Ahmed's brilliant innings. Ahmed brought Pakistan back into the contest from 88-7 with a whirlwind 24-ball 60 as they attempted to chase down New Zealand's 163-5.

Needing 15 to win from Neesham's final over, he hit a six and a four to reduce the target to five off the last three deliveries. But Neesham had Ahmed caught at long-on by Daryl Mitchell and then after a dot ball dismissed last man Haris Rauf in the same manner. "It was a great game and it's satisfying to get across the line and keep the series alive," said visiting captain Tom Latham.

"I think the whole squad will take a lot of confidence from this match moving forward. The three early Pakistan wickets in the powerplay set us up and we pride ourselves on our fielding and keep the bar high every time we set foot into the middle."

Ahmed led the fightback with Faheem Ashraf as the pair added 61 for the eighth wicket, with Ashraf holing out after a 14-ball 27 studded with two sixes and as many fours. Ahmed smashed six sixes and three fours. The victory means New Zealand trail the five-match series 2-1 after Pakistan won the first two games, by 88 and 38 runs, also in Lahore. The last two matches are in Rawalpindi on April 20 and 24.

Pakistan lost wickets at regular intervals with prolific opening pair Babar Azam (one) and Mohammad Rizwan (six) both gone by the fourth over with the score on just 17. Azam was caught at third man off pacer Adam Milne while Rizwan was found short of his crease after trying to take a sharp single. Pakistan were further jolted by left-arm spinner Rachin Ravindra who dismissed Fakhar Zaman (17) and Imad Wasim for three while Saim Ayub fell to Neesham for 10.

Ish Sodhi dismissed Shaheen Shah Afridi for six and Milne accounted for Shadab Khan for 16, leaving Pakistan reeling. The hosts battled back thanks to Ahmed, but were bowled out from the final ball on 159. "We didn't bat well enough tonight," said Pakistan skipper Azam. "We kept losing wickets at crucial stages, because of which the pressure kept building throughout the run chase, but our bowling has been superb this series."

Earlier, New Zealand's innings was anchored by Latham's 64 after winning the toss. Latham, who hit seven fours and two sixes, added 65 for the third wicket with Mitchell who scored a 26-ball 33. Mark Chapman made 16 not out off nine balls as New Zealand managed to score 51 in the last five overs. Shaheen — playing his 50th T20I — took 2-33 while his fellow pacer Rauf finished with 2-31. —AFP



LAHORE: New Zealand's Mark Chapman plays a shot during the second Twenty20 cricket match between Pakistan and New Zealand at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium on April 15, 2023. —AFP

LOCAL SPORTING ROUNDUP



KUWAIT: Kuwait Sports Club volleyball team were crowned champion of the 56th edition of the local federation's cup championship for the 2022-2023 season after they defeated Qadisiya 3-0 in the final match. Kuwait won 28/26 25/22 27/25. Kuwait has won this championship 18 times, Qadisiya 17, Kazma 13, Arabi 7 and Jahra once.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Tomooh Disabled Sports Club held its annual Ramdhan ghabqa for club employees. Chairman of Tomooh Club Jassem Al-Nouri thanked the previous board and appreciated their efforts in placing solid foundations for a promising sports entity that was able to create an outstanding nucleus of players in all games and made many achievements in regional and international arenas.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Bowling Club organized its Ramadan championship under the patronage of Chairman Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, with 100 players of both genders participating. Mohammad Abdullah won the open category, followed by Hassan Qasem in second place and Mustafa Al-Mousawi in third. Meanwhile, in the under-20 category, Nasser Al-Hajras won first place, Abdelrazaq Mohammad second and Hassan Qasem third. In the women's category, Niveen Wasel won first place, Jean Wawi second and Liza Khanifa third.

Chennai survive Du Plessis-Maxwell storm to beat B'lore

BENGALURU: Chennai Super Kings held on for an eight-run win over Royal Challengers Bangalore in a high-scoring IPL match on Monday, despite a blistering partnership from Faf du Plessis and Glenn Maxwell. A game billed as the clash between Indian superstars Virat Kohli and M.S. Dhoni saw a record-equaling 33 sixes hit in Bengaluru.

The IPL has witnessed that number of sixes in a game thrice, with Chennai involved each time. Devon Conway and Shivam Dube blasted 83 and 52 respectively to help Chennai post a commanding 226-6 batting first. "Dube is a clean hitter, is a tall guy with good reach," Dhoni said of the 29-year-old. "He can hit spinners. He needs to believe that he can score runs in the middle overs more than us because he has the talent."

Four-time champions Chennai moved to third in the 10-team table with three wins in five matches. But

Bangalore skipper Du Plessis (62) and Maxwell (76) brought the home crowd alive in a blazing partnership of 126. The pair tore into the opposition attack, striking 12 sixes between them after losing two early wickets including Kohli for six in the first over.

Dhoni played his part with two high catches to dismiss the dangerous pair, with Maxwell and Du Plessis falling in the space of two overs. Sri Lankan mystery spinner Maheesh Theekshana removed Maxwell after his 36-ball blitz, including eight hits over the boundary, and England spinner Moeen Ali sent back Du Plessis.

Dinesh Karthik attempted to keep up the attack with his 14-ball 28 but Chennai regained control with regular wickets as Bangalore failed to keep up with the asking rate. With 19 runs needed to win from the final over, Matheesha Pathirana, a fast bowler with a slinging action, kept his calm to give away just 10 and Bangalore ended on 218-8. "DK finishing the game, that's bread and butter for him, but that shows how good their bowling was," Du Plessis said. "At the toss, I said 200 was par, it was 10-15 too many." New Zealand opener Conway set the tone for the match with his 45-ball knock, laced with six sixes, as he put on big partnerships with Ajinkya Rahane and then Dube. Rahane smashed 37 before being bowled by Sri Lankan spinner Wanindu Hasaranga but Conway kept up the charge with Dube for company in a partnership of 80 off 37 balls. Bangalore at-



BENGALURU: Chennai Super Kings' Ajinkya Rahane is clean bowled during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match against Royal Challengers Bangalore at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on April 17, 2023. —AFP

tempted to pull things back with the wickets of Conway, who was named man of the match, and Dube, who departed after a 27-ball innings. But Moeen steered the team to the mammoth total with his unbeaten nine-ball 19. —AFP



GALLE: Ireland's Curtis Campher plays a shot as Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper Sadeera Samarawickrama looks on at the Galle International Cricket Stadium on April 18, 2023. —AFP

non-striker. Midway down the pitch, he turned back, slipped and despite a dive couldn't save himself, departing for 42. Jayasuriya bagged another three scalps, including the final one to fall, trapping Ben White leg-before for one. —AFP

Lanka wipe out wilting Ireland in first Test

GALLE: Ten wickets from Prabath Jayasuriya helped Sri Lanka thrash Ireland by an innings and 280 runs on Tuesday, in one of the biggest winning margins in Test history. In Sri Lanka's biggest win as well as Ireland's worst defeat to date, the visitors were bundled out for 168 on day three in a humid seaside Galle stadium after being made to follow-on.

"(Ireland) are new to this format and they are still learning about this format. But I think they were really good and in future they will be a good team as well," Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne said afterwards. It was the 12th-largest Test victory in Test history, behind England's win over the West Indies in 2007 by an innings and 283 runs.

Sri Lanka's previous biggest win was when they hammered Zimbabwe by an innings and 254 runs in 2004 in Bulawayo. Ireland have now lost all five of their matches since

securing Test status in 2017. Their previous biggest defeat was to England by 143 runs in 2019. In the first Test between the two sides, Sri Lanka made Ireland's fielders toil from the start, racking up 591 for 6 in their first innings before declaring on day two. Karunaratne top scored with a masterful 179 while Kusal Mendis posted 140. Dinesh Chandimal and Sadeera Samarawickrama then hit unbeaten hundreds. Sri Lanka then had Ireland on the ropes on 4-2 before bowling them out for 143 with Jayasuriya taking a career-best 7-52 and Lorcan Tucker top-scoring with 45. With a first-innings lead of 448, Sri Lanka enforced the follow-on, reducing them to 40-5 before lunch but Harry Tector and Curtis Campher resisted with a 60-run stand.

The partnership was broken when Nishan Madushka pulled off a good reflex catch at short leg to dismiss Campher for 30 and give Ramesh Mendis his second wicket in the innings. Mendis finished with four wickets, becoming after his 11th appearance the joint-fastest Sri Lanka to get 50 Test wickets alongside off-spinner Dilruwan Perera.

Tector, a tall 23-year-old right-handed batter, looked impressive with solid defense despite coping a nasty blow on the ribs from a Asitha Fernando delivery. But his promising innings was cut short when he pushed one to mid-off and hurried for a single but there was no response from the