

Sports

Mahomes breaks record as Chiefs secure AFC top seed, Jaguars take AFC South

MIAMI: Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes set a record for most total yards in an NFL season as the Chiefs secured the AFC top seed with a 31-13 win over the Las Vegas Raiders on Saturday while the Jacksonville Jaguars beat the Tennessee Titans 20-16 to clinch the AFC South title. The top seed spot ensures a first-round bye for the Chiefs, who end the regular season with a 14-3 record and are looking for their third Super Bowl appearance in four seasons.

Mahomes passed for 202 yards and rushed for 29 giving him 5,608 total yards for the season. That took him past the previous record of 5,562 yards set by former New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees in 2011. Kansas City scored on their first drive - Mahomes finding Justin Watson with a 67 yard pass deep left before a trademark two yard shovel pass to Jerick McKinnon for the touchdown.

A two-yard rush from Ronald Jones at the start of the second quarter put the Chiefs 14-3 up and looking in firm command of the game. After a clever wildcat play for a Kadarius Toney touchdown was ruled out for holding, Toney then compensated by rushing for an 11-yard touchdown on the next play. Isiah Pacheco's one yard rush in the fourth made it 31-6, but the Raiders reduced the deficit with quarterback Jarrett Stidham connecting with Hunter Renfrow with an 11-yard touchdown pass.

But it was a convincing win for Andy Reid's side, who will now enjoy a week off before beginning their post-season push. "It's important, it's like winning a playoff game," Mahomes said of securing the bye. The Chiefs' innovative offensive plays featured an unusual move before the penalized wildcat touchdown with the players spinning in a circle, a move Mahomes said was dubbed the "Snowglobe." "We enjoy it, we draw up these plays all the time and coach Reid lets us have rein to add our own flair," he said.

'Win and you're in'

The Jaguars made the post-season after Josh Allen ran in a fourth quarter touchdown from 37 yards after scooping up a fumble recovery forced by Rayshawn Jenkins on Titans quarterback Josh Dobbs. The game was a straightforward "win and you're in" clash for the AFC South division title and was a gruelling battle for much of the game.

The inexperienced Dobbs, making just his second start after a five-year career as a back-up, had been well protected by the Titans who relied heavily on the run with Derrick Henry putting up 109 rushing yards. The Titans, who had been 7-3 before losing their last seven games, opened up a 10-0 lead on a 21 yard touchdown pass from Dobbs to Chigoziem Okonkwo.

Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence responded, connecting with Christian Kirk for a 25-yard touchdown. While Lawrence missed two potential touchdown passes, Jacksonville's defense delivered a strong showing in the second half and after a Riley Patterson field goal they drew within three. Then Jenkins closed on Dobbs from his blind side and palmed the ball free just as Dobbs was into his passing motion with Allen pouncing on the loose ball and taking it home. The result concluded an impressive turnaround for the Jaguars, who had been 4-8 before winning their last five games.

"We just kept believing, nobody ever lost faith, we never started pointing the finger, we lost five games straight and just got tighter...it is cool to see a team come together like we have," said Lawrence, who threw for 212 yards. "It is hard to sum up this season and what we have been able to do and to get the opportunity to go and play in the playoffs with a home game...we are all fired up," added the Jaguars quarterback. "It was one of those games where the defense had to win it for us, we were a little frustrated on



LAS VEGAS: Quarterback Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs attempts a pass against safety Roderic Teamer of the Las Vegas Raiders at Allegiant Stadium on Jan 7, 2023. —AFP

offense but in these games, just win," he added.

Both games saw gestures of support for hospitalized Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who had suffered a cardiac arrest in Monday's game against the Cincinnati Bengals. Jaguars and Titans players knelt together in prayer before the kick-off

while Chiefs and Raiders players wore T-shirts in support of the player. Hamlin, who remains in critical condition but continues to progress according to a team statement, took to Instagram to express his appreciation for the wave of support he has received. —AFP

After Freire's fatal final wave, surfing world shocked, silent

NAZARE, Portugal: The day after the death of Brazilian surfer Marcio Freire, a leaden silence had settled over Nazare, the Portuguese fishing village that has become a winter destination for big-wave surfers. Around the lighthouse perched on the rocky promontory of Praia do Norte, everything, even the ocean, seemed calm.

The rollers breaking on Friday were, for once, just a few meters high on a short stretch of coast in central Portugal that draws surfers keen to ride its famed wall of water. The Nazare Canyon, a five-kilometre deep crack in the floor of the continental shelf, allows waves to roll in with little loss of energy to be thrown upward as the fault ends just off the shore, creating giant breakers.

Since Hawaiian surfer Garrett McNamara rode a series of record-breaking Nazare waves starting in late 2011, the village has drawn big-wave surfers and those who like to watch them. German Sebastian Steudtner set the world record for the tallest wave surfed, an 86-foot (26.2-m) breaker, on Oct 29, 2020. On Thursday, Freire, a veteran big-wave chaser, died there at the age of 47. Freire was being towed out in a moderate swell when he fell. "The rescuers found that the victim was in cardio-respiratory arrest, immediately starting resuscitation maneuvers on the sand," said Portugal's National Maritime Authority in a statement. "It was not possible to reverse the situation." It was, local authorities said, the first death surfing the canyon, yet the conditions were relatively benign and Freire was an experienced surfer. He was one of a trio of Brazilians who starred in a 2016 documentary called 'Mad Dogs' about their battle to surf the legendary Jaws wave in Hawaii without being towed into place.

On Friday, Mario Lopes de Figueiredo, the commander of the Nazare maritime police told AFP that they were still investigating exactly how Freire died. "The waves did not exceed five meters," de Figueiredo said. "These are not difficult conditions for surfing here. On the days of the greatest swell, they reach between 15 and 20 meters. The surfer fell and was submerged by the wave. Then he was hit by two or three waves from behind and he did not have time to react in time or found himself unconscious at the impact of the first."

The Brazilian filmmaker Bred Oliveira, a member of Freire's team, the "Jagua Boys", filmed his friend's last wave, thinking at the time he was simply recording a training session. "We had no idea. Nobody really knows how it happened. I was filming and, suddenly, I heard the sirens of the rescuers," he told AFP. "The world of big surfing is in mourning, many surfers are in shock," he continued.

Oliveira hopes that at least the accident will help "improve safety" in Nazare. While many of the community of big-wave surfers in Nazare had decided to refuse to speak to the media they are expected to organize a tribute to Freire on Sunday. Forecasts suggest it could coincide with the arrival of a giant swell. —AFP

South Africa hold out for draw to deny Australia sweep

SYDNEY: South Africa were untroubled as they batted out for their first draw in almost six years on the final day of the third Test in Sydney on Sunday, denying Australia a series whitewash. Australia went into the fifth day of the rain-ravaged Test requiring 14 wickets for an improbable victory, but the Proteas comfortably negotiated their way through to earn a first draw in their last 47 Tests going back to New Zealand in 2017.

The teams shook hands with five overs left and South Africa at 106 for two in their second innings with Sarel Erwee unbeaten on 42 and Temba Bavuma 17. Australia enforced the follow-on after Josh Hazlewood led the way with four wickets to dis-

Celtics hold off Spurs, Lakers edge Kings in thriller

LOS ANGELES: Jayson Tatum scored 34 points, including a go-ahead basket with 33.7 seconds remaining on Saturday as the Boston Celtics escaped San Antonio with a 121-116 NBA victory over the tenacious Spurs. While the Celtics followed up their dominant victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Thursday, the Mavs bounced back with a 127-117 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans with the help of a triple-double from Luka Doncic.

The Celtics improved their league-best record to 28-12 as they finished up a 2-2 road trip - but it looked harder than it needed to be against a rebuilding San Antonio squad. Jaylen Brown added 29 points, and Malcolm Brogdon scored 23 off the bench for the Celtics, who led by 11 midway through the fourth quarter. The scrappy Spurs - who had 18 points apiece from Zach Collins, Tre Jones and Josh Richardson - tied it up at 116-116 on Richardson's three-pointer with 37.4 seconds remaining.

Tatum's step-back basket - off a pass from former Spur Derrick White - restored Boston's lead, and three Celtics free throws sealed it. "There's obviously a lot of stuff tactically we can work on," said Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla, who nevertheless insisted he was happy to

see his team work through adversity to get the win. "We needed a game like this, to where it's back and forth, things aren't going our way, they are going our way - you don't get a lot of those. It's easier to say that because we won," he acknowledged. "But I'm happy the game went the way it did because we got to execute some stuff."

Boston had opened their four-game road-trip with defeats at Denver and Oklahoma City before routing the Mavericks in Dallas on Thursday on the back of Tatum's second career triple-double. In Dallas Doncic rebounded from his seven-for-23 shooting performance against Boston with 34 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. The Slovenian star notched his 55th career triple-double and his ninth this season, one behind the league-leading 10 of Denver's Nikola Jokic.

Center Jonas Valanciunas scored 25 points to lead the Pelicans, who were without injured Zion Williamson and Malcolm Brogdon and resting CJ McCollum. In Sacramento, LeBron James scored 37 points to lead the Los Angeles Lakers in a dramatic 136-134 victory over the Kings. Tied at halftime and heading into the fourth quarter, the Lakers pushed their lead to as many as nine midway through the final period.

But they had to fight to the finish for a fifth straight victory. De'Aaron Fox put the Kings up by two with one minute remaining, but James answered with a three-point play. It was tied at 134-134 after Fox's turnaround jump shot with 7.4 seconds remaining, but Dennis Schroder made two free throws to seal it for the Lakers as Fox missed at the buzzer. —AFP



SAN ANTONIO: Jayson Tatum of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball during the game against the San Antonio Spurs on Jan 7, 2023 at the AT&T Center. —AFP

Shiffrin equals World Cup victory record

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia: Mikaela Shiffrin equaled Lindsey Vonn's women's record of 82 World Cup victories when she won the giant slalom at Kranjska Gora on Sunday. The 27-year-old American produced two dominant runs to beat the Italian Federica Brignone by 0.77 seconds. The Swiss Lara Gut-Behrami was third, 0.97sec behind Shiffrin.

"I was so nervous on this run, I even had a rash on my face, maybe a bit of that was because of

82," a tearful Shiffrin told broadcaster Eurosport. "I wanted to ski well and I did it. I can't believe it. It was a fight but it was pretty amazing conditions. I got a report from the coaches that everything is fully attackable and you have to go for it. I have been in this position and given it away. Today I wanted to fight for it."

Shiffrin picked up her first World Cup win when she was only 17. She is now just four wins shy of matching the overall record of 86 wins held by the Swedish legend Ingemar Stenmark, who dominated the men's slalom and giant slalom disciplines for a decade from 1975 before retiring in 1989. Shiffrin might have equaled the record 24 hours earlier but after five successive World Cup wins, she could only finish sixth in the weekend's opening giant slalom as Valerie Grenier gave Canada its first victory since 1974. —AFP



KRANJSKA GORA: American Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates with teammates after winning the Women's Giant Slalom event of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup on Jan 8, 2023. —AFP

Davis stops Garcia to retain 'regular' WBA world title

WASHINGTON: American Gervonta Davis took his record to 28-0 with 26 knockouts on Saturday when he stopped previously unbeaten Hector Luis Garcia in a World Boxing Association lightweight fight. Davis retained his WBA "regular" world title in the division, in which American Devin Haney is recognized as the WBA's "super" world champion. Unbeaten Haney also holds the WBC, IBF and WBO belts, which he defended with a dominant victory over Australian George

Kambosios in Melbourne in October.

Saturday's bout at the Capital One arena in Washington saw Dominican Garcia push Davis in the early going. But Davis began to assert himself in the middle rounds. At the end of the eighth - after a brief timeout because of an altercation in the crowd at ring-side - Davis found Garcia with a punishing left. Garcia didn't answer the bell for the ninth. He was heard saying "I can't see" in his corner and referee Earl Brown officially stopped the fight seconds into the ninth.

"I'm never surprised," Davis said of his reaction to Garcia's refusal to answer the bell for the ninth round. "When I caught him, I knew he was hurt, he was hurt bad. He's a fighter, so he didn't want to show it." Garcia, the WBA super featherweight champion from the Dominican Republic, fell to 16-1 with 10 knockouts. —AFP



WASHINGTON: Gervonta Davis celebrates after defeating Hector Luis Garcia in their WBA World Lightweight Championship bout at Capital One Arena on Jan 7, 2023. —AFP

miss the Proteas for 255 - 21 runs short of their target, but their highest innings total of a dismal series.

"We tried different things, kept putting balls in good areas and hoped the luck would turn," Australia skipper Pat Cummins said. "We were up against it, we had 150 overs to take 20 wickets on a good surface." Australia could only muster two wickets in South Africa's second innings with skipper Dean Elgar yet again failing along with Heinrich Klaasen. Elgar fell for the fourth time in the series to a leg-side catch by wicketkeeper Alex Carey for 10.

Cummins peppered him with a rising delivery and targeted Elgar's technical batting flaw off his hips for yet another cheap dismissal. Elgar finished a miserable series with just 56 runs from six innings at an average of 9.33, raising yet more questions about his future as South Africa's Test skipper. "Touring Australia is never easy," Elgar said. "The message to the group yesterday was to fight it out on day five. Only three or four guys have played here before, so there are a lot of learnings. It is a tough place to tour, maybe the toughest in the world. Test cricket teaches you resilience. When things aren't on your side, you still have to wake up and try again." Australia opener

Usman Khawaja was named man-of-the-match for his unbeaten 195 in Australia's first innings declaration of 475-4. Fellow opener David Warner was man-of-the-series, based largely on his double century in Melbourne.

Lyon distraught

Asked about his feelings on being stranded short of his first Test double-century by the declaration, Khawaja said: "I would have loved to get a double ton. But this is what cricket is about. You play for milestones but you also need to do the best for the team." Australia had some chances on the final day and leading spinner Nathan Lyon was left distraught when two contentious reviews involving Klaasen went against him.

Klaasen survived a strident leg before wicket appeal and subsequent review on 27. A run later a low catch by Steve Smith was given out after a review with the third umpire Richard Kettleborough ruling that part of the ball was touching the grass when it went into Smith's fingers. Smith was adamant he took the catch. "I was pretty certain I caught it, but it was deemed the other way. It's the umpire's call and you move on."

But Klaasen didn't last much longer and was bowled by



SYDNEY: South Africa's Sarel Erwee plays a sweep shot during the third cricket Test match against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Jan 8, 2023. —AFP

Hazlewood for 35. Hazlewood had earlier made a crucial double-wicket breakthrough to help wrap up South Africa's first innings. —AFP