

Sports

Warriors erase a 20-point deficit, outmuscle Pelicans

Curry scores 39; Wizards shock Celtics

LOS ANGELES: Golden State erased a 20-point deficit to beat the New Orleans Pelicans 120-109 on Tuesday, with Stephen Curry scoring 39 points as the Warriors edged ahead of Minnesota into sixth place in the Western Conference. Curry drained five of his eight three-pointers in the second half as the reigning NBA champion Warriors came alive, surging past the Pelicans to win a sometimes sloppy, often scrappy contest and boost their chances of avoiding the play-in tournament for teams placed seventh through 10th in each conference.

Golden State star Draymond Green and New Orleans' Brandon Ingram received double technical fouls with 3:45 left in the second quarter after they exchanged words in the wake of Green's foul on the Pelicans player—which was upgraded to a flagrant. Green's collision with Herbert Jones sparked some more shoving, and with 14 turnovers in the testy first half, the Warriors were down 17 at the break. They

opened the third quarter on an 8-0 scoring run and had cut the deficit to four points going into the fourth. "We started playing with some heart and intensity," Green said of the difference in the second half.

Jordan Poole's reverse layup early in the fourth gave the Warriors their first lead since the first quarter, 95-94, and they didn't trail again. Poole scored 13 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter, and Klay Thompson added 17 for the Warriors. Ingram led the Pelicans with 26 points and Trey Murphy added 21, but New Orleans coach Willie Green said his team's lackluster start to the third quarter was fatal. "We started, I believe it was eight-zip," he said. "Two turnovers. You can't give this team any life. Once they get going, once this building gets going, it's tough to stop them."

Elsewhere, the Boston Celtics' chances of overtaking the Milwaukee Bucks for the top seed in the East took a hit with an ugly 130-111 loss to the

lowly Washington Wizards. Perhaps caught looking ahead to a Thursday clash with the Bucks, the Celtics were lackadaisical on defense, unable to stop a Wizards team missing two key players in Bradley Beal and Kyle Kuzma.

Kristaps Porzingis scored 32 points for the Wizards and Deni Avdija added 25. Jayson Tatum returned from a one-game absence to lead the Celtics with 28 points. Marcus Smart had four three-pointers in the first half, but overall, Boston connected on just 11 of 44 from three-point range. They trailed by 13 at halftime and by as many as 23 in the second half. "It was just one of those nights," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "Very rarely has that happened to our team. Just one of those off nights."

The Toronto Raptors outscored the Miami Heat 62-36 in the paint in a 106-92 victory. Pascal Siakam scored 26 points and Scottie Barnes added 22 along with a career-high 12 assists for the Raptors—as

the Heat failed to gain ground in their bid to avoid the play-in round. With Jimmy Butler sidelined by a sore neck, the Heat dropped a second straight game. Tyler Herro scored 33 points and Bam Adebayo added 21 points and 12 rebounds for Miami, who cut the deficit to 10 with less than four minutes to play only for their charge to stall.

Dejounte Murray starred late as the Atlanta Hawks edged the playoff-bound Cleveland Cavaliers 120-118. Murray made three free throws to put the Hawks up 115-113 with 2:14 remaining, then came up with a steal and a basket that pushed the lead to four in the final minute. He finished with 29 points to lead the Hawks, who remained tied with Toronto for the eighth-best record in the East. Atlanta withstood a 44-point effort from Donovan Mitchell, who tied LeBron James's Cavaliers franchise record of 10 games of 40 or more points in a season. — AFP

Japan Classic hero Ohtani tops MLB with record \$65m

NEW YORK: Japanese two-way star Shohei Ohtani will make a one-season Major League Baseball record \$65 million this year in salary and endorsements, Forbes magazine reported on Tuesday. Ohtani, set to be the starting pitcher for the Los Angeles Angels in their MLB season opener Thursday against Oakland, helped spark Japan to the World Baseball Classic title a week ago with a victory over the United States in the final.

The 28-year-old who serves as an outfielder and designated hitter when not on the mound, signed a one-year contract extension worth \$30 million last year and will make \$35 million in endorsements in 2023, Forbes reported. That's a huge jump from only \$6 million in 2021 sponsorship deals and \$20 million last year. While the numbers already make Ohtani the highest-paid player in the sport, the 2021 American League Most Valuable Player is set to become a free agent after the upcoming campaign and expected to receive one of the richest contracts in MLB history for 2024 and beyond.

"Shohei's commercial impact annually for the Japanese market will be to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, because he is a cultural icon in Japan first and a baseball player second," Chris Davis, New Balance's chief marketing officer, told Forbes. "He'll probably be the first and only baseball player of this generation that has the ability to have that level of commercial impact for a brand."

In 2022, Ohtani went 15-9 with a 2.33 earned-run average and 219 strikeouts over 166 innings. He had a .273 batting average with 34 home runs, 30 doubles and 95 runs batted in over 157 games. MLB's 10 highest-paid players are set to make a record \$436 million this year, up 15% from last year's record mark of \$377 million, Forbes reported. A major reason for the leap was the \$3.8 billion MLB clubs spent on free agent contracts for the 2023 season.

Among these deals was a nine-year contract worth \$360 million for 2022 AL MVP Aaron Judge to stay with the New York Yankees and pitcher



MIAMI: Shohei Ohtani #16 of Team Japan celebrates in the clubhouse after defeating Team USA in the World Baseball Classic Championship 3-2 at loan-Depot park. — AFP

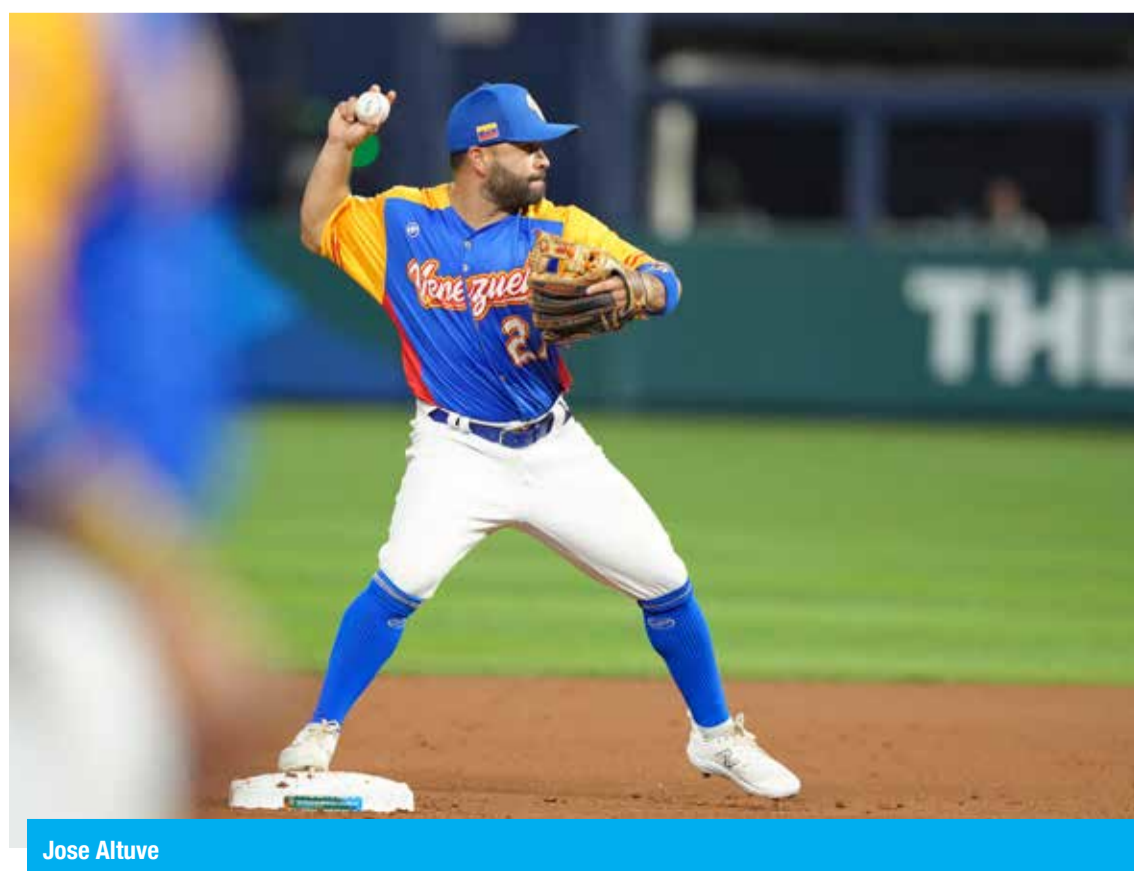
Justin Verlander's \$86.7 million two-year deal with the New York Mets. Verlander and teammate Max Scherzer have the top on-field contract totals for 2023 at \$43.3 million. Scherzer ranked second on the 2023 highest-paid players list at \$59.3 million, bolstered by \$15 million in deferred salary payments from the Washington Nationals, whom he helped win the 2019 World Series.

Judge was third at \$44.5 million, including \$4.5 million in endorsements, with Verlander fourth on \$44.3 million and Mike Trout of the Angels fifth on \$39.5 million. Trout, who just announced a deal with golf star Tiger Woods to build a course in his home state of New Jersey, was struck out by Ohtani for the last out in the Classic final to clinch Japan's third crown in five tries in the global baseball event. — AFP

ular season, it would be MLB's fastest pace of play since 1979. "It definitely speeds up the game," Yankees slugger Judge said. "I think this pitch clock is going to be a good thing for everybody." While some pitchers have complained about time limits, New York Mets ace Max Scherzer welcomes the clock. "I can completely dictate pace. I love it," Scherzer said. New York Mets ace Max Scherzer. "I can work extremely quickly or I can work extremely slow. There is another layer here to be able to mess with the hitter's timing."

'Games will be crisp'

Minnesota Twins outfielder Kyle Garlick was among the batters who would take his time and step out of the batter's box as often as he liked. Now he can do it but once. "We were always taught, slow the game down, make sure you're



Jose Altuve

McIntosh breaks Titmus freestyle world record

MONTREAL: Canadian teenager Summer McIntosh clocked 3min 56.08sec to break the women's 400m freestyle world record Tuesday at the Canadian Swimming Trials in Toronto. The 16-year-old broke the previous record of 3:56.40 set last May by Australia's Ariarne Titmus at the Australian Championships in Adelaide—where the Aussie broke American Katie Ledecky's six-year-old world mark of 3:56.46 set at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

Coming into the meet—Canada's selection meeting for the World Championships in Fukuoka, Japan, in July—McIntosh was the fourth-fastest performer ever in the event behind Titmus, Ledecky and Italian Federica Pellegrini. She had clocked 3:59.32 to finish second to Titmus at the Commonwealth Games last year in Birmingham in Britain. McIntosh also was the silver medalist behind Ledecky at the 2022 World Championships, where she broke the four-minute barrier for the first time in the event. She had also won gold in the 200m butterfly and 400m medley at the World Championships last year.

Her record is the first long-course world record by a Canadian since Kylie Masse in the 100m backstroke at the 2017 World Championships in Budapest. "Honestly, going into tonight, I didn't think the world record was a possibility but you never know," said McIntosh, who broke onto the international scene at Tokyo 2020 when—as a 14-year-old—she finished fourth in the 400m free in her Olympic debut.

McIntosh, who recently relocated to Florida to train, said she always feels extra motivated when competing in Canada, breaking into tears as she spoke about her family. "Over the past few years I've put my life into this," she said. "To be the best I can be. To achieve something like this, it was very unexpected. It was never in my dreams to do this tonight or even a few years ago. This just blows my mind." Ella Jansen, 17, also punched her ticket to the World Championships in the 400m free, finishing second in 4:08.81. — AFP

comfortable, control what's going to happen, don't rush into anything," Garlick said.

"I was always a guy who liked to step out, collect my thoughts, take a breath and get back in." With batter after batter doing that, games lagged to a record average of three hours and 11 minutes in 2021. "The game doesn't have to be three, three-and-a-half hours, and we're proving that," Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said. "Get out there and throw strikes, attack hitters, and the games will be crisp." Miami's Jon Berti, who led MLB with 41 stolen bases last season, sees the clock and pickoff attempt limits as an edge—not to mention bigger bases as targets. "We're still figuring out exactly how we can hopefully take advantage of it and just being able to be maybe a little bit more aggressive in some situations," Marti said. "The bigger bases it makes it a little easier just because it cuts down the distance." — AFP



Australia's Cameron Green

IPL returns as Mumbai eye sixth title

NEW DELHI: Mumbai Indians, armed with big-money signing Cameron Green, will bid for a record-extending sixth title when the Indian Premier League starts on Friday, in what could be Chennai veteran MS Dhoni's swansong. The 16th edition also returns to its pre-COVID glory days, with 74 matches scheduled at 12 venues over eight weeks. In the opener at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad, defending champions Gujarat Titans will play Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings.

England all-rounder Sam Curran returns to Punjab Kings after being bought for \$2.23 million, making him the most expensive IPL player ever. Green, 1.98 meters (6 feet and 6 inches) tall, joined IPL's most successful outfit Mumbai after he became the second-most expensive buy at \$2.11 million in the December auction.

India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin called Green a "once-in-a-generation" cricketer after the batting all-rounder hit his maiden Test hundred in India earlier this month. "I think he's a fantastic player. Just the raw materials for a person as tall as him, lovely levers, good batting sense, can bowl and really hit the deck well, moves pretty well on the field," Ashwin said. Mumbai, led by India captain Rohit Sharma, will be without injured pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah but have been boosted by the return of England fast bowler Jofra Archer, who missed last season due to injury.

Dhoni and Stokes

Chennai are not far behind Mumbai with four titles—and are five-time runners-up—and Dhoni's towering presence as wicketkeeper-batsman and captain has been key. Dhoni, 41, remains a huge star more than two years after his international retirement. He said he owed a "thank you" to his Chennai fans after last year's IPL, which was held in just two cities in the group stage.

Dhoni apart, the team's success will depend on all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja, Moeen Ali and England Test skipper Ben Stokes, who was bought by the franchise for \$1.96m. According to media reports, Stokes is also being considered as a possible successor to Dhoni as Chennai captain. Australia's David Warner, South Africans Aiden Markram and Faf du Plessis are the three overseas captains in this IPL.

Warner will lead Delhi Capitals in the absence of the injured Rishabh Pant, who suffered injuries in a car crash in December, as the team again chase their first ever IPL title. Markram will lead 2016 winners Sunrisers Hyderabad while fellow South African Du Plessis continues as Bangalore skipper after Kohli stepped down. The league, which began in 2008, has grown to be the world's richest cricket tournament and a huge revenue earner for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

This year for the first time there was a women's version—won in front of a packed house by Mumbai Indians. IPL has overcome corruption and match-fixing scandals to generate billions for the Indian economy each year, and last season expanded to 10 teams with Gujarat and Lucknow Super Giants. Gujarat pulled off a fairytale title win in their debut season with Hardik Pandya leading the side to victory in front of a record crowd of almost 105,000 fans at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium. The tournament runs until May 28. — AFP