



Gerald Herbert/The Associated Press

Portland Trail Blazers forward Carmelo Anthony turns down court after making a 3-point basket in the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday against the New Orleans Pelicans in New Orleans.

Anthony scores 10 in debut

By Brett Martel
The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Carmelo Anthony smiled easily in a hallway outside the Trail Blazers’ locker room and asserted that he “felt great” after the first game of his 17th NBA season, even if his new team couldn’t keep pace with Jrue Holiday, Brandon Ingram and a largely revamped Pelicans squad that is showing signs of figuring some things out.

“It felt great just to be back into the flow of the game, be back on the court, be back to where I think I belong,” Anthony said. “As far as conditioning, though, I felt absolutely great out there. There was minor things, but it was more of the flow of things, and getting used to how the team plays and sets and getting used to the guys on the team.”

Holiday had 22 points and 10 assists, Ingram added 21 points in his return from a four-game absence, and New Orleans beat Portland 115-104 on Tuesday night for its second straight victory and third in four games.

Anthony finished with 10 points while Portland leading scorer and four-time All-Star Damian Lillard missed his first game of the season with back spasms.

Starting at forward and playing across the street from where he led Syracuse to the 2003 NCAA championship over Kansas, Anthony scored the Blazers’ first points of the game on a 3-pointer from 26 feet out. Anthony missed 10 of 14 shots, but also hadn’t even participated in a full practice, having joined the team the day after its loss in Houston on Monday night.

“For having (only) a morning shootaround, I thought he was pretty good,” Blazers coach Terry Stotts said. “I thought every shot he had, he was getting a good look at the basket.”

Ingram looked spry in his return from right knee soreness, particularly on an authoritative, driving, one-handed dunk that got the crowd roaring in the opening quarter.

“I think trying to get to my spots and assert myself a little bit and getting other players involved, I think I did an OK job,” Ingram said. “I felt pretty good today. I didn’t have any restrictions.”

C.J. McCollum led Portland with 22 points, while Hassan Whiteside added 14 points and 14 rebounds.

J.J. Redick hit 4 of 9 3-pointers and scored 14 points for New Orleans. Kenrich Williams, starting at forward, filled the stat sheet with hustle plays,

grabbing 14 rebounds to go with three steals, three drawn charging fouls and a blocked shot. He also scored eight points.

“He just makes winning plays,” Pelicans coach Alvin Gentry said. “That’s what he does — winning play after winning play.”

New Orleans seized momentum in the third quarter, going up by 13 on a sequence that began when Nicolo Melli hit a 3 and then got the ball right back in a largely vacated Portland back court after Nickeil Alexander-Walker dove to swipe the ball away from McCollum. Melli went straight in for a dunk that made it 83-70.

TIP-INS

Trail Blazers: Nassir Little had 12 points and 11 rebounds. ... Kent Bazemore scored 11 points. ... Shot 16 of 29 (55.2%) from 3-point range, but only 40 of 92 (43.5%) overall and missed five of 13 free throws.

Pelicans: Melli finished with 14 points and E’Twaun Moore added 11 points off the bench. ... Guard Frank Jackson returned after missing one game with a neck bruise and scored nine points. ... Guard Lonzo Ball (groin), center Derrick Favors (back) and guard Josh Hart (ankle) were among the injured for New Orleans.

Beavers can start to think about bowl game possibility after ASU win

By Steve Gress
Albany Democrat-Herald

CORVALLIS — Since Oregon State earned its fourth win of the season at Arizona a couple weeks back, coach Jonathan Smith has been asked on several occasions about the possibility of a bowl berth.

To do that, the Beavers needed to win two of their final four games.

So Smith’s response was the Beavers had to win No. 5 before they could win a sixth.

After a 19-7 loss to Washington on Nov. 8, the questions still kept coming and the answers were the same.

They were there again on Saturday night only this time the Beavers were coming off a thrilling 35-34 Pac-12 win over Arizona State in the final home game of the season.

The first opportunity to become bowl eligible for the first time since the 2013 season comes on Saturday at Washington State. Kickoff is set for 6 p.m. and one team will hit the six-win threshold.

“Postseason play is a huge incentive and we’ve got a chance,” Smith said Saturday after his decision to go for it on fourth down in the closing seconds paid off to seal the win, OSU’s first conference win at home since the 2016 Civil War against Oregon.

“We’ve got two games left, two tough opponents. I know these guys will come back to work. Going to ask them

to stay focused on the work because it’s ultimately how you play and if you’re doing your job. It’s not really about a desire of who wants to go to a bowl game more, it comes down to executing a plan and we’re going to need to do it.”

Over the past two weeks, the players also tried to avoid the subject of a bowl game as much as possible.

But like their coach, they were more than willing to talk about it Saturday night.

“Right where we want to be,” senior quarterback Jake Luton said after throwing for 288 yards and four touchdowns in the win. “Two weeks left and we need to win at least one more but like Noah (Togia’i) said, let’s go win both. Just the fact that we’re in position to maybe go play in a bowl game is right where we want to be.”

Togia’i had a big game with eight receptions for 76 yards and a touchdown in the win.

“It’s really exciting,” he said. “We know we’re one game away, we’ve got two left and so why not win both of them. We’re going to celebrate tonight but (quickly) focus on Washington State.”

Qualifying and being invited to a bowl game would be big for a Beavers program that was near the bottom two years ago at this time, having a coach who along with the school mutually agree to part ways in the middle of a season that ended with one victory.

“A huge factor in bowl games beyond just the recognition of playing in the game (is) you get to practice more, you get to develop some talent and that’s why you’re trying always to get into the postseason to get those 10 extra practices,” Smith said.

While the Beavers are as close to a bowl game as they have been since being 5-5 with two games to play in 2014, red-shirt junior outside linebacker

Hamilcar Rashed Jr. said the approach can’t change.

“It’s what coach Tibbs (defensive coordinator Tim Tibesar) says, we’ve got to go 1-0 this week,” he said after a two-sack performance that set a new single-season record at Oregon State. “Today. That’s it. We can’t jump to conclusions, we’ve got to come to work every week. We’ve got practice and we’ve got to work there.”

Grande Ronde Hospital proudly welcomes: Zach Spoehr-Labutta, MD

Joining the Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics team as a Pediatrician

Zach Spoehr-Labutta, MD (Dr. Zach), joins the GRH **Children’s Clinic** from Johns Hopkins All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida, where he completed his residency. He completed his Doctor of Medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Washington, DC. Dr. Zach is passionate about helping children and teens achieve their best health. He enjoys helping families come up with unique solutions that meet their needs, while also partnering with schools, community organizations, and government to ensure health on a population level. Topics that he is particularly interested in are vaccination, injury and accident prevention, and building resilience for families affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). When not caring for patients, Dr. Zach enjoys hiking, kayaking, skiing, and landscaping, as well as playing video games and spending time with his family.

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NFL kickers have worst field goal rate since 2003

By Teresa M. Walker
The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tennessee — The Tennessee Titans have a very proud tradition of successful kickers over the past couple of decades ranging from Al Del Greco, Joe Nedney, the late Rob Bironas to now Ryan Succop.

That’s what makes this season so very surprising.

The Titans are on their third different kicker and already have missed eight field goals through 10 games to match the team’s most misses since 2004 when they missed eight, a dubious mark they also had in 2001. They currently rank dead last in the NFL, converting just 46.7% (7 of 15).

They’re not alone.

Kickers across the NFL are struggling to put the ball between the uprights this season. The 79.7% conversion rate through Week 11 is the league’s lowest number since 2003 when kickers hit 79.2%, missing 198 field goals, according to SportRadar.

“It’s probably just one of those years,” Titans special teams coach Craig Aukerman said. “Obviously, we’re not up to what we expect, but I just think it’s one of those years that it’s just been down. I mean it’s hard kicking (field goals) in the NFL. ... Now are they all professional athletes and they should make them? Yes, no doubt. But next year it’ll probably go back up.”

Kickers converted just 77.7% of field goals in 1999 — the season the NFL introduced the “K” ball to be used fresh out of the box to keep kickers and punters from softening them up. By 2004, kickers had gotten so used to the “K” ball, the conversion rate started climbing and reached 86.5 % in 2013.

Even the sweet spot between 40 to 49 yards hasn’t been a guarantee this season with kickers converting only 136 of 196 for a 69.4% rate that kickers also matched in 2003.

Sometimes what went wrong is simple. Brandon McManus had a chance to pad Denver’s lead in the fourth quarter Sunday only to send a 43-yarder wide right in a 27-23 loss to Minnesota.

“All I know is I kicked the ground, and it wasn’t even close,” McManus said.

Adam Vinatieri, the NFL’s career scoring leader and all-time field goal leader at age 46, has struggled with his worst season since 2003. He’s missed five field goals and

six extra points this season, which had the Colts trying out kickers last week.

Injuries also have been an issue.

Succop made a franchise-record 86.6 % of kicks through his first five seasons with Tennessee and set an NFL record making 56 consecutive field goals inside 50 yards between 2014 and 2017. Offseason surgery on his right, kicking leg put him on injured reserve to start this season. The Titans tried out Cairo Santos and Cody Parkey, signing Santos with five years’ experience kicking and with Tennessee his fifth team.

Santos wound up costing Tennessee two games.

He missed a 45-yard field goal wide left in the fourth quarter of a 19-17 loss to Indianapolis in Week 2 and missed three field goals with a fourth blocked in 14-7 loss to Buffalo on Oct. 6. The Titans cut Santos a day later and brought in Parkey, who had been Chicago’s kicker last season until he missed the potential winning field goal off the upright and crossbar in a wild-card loss to Philadelphia at Soldier Field.

Succop returned Nov. 2 and missed his first three field-goal attempts in a 30-20 loss at Carolina a day later.

“Obviously, I have to do a better job, so that’s what I’m doing,” Succop said.

The Jets are on their fourth kicker. Chandler Catanzaro retired abruptly after missing two of three extra points in New York’s preseason opener. Taylor Bertolet missed three field goals and two extra points before being cut. Kaare Vedvik was claimed off waivers from Minnesota only to miss a 45-yard field goal and extra point in the Jets’ season-opening 17-16 loss to Buffalo.

Sam Ficken, a late cut by Green Bay, is 7 for 11 on field goals for the Jets. He missed from 49 yards in a win Sunday in Washington along with a missed extra point.

Spending lots of money hasn’t guaranteed success either.

The 49ers didn’t expect any problems after placing the franchise tag on Robbie Gould last offseason before signing him in July to a four-year, \$19 million contract with \$10.5 million guaranteed. Gould had made 72 of 75 field-goal attempts in his first two seasons with San Francisco for the NFL’s best mark in that span. Only Baltimore’s Justin Tucker has been more accurate than Gould in NFL history.