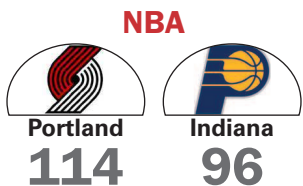


McCollum scores 28 in Blazers win

By JEFF SKIRVIN
Associated Press



INDIANAPOLIS — If the first two games are any indication of the type of team the Portland Trail Blazers will be in 2017-18, they've put the rest of the NBA on notice.

Starting its season on the road, Portland has blown out its first two opponents by a combined 68 points, including Friday night's easy win over the Indiana Pacers.

CJ McCollum scored 28 points on 12-of-18 shooting to lead the Blazers past the Pacers 114-96.

With Indiana starting center Myles Turner out with a concussion, McCollum teamed with backcourt mate Damian Lillard to take advantage of an inexperienced Pacers interior defense.

Lillard did most of his damage in the paint in the first half. McCollum picked it up in the second half, scoring Portland's final 12 points of the third quarter and giving the Blazers a 91-73 lead.

"Once I see it go in a few times," McCollum said, "that basket gets a little bit bigger

for me."

The Portland pair made it look easy at times as they drove to the basket against rookie T.J. Leaf and second-year player Domantas Sabonis. Lillard scored 11 of his 18 points in the first quarter, and the Blazers led 62-52 at halftime.

Evan Turner scored 17 points off the bench, and his run of eight straight points in the second quarter helped the Blazers stay ahead with Lillard resting. Turner led a 15-3 run that allowed Portland to gain control.

Lillard was especially pleased with Portland's defensive effort.

"We knew (the Pacers) had 140 on opening night," he said. "But it's opening night, you're excited, it's the first game, you're on your home court and a lot of shots go in. But it's hard to do that

twice — score 140 points back-to-back in the NBA. We came in here ready to guard."

The Pacers hit seven of their first nine shots but finished the first quarter by making two of their final 12. Leaf and Victor Oladipo scored 17 points apiece for the Pacers. Darren Collison added 14 points.

Oladipo said not having Turner was a key to Indiana's repeated defensive breakdowns.

"It was a little different today, just because Myles didn't play," Oladipo said. "It is what it is. We'll learn from it and move on."

BIGGIE'S HOME-COMING: Former Purdue standout Caleb "Biggie" Swanigan, Portland's first-round pick (26th overall), returned to Indiana in an NBA uniform for the first time. Last season's Big Ten Player of the Year was introduced to cheers and scored two points. He had eight points in Portland's season-opening win.

NOT JUST A THROW-IN: Sabonis, acquired in the trade that sent

Paul George to Oklahoma City, earned his first start of the season. The second-year player had three points and eight rebounds in 29 minutes. He scored 16 points off the bench in the Pacers' season-opening win over Brooklyn.

TIP-INS: Blazers: Portland has won eight of its last 10 games against Indiana. ... McCollum saw his first action after serving a one-game suspension for leaving the bench during the Blazers' final preseason game.

Pacers: After attempting 34 3-pointers in their season opener, the Pacers had 18 tries from beyond the arc on Friday, connecting on just four. ... The Pacers haven't started 2-0 since the 2013-14 season.

UP NEXT: Blazers: Portland wraps up its three-game trip Saturday at Milwaukee. The Bucks swept the season series last year against Portland.

Pacers: Indiana plays Saturday at Miami. The Heat have won their last five regular-season home games over the Pacers and 11 of 12 dating to 2010-2011.



Portland Trail Blazers guard CJ McCollum shoots over Indiana Pacers guard Victor Oladipo during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis, Friday. AP Photo/Michael Conroy

Oregon offense, UCLA defense: One will solve its problems

By DAN GREENSPAN
The Associated Press



• Saturday, 1 p.m.
• at Rose Bowl, Pasadena

LOS ANGELES — Oregon's injury-depleted offense and UCLA's battered defense have to be glad to be facing one another at the Rose Bowl on Saturday.

The Ducks have scored a total of 17 points in two games since starting quarterback Justin Herbert broke his collarbone. The Bruins have allowed at least 434 yards in every game.

One team is going to solve its struggles. For one week, anyway.

"That's the obvious," UCLA head coach Jim Mora said. "How do we fix it? That's the job that, you know, we're trying to accomplish."

The issues at UCLA (3-3, 1-2 Pac-12) have centered

on a run defense that ranks last among FBS teams in yards per carry (6.57) and yards rushing per game (313). Giving up runs of 10 yards or longer have been an issue going back to the season-opening comeback win against Texas A&M. Arizona had 11 such plays to hand UCLA a 47-30 loss last week, including touchdown runs of 45 and 71 yards by quarterback Khalil Tate.

"Our problem is the explosive runs are just

completely out of control, unlike anything I've ever seen in my career," Mora said. "It kills me. It rips my guts out."

Missed tackles have been frequently cited as a main cause of those breakdowns, and it has had an impact on UCLA's ability to generate takeaways. UCLA has recovered two fumbles and intercepted three passes, and as a longtime defensive coach Mora understands that turnovers come from either pressuring the quarterback or sound tackling of a ball carrier.

"Takeaways come in bunches, but takeaways, you create takeaways," Mora said. "Hell, we're just hanging on a lot of times even trying to make a tackle."

The absence of Herbert

has allowed opposing defenses to focus their efforts on stopping the run and making freshman quarterback Braxton Burmeister do everything for Oregon (4-3, 1-2). Burmeister is 18 for 35 passing for 178 yards with one touchdown and four interceptions in two games as the starter.

"It's not that we can't do it. We just got to execute and we can't beat ourselves," Oregon head coach Willie Taggart said. "We need more from everyone, coaches and players."

Here are some things to watch for as the Ducks and Bruins meet for the first time since 2014:

ROYCE ROLLS: Oregon senior running back Royce Freeman needs 140 yards to pass LaMichael James to

become the school's leader in career rushing yards. Freeman would also pass James for second place in Pac-12 history, trailing only Charles White of Southern California.

Freeman has rushed for 4,943 yards and 54 touchdowns at Oregon.

Freeman is also 133 all-purpose yards behind James for that school record, while his next touchdown as a runner or receiver would break the tie with James for most touchdowns from scrimmage by an Oregon player.

ROSEN REBOUND: UCLA quarterback Josh Rosen is coming off his worst performance of the season after throwing for 219 yards and three interceptions against the

Wildcats. Two came in the red zone, and the third was returned for a touchdown. In spite of those struggles, Mora believes the junior is finding a better balance between being aggressive with the ball and avoiding unnecessary risks.

"One thing I love about Josh is that he goes straight for it. And then you also have to balance that out with great decision-making, and I think he's really becoming really good at that," Mora said. "I can tell you this, I would always take a young man that is aggressive and has that type of attitude over somebody that doesn't because I think you can teach them to improve their decision-making but I don't know that you can always teach competitiveness."

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