

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Pro Basketball

Durant leads Warriors past Cavs

Golden State wins in NBA Finals rematch

By JANIE MCCAULEY
Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — LeBron James drove to the basket in the waning seconds and Kevin Durant swatted away any chance Cleveland had at a Christmas Day comeback.



Cleveland
92



Golden State
99

Durant pumped his fist again and again, emphatically shook his head and pounded his chest in delight. It looked a lot like the dominant Durant from the NBA Finals six months ago.

Klay Thompson hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:33 left, Durant delivered on both ends of the floor, and the Golden State Warriors beat the Cavaliers 99-92 on Monday in a festive holiday rematch of the past three Finals.

“There’s just so much joy in the arena today because it’s Christmas and we all feed off of that,” Durant said.

Durant’s block against a driving James with 24.5 seconds left went to official review and was ruled clean. Durant finished with 25 points, seven rebounds and five blocked shots.

“He’s one of the leaders in shot blocks a game and obviously he had five tonight, so he’s been doing a heck of a job of first of all taking the individual matchup and protecting the rim, too,” James said.

Kevin Love had 31 points and a season-best 18 rebounds, while James contributed 20 points, six rebounds and six assists in a rivalry missing one key piece: Warriors star Stephen Curry, who missed his eighth straight game with a sprained right ankle.

Thompson scored 24 points and Draymond Green had a triple-double with 12 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists. It was Golden State’s 12th win in 13 games after its 11-game winning streak was snapped by Denver on Saturday night.

Warriors rookie Jordan Bell trav-



Golden State Warriors forward Kevin Durant (35) dunk past Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James (23) and forward Jae Crowder (99) during the second half of Monday’s game in Oakland, Calif.

AP Photo/Tony Avelar

eled with 2:13 left and James tied it. Bell made up for that mistake with a key offensive rebound and pass to Thompson for his fourth 3.

James’ 3-pointer with 10:39 left pulled Cleveland within one,

but Green answered with a 3 and Andre Iguodala scored two of his nine points the next time down. In another key sequence, Durant blocked Tristan Thompson’s shot with 6:23 to go and dunked

moments later.

No surprise, the up-tempo, running rivals provided high entertainment once again. The Warriors

See WARRIORS/3B

NFL protests the top sports story of 2017

By ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press

DENVER — President Donald Trump couldn’t stand NFL players kneeling in protest during “The Star-Spangled Banner.” His angry call to fire players who didn’t stand for the national anthem rekindled both the national debate over the issue and the movement itself.

Former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick initiated the protests last year to bring attention to racial inequality and police brutality against minorities. Kaepernick is currently out of football, and relatively few players were demonstrating this season before the president stoked his feud with the NFL.

During a speech at a political rally in Huntsville, Alabama, in late September, Trump said, “Wouldn’t you love to see one of these NFL owners when somebody disrespects our flag to say get that son of a bitch off the field right now, out, he’s fired, he’s fired.”

Criticism from players, owners and fans — and some praise — greeted Trump’s remarks, which sparked a massive show of defiance that weekend, with more than 200 players protesting by choosing not to stand for the national anthem.

The president’s feud with the NFL is the runaway winner for the top sports story of 2017 in balloting by AP members and editors, easily outdistancing the corruption scandal engulfing college basketball and the Houston Astros winning their first World Series and lifting the spirits of a city devastated by Hurricane Harvey.

The year was marked by sex scandals, Russian doping and the U.S. failing to qualify for soccer’s World Cup. Tom Brady engineered a record-breaking comeback as the New England Patriots rallied from a 28-3 deficit to beat the Atlanta Falcons in the first Super Bowl to go into overtime and Clemson mounted a last-second comeback to beat Alabama for the national championship.

Kevin Durant led the Golden State Warriors to the NBA title and MMA star Conor McGregor stepped into the boxing ring to face undefeated champ Floyd Mayweather Jr.

All of that was overshadowed by the NFL protesters and the president’s dive into the debate.

See TOP STORY/3B

Pro Football

Gritty Seahawks keep playoff hopes alive

By SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Already missing two of their defensive stars for the season, the Seattle Seahawks were coming off their most-lopsided loss under coach Pete Carroll and facing Ezekiel Elliott in his return to the Dallas Cowboys after two of their worst showings against the run this year.

The Seahawks are still fighting for their sixth straight trip to the playoffs after a 21-12 victory Sunday. The Cowboys are out.

“We’ve been doing this since I’ve been here the past seven years,” said linebacker K.J. Wright, who had one of two interceptions against Dak Prescott, the other returned for a touchdown by Justin Coleman.

“Whenever our backs are against the wall, we just find a way to bounce back.



We could have easily taken the loss against the Rams, come back, pouted and moaned all throughout the week.”

Instead they won despite a career-low 93 yards passing from Russell Wilson, who threw two touchdown passes to get to 32 for the season, within two of his career high.

The Seahawks won despite just 136 yards total offense — fewest since beating the then-St. Louis Rams in 2013 — because that defense missing safety Kam Chancellor and cornerback Richard Sherman, not to mention end

See SEAHAWKS/3B



Dallas Cowboys wide receiver Dez Bryant (88) defends as Seattle Seahawks linebacker K.J. Wright (50) intercepts a pass intended for Bryant in the second half of Sunday’s game, in Arlington, Texas.

AP Photo/Michael Ainsworth

Sports shorts

Westbrook’s double-double leads Oklahoma City past Houston

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Russell Westbrook had 31 points and 11 assists to help the Oklahoma City Thunder stay hot with a 112-107 win over the Houston Rockets on Monday night.

Paul George scored 24 points and Carmelo Anthony added 20 for the Thunder, who won their fifth straight game. Oklahoma City shot 54.4 percent from the field.

James Harden led the Rockets with 29 points, but he made just 7 of 18 field goals. The league’s leading scorer was coming off back-to-back 51-point games.

Trevor Ariza and Eric Gordon each scored 20 points and Clint Capela added 19 points and 10 rebounds for Houston, which lost its third straight.



Westbrook

“We felt that both from a competitive standpoint and from a fan perspective, the most fair thing to do is to schedule all Week 17 games in either the 1 p.m. or 4:25 p.m. ET windows. This ensures that we do not have a matchup on Sunday Night Football that because of earlier results has no playoff implications for one or both of the competing teams.”

— Howard Katz

NFL senior vice president of broadcasting on the finalized Week 17 schedule.

Villanova remains at No. 1 in latest AP Top 25 poll

(AP) — The new AP Top 25 poll features the same four teams at the top, led by No. 1 Villanova.

The Wildcats (12-0) received 43 of 65 first-place votes to stay at No. 1 for the third straight week.

Michigan State (12-1) was second and had 16 first-place votes, while third-ranked Arizona State (12-0) had six first-place votes to stay ahead of No. 4 Duke (12-1).

Texas A&M (11-1) climbed to fifth, followed by Xavier, West Virginia, Wichita State, Virginia and TCU to round out the top 10.

Four ranked teams took big slides after losses to unranked opponents last week. North Carolina fell eight spots to No. 13, while Gonzaga also fell eight spots to No. 20.

Now-No. 15 Miami and No. 16 Kentucky each fell nine spots.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1986 — Center Doug Jarvis of the Hartford Whalers plays his 915th consecutive game, setting an NHL record.

2001 — Colorado’s Patrick Roy becomes the first NHL goalie to win 500 games, recording his seventh shutout of the season with a 2-0 win over Dallas.

2004 — Peyton Manning breaks Dan Marino’s single-season touchdown pass record when he throws his 48th and 49th of the season, rallying Indianapolis from a 31-16 fourth-quarter deficit to win 34-31 in overtime over San Diego.

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