

# Sports

## Rockets rally to beat Blazers

■ Houston outscores Portland 25-5 late in the third quarter and into the fourth

HOUSTON (AP)— The Houston Rockets' bench came to the rescue twice Tuesday night, and the second time made the difference.

James Harden had 29 points and seven Rockets scored in double-figures as Houston used a big second-half run and snapped a three-game losing streak with a 111-103 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Chris Paul added a triple-double with 11 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists. Clint Capela had 13 points and seven rebounds before fouling out with five minutes left, and Eric Gordon, who started in place of James Ennis, had 14 points for the Rockets, who shot 49 percent from the floor.

"We did a good job of just competing, playing harder," Harden said. "That was really it — playing harder and got into them. We were a little more aggressive. Good things seem to happen when you play harder."

Houston's bench played a key role in a 24-6 first-half run that erased a 15-point deficit, and then led a charge in the

second half. Gerald Green had 13 points, and Danuel House had 12 off the bench.

"They won the game for us," Houston coach Mike D'Antoni said of the bench. "They turned it around when we were down 15, and they came in, and Nene, Danuel House and Gerald put a lot of energy."

Damian Lillard had 34 points, CJ McCollum scored 22 points and Jusuf Nurkic added 15 points and 10 rebounds for Portland, which shot 44 percent after starting the game by making seven of its first nine shots.

"I thought Houston played pretty aggressive defense on us," Portland coach Terry Stotts said. "We took some possessions for granted and some turnovers led to their transition. Obviously, their bench came in and hand an impact on the game. They just outplayed us in the second half."

Houston used a 25-5 run to end the third and start the fourth quarters, and opened a 100-83 lead on a 3-pointer by Harden with 6:48 left. House and Green each had five points in the run.

"I think you could really tell the difference (in) the second half," Green said. "I thought that we didn't give up a lot of offensive rebounds that was really killing us in the first half. Our pace was really good tonight. I feel like we were playing faster. We were getting out in transition a lot more than we did in the last few games. I think it was something we can build on."

The Blazers responded with a 14-2 run and cut the lead to 102-97 when Nurkic made a pair of free throws with three minutes left.

After trading baskets, Houston pushed the lead to 107-99 on a free throw by Harden and two free throws by Paul. After Lillard missed a layup, Paul hit two more free throws to push the lead back to 10 with 1:38 left. Portland got no closer than eight the rest of the way.

"We dug ourselves into a hole, and with the style that they play, you're going to have a chance to get back into it, but it's a tough battle when you have to fight back into the game," Lillard said.

SEATTLE WINS FOURTH STRAIGHT GAME, ON VERGE OF QUALIFYING FOR PLAYOFFS

## Seahawks defense stifles Vikings

By Tim Booth  
AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE — Bobby Wagner leaped over the line of scrimmage, swatted Dan Bailey's field goal attempt and sparked the Seattle Seahawks to two late touchdowns.

Whether or not what Wagner did was entirely legal, he frankly didn't care.

"I'm not stressing about that. I made the play. They called what they called," Wagner said. "There's times in games where things happen all the time. I'm not stressing on it. It was a big block and we'll definitely take it. It was amazing."

Wagner's block midway through the fourth quarter was the catalyst in a 21-7 win over the Minnesota Vikings on Monday night that pushed Seattle to the brink of a playoff berth.

Chris Carson followed the blocked kick with a 2-yard TD run with 2:53 left, and Justin Coleman capped off the Seahawks' fourth straight victory with a 29-yard fumble return for a touchdown 18 seconds later.

What was an ugly and mostly forgettable first three quarters turned into a Seattle party in the fourth as the Seahawks (8-5) moved to the

### Vikings fire offensive coordinator

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings have fired offensive coordinator John DeFilippo, whose first season on the job ended after just 13 games amid a sharp decline in production by the offense over the past six weeks.

Quarterbacks coach Kevin Stefanski was made interim offensive coordinator on Tuesday morning, following a 21-7 loss at Seattle on Monday night.

brink of wrapping up a wildcard spot in the NFC. One win in Seattle's final three games — including matchups with lowly San Francisco and Arizona — should be enough to put the Seahawks into the postseason.

"It's really about the defense. I loved the way they played, they played so hard and so spirited," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said. "It was almost poetic after last week's game that Bobby

would get to block the field goal and he pulled it off and did it. That was an incredible play."

Minnesota (6-6-1) twice had scoring chances in the fourth quarter when it was still a one-score game but was turned away each time. Minnesota's chances of winning the NFC North took a major hit with its second straight loss, but the Vikings still hold the No. 6 spot in the NFC.

"Part of it is being better on third downs. We haven't really done a good job there. Part of it is being better in the red zone," Vikings coach Mike Zimmer said. "We had the ball on the 2-yard line and didn't score."

But much of the conversation centered on Wagner's block of Bailey's 47-yard attempt with 5:38 left and whether it was entirely legal. Wagner's jump through a gap in Minnesota's offensive line was fine, but it appeared he used his teammates to gain leverage, which allowed him to come through and block the kick. A flag was initially thrown but was picked up by the officials.

Wagner said he attempted it four times in practice without a problem but

acknowledged it could be tough to pull off the play during the fourth quarter of a tight game.

"When I did it in practice I was pretty fresh," Wagner said.

Zimmer said he asked for an explanation of what happened but wasn't given one. He was told he couldn't challenge.

"Quite honestly, I didn't see what happened. I was told what happened," Zimmer said.

Seattle took possession and Russell Wilson immediately scrambled 40 yards deep into Minnesota territory. Five plays later, Carson scored and Seattle finally had a cushion. Two plays after that, Jacob Martin sacked Minnesota's Kirk Cousins and the ball popped to Coleman, who weaved his way for the clinching touchdown.

Cousins threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to Dalvin Cook with 1:10 remaining, but Seattle recovered the onside kick.

"I feel like all of our losses we, as an offense, we are so slow," Vikings wide receiver Adam Thielen said. "Our defense is keeping us in games. And we're not pulling our side of the bargain."

## SCOREBOARD

### TELEVISION

**All Times PST**  
**Wednesday, Dec. 12**  
Portland at Memphis, 5 p.m. (CBS)  
Pittsburgh at Chicago, 5 p.m. (NBCSN)  
Oklahoma City at New Orleans, 5 p.m. (ESPN)  
Toronto at Golden State, 7:30 p.m. (ESPN)  
**Thursday, Dec. 13**  
L.A. Lakers at Houston, 5 p.m. (TNT)  
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City, 5:20 p.m. (FOX)  
Dallas at Phoenix, 7:30 p.m. (TNT)  
**Friday, Dec. 14**  
Indiana at Philadelphia, 4:30 p.m. (ESPN)  
Toronto at Portland, 7 p.m. (CSN)  
Oklahoma City at Denver, 7 p.m. (ESPN)  
**Saturday, Dec. 15**  
Army vs. Navy, noon (CBS)  
Minnesota at Portland, 7 p.m. (CSN)  
Heisman presentation, 5 p.m. (ESPN)  
**Sunday, Dec. 16**  
Green Bay at Chicago, Dallas at Indianapolis, Tampa Bay at Baltimore, Arizona at Atlanta, Detroit at Buffalo or Washington at Jacksonville, 10 a.m. (FOX)  
Oakland at Cincinnati, Tennessee at NY Giants or Miami at Minnesota, 10 a.m. (CBS)  
Seattle at San Francisco, 1:05 p.m. (FOX)  
New England at Pittsburgh, 1:25 p.m. (CBS)  
Philadelphia at LA Rams, 5:20 p.m. (NBC)

### NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE				
East Division				
W	L	T	Pct	
New England	9	4	0	.692
Miami	7	6	0	.538
Buffalo	4	9	0	.308
N.Y. Jets	4	9	0	.308
South				
W	L	T	Pct	
Houston	9	4	0	.692
Indianapolis	7	6	0	.538
Tennessee	7	6	0	.538
Jacksonville	4	9	0	.308
North				
W	L	T	Pct	
Pittsburgh	7	5	1	.577
Baltimore	7	6	0	.538
Cleveland	5	7	1	.423
Cincinnati	5	8	0	.385
West				
W	L	T	Pct	
Seattle	8	4	0	.692
San Francisco	3	10	0	.231
San Francisco	3	10	0	.231

x-Kansas City	11	2	0	.846
L.A. Chargers	10	3	0	.769
Denver	6	7	0	.462
Oakland	3	10	0	.231
NATIONAL CONFERENCE				
East				
W	L	T	Pct	
Dallas	8	5	0	.615
Philadelphia	6	7	0	.462
Washington	6	7	0	.462
N.Y. Giants	5	8	0	.385
South				
W	L	T	Pct	
y-New Orleans	11	2	0	.846
Carolina	6	7	0	.462
Tampa Bay	5	8	0	.385
Atlanta	4	9	0	.308
North				
W	L	T	Pct	
Chicago	9	4	0	.692
Minnesota	6	6	1	.500
Green Bay	5	7	1	.423
Detroit	5	8	0	.385
West				
W	L	T	Pct	
y-L.A. Rams	11	2	0	.846
Seattle	8	5	0	.615
Arizona	3	10	0	.231
San Francisco	3	10	0	.231

x-clinched playoff spot				
y-clinched division				
Saturday's Games				
N.Y. Giants 40, Washington 16				
Miami 34, New England 33				
Cleveland 26, Carolina 20				
Indianapolis 24, Houston 21				
New Orleans 28, Tampa Bay 14				
Green Bay 34, Atlanta 20				
N.Y. Jets 27, Buffalo 23				
Kansas City 27, Baltimore 24, OT				
L.A. Chargers 26, Cincinnati 21				
San Francisco 20, Denver 14				
Detroit 17, Arizona 3				
Oakland 24, Pittsburgh 21				
Dallas 29, Philadelphia 23, OT				
Chicago 15, L.A. Rams 6				
Monday's Game				
Seattle 21, Minnesota 7				
Thursday's Game				
All Times PST				
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City, 5:20 p.m.				

Saturday's Games				
Houston at N.Y. Jets, 1:30 p.m.				
Cleveland at Denver, 8:20 p.m.				
Sunday, Dec. 16				
Tennessee at N.Y. Giants, 10 a.m.				
Green Bay at Chicago, 10 a.m.				
Detroit at Buffalo, 10 a.m.				
Tampa Bay at Baltimore, 10 a.m.				
Arizona at Atlanta, 10 a.m.				
Oakland at Cincinnati, 10 a.m.				
Dallas at Indianapolis, 10 a.m.				
Miami at Minnesota, 10 a.m.				
Washington at Jacksonville, 10 a.m.				
Seattle at San Francisco, 1:05 p.m.				
New England at Pittsburgh, 1:25 p.m.				
Philadelphia at L.A. Rams, 5:20 p.m.				
Monday, Dec. 17				
New Orleans at Carolina, 5:15 p.m.				

### NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE				
East Division				
W	L	Pct.	GB	
Toronto	22	7	.759	—
Philadelphia	19	9	.679	2½
Boston	16	10	.615	4½
Brooklyn	10	18	.357	11½
New York	8	20	.286	13½
Southeast Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Charlotte	13	13	.500	—
Orlando	12	15	.444	1½
Miami	11	15	.423	2
Washington	11	16	.407	2½
Atlanta	6	20	.231	7
Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Milwaukee	18	8	.692	—
Indiana	17	10	.630	1½
Detroit	13	12	.520	4½
Cleveland	6	21	.222	12½
Chicago	6	22	.214	13
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
Southwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Memphis	15	11	.577	—
Dallas	14	11	.560	½
San Antonio	14	14	.500	2
New Orleans	14	15	.483	2½
Houston	12	14	.462	3

Northwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Oklahoma City	17	8	.680	—
Denver	18	9	.667	—
Portland	15	12	.556	3
Minnesota	13	14	.481	5
Utah	13	15	.464	5½
Pacific Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Golden State	19	9	.679	—
L.A. Clippers	17	10	.630	1½
L.A. Lakers	17	10	.630	1½
Sacramento	14	12	.538	4
Phoenix	4	24	.143	15

Monday's Games				
Indiana 109, Washington 101				
Philadelphia 116, Detroit 102				
Boston 113, New Orleans 100				
Milwaukee 108, Cleveland 92				
Oklahoma City 122, Utah 113				
Sacramento 108, Chicago 89				
Dallas 101, Orlando 76				
Denver 105, Memphis 99				
L.A. Clippers 123, Phoenix 119, OT				
Golden State 116, Minnesota 108				
L.A. Lakers 108, Miami 105				
Tuesday's Games				
Houston 111, Portland 104				
San Antonio 111, Phoenix 86				
Toronto 123, L.A. Clippers 99				

Today's Games All Times PST				
Boston at Washington, 4 p.m.				
Brooklyn at Philadelphia, 4 p.m.				
Detroit at Charlotte, 4 p.m.				
Milwaukee at Indiana, 4 p.m.				
New York at Cleveland, 4 p.m.				
Oklahoma City at New Orleans, 5 p.m.				
Portland at Memphis, 5 p.m.				
Atlanta at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.				
Miami at Utah, 6 p.m.				
Minnesota at Sacramento, 7 p.m.				
Toronto at Golden State, 7:30 p.m.				
Thursday's Games				
L.A. Lakers at Houston, 5 p.m.				
L.A. Clippers at San Antonio, 5:30 p.m.				
Chicago vs. Orlando at Mexico City, 6:30 p.m.				
Dallas at Phoenix, 7:30 p.m.				

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**With the holidays and families traveling... please drive safe! Happy Holidays!**

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