

Sports

Aldridge scores 56 in Spurs' win

By Raul Dominguez
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The Spurs started hotter than ever from 3-point range Thursday night. When that wasn't enough to put away the Oklahoma City Thunder, San Antonio got the extra push it needed from its big man in the middle.

LaMarcus Aldridge scored a career-high 56 points and the Spurs overcame Russell Westbrook's triple-double to outlast the Oklahoma City Thunder 154-147 in double-overtime.

"He carried us," Spurs point guard Derrick White

said. "It was fun to watch."

San Antonio set a franchise record by making its first 14 3-pointers and was 16 of 19 overall from deep, but it still needed two overtime periods to topple Oklahoma City, in part because Westbrook had 24 points, 24 assists and 13 rebounds.

Aldridge had seven points in the second overtime and White added four points, a steal and a critical block of Jerami Grant at the rim with San Antonio up 148-144 with less than two minutes remaining. White finished with 23 points and Marco Belinelli made all five of his 3-point attempts while scor-

ing 19 points for the Spurs, who have won seven straight at home.

"He's been a beast all year long," San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said of Aldridge. "He anchors us at both ends of the floor. He did it last year, and he's doing it this year, too. He's just been fantastic. Obviously, he had a great night."

Aldridge was 20 for 33 from the field and 16 for 16 on free throws in surpassing his previous career high of 45 points, which he set against Utah on March 23, 2018.

"I was just complaining about (not scoring 50 points) like two weeks ago," Aldridge said. "That I feel like it should have happened in my career."

The Spurs have won six of seven and 14 of 18 to close within a game of the

Thunder for third place in the Western Conference.

"For it to go down to the wire with a team that's hot like that, we have a lot to take away for us, for how we played," Oklahoma City forward Paul George said.

The Thunder lost their seventh straight in San Antonio despite Westbrook's huge game. George scored 30 points, and Grant added 25 points and 12 rebounds but fouled out with 25 seconds remaining in the second overtime.

Westbrook had only three turnovers in 50 minutes.

"I take a lot of pride (in triple-doubles)," Westbrook said. "I do other things that impact winning, impact the team and then I feel like I'm the best at all those other things. So, I do it every night."

Blazers pull away from Bulls

By Anne M. Peterson
AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — The Trail Blazers are taking advantage where the schedule allows.

CJ McCollum had 24 points and the Portland Trail Blazers pulled away in the final quarter to send the Chicago Bulls to their fifth straight loss, 124-112 on Wednesday night.

Jusuf Nurkic had 18 points and eight rebounds but got into foul trouble and came up just short of his fifth straight game with 20 or more points. Portland has won three straight and five of its last six games.

Damian Lillard, who leads the team in scoring, said he's been good with letting others take some of the load. Lillard finished with 16 points and 10 assists for his fifth double-double of the season.

"We had a stretch we played against all playoff teams. Not looking down on any of our past few opponents but they've been teams where we've been able to get things that we might not have been able to get against those other teams because we're so familiar with them, their style," Lillard said. "So I've just kind of been letting the game happen, making the right plays and guys have been playing really well."

Wendell Carter Jr. had 22 points to lead the Bulls in the first of a five-game road trip.

After a tight first half, the Blazers led by as many as 11 points in the third quarter but the Bulls kept the margin from getting any wider until Meyers Leonard's dunk put Portland up 106-94 with just under eight minutes left in the game.

A pair of consecutive 3-pointers from McCollum and Seth Curry put the Blazers up 112-96 and Portland went on to lead by as many as 19 points down the remaining stretch.

"Rebounding and our pick and roll coverage wasn't the best tonight," Carter said. "It was just an effort thing, we didn't stick to the game plan like we were supposed to. We're learning and growing. I have no regrets about what we did tonight. We learn and move on."

Bulls coach Jim Boylen said before the game that Bobby Portis would be on a 24-minute restriction. Portis returned Sunday from a sprained right ankle that kept him out of seven straight games. He finished with 15 points in 19 minutes against the Blazers.

Portland was without Maurice Harkless, because of left knee soreness. Jake Layman started in his place. Harkless, who had surgery on the knee last March, has missed 14 games this season because of the knee.

The Blazers held a 30-29 edge after a close first quarter but they began to pull away in the second, going up 41-35 after Nic Stauskas' 3-pointer. Portland briefly extended the lead to 10 points and 54-45 but led 56-51 at halftime. CJ McCollum led the Blazers with 12 points at the break, while Zach LaVine had 12 for the Bulls.

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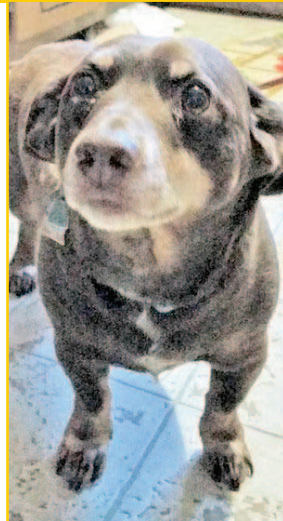
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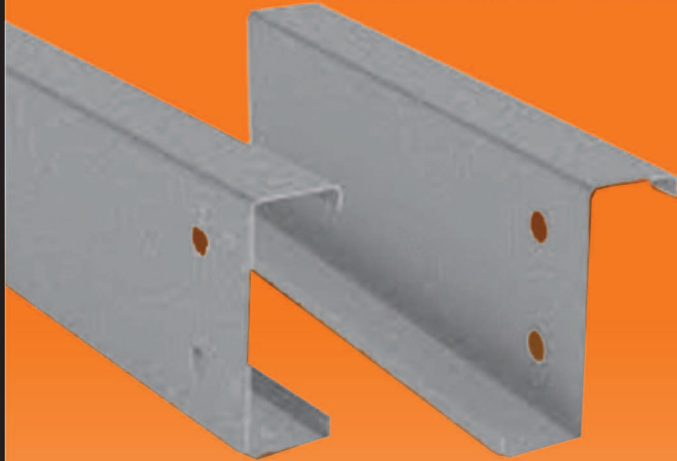
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