

Sports

NATIONAL BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS UNDERWAY IN THE FLORIDA BUBBLE AND BOTH TOP SEEDS LOSE THEIR OPENING GAMES

Blazers upset Lakers in Game 1

■ Damian Lillard hits a late 3-pointer to help hold off a Los Angeles rally

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — After sinking a deep 3-pointer midway through the final quarter, Damian Lillard did a little dance and teammate Jusuf Nurkic pointed to his wrist.

This was Dame Time, playoff edition.

“Every game since we’ve been here has been a playoff game. So that prepared us for a game like this,” Lillard said. “It’s only one win. I’m happy to be here competing in the playoffs again, but we’ve got to move on to the next one.”

Lillard had 34 points and the Portland Trail Blazers spoiled LeBron James’ first playoff appearance for the Los Angeles Lakers with a 100-93 victory on Tuesday night in Game 1 of the teams’ playoff series.

James had 23 points, 17 rebounds and 16 assists, becoming the first player to have as many points, rebounds and assists in the playoffs. It was his 24th postseason triple-double and his assists were a career playoff high.

“We had a couple of breakdowns, which you can’t have down the stretch, especially against a team like Portland,” James said.

Jusuf Nurkic had 16 points and 15 rebounds for Portland, which led by as many as 16 points in the first half. The Lakers, making their first playoff appearance since 2013, narrowed the advantage to 57-56 at the break and stayed close the rest of the way.

Trailing 78-75 going into the final period, the Lakers tied it at 78 on Kyle Kuzma’s 3-pointer. James’ layup gave Los Angeles the lead, and Kuzma added a pair of free throws and another layup to extend it to 84-78.

Lillard’s 3-pointer tied it again at 87 with 5:46 to go and CJ McCollum’s floater gave Portland the lead. Lillard said afterward he danced after his 3 because the song



LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers defends against Trail Blazers guard CJ McCollum in a game earlier this season.

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— Damian Lillard, Portland Trail Blazers guard

Blow the Whistle was played in the bubble arena, which Lillard called the “East Oakland anthem.”

After Danny Green’s layup tied it again for Los Angeles, Lillard nailed another 3-pointer. Anthony Davis’ dunk got the Lakers within 95-93, but Gary Trent Jr. made a 3-pointer that put Portland up 98-93 before Nurkic dunked to seal it.

Anthony Davis had 28 points and 11 rebounds for the Lakers.

Portland won the first play-in postseason NBA game since 1956, beating Memphis 126-122 on Saturday to make the playoffs for the seventh consecutive season. The Blazers were among three teams with losing overall records to make the bubble playoffs. No team below .500 had

advanced to the postseason since 2015.

The Blazers were without forward Zach Collins because of inflammation in his left ankle. Wenyen Gabriel started in his place.

Portland led by 33-17 in the first half after Nurkic’s dunk. The Lakers got within 40-38 but couldn’t pull in front until Davis’ dunk off of James’ pass made it 50-49 with just over three minutes left in the half. But it was short-lived.

The game was delayed for a time in the first half when the Lakers’ rim got tilted and had to be adjusted.

TIP INS

- Trail Blazers: Lillard had 48 points in Portland’s 127-119 victory over the Lakers in Los Angeles on Jan. 31. So of course the Lakers were

Portland vs. Los Angeles

- Game 1: Tuesday, Portland 100, L.A. 93
- Game 2: Today, 6 p.m. TV on ESPN
- Game 3: Saturday, 5:30 p.m., TV on ABC
- Game 4: Aug. 24, 6 p.m., TV on TNT

going to try to stop the bubble MVP. But that’s no different than every other game, Stotts said. “There’s not a lot that he hasn’t seen or that we haven’t seen,” Stotts said. ... Portland is also without Rodney Hood, who continues to rehab from an Achilles injury, and Trevor Ariza, who opted not to play in Florida.

- Lakers: Rajon Rando is in the bubble and has returned to limited practice heading into the playoff, after being out with a fractured left thumb. Coach Frank Vogel said Rando’s “close, but we’ll continue to evaluate it day by day.”

Magic upset top-seeded Milwaukee

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — The Milwaukee Bucks’ hopes of winning their first NBA title since 1971 got off to a rocky start.

Nikola Vucevic scored a playoff career-high 35 points and had 14 rebounds, and the Orlando Magic stunned the top-seeded Bucks 122-110 on Tuesday in the league’s fan-free Disney World bubble.

Terrence Ross scored 18 points, Gary Clark added 15 and D.J. Augustin had 11 points and 11 assists for the eighth-seeded Magic, who were 14-point underdogs.

Orlando took a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven series, an intriguing result given that the Bucks can’t rely on home-court advantage in these pandemic-altered playoffs.

“We don’t care what other people have to say,” Vucevic said. “We focus on ourselves and we came out and played a great game on both ends of the floor.”

Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 31 points, 17 rebounds and seven assists for Milwaukee. Last season’s MVP was held without a field goal over the final 11 minutes and seemed to get more frustrated as the fourth quarter went on.

“You have to really be ready for what they do,” Vucevic said. “Especially us against a team like Milwaukee where we have to make sure we know their stuff and we are prepared for everything. Tonight, we definitely were on top of that. We did a good job executing the game plan.”

The Bucks came into the postseason as the favorites to win the NBA title. But they went 3-5 in seeding games in the bubble, and that sluggish play carried over into the postseason.

George Hill said the Bucks needed to do some “soul searching.”

Antetokounmpo didn’t go that far, saying the Bucks’ energy level was fine, but that they need to make more shots. Milwaukee made 43% from the field and was 14 of 42 from 3-point land.

Rockets top Thunder in series opener

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — James Harden had 37 points and 11 rebounds, and the Houston Rockets rolled past the Oklahoma City Thunder 123-108 on Tuesday in Game 1 of their first-round Western Conference playoff series.

Houston All-Star Russell Westbrook, who played his previous 11 years with the Thunder, was out with a quad injury. The fourth-seeded Rockets still made 20 3-pointers and shot 48% from the field.

“Our ball movement tonight was excellent,” Harden said. “We were just playing off the catch, guys were very confident in their shots when they’re open. When they’re not open, they’re getting off the ball and making a quick decision.”

Jeff Green scored 22 points and Eric Gordon added 21 for Houston, which isn’t sure how long it will be without Westbrook. The Rockets got 42 points from their bench.

Danilo Gallinari matched a playoff career high with 29 points for the fifth-seeded Thunder. Chris Paul, who joined Oklahoma City in the trade that sent Westbrook to Houston, finished with 20 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists. Steven Adams added 17 points and 12 rebounds.

Gordon scored 16 points and Harden had 15 in the first half to help the Rockets take a 68-52 lead.

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Dodgers nip Mariners

By Greg Beacham
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — Austin Barnes stood by first base and watched the Seattle Mariners’ infield move back, leaving him to take whatever lead he desired.

This apparent disregard for an able-bodied catcher would not stand, Barnes thought to himself — and he promptly stole second with a daring that decided yet another win for the streaking Los Angeles Dodgers.

“When they played behind me, I was confused, because I can run a little bit,” Barnes said. “I’m not

super slow.”

Corey Seager singled home Barnes with the tiebreaking run in the eighth inning and the Dodgers beat Seattle 2-1 on Tuesday for their seventh consecutive victory.

Barnes went 2 for 2 with a walk and scored both runs for the Dodgers, who improved to an NL-best 18-7 and sent the Mariners to their seventh straight defeat.

With the temperature at 102 degrees in Chavez Ravine for the opening pitch, Tony Gonsolin threw six scoreless innings of two-hit ball for the Dodgers.

Baker coaches discuss sports seasons

By Corey Kirk
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Coaches from all levels within the Baker School District convened for a Zoom call Aug. 12 moderated by the District’s athletic director, Buell Gonzales Jr., to discuss plans for athletics in a year with pandemic-related restrictions.

Earlier this month, the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) introduced a new school activities calendar that postpones fall sports until 2021.

Those sports — football, soccer, volleyball and cross-country — are scheduled to start in late winter. They will be wedged between a season for traditional winter sports — basketball, wrestling and swimming — and a traditional spring sports season.

In the wake of this announcement, Gonzales needed to get the District’s coaches on the same page.

“We are all in this together, when we do this we have to do this the right way,” Gonzales said during the Zoom meeting.

How can sports happen with distance learning in place?

With no organized sports for the fall, Gonzales and coaches discussed other options.

OSAA’s schedule includes a five-week period this fall when practices could potentially happen — albeit only if students return to their classrooms in some fashion.

“The current stance of the district is that if we are in CDL (Comprehensive Distance Learning) then those mini seasons will be virtual,” Gonzales said.

The Baker School Board decided earlier this month to start the school year on Sept. 8 with all students attending virtual classes for at least the first nine weeks.

That means students in fall sports, with a practice period of Sept. 7-Oct. 9, and in spring sports, Oct. 12-Nov. 13, wouldn’t be able to practice together in person.

Winter sports possibly could have practices during the Nov. 16-Dec. 18 period if in-person classes resume, although Gonzales said that based on current OSAA regulations, basketball and wrestling couldn’t have regular practices due to the physical contact involved in those sports.

Basketball players and wrestlers could do individual conditioning.

When/how will the sports season begin?

If the situation improves later this fall and Baker students return to classes, either full-time or in the hybrid model that the school board initially planned for grades 7-12, with students attending in-person classes two days each week, the winter sports teams could begin practicing Dec. 28 in preparation for OSAA-sanctioned games, which could start as early as Jan. 11, 2021.

The competitive season for usual fall sports would start with practices on Feb. 22 and first games on March 8. The season would end May 1 for volleyball, soccer and cross-country, and May 8 for football.

The final season, for traditional spring sports — golf, tennis, track and field, baseball and softball — would start with practices on April 19 and first games May 3. The season would end June 26.

A rule once enforced only for football will be in effect for all sports. Each athlete needs to have at least nine organized practices before participating in a game. That requirement could be waived

later in 2021 for students who have played in a sport earlier in the year and thus had the requisite practices.

“It just used to be football for safety reasons, so if you are a basketball player and you go into volleyball, you can go right into practice,” Gonzales said. “You wouldn’t need those nine days.”

What would happen if sports seasons overlap?

If student-athletes are transitioning from one sport to another, they need to complete a nine-day practice grace period before they could begin their next sport.

Because the spring season would extend until June 26, after graduation, Gonzales said there could be issues with seniors being eligible.

If things are safe enough to play again, how could this work?

Gonzales emphasizes the importance of communication. Coaches who have multi-sport athletes on their roster should keep each other in the loop in preparation for transition of seasons.

“You (coaches) are going to treat this like a real season, you are going to teach, you are going to model teamwork and accountability within the confines of what we are allowed to do,” Gonzales said during the Aug. 12 Zoom meeting.

Parents are encouraged to watch for emails from the school district and to check the Baker Bulldog Nation Facebook page. A Zoom meeting is set for this evening at 6:30 p.m. For information about attending, email Gonzales at buell.gonzales@bakercityherald.com

The meeting will also be recorded and posted on the Bulldog Nation page.