

# Lillard's last-second free throws lift Trail Blazers past Miami Heat

By Tim Reynolds  
AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI — CJ McCollum got Portland started, and Damian Lillard provided the finish.

Lillard made three free throws with one second remaining for the final margin, and the Trail Blazers survived a wild ending to beat the short-handed Miami Heat 125-122 on Thursday night, March 25.

Lillard was fouled by Miami's Trevor Ariza on a 3-point attempt, which the Heat argued to no avail. He coolly sank all three foul shots, and the Blazers snapped a two-game slide.

"Sometimes I might have it going, but he's the closer," McCollum said of Lillard.

Miami didn't have a time-out remaining to advance the ball and couldn't get a desperation attempt to tie the game off before time expired.

McCollum had 21 of his game-high 35 points in the first quarter for Portland, which got 22 points from Lillard, 20 points from Carmelo Anthony and 18 points to go along with 16 rebounds from Enes Kanter.

Bam Adebayo and Tyler Herro each had 29 points for Miami, which dropped its fifth straight and fell to 22-23. Kendrick Nunn scored 22 for the Heat.

"I was happy with the way we fought out there," Herro said. "That was a great game, down to the end and they came down with a couple more free throws."

A combination of trades, illness, injury



Tribune New Service

Portland's Damian Lillard, shown here in an earlier game, sank three free throws with one second left on Thursday, March 25, to break a tie with Miami.

and virus-related issues left the Heat with nine players for the game.

Victor Oladipo and Nemanja Bjelica have yet to join the club after being acquired earlier Thursday in moves that sent Kelly Olynyk and Avery Bradley to Houston, plus Chris Silva and Moe Harkless to Sacramento. The other Heat absences: Jimmy Butler was sick, Goran Dragic has a back issue and Udonis Haslem and KZ Okpala remain in the league's health and safety protocols.

Portland took a 100-99 lead with 7:57 left on a 3-pointer by Anthony. To that point, neither team had been up by more than eight all night.

Miami then went on an 11-0 run to take a 110-100 lead, with Gabe Vincent, Andre Iguodala and Herro all making 3-pointers on consecutive possessions and Herro adding a pair of free throws to cap the spurt.

Portland answered with an 11-0 run of its own, taking the lead back on a layup by Lillard with 3:48 left.

NATIONAL INVITATION TOURNAMENT

## Memphis nips Boise State, 59-56

DENTON, Texas (AP) — Lester Quinones made a putback with 32.5 seconds remaining to give Memphis the lead en route to a 59-56 win over Boise State in the NIT on Thursday night, March 25.

Memphis (18-8) advances to play Colorado State in the semifinals on Saturday.

Quinones' offensive rebound and basket ended Boise State's 10-0 run, and gave Memphis a 56-55 lead. After a Boise State miss, DeAndre Williams made two free throws to give the Tigers a three-point lead at 13.2.

Memphis had made just 3 of 11 free throws until Williams' makes.

Boise State's Derrick Alston Jr. went to the line with 3.6 seconds left, and made the first before intentionally missing the second. Landers Nolley II made 1 of 2 to regain the three-point lead and Boise State's heave at the buzzer did not hit the rim.

## Blazers trade for Powell

PORTLAND (AP) — The Portland Trail Blazers have acquired shooting guard Norman Powell in a trade with the Toronto Raptors in exchange for Gary Trent Jr. and Rodney Hood.

Powell, 27, is averaging a career-best 19.6 points per game this season and is shooting 43.5% from beyond the arc. He scored a career-high 43 points earlier this month.

"We are a three-point shooting team. He'll get good looks. And I think that really fits in with our style of play in some ways," Blazers coach Terry Stotts said.

Powell was the 46th overall pick in the 2015 draft out of UCLA.

# Gratified to see local students competing again

In the crisp cold of a recent Wednesday evening, I found myself driving to the Baker Sports Complex to cover a Baker girls soccer match. Halfway through the match, someone mentioned something to a friend, a bit of conversation I overheard. I suddenly realized that what the person said was true.

We have reached the one-year mark since COVID-19 not only became part of our communities, but began to disrupt sports at every level.

It's crazy to think that little more than 365 days ago, we saw playoffs



COREY KIRK

in winter sports suddenly being halted. Spring sports were up in the air, and eventually canceled. Suddenly we were in treacherous waters unlike any we had seen.

The old saying is "what a difference a year can make."

Well, 2020-21's response was "you haven't seen anything yet."

Professional sports were post-

poned. Gyms were closed. Little League, club play and recreational leagues canceled their seasons.

This past year has been difficult for everyone. The most important group that was deeply affected is the kids. The social element of making memories with their friends and teammates was immediately ripped away from them. We saw seniors who compete in every season who never had a chance to finish their athletic careers on their own terms. They didn't even get to walk across a field or a stage to receive their diplomas.

Then there are the coaches, people

passionate about teaching young people and showing them what they are truly capable of. In every conversation I've had with a coach the past year, although they missed serving as leaders, they couldn't stop thinking about the players. They knew, from their own experiences as students, how pivotal these years were, and what the kids were missing.

Although the usual goal for a high school team or athlete is a state title, the pandemic has brought a new-found perspective.

Win or lose, simply being able to play the sports they love has reminded athletes that they shouldn't

take for granted the opportunity. They're playing in front of limited audiences rather than full bleachers. But to be back playing sports, that's all that matters.

This is a small step in the right direction. Now they will be able to create the memories with their teammates, compete to the best of their abilities, and most of all enjoy sports they are passionate about.

We're not back to normal. But it's nice to have sports return to our daily lives.

Corey Kirk is sports editor for the Baker City Herald.

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