

Sports

George has 36 to lead Clippers to 133-116 rout of Trail Blazers

By Beth Harris
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — Paul George scored 36 points and the Los Angeles Clippers rode a franchise-best 47-point first quarter to a 133-116 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers on Tuesday night.

Kawhi Leonard added 29 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists as the Clippers followed an 18-point rout of the defending champion Lakers two days ago with another impressive performance at both ends.

George shot 11 of 18, made six 3-pointers and hit all eight of his free throws. He finished three points off his season high of 39. Reggie Jackson added 23 points off the bench.

Norman Powell scored 32 points and CJ McCollum added 24 points for the Blazers, who had their four-game road winning streak snapped.

The Clippers harassed Damian Lillard into 2-of-14 shooting for 11 points, well under his team-leading 29.6 average. A frustrated Lillard earned a technical foul in the third. He had just four points in the second half.

“Just trying to keep the ball out of his hands and really trying to make everything tough on him,” Jackson said. “It was a great game plan.”

The Clippers scored 47 points in the first quarter, the most in that quarter in franchise history, while shooting 64%. George’s 22 points were



Tribune News Service

Portland’s Norman Powell, shown in a game on April 3, scored 32 points on Tuesday, April 6 in the Trail Blazers’ 133-116 loss to the Clippers in Los Angeles.

the most by a Clipper in the first since Blake Griffin had the same on March 10, 2014, against Phoenix.

Portland coach Terry Stotts called his team’s defensive effort in the first “embarrassing.”

“The first quarter was really bad defensively,” Powell said. “They didn’t feel us. They got in a rhythm and were able to hit shots. We have to put together a full 48-minute effort on the defensive end.”

George keyed a 24-6 run over the end of the first and start of the second that extended the Clippers’ lead to 26 points, their largest of the game. He scored seven points. Leonard, Nicolas Batum and Jackson hit consecutive 3-pointers and new addition DeMarcus Cousins capped the spurt by scoring on his offensive rebound.

“We talked about attacking the paint,” Clippers coach Tyrone Lue said. “PG and

Kawhi really did that and set the tone early on.”

Trailing 62-36, the Blazers worked hard at getting back in the game. They outscored the Clippers 30-11 to close within seven at halftime. Powell scored nine, punctuated by a one-handed slam. McCollum added eight, and Robert Covington closed out the half with a 3-pointer that beat the shot clock.

The Clippers extended their lead to 14 points early in the third. Portland ran off 12 in a row, getting 3-pointers from Powell and Covington, to close to 84-82. That’s the closest the Blazers came the rest of the way.

Los Angeles closed with an 18-7 spurt to lead 101-89 going into the fourth. Leonard and Jackson scored eight apiece and Rajon Rondo added a basket.

TIP-INS

• Trail Blazers: Jusuf Nurkic (right knee inflammation) sat out less than two weeks after returning from a right calf strain. He missed nearly two months with a right wrist fracture. The 47 points were their most allowed in any quarter this season.

• Clippers: Their 47 points were the fourth-most in a single quarter in franchise history and the most scored in a single quarter since they had 47 in the second on Jan. 5, 2020, against New York.

MLB moves All-Star Game to Denver

By Pat Graham
AP Sports Writer

DENVER — Atlanta, you’re out. Denver, you’re up. Major League Baseball swiftly moved the All-Star Game to hitter-friendly Coors Field on Tuesday after pulling the Midsummer Classic from Atlanta over objections to extensive changes to Georgia’s voting laws.

Coors Field last hosted the All-Star Game in 1998. The game will be held July 13.

“We appreciate their flexibility and enthusiasm to deliver a first-class event for our game and the region,” MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement. “We look forward to celebrating our sport’s best players and entertaining fans around the world.”

MLB decided to move the game from Truist Park in Atlanta in response to Georgia voting changes signed into law by Republican Gov. Brian Kemp on March 25. Critics, including the CEOs of Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines and Coca-Cola, have condemned the changes as being too restrictive.

The Georgia laws include new limits on voting by mail and greater legislative control over how elections are run, amid a push in Republican-led states to reduce voting options after former president Donald Trump made baseless claims of widespread fraud in last year’s election.

Democratic state officials in Colorado have touted their state’s mail-in voting system, which began in 2013, for its ease and accessibility. In the November election, there were more than 350 ballot drop boxes around the state along with a ballot tracking system that allowed voters to trace their votes as they were accepted and counted.

Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold praised the MLB decision, crediting it to the state’s “national gold standard for elections.”

“We’ve got the most accessible and secure elections in the country, and are grateful that MLB is giving us the opportunity to showcase how elections can be!” Griswold said in a statement.

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis said at a news conference that the state had expressed interest in hosting a game down the road, but when given the last-minute opportunity, Denver was able to make plans quickly. They already had a blueprint for handling hotels, event space and security.

“This is fundamentally about baseball and it’s about the fans. And I couldn’t be more excited that we’re gonna be able to highlight Denver as the venue,” Polis said.

Predicting the NFL Draft: Part 1

In about five weeks, the National Football League’s attention will be focused on Cleveland, where futures of young prospects and organizations will forever be changed in the 2021 NFL Draft.

In my first mock draft, I omit mock trades as a lot has happened, and I try to focus on the needs of the specific team. Did I pick someone you would like to see in your favorite team’s uniform? Well, take a look and see!

1. Jacksonville Jaguars (1-15): Trevor Lawrence, quarterback, Clemson

Trevor Lawrence has been one of the most exciting college quarterbacks in recent memory. From the national title game his freshman year till now, he has shown an elite arm and the ability to find receivers in tight spots. He couldn’t be more prepared to step into a franchise-leading position. The Jaguars showed this past season how many gaping needs they have, but what showed the most was the inconsistency of their signal caller, and that Minshew mania just didn’t have enough steam.

2. New York Jets (2-14): Zach Wilson, quarterback, BYU

I see new head coach Robert Saleh wanting to start with a new quarterback. Though Justin Fields is a sensible choice here, I see Wilson as capable of making a bigger immediate impact. He has one of the stronger arms in the draft, and can be a running threat.

3. San Francisco 49ers (6-10) (Acquired in a trade with Miami): Justin Fields, quarterback, Ohio State

In a surprising trade on March 26, the 49ers made a deal with Miami to get this pick. This solidifies for me



COREY KIRK

that San Francisco intends to pick a quarterback, and Fields makes the most sense. He has a strong arm, can hit receivers in tight windows, and is a fantastic runner. Fields will either move into the leading role immediately or a year from now, as the 49ers expressed no interest in trading Jimmy Garoppolo.

4. Atlanta Falcons (4-12): Trey Lance, quarterback, North Dakota State

In such a quarterback-heavy draft, the Falcons choose a bit of a project, one that carries risk. Matt Ryan, their franchise quarterback, just turned 35, and he hasn’t returned to his 2017 form. Drafting Lance gives him a chance to blossom under Ryan’s tutelage before taking on elite NFL defenses. Lance didn’t have a strong pro day, but he’s one of the best mobile quarterbacks in the draft.

5. Cincinnati Bengals (4-11-1): Penei Sewell, offensive line, Oregon

After taking Joe Burrow last year, the Bengals have made it very clear that they need to protect their quarterback, and Sewell is the consensus best offensive lineman in the draft. Sewell’s technique can come off as sloppy, and needs some work, but he should be a fantastic addition to the Bengals.

6. Miami Dolphins (10-6) (Acquired in trade with PHI): Devonta Smith, wide receiver, Alabama

The Dolphins gain a new weapon

for quarterback Tua Tagovailoa in Devonta Smith. The reigning Heisman Trophy winner, Smith is a speedy receiver with incredible athleticism and great ability to gain yards after the catch. The only alarming thing is his build, as he is only 175 pounds. Nonetheless, he is an incredible upgrade to Miami’s offense.

7. Detroit Lions (5-11): Patrick Surtain II, cornerback, Alabama

Physically capable with great speed, Surtain is ready to follow in his dad’s footsteps and make his mark in the NFL. What concerns me the most is he is best outside, so he isn’t as capable of taking on better receivers who line up in the slot.

8. Carolina Panthers (5-11): Mac Jones, quarterback, Alabama

I don’t see Carolina sticking with Teddy Bridgewater long term, making Jones the sensible choice here. Jones is a smart pocket passer who can fit well in a West Coast offense. He doesn’t have an elite arm, and doesn’t pose a running threat. I can see him coming into the starting role within two seasons.

9. Denver Broncos (5-11): Micah Parsons, linebacker, Penn State

While drafting a quarterback makes sense, another gaping need for the Broncos is at linebacker. Parsons is not only a physical player, but he comes with great speed and does a great job in pass coverage. If he tones down the aggressiveness, plays with more patience he can have an integral part in Denver’s defense for years to come.

10. Dallas Cowboys (6-10): Jalen Phillips, edge rusher, Miami

Although the Cowboys would love



Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images-TNS

Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence looks to pass against Notre Dame during the ACC Championship game on Dec. 19, 2020.

to get Surtain, adding Phillips as an edge rusher is a good option. He is incredibly athletic, has shown great vision and can shed blocks easily.

11. New York Giants (6-10): Kyle Pitts, tight end, Florida

Pitts pairing with Evan Engram would be very interesting. Pitts is incredibly athletic and has soft hands, and he’s willing to block.

12. Philadelphia Eagles (4-11-1): Jamar Chase, wide receiver, LSU

Now that they have invested in Jalen Hurts, the Eagles need to find better offensive weapons for their young quarterback. Chase is an absolute playmaker. His decision to opt out of the 2020 season raises some concern about him being ready, but I think he can make an immediate impact.

13. Los Angeles Chargers (7-9): Rashawn Slater, offensive line, Northwestern

Like the Bengals, the Chargers found their franchise quarterback in Justin Herbert, and this year they opt to protect him better by

drafting Slater. What makes Slater appealing is his speed, which helps make up for his relatively short wingspan.

14. Minnesota Vikings (7-9): Allijah Vera-Tucker, offensive line, USC

After a strong year from running back Dalvin Cook, upgrading the offensive line is a priority for the Vikings, and Vera-Tucker couldn’t be a better fit. He has great technique and speed.

15. New England Patriots (7-9): Jaylen Waddle, wide receiver, Alabama

Although Cam Newton is not the long-term solution at quarterback, taking the best available signal caller in Kyle Frask might be a reach. I can see the Patriots either making a trade here to gain draft capital, or taking Waddle with this pick. An explosive receiver, Waddle is a consummate deep threat. He’s a bit undersized at 5-foot-10 and 182 pounds, but with Julian Edelman, another small receiver, to mentor him, I think Waddle will make the transition to the NFL.

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