

Sports

Grizzlies beat Blazers twice in three days

By Anne M. Peterson
AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — Ja Morant had 28 points and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Portland Trail Blazers for the second time in three days, 120-113 on Sunday, April 25.

Jonas Valanciunas, back after missing three games because of concussion protocol, added 21 points and 10 rebounds and the Grizzlies held off a late rally by Portland.

“The most impressive thing for us tonight was to not panic late in the game. When they went on that run we stayed locked in,” Morant said. “We got stops late and that was needed for us to get the win. Every punch they threw we threw a punch back and that allowed us to win the game.”

CJ McCollum had 27 points, and Jusuf Nurkic added 16 points and 19 rebounds for the Blazers. They have lost five straight and nine of their last 11 to fall to seventh in the Western Conference — a half-game ahead of Memphis.

Sunday's contest was the



Craig Mitchell/Associated Press

Portland Trail Blazers forward Norman Powell, center, shoots between Memphis Grizzlies center Xavier Tillman, left, and forward Brandon Clarke on Sunday, April 25, at the Moda Center in Portland.

second of three meetings between the two teams in less than a week. Morant had 33 points and 13 assists in a 130-128 Memphis victory over the Blazers on Friday night.

Memphis stretched the lead to as many as 16 points in the third quarter but Portland closed the gap to 94-92 on Carmelo Anthony's pullup 3-pointer with just over 10 minutes left. It was

Anthony's fourth straight 3. But Portland went cold and the Grizzlies went on a 10-0 run to lead 104-92 after Dillon Brooks' 3-pointer with 8:35 left. Brooks' short jumper pushed it to 111-96.

Portland rallied, getting to 114-111 on Nurkic's layup and free throw with 58.3 seconds left.

After Morant's free throws, Norman Powell's layup made

it a three-point game. Morant added another pair of free throws before Damian Lillard missed on a 3-point attempt that all but ended it.

Brooks finished with 18 points for Memphis.

“The whole game we just said ‘Keep staying locked in,’” Grizzlies coach Taylor Jenkins said. “Our discipline was phenomenal for the entire game.”

The Grizzlies were in the midst of a seven-game road trip, longest of the team's Memphis-era. They'll wrap it up on Monday at Denver, before hosting the Trail Blazers on Wednesday.

The Grizzlies were without Jaren Jackson Jr. because of injury management. Jackson has played in two games this season after left knee surgery and had 23 points in 25 minutes off the bench against the Blazers on Friday night.

The Blazers were off at the start but went on a 12-0 run that put them up 20-16 in the opening quarter. The lead was short-lived, however, and the Grizzlies built a 51-40 second-quarter lead capped by

Morant's 3 pointer.

The Grizzlies had a 58-47 halftime advantage, paced by Valanciunas with 13 points. Portland was shooting just 29.4 points from the field in the first half.

The game was heated at times in the third quarter. Anthony and Brooks exchanged words and were given offsetting technical fouls. Earlier in the quarter, McCollum was charged with a flagrant foul on Brooks.

“I talk the whole game,” Brooks said. “They don't like that. I'm physical and I don't think a lot of guys in the league see this type of defense so I'm bringing it every single night and trying to rise to the occasion.”

TIP INS

• Grizzlies: The teams were scheduled to meet in January but the game was called off because of coronavirus protocol. Memphis did not have the league-required eight players for the game due to contact tracing. ... The Grizzlies have

won eight of their last 11 games on the road.

• Trail Blazers: The Blazers had five fast-break points in the opening half — compared to 25 for the Grizzlies. ... Portland now heads out on a six-game trip.

LILLARD'S STRUGGLES

Lillard finished with 23 points, well off his average this season of 28.5 points. He missed three games earlier this month because of a hamstring injury, but recently he hasn't looked like himself.

Coach Stotts was asked after the game what was going on. “He's missing some shots that he normally makes, but I think that he's competing. His ankle's a little bit sore today from the last game. But that's what I see.”

For his part, Lillard said: “Right now, I'm not really sure. The only think I can do is look in the mirror at myself, evaluate myself. Just not playing well enough.”

He added, “I've just got to be better.”

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

Timbers top Dynamo 2-1 for first victory of the season

By Anne M. Peterson
AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — Dairon Asprilla and Cristhian Paredes scored and the Portland Timbers beat the Houston Dynamo 2-1 on Saturday night, April 24 for their first victory of the season.

Asprilla scored in the sixth minute to give the Timbers the lead, celebrating with a cartwheel and a backflip.

After the goal, the entire team

went to the bench to hug Diego Valeri, whose father Luis died earlier this week. Coach Giovanni Saverese wore a black arm band.

“It was a huge shock for us, so being able to dedicate this game to him (Diego's father) was something that was super special and something that meant a lot to us,” said Timbers midfielder Blake Bodily.

Ahead of the first leg of Portland's CONCACAF Champions League quarterfinal match

Wednesday against Club America, usual starters Valeri and Felipe Mora didn't come on until the second half.

Houston equalized with an own goal in the 27th minute when Paredes tried to deflect a pass from Tyler Pasher. Pasher returned to MLS this year after three seasons with Indy Eleven in the USL Championship.

Paredes broke the stalemate with a goal for the Timbers off a pass

from Mora in the 73rd minute. Both Paredes and Asprilla hadn't scored since 2019.

“Happy to score my first goal, I know last year wasn't my best season, but it is important for me to come back this season and score, and (show) how I'm going to help the team moving forward,” Paredes said.

Dynamo coach Tab Ramos said he addressed Portland's lineup changes before the game.

“I said ‘Let's not be fooled by their lineup today because they've taken out two or three of their guys who are important, because there's other players who want to show that they belong and they want to make a difference, in particular when you're playing at home.’ So we knew it was going to be difficult. We knew it was going to be a battle,” Ramos said.

The Timbers dropped their opener last week to the Vancouver Whitecaps, 1-0 in Utah.



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