

# U.S. men top Australia, on to gold medal game

## Americans will take on France

By Brian Mahoney

AP Basketball Writer

SAITAMA, Japan — The U.S. has owned gold for three straight Olympics, making the middle of the medals platform property of the Americans.

The Australians tried everything they could to shove them off.

"They hit us with a nice punch," Kevin Durant said after their men's Olympic semifinals matchup. "We knew that team was going to get us down early and see how we'd respond."

The response was not what Australia had hoped.

Durant scored 23 points, Devin Booker had 20 and the U.S. blew past and eventually blew away the Aussies 97-78 on Thursday after falling into a 15-point hole.

With their gold-medal streak looking in jeopardy midway through the second quarter, the Americans overwhelmed the Australians with a 48-14 stretch that gave them a 74-55 lead after three periods.

The U.S. missed its first 10 3-point attempts and didn't hit one until late in the second quarter. Then it felt as if the Americans hardly missed again, with Booker making three 3-pointers.

"Obviously, getting down 15 points you know you've got to bring it up a notch and that's what we did," Booker said.

Jrue Holiday had 11 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the U.S., which will play France for a fourth straight gold medal Saturday. The French beat the Americans 83-76 in their Olympic opener.

That was part of a 2-3 start to the summer for the U.S., which included a loss to the Australians in an exhibition game in Las Vegas.

The Americans don't look like that team anymore.

They look like the best team



Aris Messinis/AFP via Getty Images-TNS

USA's Kevin Wayne Durant dribbles the ball past Australia's Jock Landale (left) in the men's semi-final basketball match between Australia and USA during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Saitama Super Arena in Saitama on Thursday, Aug. 5, 2021.

in the world, like those that used to win gold with ease.

It's clear the Americans still have their grip on gold and it's going to take more than a few bad minutes for anyone to take it away from them.

Patty Mills scored 15 points for Australia, which still needs a win for its first Olympic basketball medal.

The Australians have finished fourth four times at the Olympics, including in 2016, but believed this time they could bring home gold.

For 1 1/2 quarters, it looked like they'd get a chance.

They dropped the Americans into their second double-digit deficit in two games, outplaying the world's No. 1-ranked team and looking

capable of forcing the U.S. to settle for anything other than Olympic gold for the first time since the Americans stumbled home with bronze in 2004.

But the U.S. recovered and romped after halftime, improving to 9-0 against Australia at the Olympics.

"In the locker room, it basically was, 'How bad do you want it?' And we came out with the same intent we had in the first half," Australia's

Nic Kay said. "We didn't do it at the level we needed to. It's unfortunate."

The minutes before the first semifinal were another unusual scene in these most unusual Olympics, where the public address announcer pleaded multiple times for players to clear the court while Durant and Mills were warming up so a robot that entertains the almost-nonexistent audience could perform his shooting routine before the game.

The robot missed both his attempts from halfcourt. His long-range shooting was off.

So were the Americans, at least for a little while.

The Australians opened an eight-point lead while the Americans managed only one basket over a span of more than four minutes. Australia took a 24-18 lead into the second quarter after Chris Goulding made a 3-pointer in the closing seconds.

The U.S. kept misfiring from behind the arc and even had some shaky moments at the rim — Khris Middleton had an open dunk attempt coming off the baseline but slammed the ball into the front of the rim.

The Australians took advantage with eight straight points midway through the second. Dante Exum made a 3-pointer, Matisse Thybulle converted a three-point play after scoring on the break and Exum threw a lob to Jock Landale to make it 41-26 with 5:23 to go.

But the Australians got only one basket the rest of the half and will look back at that stretch if they again go home without a medal. They still led by 11 with 2:59 to go but the Americans cut the deficit to 45-42 by halftime.

"Last five minutes of the second quarter they were fantastic and it continued into the third," U.S. coach Gregg Popovich said.

The Americans started the second half with two buckets from Holiday and two more from Durant. By the time the Australians got a basket nearly four minutes into the half, the U.S. had opened a nine-point lead.

The U.S. outscored Australia 32-10 and led 74-55 heading into the fourth quarter.

"Everything fell in line for us in that second half and that's who we are," Durant said.

## OLYMPICS ROUNDUP

# Felix sets new women's Olympics medal record

By Jim Vertuno

Associated Press

TOKYO — The new medal standard in Olympic women's track has been set. American Allyson Felix stands alone at the top and still has a chance to go even higher.

The 35-year-old Felix won her record 10th Olympic track medal Friday night at the Tokyo Games with a push down the home stretch of the 400 meters to take the bronze medal.

Felix now has more Olympic track and field medals than any woman in history in a career that dates back to 2004 in Athens. She came to Tokyo even with Jamaican runner Merlene Ottey.

Her 10th medal also ties her with the great Carl Lewis for the most by an American athlete. She could break that Saturday when she's expected to run in the 1,600-relay.

Shaunae Miller-Uibo of the Bahamas won the 400 in 48.36 seconds to defend her Olympic title. Marileidy Paulino of the Dominican Republic finished second a full .84 seconds behind. Felix took bronze by a mere .15 seconds ahead of Stephanie Ann McPherson of Jamaica.

It was a far less dramatic finish than in 2016 when Miller-Uibo dived at the finish line to edge out Felix for the gold.

American women also had a good day at the beach and on the courts, with one Olympic gold medal won and a couple more set up for the taking.

The U.S. beach volleyball team of April Ross and Alix Klineman won gold in beach volleyball and the American women's basketball and volleyball teams won to advance to the gold medal finals in both sports.

Ross and teammate Alix Klineman swept Australia 21-15, 21-16 in 43 minutes. For Ross, the gold completes a set. She won silver in London in 2012 and bronze in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Klineman won gold in her first Olympics.

"It's kind of a fairytale story like, 'Oh, you know I'm going at 39 to try and get my gold medal,' and the fact that it actually happened feels so special and surreal," Ross said.

The U.S. women's volleyball team avenged a gold-medal match loss to Serbia in 2016 with a 25-19, 25-15, 25-23 victory that sends them back into the final. The Americans have made three previous gold medal finals, but have never won.

"It wasn't like, 'Oh we have to get redemption of this or that,'" U.S. star Foluke Akinradewo Gunderson said. "It was we just want to win a gold medal and whatever that's going to take, we're going to do that."

The U.S. women's basketball team will play Japan in Sunday's final after rolling over Serbia 79-59 behind 15 points and 12 rebounds from Brittney Griner. Japan beat France 87-71.



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