

Sports

Celtics strike back with 117-106 win over Heat

Celtics bounce back from consecutive losses

MIAMI: The Boston Celtics hit back on Saturday, leading wire-to-wire in a 117-106 victory over the Miami Heat that cut the gap in the NBA Eastern Conference finals to two games to one. Jaylen Brown scored 26 points and Jayson Tatum added 25 points and 14 rebounds for the Celtics, who avoided falling into an 0-3 hole from which no NBA team has rallied to win a best-of-seven playoff series. After their 17-point lead slipped away in a game-two loss on Thursday—the second straight game they surrendered a double-digit lead in defeat—Celtics players could be heard exchanging heated words in their locker room.

But they were all on the same page on Saturday, displaying a sense of purpose in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida, and maintaining their poise as the Heat narrowed a 20-point fourth-quarter deficit to five with less than a minute to play. Marcus Smart, a perfect 10-for-10 from the foul line, produced a string of clutch free throws and the Celtics hung on for the win. "Down 0-2 in the series, we played some games we thought we should have played better," Brown said. "We wanted to make it an emphasis to come out tonight and play 48 minutes, and we did."

Center Bam Adebayo led the Heat with 27 points, 16 rebounds and three steals. Rookie Tyler Herro scored 22 points for Miami and star forward Jimmy Butler scored 17. But Boston outscored Miami 60-36 in the paint and held the Heat to 38.8 percent shooting from the floor. "They came out, Boston did, with great force in this game," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "You do have to credit them for that. They sustained it for the better majority of the game. We were on our heels most of the game."

The Celtics were buoyed by the return from injury

of playmaker Gordon Hayward, who played 30 minutes off the bench and scored six points with five rebounds and four assists in his first game in more than four weeks. "The first five minutes I was gassed," admitted Hayward, adding that he was feeling it in the right ankle he sprained in game one of the Heat's first-round series against Philadelphia. Hayward left the bubble to rehabilitate the injury, returning and going through quarantine before he could return to the court. Boston led 31-22 at the end of the first quarter, and were up by 12 early in the second before the Heat surged back.

Celtics family

Miami, led by Herro's 16 points in the period, twice cut the deficit to three points before the Celtics reasserted themselves to take a 62-50 lead into halftime. "There's some great guys in that locker room," Brown said of the Celtics' unity. "A lot of emotion, a lot of passion, but we're a family and we're here for each other." "We exemplified that when we came out together and stayed together during some tough moments. They made a big run I think at the end of the second quarter, Tyler Herro made some big plays.

"We didn't hang our heads, we kept our will high and persevered to win this game." Celtics coach Brad Stevens acknowledged that his team was challenged emotionally by the two tough defeats in the first games of the series. Game three, he said, "was more about what are we going to show ourselves to be. "The first time we were pushed to more emotions that challenged us, we got better," Stevens said. "And that's encouraging." The Celtics will try to level the series in game four on Wednesday. Brown could barely wait. "Looking forward to the next game," he said. "We all are." — AFP



FLORIDA: Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics drives to the basket against Tyler Herro #14 of the Miami Heat during the fourth quarter in Game Three of the Eastern Conference Finals during the 2020 NBA Playoffs on September 19, 2020. — AFP

Stars down Lightning in Stanley Cup opener

LOS ANGELES: The Dallas Stars struck hard against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday, winning the opening game of the Stanley Cup final 4-1 in Edmonton. Joel Hanley, Jamie Oleksiak and Joel Kiviranta scored for the Stars in the first two periods and Jason Dickinson added an empty-netter in the waning minutes as Dallas held off Tampa Bay's third-quarter rally bid to take a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven championship series.

It seems an unlikely run for a Stars team that had lost six games in a row before the coronavirus pandemic forced the NHL to pause its season in March. They were outscored 10-5 in the round-robin when play resumed in August - but made their way into the playoffs and now have a chance to add a second NHL title to the one they captured in 1999.

Hanley opened the scoring at 5:40 of the first, taking a pass from Roope Hintz and beating Andrei Vasilevskiy to notch his first career NHL goal. Yann Gourde pulled the Lightning level seven minutes later on a fluky goal after the puck hit the skate of both Gourde and Hintz. Oleksiak scored off his own

rebound at 12:30 of the second, and Kiviranta - the hat-trick hero of game seven in the second round — stretched the lead to 3-1 with 27.4 seconds left in the second.

Khudobin shines in goal

Dallas held Tampa Bay's leading playoff scorer Nikita Kucherov without a shot until the third period, but Stars goaltender Anton Khudobin worked hard in the third, making 22 of his 35 saves as Dallas were out-shot 22-2. "He made some huge saves at the right moments," Stars coach Rick Bowness said. "You know you're on your heels a little bit and with their elite-level offensive skills you know they're going to get some chances. You don't want to give them a goal at the wrong time and you need a big save at the right time. "Anton certainly did that for us tonight." The Stars had the luxury of four nights' rest after completing a five-game Western Conference final win over the Vegas Golden Knights on Monday.

Tampa Bay had just one day off after playing back-to-back overtime games in their Eastern Conference final



EDMONTON: Ryan McDonagh #27 of the Tampa Bay Lightning attempts a shot against Mattias Janmark #13 of the Dallas Stars during the third period in Game One of the 2020 NHL Stanley Cup Final on September 19, 2020. — AFP

triumph over the New York Islanders. "Been a few days here, we got some rest," Dallas captain Jamie Benn said. "I thought we had a good start to the game, they got a lucky one but it didn't faze us and we just kept playing our game." "They're a good team, they're going to get their chances," Benn added. "(Khudobin) made a lot of great saves there in the third period, kept us in it, and we found a way to win."

Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said his players came out flat. "I don't even know if you need to take a shower

after the first two periods," he said. "We just didn't have our legs, and clearly it showed. "We're going to have to make it a little tougher on their goalie if we're going to score." Game two is today in Edmonton, one of two quarantine "hub cities" used by the NHL when it resumed play in August, and host of both conference finals and the Stanley Cup final. The Cup itself was on display Saturday - a break from tradition, which usually sees it brought to an arena only when a team has a chance to clinch the title. — AFP

Arsenal strike late to beat wasteful West Ham

LONDON: Mikel Arteta praised Arsenal's mental strength to strike late through Eddie Nketiah and beat West Ham 2-1 despite an underwhelming performance at the Emirates. The Gunners move level with Everton and Crystal Palace on maximum points at the top of the table after two games, but were far from the standards they have set under Arteta. After Michail Antonio cancelled out Alexandre Lacazette's opener for the hosts, West Ham enjoyed the majority of the chances.

Antonio saw a second-half header come back off the bar, but Arsenal were ruthless with their chance to win the game as Dani Ceballos timed his run perfectly in behind the West Ham defense to square for Nketiah, who had the simple task of rolling into an empty net. "I am really happy with the three points and it's a time to analyse properly because we have a lot of issues," said Arteta. "What I like is the approach the boys had in the last 25 minutes where I could see they were a bit down and then they lift it and probably a few months ago we would have drawn or lost that game and today we win it."

"In the end you have to find a way because there will be games like this through the season." After winning the FA Cup and Community Shield and starting their season with a flourish by winning 3-0 at Fulham on the opening weekend, Arsenal were expected to swot aside a West Ham team that were easily beaten by Newcastle a week

ago. But David Moyes's men deserved something to show for their performance and felt hard done by with some decisions that went against them.

After a relatively trouble free first weekend of the season for VAR reviews, the inconsistent application of what constitutes handball reared its head on Saturday. Manchester United's Victor Lindelof was penalised for handling inside the box during his side's 3-1 home defeat to Crystal Palace, but West Ham were not awarded a penalty for what seemed a much more obvious handball from Gabriel Magalhaes early on. "I definitely think we should have had a penalty," said Moyes. "But we don't know the rules, really, do we?"

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang committed his future to Arsenal earlier this week by signing a new three-year contract and the Gunners' prolific goalscorer was the creator for the opening goal as he just managed to stay onside from Bukayo Saka's pass before crossing for Lacazette to power a header home. That was the only clear opening the hosts created before halftime and West Ham leveled just before the break when Antonio outmuscled Rob Holding to turn home Ryan Fredericks's inviting cross. Antonio was a constant menace to the Arsenal defence and came close twice more in the second period. Gabriel just did enough to take the sting out of his first effort for Bernd Leno to save on the line before Antonio powered a header back off the crossbar.



LONDON: Arsenal's German goalkeeper Bernd Leno (back) goes over the back of Arsenal's Spanish midfielder Dani Ceballos (front) as he claims the ball during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and West Ham United on September 19, 2020. — AFP

And West Ham were made to rue those missed chances as Arsenal were clinical with their only clear sight of goal in the second-half. "Not to be

rewarded with some points tonight is really hard on us," added Moyes. "For us just to turn off in the last five minutes, it's criminal." — AFP

News in brief

Dortmund young guns sparkle

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund's Erling Haaland scored twice and teenager Giovanni Reyna added another goal as they cruised past Borussia Moenchengladbach 3-0 in their season opener on Saturday. The 20-year-old Haaland scored a 54th minute penalty, awarded for a foul on Reyna, and bagged another with a sensationally quick counter-attack and a Jadon Sancho assist as Dortmund utilized their fearsome youthful attacking weapons. Norway forward Haaland, who joined in January, took his tally to 15 goals in his 16 Bundesliga games so far this year. A day after Bayern Munich opened their season with an 8-0 demolition of Schalke 04, Dortmund sent a warning to the title holders with their dominant performance over Gladbach, who will be competing in the Champions League this season. — Reuters

AS Roma kick off new era

VERONA: AS Roma were held to a 0-0 draw at Verona in their opening Serie A game of the season on Saturday as they began a new era under the ownership of the Texas-based Friedkin Group who took over the club last month. Verona hit the woodwork in each half while Roma also struck the bar but otherwise gave a disjointed performance in front of billionaire owner Dan Friedkin and his son Ryan, who both saw the match on a balmy evening at the Bentegodi stadium. The Veneto regional government had given permission for up to 1,000 fans to watch the game but the club did not have time to sell tickets, instead inviting a small number of friends and relatives of club employees. — Reuters

Ambitious Hertha crush Werder

BERLIN: Hertha Berlin beat hosts Werder Bremen 4-1 in their Bundesliga opener on Saturday to earn their first win there in 14 years as they go into the season with renewed ambition. Hertha, who announced a 127 million euro investment in June in their effort to eventually compete for silverware, barely had any chances until they struck twice in three minutes late in the first half. Peter Pekarik was left unmarked at the far post and tapped in for the lead in the 42nd minute. Forward Dodi Lukebakio then stunned the hosts - and 8,500 home fans allowed to attend the match - firing in a second on the stroke of halftime. With Werder forced to go forward, Hertha found the space to score again with Matheus Cunha wrongfooting keeper Jiri Pavlenka with a low shot before newcomer Jhon Cordoba added his first goal for the club in the 90th minute. — Reuters

Villa sign Lyon forward Traore

LONDON: Aston Villa signed Burkina Faso forward Bertrand Traore from Lyon for a reported £17 million (\$21 million) on Saturday. Traore returns to the Premier League after starting his career with Chelsea, where he spent three years with Villa's current assistant manager John Terry. The 25-year-old's signing is another boost to Villa's attacking options after the arrival of Ollie Watkins from Brentford for a club record £28 million earlier this month. "We're delighted that Bertrand has chosen to come to Villa," manager Dean Smith told his club's website. "He's a player with immense talent who will really enhance our attacking options." — AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
ENGLISH PREMIER		
Aston Villa v Sheffield United FC	beIN Sports HD 1	20:00
Wolverhampton Wanderers FC v Manchester City	beIN Sports HD 1	22:15
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
AC Milan v Bologna FC	beIN Sports HD 4	21:45