

# Lillard scores 50 as Trail Blazers sink Pacers

Raptors, Spurs share 24-second Bryant tributes; Toronto win

PORTLAND, Ore., Jan. 27, (AP) — Damian Lillard had 50 points and 13 assists, becoming the first Portland player with 40-plus points in three straight games, and the Trail Blazers beat the Indiana Pacers 139-129 on a Sunday night marked by grief over the death of NBA great Kobe Bryant.

The Trail Blazers honored Bryant with 24 seconds of silence before the game, and the team took a 24-second shot-clock violation at the start before the Pacers took an eight-second timeline penalty, recognizing Bryant's jersey numbers. Several fans at the Moda Center wore Lakers jerseys in salute to a player who spent his entire career with rivals Los Angeles.

C.J. McCollum returned after a three-game absence because of an ankle injury and added 28 points for the Blazers (20-27). Hassan Whiteside had 21 points and 14 rebounds.

Domantas Sabonis, whose father Arvydas played for the Blazers, had 27

## BASKETBALL

points, 14 assists and 11 rebounds for the Pacers for his second career triple-double. His first came last Sunday at Denver.

Indiana (30-17) hasn't won in Portland since the 2007-08 season, a streak of 11 games.

But there was a pall over the game because of the helicopter crash earlier Sunday that killed Bryant, one of his daughters, and seven others in Southern California. Both coaches spoke about Bryant before the game.

Pacers coach Nate McMillan was an assistant for the US national teams that featured Bryant in the 2008 and 2012 Olympics.

The Pacers were without starter Malcolm Brogdon, who missed his second straight game in concussion protocol after taking an elbow against Phoenix on Wednesday. Indiana center Myles Turner also sat out because of illness.

### Raptors 110, Spurs 106

In San Antonio, the Toronto Raptors and San Antonio Spurs did not want to be on the court after learning Kobe Bryant had died, but they tried to honor him as best they could.

The teams collaborated on a touching tribute to Bryant at the beginning of their game Sunday, with each team dribbling out the 24-second shot clock in remembrance of the No. 24 worn by the retired NBA great, who died in a helicopter crash at age 41.

Pascal Siakam scored 35 points to lead the Raptors past the Spurs 110-106 on a day when many players' thoughts were elsewhere.

Bryant and his 13-year-old daughter, Gianna, were among the nine people killed when the helicopter they were riding in crashed in Calabasas, California. The teams found out about Bryant's death about an hour before the afternoon tip-off.

The teams did not contest the opening tip-off. Instead, Toronto point guard Fred VanVleet held onto the ball for 24 seconds, incurring a shot-clock violation. San Antonio point guard Dejounte Murray did the same as the crowd gave a standing ovation and chanted, "Kobe! Kobe!"

Popovich was not his usual animated self on the sidelines as the Raptors raced to a 29-12 lead. But when Walker missed a defensive assignment on one of Siakam's five 3-pointers, Popovich pulled Walker immediately from the game and had the second-year guard sit by him as he scolded him and then im-



Qatar celebrate on the podium after winning the AHF Asian Men's Handball Championship.

## Qatar win 19th AHF Asian Men's Handball Championship

Qatar on Monday won the 19th AHF Asian Men's Handball Championship, after defeating South Korea 33-21.

Qatar dominated the game from the beginning, outperforming the Korean for the second time

in this tournament, as they beat them in the main round 34-27.

Earlier, Japan edged Bahrain 27-26 to finish third. Qatar qualified along with South Korea, Japan and Bahrain, for the 2021 World Men's Handball

Championship in Egypt.

The tournament witnessed the participation of Kuwait (the host), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Japan, South Korea, Iraq, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia, Iran and China. (KUNA)

mediately reinserted him into the lineup.

The Spurs also returned to life, outscoring the Raptors 34-23 in the third quarter after trailing by as many as 19 points in the first half.

### Hawks 152, Wizards 133

In Atlanta, Trae Young had to compose himself a couple of times when asked about the death of Kobe Bryant and his daughter, Gianna.

It wasn't easy for Young, who was mentored by Bryant and had a special relationship with the former NBA star's 13-year-old girl, nicknamed Gigi.

Young had 45 points and 14 assists in an emotional game for the first-time All-Star, and the Atlanta Hawks beat the Washington Wizards 152-133 on Sunday night.

Young looked up toward the rafters several times to honor Bryant, his mentor and favorite NBA player, who died in a helicopter crash earlier in the day. Young wore a No. 8 jersey to salute Bryant during the first few seconds of the game and dressed up his shoes with a heartfelt tribute as well.

The Hawks, who have endured a tough season as the worst team in the Eastern Conference, had lost three of four before setting a season scoring high. De'Andre Hunter finished with 25 points, Kevin Huerter had 18 and John Collins 16, but this game belonged to Young, who surpassed 40 points for the eighth time this season, second-most in the NBA.

### Pelicans 123, Celtics 108

In New Orleans, Zion Williamson's authoritative, two-handed dunk as he was fouled by Boston guard Kemba Walker gave an appreciative crowd its first taste of how effectively the New Orleans Pel-

cans can close out games with the NBA's top draft choice on the court.

Williamson had 21 points and 11 rebounds in 27 minutes, and the Pelicans beat the Celtics 123-108 on Sunday for their first victory in three games since the rookie star joined the lineup.

The game also marked the first time the Pelicans permitted Williamson to play late in the fourth quarter. He scored eight points in the final three minutes as New Orleans pulled away.

Jrue Holiday had 25 points, J.J. Redick scored 17 and Brandon Ingram added 16 for New Orleans, which snapped a two-game slide. Lonzo Ball's career-high 15 assists included a long lob to Williamson for an alley-oop layup

and an alley-oop pass that Williamson dunked on a sideline inbounds play.

Williamson played his most minutes yet since completing his rehabilitation from arthroscopic knee surgery performed the day before the regular season opened. He had played the first five or so minutes of each quarter in his first two games, but the Pelicans made an adjustment to his fourth-quarter usage to allow the ex-Duke star to e on the court for the final minutes against Boston.

Walker scored 35 points, Gordon Hayward had 23 and Jaylen Brown 20 for the Celtics, who fell behind for good in the first quarter and trailed by as many as 23 in the third.

Boston hit just 16 of its first 43 shots

— including 3-of-17 shooting from 3-point range — during the first half. New Orleans took advantage, opening a 62-42 lead by halftime.

### Knicks 110, Nets 97

In New York, every time Kobe Bryant came to Madison Square Garden, it was an event.

From the 1998 All-Star Game, his first one, to the night of Feb. 2, 2009, when he broke the arena's scoring record, people just wanted to be in the building.

Not Sunday. Kyrie Irving couldn't bring himself to play after his friend's death. The ones who took the floor did so with the knowledge that Bryant would have had one expectation.

Julius Randle, who began his career as Bryant's teammate, had 22 points and 15 rebounds to lead New York to a 110-97 victory over the Brooklyn Nets.

### Grizzlies 114, Suns 109

In Memphis, Tenn., the night in Memphis started with a moment of silence for Kobe Bryant. It ended with players from both sides remembering the Los Angeles Lakers great for the good he brought to the game.

As for the game itself, Ja Morant scored 14 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter to help the Memphis Grizzlies hold off the Phoenix Suns 114-109 on Sunday night for their second straight victory.

Devin Booker led the Suns with 36 points, Kelly Oubre Jr. added 27 points, and Deandre Ayton finished with 17 points and 15 rebounds. Phoenix lost for the third time in four games.

Memphis built the lead to double digits, reaching 14 with just under five minutes to play in the third quarter. The



Portland Trail Blazers guard Damian Lillard (right), drives to the basket on Indiana Pacers forward Domantas Sabonis (left), during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Portland, Ore. on Jan. 26. Lillard scored 50 points as the Blazers won 139-129. (AP)

## NBA Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27, (AP) — NBA results and standings on Sunday.

Denver	117	Houston	110
Toronto	110	San Antonio	106
New Orleans	123	Boston	108
New York	110	Brooklyn	97
LA Clippers	112	Orlando	97
Memphis	114	Phoenix	109
Atlanta	152	Washington	133
Portland	139	Indiana	129

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Toronto	32	14	.696	—
Boston	30	15	.667	1-1/2
Philadelphia	30	17	.638	2-1/2
Brooklyn	19	26	.422	12-1/2
New York	13	34	.277	19-1/2

Southeast Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	31	14	.689	—
Orlando	21	26	.447	11
Washington	15	30	.333	16
Charlotte	15	31	.326	16-1/2
Atlanta	12	35	.255	20

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Milwaukee	40	6	.870	—
Indiana	30	17	.638	10-1/2
Chicago	18	30	.375	23
Detroit	17	30	.362	23-1/2
Cleveland	12	34	.261	28

Western Conference				
Southwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Dallas	28	17	.622	—
Houston	28	17	.622	—
Memphis	22	24	.478	6-1/2
San Antonio	20	25	.444	8
New Orleans	18	29	.383	11

Northwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Utah	32	13	.711	—
Denver	32	14	.696	-1/2
Oklahoma	28	19	.596	5
Portland	20	27	.426	13
Minnesota	15	31	.326	17-1/2

Pacific Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
LA Lakers	36	10	.783	—
LA Clippers	33	14	.702	3-1/2
Phoenix	27	21	.564	17
Sacramento	16	29	.356	19-1/2
GS Warriors	10	37	.213	26-1/2

Suns put on a burst at the close of the period, pulling to 79-78 with a 17-4 run as the Grizzlies struggled to hold on to the ball, committing nine turnovers in the quarter.

But Morant took over the fourth. In the final 4:06, with the Suns continuing to threaten the Memphis lead, Morant scored eight of 10 Memphis points and the only one where he didn't, he assisted on an alley-oop to Brandon Clarke.

### Clippers 112, Magic 97

In Orlando, Fla., the Los Angeles Clippers won a game nobody wanted to play. The tip-off was less than four hours after the Clippers and Orlando Magic learned of the death of former NBA great Kobe Bryant at the age of 41.

Kawhi Leonard scored 15 of his 31 points in a big third quarter and the Clippers won 112-97 for their sixth victory in seven games.

No Clippers were available after the game, but Magic forward Aaron Gordon expressed the players' point of view.

Leonard scored seven straight points for the Clippers in the big third quarter to help Los Angeles stretch a four-point lead to 10.

Landry Shamell and Montrezl Harrell scored 19 points each for the Clippers and Lou Williams added 15.

Leonard also had 14 rebounds, leading Los Angeles to a 53-45 advantage.

### Nuggets 117, Rockets 110

Colorado was the epicenter of Kobe Bryant's worst moment, but even in Denver, in a building where he was frequently booed, there were tears and stunned silence.

It started with a moment of silence for the NBA great, who was killed in a helicopter crash about an hour before the game, and led to chants of "Kobe! Kobe! Kobe!"

The game became secondary on this melancholy Sunday at Pepsi Center as the Denver Nuggets held off the Houston Rockets 117-110.

Jokic gave everything in honor of the player nicknamed Black Mamba.

## Ratings up, future bright

# NFL rebounds off troubled seasons

WASHINGTON, Jan. 27, (AP) — The most compelling drama in the NFL this season unfolded on the field, not off it.

And any thought that the league was in jeopardy of losing its spot as America's favorite sport has been set on the back burner, which is mostly where the domestic abuse cases, national anthem controversies and even the concerns about player safety resided for the bulk of the season.

To be sure, 2019 was far from perfect. Antonio Brown, a handful of over-matched officials and even a cameo appearance by Colin Kaepernick kept a spotlight on the warts this behemoth of a league will always carry. And certainly the Super Bowl will offer an opportunity to discuss Chiefs receiver Tyreek Hill's history with domestic violence and the NFL's response to it.

But for the better part of the season, the stickiest topics have included the quarterback-turned-pitchman Baker Mayfield, and his overrated Cleveland Browns, the underachieving Cowboys and the possible end of the Patriots' dynasty, to say nothing of a legion of rising young stars who were scattered throughout the league. It is led by Patrick Mahomes, the 24-year-old quarterback who brought the Chiefs to the Super Bowl to face the 49ers, the team trying to complete the NFL's version of a fairy tale by going from 4-12 to hoisting the Lombardi Trophy in the span of a year.

America's ever-expanding gambling landscape, the continued strength of fantasy football, the league's steady growth in Britain and other countries, along with a fair share of good games placed in the correct time slots and made available on a growing number of platforms also played roles in keeping

eyeballs focused on the games.

It all helps explain the league's back-to-back 5% TV ratings increases — two straight years with an uptick after a two-year stretch (2016-17) during which the NFL's status as the king of American sports took a hit, due in part to President Donald Trump's withering criticism and, more broadly, to the league's problematic handling of myriad problems that came fast and furious. The league accounted for 47 of the 50 most-watched shows on TV last year.

"The NFL is in a better space leading up to the ... Super Bowl, than they have been in a few years," said Bettina Cornwell, the academic director at University of Oregon's Warsaw Sports Marketing Center. "Less limelight can be a good thing."

While staying out of the constant crisis-management loop, the league took advantage of trends that have been evolving for a decade or more.

The NFL's embrace of fantasy football at the beginning of the 2000s — replete with in-stadium Wi-Fi advances, stat-heavy tickers and updates that permeate the telecasts and both league and team endorsements with fantasy websites — set a template that, in turn, positioned the league to take advantage of the more recent expansion of legalized gambling.

Long the most reluctant (and hypocritical) of the American pro leagues when it came to acknowledging the

reality that gambling is a key driver of fan interest, the NFL signed a marketing deal with Caesars Entertainment at the start of 2019. A handful of teams have inked their own casino deals, as well. Next season, the Raiders are moving into a \$1.8 billion stadium in Las Vegas — a city that NFL officials worked hard to keep at arm's length for decades.

"They were probably the last one at the table, but they took the most in from what other leagues are doing,"

## FOOTBALL

marketing expert Joe Favorito said. "They're doing it with fan engagement on mobile phones, games that give fans ability to win money or prizes, games where it's as easy as trying to predict what's going to happen on the next play."

This season also marked the beginning of a changing of the guard, of sorts, among the star set.

Mahomes dethroned Patriots QB Tom Brady as the league leader in jersey sales, according to the NFLPA. Seven of the top 12 on the jersey list, including Mayfield, Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott, Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson and Giants running back Saquon Barkley, were 26 or younger. Only four of the top 10 were quarterbacks — a lower-than-usual number that could be a subtle signal of a generational shift in the fan base.

With one year left before the end of the current collective bargaining agreement, there appears to be far less friction between the league and its union than last time they reached this point, in 2010.



Mahomes

## Bavarians one point off top spot

# Bayern back on track as title rivals Leipzig falter

DUSSELDORF, Germany, Jan. 27, (AP) — Don't bet against Bayern Munich.

The Bavarian title-winning machine are back on track and Bundesliga leaders Leipzig are suddenly sputtering.

If Bayern do win their eighth consecutive Bundesliga title, then Saturday will likely be seen as a key turning point. It was the day when Leipzig's winning run was ended 2-0 by Frankfurt and when Bayern routed Schalke 5-0. That left Bayern one point off the top spot.

It wasn't just a demolition, but also a demonstration of Bayern's strength in depth, with five different players scoring the goals. Leon Goretzka in particular, scored with a scissor kick and set up chance after chance against his old

club. Since the winter break, Bayern have scored nine goals and conceded none.

This isn't even Bayern at full strength. Not yet. Winger Kingsley Coman and defensive midfielder Javi Martinez are expected back from injury soon, though defender Niklas Sule remains a longer-term absentee with a knee injury.

Robert Lewandowski had a groin operation last month but hasn't let it slow him down. Since then, the Poland striker has scored twice to move to 21 Bundesliga goals for the season, one ahead of Leipzig forward Timo Werner.

Bayern coach Hansi Flick has tightened things up at the back after some

defensive mishaps before the winter break. It was only last month that Bayern needed stoppage-time goals to beat Freiburg, not long after losses to Bayer Leverkusen and Borussia Moenchengladbach.

There are caveats, of course. Leipzig's loss on Saturday was against Frankfurt, a team who also beat Bayern 5-1 in November. That led to Niko Kovac being fired as Bayern coach and the appointment of Flick, who was an interim replacement but is now confirmed until at least the end of the season.

For Leipzig, the next few games can make or break their season.

On Saturday, Leipzig host Gladbach, who are still very much in the title race in third place and could overtake Leipzig with a win. After that comes Frankfurt, then a potential title-decider against Bayern on Feb. 9 in Munich. Ten days later is Leipzig's first ever Champions League knockout game against Tottenham.

Leipzig's loss on Saturday has also brought Borussia Dortmund and the Bundesliga's most exciting forward

## SOCCER

right back into title contention. Dortmund are fourth, four points off the lead, after a 5-1 rout of Cologne on Friday.

Erling Haaland, the unstoppable 19-year-old new signing, scored twice to make it five goals in his first two substitute appearances for Dortmund. The team's next game is at home against Union Berlin on Saturday and could offer Haaland the chance to show what he can do when he starts.



Dusseldorf's Matthias Zimmermann (right), fouls Leverkusen's Nadiem Amiri in the penalty zone during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Bayer Leverkusen and Fortuna Dusseldorf in Leverkusen, Germany on Jan. 26. (AP)