



Chicago Blackhawks defenseman Duncan Keith (2) knocks away the puck from Nashville Predators right wing Viktor Arvidsson (33) during the third period of an NHL hockey game in Chicago. Predators won 3-1. (AP)— See Page 14

Sports

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PSG, Bayern now lead a six-member emergency management team

Super League fiasco gives clubs open goal to reset with UEFA

GENEVA, April 24, (AP): Purged of most of its leaders in the Super League fiasco this week, the group representing European soccer clubs was given a chance to reinvent itself.

Now the European Club Association is free to push for reversing Champions League changes that favor the wealthiest and more powerful who threatened to tear apart soccer's traditional fabric.

The decisions UEFA made on Monday for a Champions League revamp in 2024 - of 36 teams each playing 10 games in a single standings - clearly favor the rebels. Two wild cards for storied clubs is one gift that can be taken back now they no longer dominate a key UEFA committee.

Hours earlier around midnight on Sunday, the 246-member ECA lost 12 of the most influential - and most demanding - when they left to announce their own Super League.

The project quickly collapsed amid a ferocious backlash from fans and domestic leagues, governments and Champions League organizer UEFA, handing the ECA a chance to restore trust.

"Over the past week, we have seen the worst but also the best of football," ECA chief executive Charlie Marshall said in a statement Friday. "Ultimately, the best has triumphed."

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The "worst" was done by clubs and people that were Marshall's bosses until the early hours of Monday. They led ECA through talks with UEFA to shape the Champions League's future while plotting a rival to usurp it.

Juventus president Andrea Agnelli resigned as ECA chairman and Real Madrid's Pedro Lopez as his 1st vice chairman. Board member Ed Woodward of Manchester United also walked out.

They and the nine other Super League founders terminated their memberships, freeing them of the ECA's pledge to UEFA - signed by Agnelli in 2019 - not to play in a breakaway competition.

ECA observers, and even members, had suspected the oft-claimed unity and democracy in a 55-nation group was a façade to help a storied few clubs get what they wanted.

The sense of betrayal was clear this week among members who recalled Agnelli telling them ECA was more important to him than Juventus. Agnelli's family has owned Juventus for almost 100 years.

By Wednesday, the Super League was in ruins, the reputations of lead conspirators shredded and the ECA moved fast to renew itself.

Super League refuseniks Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich now lead a six-member emergency management team. It includes Ajax chief executive Edwin van der Sar, the widely liked former Man United and Juventus goalkeeper.

"This could be the best that has happened to football," said Olivier Jarosz, a former ECA staffer whose consultancy firm Club Affairs advises officials across Europe. "What is needed now is to restore trust and credibility."

Jarosz is a specialist in Eastern Europe soccer, which was all-but ignored in the Super League debate, and marginalized in UEFA's slate of Champions League changes from 2024 shaped under pressure by the rebel clubs.

"What I hear from clubs around Europe now is the need for reform and to create an organization that fully represents them, so ECA could be the winner," Jarosz told The AP.

Going further, sports law academic Antoine Duval this week urged smaller clubs to "occupy ECA and fight for your damn interests!"

After the storm, the ECA and UEFA aimed for calm and stability before punishing the rebels.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin warned there must be consequences. The clubs he called a "Dirty Dozen" face extended exile from decision-making and expulsion from the next Champions League until they renounce the Super League.

UEFA gave itself the rest of 2021 to finalize the Champions League format. Key financial decisions already stalled last month as a rift opened between Ceferin and Agnelli.

An offer could be withdrawn to share ownership with ECA of a Champions League commercial venture.

A past concession was a joint UEFA-ECA panel overseeing Champions League commercial strategy in which an Agnelli aide, Stefano Bertola, took a key role.

Even back in 2016, domestic league officials warned against opening UEFA's books to give clubs such sensitive data, amid regular rumors of breakaway plans.

The 30-nation European Leagues group believes a separate UEFA path to driving Champions League changes, the Club Competitions' Committee, cannot continue with ECA having 80% of the seats.



Arsenal's Eddie Nketiah (left), duels for the ball with Everton's Ben Godfrey during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Everton at the Emirates stadium in London. (AP)

Nets regain East lead

Warriors welcome back fans and beat Nuggets

NEW YORK, April 24, (AP): Kyrie Irving just missed a triple-double despite an awful shooting night, Joe Harris scored 20 points and the Brooklyn Nets regained first place in the Eastern Conference with a 109-104 victory over the Boston Celtics on Friday night.

Irving had torched his former team for 77 points in 67 minutes in a pair of victories this season, but this time shot just 4 for 19, missing all six of his 3-pointers.

But he scored 15 points, including the finishing free throws with 1.6 seconds left, and added 11 assists, nine rebounds and four steals as the Nets finished a season sweep of the Celtics, just the third in their franchise history.

Jayson Tatum had 38 points and 10 rebounds but was doing it mostly alone in the first half, when he had 25 of the Celtics' 51 points.

Payton Pritchard (22 points) and Marcus Smart (19) got it going after halftime and each added points, but the Celtics couldn't overcome 19 turnovers that gave Brooklyn a whopping 32-0 advantage in fast-break points.

Both teams were without two of their three best players. Kevin Durant missed a third straight game with a bruised left thigh, remaining sidelined along with James Harden (right hamstring).

Jaylen Brown missed his second straight game with left shoulder bursitis, while Kemba Walker rested his left knee on the second night of Boston's back-to-back after beating Phoenix on Thursday.

Clippers 109, Rockets 104
In Houston, Paul George had 33 points and 14 rebounds and Los Angeles shook off an 11-point third quarter to beat Houston for its fourth straight victory.

The Clippers were 5 of 22 from the field and 0 for 6 from 3-point range in the third to fall behind 80-76. Reggie Jackson hit three straight 3s early in the fourth as part of an 11-2 run that helped Los Angeles regain the lead. Jackson finished with 19 points.

John Wall had 27 points and 13 assists for Houston. Christian Wood had 24 points and 19 rebounds, and Kelly Olynyk 23 points and 10 rebounds.

The Rockets have lost eight of their last nine and 13 of their last 15. Houston is 4-34 since Feb. 4.

Wizards 129, Thunder 109
In Oklahoma City, Russell Westbrook had another triple-double in his return to Oklahoma City, and Washington won its seventh straight.

Westbrook had 37 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists - his fourth straight triple-double and his 14th in 16 games. Westbrook has 174 triple-doubles in his career and is closing in on Oscar Robertson's career record of 181. He has 28 triple-doubles this season.

Bradley Beal added 33 points for the Wizards.

Darius Bazley and Theo Maledon each scored 20 points for Oklahoma City. The Thunder have lost 13th straight.

Warriors 118, Nuggets 97
In San Francisco, Stephen Curry scored 32 points, Draymond Green had 19 assists and 12 rebounds, and Golden State welcomed back fans for the first time since the pandemic began by beating Denver.

Nikola Jokic scored 19 points for Denver in a matchup of MVP candidates with Curry, who received a rare technical with 33.7 seconds left in the

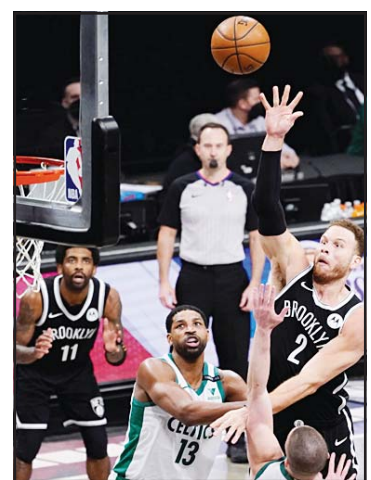
BASKETBALL

third when he wanted a foul call. Michael Porter Jr. led the Nuggets with 26 points, hitting seven 3-pointers.

Denver forward Will Barton went down 59 seconds into the game with a strained right hamstring and didn't return. He hit the floor awkwardly on the baseline beneath the Nuggets basket.

Fans chanted "M-V-P! M-V-P!" for Curry, who shot 11 for 18 with four 3s and also grabbed eight rebounds.

Hawks 118, Heat 108
In Atlanta, Bogdan Bogdanovich scored 21 points, John Collins added 20 and injury-depleted Atlanta surprised Miami.



Brooklyn Nets forward Blake Griffin (2) goes to the basket past Boston Celtics guard Payton Pritchard (11) and center Tristan Thompson (13) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in New York. The Nets won 109-104. (AP)



Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry (30) yells at a referee during the second half of the team's NBA basketball game against the Denver Nuggets in San Francisco. (AP)

NBA Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, April 24, (AP): NBA results and standings on Friday.

Atlanta	118	Miami	103	LA Clippers	109	Houston	104
Brooklyn	109	Boston	104	Golden State	118	Denver	97
Charlotte	108	Cleveland	102	Memphis	130	Portland	128
Washington	129	Oklahoma City	109				

Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
Atlantic Division		Central Division		Southwest Division		Northwest Division		
W	L	Pct	GB	W	L	Pct	GB	
Brooklyn	40	20	.667	-	Dallas	32	26	.552
Philadelphia	39	20	.661	-1/2	Memphis	30	28	.517
New York	33	27	.550	7	San Antonio	29	29	.500
Boston	32	28	.533	8	New Orleans	26	33	.441
Toronto	25	34	.424	14-1/2	Houston	15	45	.250
Atlanta	33	27	.550	-	Utah	44	15	.746
Miami	31	29	.517	2	Denver	38	21	.644
Charlotte	29	30	.492	3-1/2	Portland	32	27	.542
Washington	26	33	.441	6-1/2	Oklahoma City	20	40	.333
Orlando	18	41	.305	14-1/2	Minnesota	16	44	.267
Milwaukee	36	22	.621	-	Phoenix	42	17	.712
Indiana	27	31	.466	9	LA Clippers	43	19	.694
Chicago	25	34	.424	11-1/2	LA Lakers	35	24	.593
Cleveland	21	38	.356	15-1/2	Golden State	30	30	.500
Detroit	18	42	.300	19	Sacramento	24	35	.407

Atlanta played without its two best players, leading scorer Trae Young and NBA rebounding leader Clint Capela.

The Hawks, who began the game No. 5 in the Eastern Conference, improved to 33-27 after winning for the 10th time in their last 12 games against the Eastern Conference and 10th time in the last 13 overall.

Kendrick Nunn had 21 points for the Heat.

Grizzlies 130, Trail Blazers 128
In Portland, Ore., Ja Morant had 33 points and 13 assists and Memphis handed Portland its fourth straight loss. Dillon Brooks added 25 points to

help Memphis snap a two-game losing streak.

Damian Lillard overcame a slow start and finished with 27 points, and Jusuf Nurkic added 26 points and a season-high 17 rebounds. Portland has lost six of its last seven.

Hornets 108, Cavaliers 102
In Charlotte, N.C., Miles Bridges had 25 points and 10 rebounds and Charlotte overcame a 10-point second-half deficit to beat Cleveland.

P.J. Washington and Terry Rozier also each had 25 points for the Hornets.

Collin Sexton had 28 points for the Cavaliers.

Fans protest

Newcastle dent Liverpool hopes

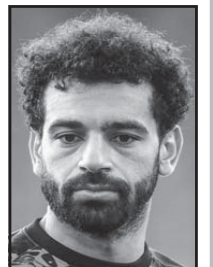
LIVERPOOL, England, April 24, (AP): Liverpool conceded a goal in the fifth minute of stoppage time to draw 1-1 with Newcastle in the Premier League on Saturday in a blow to its chances of qualifying for the Champions League.

Joe Willock's shot deflected into the corner off the stretched leg of Fabinho in a dramatic finish at Anfield. Earlier in added-on time, Newcastle had an equalizing goal by another substitute, Callum Wilson.

Wilson, ruled out for a handball against the striker. Mohamed Salah's 20th Premier League goal of the season looked like earning Liverpool a win that would have lifted the team into the top four, above Tottenham, West Ham and Chelsea.

As it is, the Reds are sixth with five games remaining of a disappointing title defense that has left them battling just to earn Champions League qualification.

Salah's goal came in the third minute and was brilliantly taken - the Egypt forward bringing down a high ball with his left foot and swiveling to smash a finish high into the net. He became the first Liverpool player to score at least 20 goals in three different Premier League seasons.



Salah

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Salah missed a glut of other chances to move level with Harry Kane as this season's top scorer in an open and often wild game, largely brought about by Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp's decision to play a front four of Diogo Jota, Sadio Mane, Roberto Firmino and Salah.

That meant Liverpool looked dangerous going forward - the team had 22 shots - but were left vulnerable at the back.

Most of the chances created by Newcastle, for whom forward Allan Saint-Maximin was a constant live wire, came in the first half and again after Willock and Wilson, the fit-again striker, came off the bench halfway through the second half.

Willock also scored an 82nd-minute winner against West Ham last weekend, as well as an 85th-minute equalizer against Tottenham on April 4.

Newcastle moved nine points above the relegation zone with five games left.

Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno's blunder allowing an own goal to Everton was the decider in a 1-0 win for the visitors in the English Premier League.

The only other tumult in this otherwise dull match came outside the stadium as hundreds of Arsenal fans protested in front of Emirates Stadium before and after kickoff. They set off pyrotechnics and flares to demonstrate against Stan Kroenke's ownership amid anger over the club joining the Super League.

Everton remained in eighth place and in touching distance of the Champions League places.

Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti said his team were still fighting for a place in the top four, saying the race could go down to the last match of the season.

"We are still attached to the top of the table," Ancelotti said. "This one we needed. We have to keep fighting." Arsenal started the match brightly and seemed to be in control in the early stages. But Everton started to cause problems for Arsenal, with Dominic Calvert-Lewin, Richarlison and Gylfi Sigurdsson all going close in the first half.

Everton came close to taking the lead when Sigurdsson's 20-yard free kick curled over the wall and hit the crossbar in the 39th minute. The midfielder also nearly scored in the 47th, but Arsenal center back Rob Holding made a crucial block to put the ball out for a corner.