

Staying a Sixer

Simmons' fate looms large in Philadelphia

CAMDEN, N.J., Oct. 19, (AP): Philadelphia 76ers coach Doc Rivers and the team he led to the best record in the Eastern Conference last season put their hands together in the middle of a huddle at the end of practice and counted off, "1-2-3! Together!"

Lingering outside the huddle, holding a basketball and looking uninterested was the \$147 million puzzle piece in Ben Simmons. With Simmons focused and engaged, the Sixers are again a team to beat in the East this season.

But the Sixers open the season Wednesday in New Orleans with no guarantee that Simmons will play. He has practiced twice with the Sixers since ending his holdout. Meanwhile, the Sixers hold out hope the three-time All-Star guard wants to suit up again. Simmons has dominated the headlines in Philadelphia since his baffling off-season trade request and then mystifying decision to report, showing up without warning last week.



Rivers

He declined to talk to the media for the second straight practice on Monday -- the Sixers say he's scheduled for Tuesday -- and maybe then he can start to explain why he wanted out of Philadelphia. And now that he's back, how long does he plan to stay.

Tyrese Maxey ran the offense with the first team in the portion of practice open to the media, and Simmons mostly stood in a corner stretching or dribbling the basketball. He played defense on one drill, then walked off the court without saying a word to a teammate.

Rivers said he had no idea if Simmons will play Wednesday.

"We're just going to take our time," Rivers said Monday. "When it comes, I'll make that decision. I'm just going to wait and see and watch. The spirit has been so good. We're just going to keep going."

Simmons, the No. 1 pick of the 2016 draft, was paired with Joel Embiid as the franchise cornerstones as the Sixers chase their first NBA championship since 1983.

Simmons, though, took the brunt of the blame for the top-seeded Sixers' second-round exit in last season's playoffs. He shot 34% from the free-throw line in the postseason and was reluctant to attempt a shot from anywhere on the floor late in games. That led to him spending critical minutes on the bench.

BASKETBALL

He'd be the only missing starter from last season's run to the Eastern Conference's top seed. Embiid, Danny Green, Seth Curry and Tobias Harris form a solid first four. Sixers President Daryl Morey has fielded offers for Simmons, but has yet to find a package to his satisfaction for the enigmatic guard.

Embiid, the NBA MVP runner-up, will have to limit the trash talking with Andre Drummond to practices this season. Drummond played for the Detroit Pistons and engaged in some physical and social media battles with Embiid through the years. That's on hold for now after Drummond, a two-time All-Star, signed as Embiid's backup. Embiid once accused Drummond of being unable to play defense. Drummond chirped Embiid wasn't worthy of his time until he could stay healthy for an entire season.

"We're in the NBA. At the end of the day, what kind of beef can you really have?" Drummond said.

But he has to adjust to life as a reserve for the first time since he was a rookie with Detroit in 2012-13.

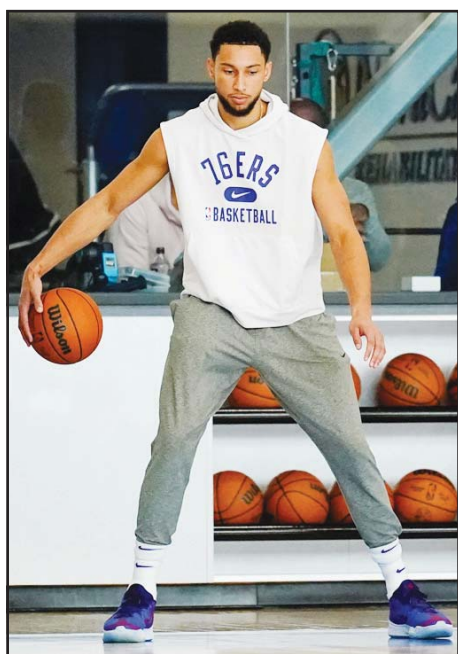
Drummond, a four-time NBA rebounding champion, is a significant upgrade from last season over the aging Dwight Howard. Drummond said there's no issue with Embiid. "We're two competitors that love the game of basketball," Drummond said. "We're like titans. We just clash. We play hard against each other. I have no animosity toward him, nor does he."

The Sixers edited Ben Simmons out of the in-game highlight films shown during pre-season games. Depending on the what happens the next couple of days they may need to call the editor back for some last-minute splicing before Friday's home opener against Brooklyn.

Tyrese Maxey enjoyed the cameo role he shot over the offseason for the Adam Sandler movie "Hustle." He "had a blast" playing, well, a basketball player in the movie that filmed all over the city.

Maxey didn't get to share any scenes with Sandler, though, or play with him during off-hours pickup games. "I heard he can pass the ball pretty well," Maxey said.

The Sixers need the same out of Maxey, who averaged eight points in averaging 15.3 minutes last season. He is close with Simmons and may start in his spot on opening night. Shake Milton, the other point guard, is out with an injury, and Isaiah Joe may see more playing time. Seth Curry could even run the point in Simmons' place.



Philadelphia 76ers' Ben Simmons takes part in a practice at the NBA basketball team's facility, on Oct 18, in Camden, N.J. (AP)

Flyers rout Kraken, spoil Hakstol's return to Philly



Seattle Kraken's Jaden Schwartz, (left), and Philadelphia Flyers' Ryan Ellis battle for the puck during the third period of an NHL hockey game, on Oct. 18, in Philadelphia. (AP)

Panarin, Shesterkin lead Rangers over Maple Leafs 2-1 in OT

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 19, (AP): Claude Giroux and Travis Konecny scored, Carter Hart stopped 24 shots and the Flyers spoiled former coach Dave Hakstol's return to Philadelphia with a 6-1 win over the expansion Seattle Kraken.

Joel Farabee, Derick Brassard, Ryan Ellis and Justin Braun also scored for the Flyers.

Carson Soucy scored the first goal in four games for a Kraken defenseman in team history. The previous three were each decided by one goal. Philipp Grubauer had 15 saves on 20 shots in just over 28 minutes of action. Chris Driedger made six saves on seven shots in just over 31 minutes for Seattle (1-2-1).

Hakstol was hired by the Flyers in 2015 out of a college job at North Dakota. He was fired in December 2018 after he went 134-101-42, coaching the third-most games in franchise history behind Fred Shero and Mike Keenan - and the most for the Flyers without winning a playoff series.



New York Rangers forward Filip Chytil (72) is tied up by Toronto Maple Leafs forward Jason Spezza (19) and TJ Brodie (78) as Maple Leafs goaltender Jack Campbell (36) makes a save during first-period NHL hockey game action in Toronto, on Oct 18. (AP)

Rangers 2, Maple Leafs 1, OT
In Toronto, Artemi Panarin scored in overtime, Igor Shesterkin stopped 40 shots and New York beat Toronto.

Mika Zibanejad had a goal and an assist for the Rangers (2-1-1), the 100th two-point game of his NHL career.

Michael Bunting scored for Toronto (2-1-1), which got 21 saves from Jack Campbell.

Panarin won it at 3:48 of a frantic, end-to-end extra period off a faceoff in the Maple Leafs' end. He played a quick give-and-go with Zibanejad before firing a shot past Campbell.

Ducks 3, Flames 2, OT

In Calgary, Alberta, Jamie Drysdale scored in overtime to give Anaheim a win over Calgary.

Drysdale tapped in a pass from Troy Terry at 3:26 of overtime for the winner.

Cam Fowler and Rickard Rakell also scored for the Ducks, who started a four-game trip with a victory. Anaheim goaltender John Gibson made 41 saves.

Blake Coleman scored in his debut with the Flames, and Elias Lindholm added a goal. Johnny Gaudreau had two assists, and Jacob Markstrom stopped 24 shots.

Blues 7, Coyotes 4

In Glendale, Arizona, Jordan Kyrou had two goals and two assists, and St. Louis scored five times in a 5:07 span of the second

Kane suspended for COVID-19 violations

SAN JOSE, Calif., Oct 19, (AP): The NHL has suspended San Jose Sharks forward Evander Kane for 21 games for submitting a fake COVID-19 vaccination card.

The league announced the suspension without pay on Monday and said Kane will not be eligible to play until Nov. 30 at New Jersey. Kane will forfeit about \$1.68 million of his \$7 million salary for this season with the money going to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund. The league also announced that a concurrent investigation into allegations of sexual and physical abuse made against Kane by his estranged wife, Anna, could not be substantiated.

Kane had previously been cleared by the NHL in an investigation into allegations made by Anna Kane that he bet on hockey games, including some against the Sharks.

But the league did determine that Kane violated the COVID-19 protocols. A person familiar with the investigation said earlier this month that the league was looking into allegations that Kane submitted a fake vaccination card.



In this, Feb 21, 2021, file photo Serbia's Novak Djokovic holds the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup after defeating Russia's Daniil Medvedev in the men's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

NHL Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Oct 19, (AP): Results and standings from the NHL games on Monday.

Eastern Conference		Western Conference													
Atlantic Division				Central Division											
GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA				
Toronto	4	2	1	1	5	8	7	St Louis	2	2	0	0	4	12	7
Florida	2	2	0	0	4	10	5	Minnesota	2	2	0	0	4	5	3
Buffalo	2	2	0	0	4	7	2	Colorado	2	1	1	0	2	7	7
Ottawa	3	2	1	0	4	7	7	Dallas	3	1	2	0	2	6	8
Tampa Bay	3	2	1	0	4	11	13	Chicago	3	0	2	1	1	7	13
Detroit	2	1	0	1	3	9	8	Arizona	3	0	2	1	1	7	17
Boston	1	1	0	0	2	3	1	Los Angeles	2	0	2	0	0	5	7
Montreal	3	0	3	0	0	3	10	Nashville	2	0	2	0	0	4	8
								Winnipeg	2	0	2	0	0	4	8

Metropolitan Division				Pacific Division											
GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA	GP	W	L	OT Pts	GF	GA				
Pittsburgh	3	2	0	1	5	15	9	Edmonton	2	2	0	0	4	8	4
NY Rangers	4	2	1	1	5	8	10	Anaheim	3	2	1	0	4	8	5
Carolina	2	2	0	0	4	9	5	Vancouver	3	1	1	1	3	8	10
Columbus	2	2	0	0	4	10	3	Seattle	4	1	2	1	3	9	15
Philadelphia	2	1	0	1	3	10	6	San Jose	1	1	0	0	2	4	3
Washington	2	1	0	1	3	6	3	Los Angeles	2	1	1	0	2	8	5
New Jersey	1	1	0	0	2	4	3	Vegas	2	1	1	0	2	6	9
NY Islanders	2	0	2	0	0	4	11	Calgary	2	0	1	1	1	4	8

Note: Two points for a win one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Prospect of no jab, no visa for Australian Open tennis 'stars'

SYDNEY, Oct. 19, (AP): Tennis players who haven't received a COVID-19 vaccination are unlikely to get a visa to enter the country for the Australian Open in Melbourne in January, according to the political leader of the state which hosts the season-opening major.

Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews has already introduced a vaccine mandate for professional athletes competing in domestic sports leagues and people working in some industries including health. On Tuesday, he increased the pressure on tennis players

international borders for the first time in more than 18 months, but it'll be a gradual, state-by-state process starting next month and will depend on vaccination rates across the country. Fully vaccinated people will have fewer restrictions in Australia than those who are not.

The vaccination debate has been ongoing in tennis since international competition started re-emerging following a global shutdown last year.

Some players, including men's No. 1 Novak Djokovic, have advocated that the decision to get the vaccine should be a personal choice. Others, including Andy Murray, have said it should be mandated for the good of the majority.

At the U.S. Open, which ended Sept. 12, spectators had to show proof of at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to attend matches, although players weren't required to get a shot.

Victoria Azarenka, a two-time Australian Open champion and three-time runner-up at the U.S. Open, thought that sent a mixed message. She reached the U.S. Open final in 2020, when there were no fans allowed.

TENNIS

traveling from abroad.

"I don't think any unvaccinated tennis player is going to get a visa to come into this country," Andrews said. "If they did get a visa, they'd probably have to quarantine for a couple of weeks when no other players will have to. "Professional sport is part of that authorized worker list and they have to be double-dose vaccinated."

Australia is preparing to re-open its in-