



Leeds United's Luke Ayling (right), celebrates scoring with teammates during the English Premier League soccer match at Molineux Stadium, Wolverhampton, England. (AP)

# Sports

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## Leeds move 7 clear of drop zone

# Gunners 'strengthen' hold on final CL spot

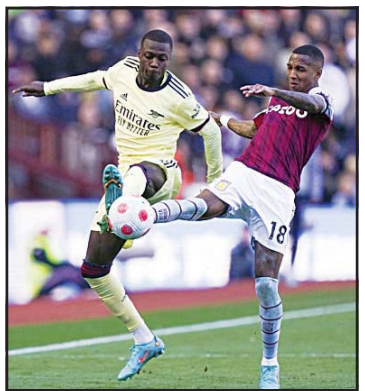
BIRMINGHAM, England, March 19, (AP) — Arsenal strengthened their hold on the final Champions League spot in the Premier League with a 1-0 win over Aston Villa on Saturday, secured by a first-half strike by Bukayo Saka.

The England international latched onto a ball that was weakly cleared by the Villa defense and lashed a low, first-time shot past unsighted goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez from the edge of the area in the 30th minute.

Arsenal - missing first-choice goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale because of injury and in-form winger Gabriel Martinelli because of illness - were in control for most of the lunchtime game at Villa Park despite the short turnaround from their loss to Liverpool on Wednesday night.

Saka was a constant danger and his well-taken goal took him to nine in the league this season, during which he has established himself as regular on the right wing.

Arsenal moved four points clear of



Arsenal's Nicolas Pepe (left), and Aston Villa's Ashley Young battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Aston Villa and Arsenal at Villa Park, Birmingham, England. (AP)

fifth-place Manchester United and within five of third-place Chelsea in their bid to return to the Champions League. This season is the first in a quarter of a century that Arsenal have not been involved in European competition.

Arsenal also have a game in hand over United, which aren't in action this weekend.

Ninth-place Villa were strangled by Arsenal's intensity in midfield and had only a few sights on goal, mostly in the second half. From one, Ollie Watkins struck the base of the post in the 68th minute with what proved to be the hosts' best chance.

Leeds fought back from 2-0 down to win 3-2 at 10-man Wolverhampton with a last-minute winner by Luke Ayling in

## SOCCER

one of the English Premier League games of the season.

Ayling clinched Leeds a vital win in their fight for survival after they trailed to first-half goals from Wolves pair Jonny and substitute Francisco Trincao.

But Wolves striker Raul Jimenez was sent off for his second yellow card early in the second period and Leeds hauled themselves level with two goals in three minutes from Jack Harrison and Rodrigo.

When Wolves failed to clear a free kick from their area, Ayling lashed home an unstoppable shot in the 90th minute. It sparked a touchline melee as tempers flared in both dugouts at Molineux.

The fightback from Leeds was all the more impressive given it lost four players to first-half injuries, including striker Patrick Bamford.

Leeds secured back-to-back league wins for only the second time this season and moved seven points clear of the relegation zone.

# Suns move 'closer' to wrapping up top spot



Cleveland Cavaliers' Lamar Stevens (8) steals the ball from Denver Nuggets' Will Barton (right), during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Cleveland. (AP)

## Lakers snap three-game losing streak

PHOENIX, March 19, (AP) — Devin Booker scored 28 points and the Phoenix Suns moved closer to wrapping up the NBA's best regular-season record, routing the Chicago Bulls 129-102 on Friday night.

At a franchise-best 57-14 through 71 games, the Suns moved nine games ahead of second-place Memphis with 11 games left. Memphis lost at Atlanta earlier Friday.

Deandre Ayton added 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Suns. Cameron Payne scored 15 points, Torrey Craig and Landry Shamet had 14 each, JaVale McGee 12 and Mikael Bridges 11.



Booker

DeMar DeRozan scored 19 points for Chicago, fifth in the Eastern Conference at 41-29. Nikola Vucevic added 16 points. Coby White had 14, Zach LaVine 12 and Tristan Thompson 11.

## Nets 128, Trail Blazers 123

In New York, Kevin Durant scored 38 points and Seth Curry returned to the lineup with seven 3-pointers in his best game as a Net to help Brooklyn beat Portland.

Curry finished with 27 points, his most since coming from Philadelphia last month in the trade headlined by James Harden and Ben Simmons. Curry had missed the previous three games with left ankle soreness.

## Lakers 128, Raptors 123, OT

In Toronto, LeBron James scored 19 of his 36 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, Russell Westbrook had 22 points, 10 rebounds, and 10 assists and Los Angeles beat Toronto to snap a three-game losing streak.

Avery Bradley hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 32.5 seconds left in the extra session, putting the Lakers up 125-123, then added a pair of free throws after a turnover by Toronto rookie Scottie Barnes.

## 76ers 111, Mavericks 101

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid scored 32 points, James Harden had 24 points and 13 rebounds and Philadelphia 76ers beat Dallas.

Embiid was 11 of 20 from the floor. Harden also had seven rebounds. Tobias Harris added 14 points, Georges Niang had 12 and Mattias Thybulle 10.

## Heat 120, Thunder 108

In Miami, Tyler Herro got through an ankle scare and scored 26 points, Duncan Robinson scored 19 points in 19 minutes and the Eastern Conference-leading Miami topped Oklahoma City. Bam Adebayo had 19 points on 8-for-

10 shooting and Kyle Lowry added 16.

## Jazz 121, Clippers 92

In Salt Lake City, Rudy Gobert had 19 points, 16 rebounds and two blocks, Jared Butler scored a career-high 21 points and Utah beat Los Angeles Clippers on Friday night.

Jordan Clarkson added 20 points, Eric Paschall 17 and Nickeil Alexander-Walker finished with 13 points in his first start for Utah, which was without Donovan Mitchell and Bojan Bogdanovic.

## Hawks 120, Grizzlies 105

In Atlanta, Bogdan Bogdanovic scored a season-high 30 points, Delon Wright had 18 and Atlanta beat Memphis without Hawks star guard Trae Young sidelined by a bruised left quad.

Wright, filling in for Young, provided a big boost for Atlanta, which is clinging to the 10th spot in the Eastern Conference and final spot in the play-in tournament. Wright had five steals and six assists.

## Cavaliers 119, Nuggets 116, OT

In Cleveland, Lauri Markkanen made the go-ahead 3-pointer with 29 seconds left in overtime and scored a season-high 31 points, helping Cleveland end Denver's franchise-record road winning streak at seven.

Reigning MVP Nikola Jokic scored in the paint to cut Cleveland's lead to 117-116 with 25 seconds remaining, but rookie Evan Mobley dunked over Aaron Gordon to restore the Cavaliers' three-point advantage. Bones Hyland missed a 3-pointer as time expired.

## BASKETBALL

### Celtics 126, Kings 97

In Sacramento, Jayson Tatum made seven 3-pointers and scored 32 points, Jaylen Brown added 30 points and Boston routed Sacramento.

Payton Pritchard had 14 points and eight assists as the Celtics won for the seventh time in eight games to remain in fourth place in the Eastern Conference.

### Knicks 100, Wizards 97

In New York, Julius Randle had 18 points and 17 rebounds, RJ Barrett also scored 18 points and New York outlasted Washington.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope missed a potential game-tying 3-pointer at the buzzer for the Wizards. They have lost six straight.

### Pelicans 124, Spurs 91

In San Antonio, C.J. McCollum had 20 points and New Orleans beat San Antonio to strengthen its play-in hopes.

Jonas Valanciunas had 16 points and 12 rebounds and Jaxson Hayes also scored 16 points for New Orleans. The Pelicans won for the second time in seven games.

### Pacers 121, Rockets 118

In Houston, Malcolm Brogdon scored 25 points and Goga Bitadze added 23, including two key baskets down the stretch, to help Indiana beat Houston.

## Defending champion Badosa outlasted

# Swiatek, Sakkari advance to Indian Wells final

INDIAN WELLS, Calif., March 19, (AP) — Iga Swiatek rallied from a break down in each set to beat Simona Halep 7-6 (6), 6-4 on Friday night and reach the final of the BNP Paribas Open.

Maria Sakkari outlasted defending champion Paula Badosa 6-2, 4-6, 6-1 and will play Swiatek in Sunday's final. Either fourth-ranked Swiatek or sixth-ranked Sakkari would move to No. 2 in the world by earning the title.

It's a rematch of last month's semifinals in Doha, where Swiatek beat Sakkari for the first time, 6-4, 6-3 and went on to win the title.

After splitting sets, Sakkari took a 2-0 lead in the third.

"Even though I lost the second set, the way I lost it was by playing aggressive, which helped me a lot on the third set," Sakkari said.

Badosa broke back, but Sakkari won the last four games to close out the victory and reach the biggest final of her career.

"She served well. She was moving very well. She was playing very fast," Badosa said. "She didn't let me a lot of time to build the points."

In the first semifinal, Swiatek saved two set points in the first-set tiebreaker when she overcame deficits of 3-1 and 5-3. She won the final four points, with Halep

## TENNIS

committing errors on three of those points, before Swiatek cracked a forehand winner off Halep's second serve. Halep received a racket abuse warning for smashing her racket on the court.

Swiatek took a 2-1 lead in the second set that featured five service breaks. Halep took a medical timeout and had a trainer wrap her upper left thigh.

Halep then broke Swiatek twice while taking the next three games for a 4-2 lead. But Swiatek took over from there. She won the last four games in a row, with Halep winning just four points total on her serve while getting broken twice.

"We had like the longest rallies I played here," Swiatek said. "At the beginning I had to adjust a little bit to the new rhythm because Simona was for sure playing good than my opponents in previous rounds, and I'm pretty proud that I did that. Mentally, I was pretty strong."

## Fürth dent Freiburg Champs League ambitions

# Berlin rout Hoffenheim, boost survival hopes

BERLIN, March 19, (AP) — Hertha Berlin won its first game of 2022 in Felix Magath's first game as coach despite his absence due to a coronavirus infection on Saturday.

Marvin Plattenhardt set up three goals for Hertha to climb out of a direct relegation place in the Bundesliga with a 3-0 win over Hoffenheim, ending a nine-game winless streak going back to a 3-2 win over Borussia Dortmund on Dec. 18.

## SOCCER

Hertha, which dropped second last in the 18-team division last weekend, fired Tayfun Korkut as coach on Sunday and appointed the experienced Magath in his place.

Magath, who formerly coached Bayern Munich, Wolfsburg, Stuttgart and many more, was joined by assistant coach Mark Fotheringham, whom he knew from their time together at English team Fulham.

But Magath tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, leaving Fotheringham to take charge in his place.

Hoffenheim were previously unbeaten in five Bundesliga games. They drew with Bayern Munich 1-1 last weekend.

Hertha played with passion and intensity, though Hoffenheim's Jacob Bruun Larsen had the best chance of the first half when he failed to make the most of a one-on-one with Hertha goalkeeper Alexander Schwolow.

Niklas Stark finally broke the deadlock in the 39th minute with a header to



Hertha's Ishak Belfodil (left) heads the ball as Stefan Poschfor looks on during the Bundesliga soccer match between Hertha BSC and TSG 1899 Hoffenheim at Olympiastadion, Berlin. (AP)

Plattenhardt's free kick. The linesman raised his flag for offside but a VAR check confirmed Stark was on.

Hertha maintained their intensity after the break. The players' commitment even earned applause from the home supporters, a noise they'd rarely heard this season.

Ishak Belfodil got the second goal in the 63rd, when Marc Oliver Kempf cushioned another free kick from Plattenhardt into the Algerian's path. Bel-

fodil's celebrations were muted against his former club, but the Hertha fans were singing.

There was also good news coming from Mainz, where relegation rivals Arminia Bielefeld was losing.

Another free kick from Plattenhardt led to Hertha's third in the 74th, an own-goal from David Raum under pressure from Dedryck Boyata.

## NBA Results/Standings

Table containing NBA results and standings for various divisions including Atlantic, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, and Pacific Divisions.



Iga Swiatek, of Poland, reacts after defeating Simona Halep, of Romania, in their women's singles semifinals match at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)