

SPORTS

NBA

10 Things To Know About The Playoffs

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

With the NBA playoffs starting Saturday, here's 10 things to know:

LEBRON'S STREAK

Pacers fans, avert your eyes. LeBron James hasn't experienced losing a first-round game in nearly six years. James' teams have won 21 consecutive opening-round contests, a streak that started in Game 5 of the Miami-New York series in 2012. Combining his Cleveland and Miami years, James' teams have won 46 of their last 51 first-round games. James and the Cavs play Indiana in the first round this season.

MORE LEBRON

James could set a slew of NBA records in these playoffs.

He's already the all-time postseason leader in points, is seven steals from passing Scottie Pippen (395) for the playoff record in that department, is four shots from passing Kobe Bryant (4,499) for another career postseason mark.

Depending on how long Cleveland's postseason lasts, James also has a shot at passing Ray Allen (385) for career postseason 3-pointers; he's 55 shy of taking over the No. 1 spot there. And if the Cavs make a deep run James could also catch Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (2,356) for most field goals.

KERR BATTLE

Golden State coach Steve Kerr is estranged from his son.

Temporarily. Nick Kerr works for the San Antonio Spurs — the Warriors' opponent in a Western Conference first round series. This has long been a source of great amusement for Spurs coach Gregg Popovich, who coached Steve Kerr as a player and remains close with him now. Popovich has said that Nick Kerr is the subject of additional security screenings at work, just to ensure he's not a spy for the Warriors. (No, Pop wasn't serious.) Steve Kerr says he and his son are "re-



Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James, left, drives past New York Knicks' Trey Burke in the first half of an NBA basketball game on Wednesday in Cleveland.

AP PHOTO BY TONY DEJAK

cusing ourselves" from family interaction during the series.

"I think they already confiscated Nick's phone," he said.

SO CLOSE ...

You have to feel for Omri Casspi and DeMarcus Cousins.

No active players have appeared in more regular-season games without any getting any postseason run than Casspi and Cousins. Casspi has played in 552 games, Cousins 535. And both were right on the cusp of ending their droughts this year; Casspi was waived by Golden State because it needed a roster spot once he hurt his ankle, and Cousins tore his Achilles' to end his season with New Orleans.

Tom Van Arsdale (929) is the record-holder for most regular-season games without seeing postseason play, followed by Otto Moore (682), Nate Williams (642), Sebastian Telfair (564), then Casspi and Cousins.

GLOBAL GAME

These NBA playoffs will be more global than ever.

A record 62 international players, from a record 33 countries, are headed to the postseason. Every playoff team has at least one international player on its roster, with Utah and Philadelphia both featuring seven and Boston, Toronto and San Antonio six each.

France and Australia lead the way in international representation in these playoffs, with seven players from each nation making it to the second season. Canada and Spain both have four.

STREAKING SPURS

This wasn't San Antonio's best season; the Spurs got "only" the seventh seed in the West.

But their streak lives.

This is the 21st consecutive season the Spurs have made the playoffs, one shy of matching Philadelphia for the longest NBA run.

To put their current streak in perspective, the soonest any other NBA club will be able to say that it has a 21-season postseason streak will be 2033.

Golden State and Houston have the second-longest active postseason streaks, at six. Portland and Toronto have been to five in a row, and four teams in this postseason — Miami, Minnesota, Philadelphia and New Orleans — didn't qualify for the playoffs a year ago.

MONEY MATTERS

Portland and Philadelphia have already won a little extra money. By winning on the season's final night to ensure each finished alone in third in their respective conferences, the Trail Blazers and 76ers picked up another \$64,842 from the NBA's record \$20 million playoff pool this season.

Playoff teams split payouts from the pool, often toward bonuses for players and staff.

Houston is assured \$1,380,065 from the pool so far. Toronto is assured \$803,222 while Boston and Golden State are up to

\$704,169. Every playoff team will receive at least \$298,485 — and the payouts keep rising as teams keep advancing.

The NBA champion will claim at least \$4,782,438; the runner-up, at least \$3,587,489.

START FAST

Of the 15 series played in the 2017 postseason, Game 1 winners ultimately won the best-of-seven 12 times. That 80 percent clip is consistent with the league norm.

Since the 1983-84 season, winners of Game 1 have gone on to win the series 79 percent of the time. But that guarantees nothing — over the last seven years, four teams have lost Game 1 of the NBA Finals and gone on to win the championship anyway.

DEFEND HOME COURT

Home-court "advantage" really didn't exist in the 2017 playoffs.

Road teams won 43 percent of the postseason games played last year, and it's reasonable to think such a success rate might be in play again this year. The 16 teams in these playoffs combined to win 351 games on the road in the regular season, or 54 percent.

Ordinarily, road teams win playoff games about 35 percent of the time.

FINALLY, MINNESOTA

The Timberwolves are in the playoffs for the first time since 2004.

During that 14-year drought, the franchise had nine different coaches, used 131 different players, 92 different starters, took 93,776 field-goal attempts and scored 112,664 points.

Here might be the best illustration of how long the postseason wait was for Minnesota: Only 12 of the 59 players taken in the 2004 draft were still in the NBA this season. The only player the Timberwolves drafted in the year of their last playoff run was Blake Stepp, who never made the NBA but played at least three times in the World Series of Poker.

MLB

Braves Crash Darvish's Home Debut With Cubs

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO (AP) — Yu Darvish's first home start with the Chicago Cubs went nothing like his previous outing at Wrigley Field. Instead of dominating in a playoff win, he got knocked out in an early-season loss.

Anibal Sanchez pitched three-hit ball over six innings, Preston Tucker backed him with a three-run homer and the Atlanta Braves spoiled Darvish's home debut with a 4-0 victory on Friday.

Darvish had already dodged a few jams when he got thrown off by a balk call in the fifth that he and manager Joe Maddon did not think he deserved. The Braves went on to score all of the runs in that inning while knocking Darvish out of the game.

"After the balk, I got (thrown) off guard and just went downhill from there," Darvish said through an interpreter.

The four-time All-Star got tagged for four runs and nine hits in 4 2/3 innings. Darvish (0-1) walked four and struck out four while throwing 105 pitches. The last time he pitched at Wrigley, he worked into the seventh inning of a 6-1 Dodgers victory in Game 3 of the NL Championship Series last fall. Signed to a \$126 million, six-year deal, he struggled for the second time in three starts with Chicago. And the Cubs lost again after dropping two of three to the surging Pittsburgh Pirates.

Tucker delivered the big blow in the fifth with a long homer to right to make it 4-0, and that was all the

Braves needed with Sanchez (1-0) dominating.

"I faced him one time right before I had shoulder surgery, and it wasn't pretty," said Tucker, who has three homers — all three-run shots. "It's hard enough to hit him when you're healthy."

Sanchez struck out six and walked one. He has a 1.29 ERA through two starts and three appearances after signing a minor league deal in mid-March.

Shut out for the third time this season, the Cubs have scored just one run in the two games since a 13-5 romp over Pittsburgh. But Ian Happ insisted he is not concerned.

"Look around this room," he said. "Look at our lineup every day."

TAKING THE LEAD

The Braves finally broke through against Darvish in the fifth, sending 10 batters to the plate.

He gave up a double to Ozzie Albies, got called for the balk and bounced a pitch to Nick Markakis with two outs to bring home the first run. Six straight batters then reached base, starting with a single by Markakis. After Kurt Suzuki doubled, Tucker hit a drive to right that ricocheted out of the ballpark.

Darvish threw 39 pitches in the inning and exited after walking Sanchez to load the bases. Brian Duensing then retired Ender Inciarte on a bouncer to the pitcher.

QUOTABLE

"The umpire told me (I) paused (in) the motion. But

over the course of my career, I've done that many times and it was never called balk." — Darvish on the balk.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Braves: RHP Brandon McCarthy is on track to make his next start after dislocating his left shoulder at Washington on Wednesday. "He's fine," manager Brian Snitker said. ... RHP Aaron Blair (right shoulder) is scheduled to be examined by Dr. James Andrews on Monday. He left Wednesday's start at Triple-A Gwinnett after injuring his arm. Blair made 15 starts for the Braves in 2016 and one last season.

Cubs: Manager Joe Maddon said he thinks 1B Anthony Rizzo (back) will be ready to return from the 10-day disabled list when he is eligible against St. Louis on Monday. "He's making great progress," Maddon said. ... CF Albert Almora was scratched because of an illness. Ian Happ started and led off in his place.

UP NEXT

Braves: LHP Sean Newcomb (1-1, 4.35 ERA) looks to build on a scoreless six-inning performance against Colorado on Sunday.

Cubs: LHP Jose Quintana (1-1, 4.50) goes for back-to-back wins after throwing six scoreless innings at Milwaukee on Sunday.

PREP ROUNDUP

Chuckey-Doak Tops Sullivan North In Baseball

The Chuckey-Doak baseball team picked up a 9-2 win over Sullivan North on Friday.

Freshman pitcher Dustin Eatmon earned the win on the mound. In a complete game, he struck out 11, walked one and allowed just three hits.

At the plate, Chuckey-Doak picked up 15 hits. Eatmon and Jacob Willett each had three hits, and Eatmon had a double. Jameson Cobble went 2-for-4 at the plate with an RBI. Leonard Cobb was 2-for-4 with two RBIs.

Hayden Rush and Colton Fleener each had doubles for the Knights.

West Greene Wallops Cosby

The West Greene baseball team took down Cosby 20-1 on Friday.

The Buffaloes used 10 hits and took advantage of eight Cosby errors to capture the victory.

Sam Haldeman, Ben Cox and Austin Anderson all had two hits for the Buffaloes. Cox and Haldeman each drove in three runs while Anderson knocked in two.

Cox threw three innings with six strikeouts to earn the win in his first varsity start. Trey Tweed threw one relief inning with two strikeouts.

SOCCER

Greeneville Boots Tennessee

The Greeneville boys soccer team defeated Tennessee High 8-1 on Thursday to improve to 10-2 on the season.

J.P. Vital led the attack for the Devils with a hat trick and a pair of assists. John Stewart had a goal and a pair of assists, while Ryan Thompson also had a goal and an assist.

Cade Miles, Kevin Sanchez and Con-

nor DeBusk each added a goal. Peter Kriebel and Malachi Ashley each had an assist for Greeneville.

The Devils' defense of Will Albright, Bryant Renner, Devin Vital, Ashley, Matthis Stover and Quinten Mitchel in the goal only gave up two shots on the night.

The Devils play again at home on Tuesday night against Volunteer at 6 p.m.

The junior varsity team won by a score of 6-0 on Thursday.

A.J. McGill and Drew Renner led the JV with a pair of goals each. Colby Frreman got the clean sheet in goal. The defense was led by Will Grant, Renner, Calvin Hood and Jacob Hillyer.

SOFTBALL

Chuckey-Doak Rolls To Win

The Chuckey-Doak softball team took down Cumberland Gap 17-2 on Thursday.

The Lady Knight's got started in the second inning with an eight-run side that took advantage of seven walks. Katie Jones had a two-RBI single in the inning and Anleigh Kelley had an RBI single.

Kelley led the Lady Knights by going 2-for-3 at the plate.

Cumberland Gap scored both of its runs in the third inning. A two-out, two-RBI triple did all of the damage.

In the bottom of the third inning, three more walks contributed to five runs for Chuckey-Doak. Skylar Maynard, Alesha Shelton and Hope Thacker all earned hits in the frame.

Chuckey-Doak closed out the game with four runs in the fourth inning.

From the circle, Shelton allowed four hits with four strikeouts and a walk.

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