

Heat Overcome Bulls



Alonzo Mourning (top) of the Miami Heat dunks the ball over Tyson Chandler of the Chicago Bulls at the United Center in Chicago, Illinois, Tuesday. (AFP Photo)

NEW YORK, Dec. 14- Shaquille O'Neal scored 30 points on his first start since coming back from injury and Pat Riley enjoyed a winning return as Miami Heat coach in a 100-97 road win over the Chicago Bulls on Tuesday. Riley, the team's president and former coach, took over coaching duties for a second time earlier this week when Stan Van Gundy resigned for personal reasons. The alarm bells would have been ringing when he saw Miami's double-digit lead in the fourth quarter drop to just two, but the Heat managed to hold on to improve to 12-10, and 3-1 with O'Neal in the line-up, Reuters said.

"It's going to take me time to get up to speed on everything," Riley admitted after the game.

O'Neal played in his second game since missing 18 contests with a sprained ankle and started for the first time after coming off the bench in the overtime win over Washington on Sunday.

He shot 12-for-21 from the field and added seven rebounds while playing 27 minutes.

Dwyane Wade added 14 points and had 11 rebounds for the Heat, while Antoine Walker also scored 14 points.

Alonzo Mourning turned

in another solid effort off the bench for Miami, contributing 11 points and 12 rebounds in just 20 minutes.

Kirk Hinrich had 26 points and eight assists for the Bulls (11-11), who trailed 52-43 at the half.

Darius Songaila added 19 points in just 21 minutes for Chicago.

The Bulls had one last chance to tie the game on a three-pointer as time expired, but Luol Deng's shot went off the rim as the buzzer sounded.

In Washington, Jarvis Hayes scored 19 points as the Wizards beat the New Jersey Nets 94-74.

In Cleveland, Al Harrington scored 20 points as the Atlanta Hawks beat the Cavaliers 100-94.

In Charlotte, Carmelo Anthony scored 42 points as the Denver Nuggets beat the Bobcats 101-85.

In Minneapolis, Bonzi Wells scored 20 points as the Sacramento Kings beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 93-91.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan scored 27 points and had 22 rebounds as the Spurs beat the Los Angeles Clippers 95-87 in overtime.

In Seattle, Derek Fisher scored 26 points and Baron Davis added 21 in leading the Golden State Warriors to a 110-107 overtime win against the SuperSonics.

Brazil, Russia Warm-Up Match Confirmed

MOSCOW, Dec. 14- Defending champions Brazil will play Russia in March as part of their preparations for next year's World Cup in Germany.

"The match has been already confirmed, so has the date. It will take place in Moscow on March 1," Russian Football Union (RFU) spokesman Andrei Malosolov said on Tuesday.

Brazil hope to use the Moscow game to prepare for Croatia, their first opponents in World Cup Group F, Reuters reported.

The five-times world champions face Croatia on June 13 before playing Australia and Japan.

Russia, who failed to qualify for the finals, plan to name their new coach before the Euro 2008 qualifying campaign starts in September.

Kumble Spins India to Victory

NEW DELHI, India, Dec. 14- India leg spinner Anil Kumble grabbed his eighth 10-wicket match haul to spin India to an 188-run victory over Sri Lanka in the second test on Tuesday.

Kumble took four for 85 to bowl out Sri Lanka for 247 runs in their second innings 40 minutes after lunch on the fifth day, giving the hosts a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, Reuters said.

Kumble, 35, finished with a match haul of 10 wickets for 157 runs.

Sri Lanka, set a world record fourth innings target of 436 runs, had been reduced to 203 for seven in the morning.

Mahela Jayawardene struck a patient 67 before he fell to off spinner Harbhajan Singh to make it 243 for eight and the last three wickets then tumbled for four runs.

India declared their second innings at 375 for six to take command on the fourth afternoon, having restricted Sri Lanka to 230 all out in reply to their first innings total of 290.

The rain-marred first test in Chennai ended in a draw, while the final match begins in Ahmedabad on Sunday.



Indian cricketers Rahul Dravid (l) and Mahender Singh Dhoni (r) watch as Sri Lankan batsman Tillakaratne Dilshan is clean bowled by unseem Anil Kumble during the fifth and final day of the second Test match between India and Sri Lanka at the Ferozeshah Kotla Cricket Ground in New Delhi, Tuesday. (AFP Photo)

Argentina Upbeat About World Cup

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Dec. 14- Argentina are aware of the strengths of their World Cup Group C rivals but will be ready to have a good tournament, coach Jose Pekerman said.

Pekerman's seeded team were drawn in one of the toughest groups with the Netherlands, Serbia & Montenegro and Ivory Coast for the June 9-July 9 tournament in Germany.

"The team will be in good shape when they get to the World Cup. We have a very good team and I'm sure we'll have a great World Cup," Pekerman told the Argentine news agency Telam in an interview published on Tuesday, Reuters reported.

"You have to go to the World Cup in your best form. We Argentines are affected by our elimina-

tion in the first round of Korea-Japan," he said referring to the 2002 tournament.

Pekerman implied that talk about how tough Argentina's group rivals are has been based largely on their poor tournament four years ago in an even tougher group with England, Sweden and Nigeria and their erratic form in the last six months.

"But if the team were okay (now), like for example in the first half at home against Brazil, we wouldn't even worry today about our rivals," he said. Argentina beat Brazil 3-1 in Buenos Aires in June to clinch an early World Cup berth.

"Brazil are the best team at the moment, for the way they play. I like their players, their ideas, their football...and England are

getting there with greater aspirations than 2002.

Position by position, they are complete and will do very well." Pekerman is leaving himself with little further preparation, however, saying: "There are six months left for the World Cup but we're only going to play one (warm-up) friendly, maybe against Croatia.

"In other words, the state in which the players get there will depend on what they do with their clubs."

He said he had never called up Juan Sebastian Veron of Inter Milan, Argentina's captain in 2002 when he was a Manchester United player, because "up to now there is a squad that has responded (to my wishes)."

Aussies, Dutch On Course for Final

CHENNAI, India, Dec. 14- Australia and the Netherlands stayed on course for the Champions Trophy field hockey final with contrasting wins Tuesday while Pakistan and Germany played out a thrilling 4-4 draw.

Olympic gold-medalists Australia pulverized hosts India 4-1 to record their third consecutive win in the six-nation round-robin league, AFP reported.

The Dutch fended off a late challenge from defending champions Spain to win 3-2 and take second place on the table with seven points, two behind Australia.

Spain and India were neck in line with three points each and needed a dramatic turnaround in the last two rounds to deny the Aussies and the Dutch a place in Sunday's final.

Pakistan, languishing at the bottom of the table, were fortunate to share

points with Germany as captain Mohammad Saqlain converted a penalty stroke two minutes from the final whistle.

It was Pakistan's first point in the tournament while a young German side, without eight retired Olympic stars, are in fifth position with two points.

The Kookaburras scored four goals in the first 20 minutes against India, including Nathan Eglinton's first strike in the 58th second of the match.

Dean Butler, Travis Eglinton and Nathan Eglinton scored for the Australians, while Tushar Khandekar pulled one back for India just before half-time.

India's reserve goalkeeper Bharat Chetri, who replaced a rattled Adrian D'Souza after the four-goal blitz, prevented Australia from increasing the margin in the second half.

Earlier, the Dutch appeared headed for an easy victory against Spain when two goals from Matthijs Brouwer and one from Karel Klaver put them 3-0 ahead with 13 minutes left in the game.

Spain, however, scored twice in a five-minute burst, but missed a penalty corner in the final minute to concede three points to the Dutch.

The close win helped the Netherlands avenge two defeats at the hands of Spain in the finals of the Champions Trophy last December and the European championships in September.

Montgomery Banned for Doping



Tim Montgomery

LONDON, Dec. 14- Former world 100 meters record holder Tim Montgomery became on Tuesday the highest profile culprit after a US federal investigation into the BALCO laboratory doping conspiracy.

The Court of Arbitration for sport (CAS) banned Montgomery and Chryste Gaines for two years each from June 6 this year after accepting evidence that the pair had taken the designer steroid THG (tetrahydrogestronone).

In addition Montgomery will forfeit all his results and earnings from March 31, 2001, through to June 6 while Gaines will have her results annulled and lose her winnings from November 30, 2003, up to the same date, Reuters said.

CAS said those were the dates when both athletes told double world sprint champion Kelli White that they had been taking THG.

Montgomery, 30, the former partner of triple Olympic champion Marion Jones, won \$100,000 alone after setting his then world record of 9.78 seconds at the 2002 Paris grand prix final.

A CAS statement on Tuesday said the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) submitted evidence that BALCO had been

involved in a conspiracy to distribute undetectable performance-enhancing drugs.

Agents from the US Internal Revenue Service criminal investigations unit raided the laboratory in California on Sept. 23,

2003. A CAS statement said the USADA had sought a four-year ban for Montgomery for taking part in a world-wide doping conspiracy initiated by BALCO.

"According to USADA,

BALCO was involved in a conspiracy, the purpose of which was the distribution and use of doping substances and techniques that were either undetectable or difficult to detect in routine drug testing.

"BALCO is alleged to have distributed several types of doping agents to professional athletes in track and field, baseball and football.

"Among these were (THG), otherwise known as the clear that could not be identified by routine anti-doping testing until 2003."

The decision, which was based on legal evidence about doping rather than a positive sample, was welcomed by World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) president Dick Pound.

"We now have driven the stake through the heart of the argument that you have to have an analytical positive in order to have a doping infraction, or a confession," Pound told Reuters in a telephone interview from his Montreal office.

Pound also expressed astonishment that Montgomery had not given evidence to CAS. "We had this extraordinary thing in which Montgomery does not bother to show up to say 'it ain't so'. He did not provide any explanation

Deportivo Coruna Coach Extends Contract

MADRID, Spain, Dec. 14- Deportivo Coruna coach Joaquin Caparros has extended his contract with the Primera Liga side until July 2008, the club said on Tuesday. Caparros originally signed a one-year-deal in the close season after the club had parted company with long-serving coach Javier Irureta, Reuters reported.

The 50-year-old former Sevilla boss has made an impressive start with his new club and given the squad a new lease of life with his extrovert and demanding coaching methods. His skill in bringing through youngsters from the reserve teams and his success in revitalizing more experienced players like winger Pedro Munitis and center-back Juanma persuaded club president Augusto Cesar Lendoiro to make Caparros the center of a long-term project. Depor are fifth in the league, two points adrift of Real Madrid and have lost just three of their 15 games this season.

Robertson Beats World Champion

YORK, UK, Dec. 14- Australia rising star Nathan Robertson said he could win the UK Snooker Championship after knocking out world champion Shaun Murphy here Tuesday in a thrilling final frame decider.

Robertson was 6-4 down against the Englishman but showed his resilience to take the match 9-8 with a break of 47 in the 17th frame.

The 23-year-old from Melbourne now faces Chinese teenager Ding Junhui in the quarter-finals, AFP said.

But Robertson insisted he feared no one after his nerve-wracking triumph.

"I'm thrilled to get through. That's the best I have played in a televised match," Robertson said. "Shaun has a bit of an aura around him now he is world champion and was very confident, but I had beaten him a couple of times before. I can definitely win this tournament."

Robertson's victory

meant former world champions Stephen Hendry and Ken Doherty were the only two of the top 12 seeds remaining in a competition that is snooker's second-most important after the World Championship.

Murphy, 23, was left to rue a loss in an event where the departure of so many leading players had, he believed, made the tournament his for the taking.

"I'm very pleased with how I played but the

frustration of such a close defeat is difficult to cope with, especially with the tournament wide open.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the age spectrum, six-time world champion Steve Davis hailed what he said could have been his best performance ever as he came from behind to beat reigning UK titleholder Stephen Maguire 9-8.

The 48-year-old rolled back the years as he took five of the last six frames, including the

penultimate with a 145 break, and was rewarded with a last eight clash against Doherty.

Maguire led 5-3 overnight and at 7-4 looked poised for victory but Davis rallied and used his renowned safety play to get back into the match.

At 8-7 down in his 145-his highest since his ground-breaking maximum in 1982-and then the Englishman took the final frame off a stunned Maguire.