

NBA

# Knicks rally from 20 down to beat Celtics in Game 2

By The Associated Press

BOSTON — For the second straight game, the New York Knicks found themselves in a hole the Boston Celtics have rarely let teams out of this season.

The Knicks again found a way — almost the same way, in fact — to pull off the improbable. And now they are two wins away from knocking the defending champions out of the playoffs.

Mikal Bridges sealed another 20-point comeback with his second straight game-ending steal and the Knicks stunned the Celtics again Wednesday night, winning 91-90 for a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

“Just finding ways to win,” Bridges said.

Jalen Brunson scored 17 points for New York and made two free throws with 12.7 seconds left for a 91-90 lead. Jayson Tatum then couldn’t get to the rim and Bridges moved in to bat the ball away and recover it.

Bridges also scored all of his 14 points in the fourth quarter. Josh Hart had 23 points and Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 21 points and 17 rebounds for the Knicks, who will host Game 3 on Saturday.

“Going home we realize the opportunity we have. We just have to stay locked in,” Brunson said.

Jaylen Brown and Derrick White scored 20 points apiece for the Celtics, who were 10 for 40 from 3-point range after going 15 for 60



CHARLES KRUPA / AP  
New York Knicks center Karl-Anthony Towns celebrates after defeating the Boston Celtics in Game 2 of an NBA second-round playoff series Wednesday in Boston.

in Game 1.

Tatum was limited to 13 points on 5-for-19 shooting for the Celtics, who went more than eight minutes without a field goal in the fourth quarter. They missed 13 consecutive shots during the stretch.

Teams that win the first two games of a best-of-seven series

on the road win the series 85.7% of the time. The Knicks took the opener when Bridges stole the ball away from Brown with a second left in overtime.

“Opportunity to show what we’re made of,” Brown said of a Boston team that swept New York 4-0 in the regular season.

“We’ve got to respond.”

Kristaps Porzingis didn’t start after sitting out the second half of Game 1 with an illness. He came off the bench for just the fifth time in his NBA career and finished with eight points and four rebounds in 14 minutes.

All eyes were on the Celtics’ offense after they missed an NBA playoff-record 45 3-pointers in their Game 1 loss. They went 24 for 54 from 2-point range Wednesday.

Despite their shooting struggles, the Celtics found some traction late in the third quarter, using a 16-6 run — keyed by their effort on the defensive end — to turn a 10-point lead into a 73-53 advantage late in the period.

It was 84-68 after Payton Pritchard’s 3-pointer with 8:40 to play but the Celtics wouldn’t make another basket until Tatum’s driving dunk with 18.5 seconds remaining.

New York cut it to 86-82 on a floater by Hart before Towns’ three-point play cut it to 86-85. Tatum missed a jumper, and Brunson made an 18-footer to put New York in front.

A jumper by Brown rolled off the rim on Boston’s next trip up the floor. Brunson then found a lane to the basket and dropped in a layup to make it 89-86.

Tatum connected on a pair of free throws and then got it back following a New York miss that rolled out of bounds with 24.2 seconds left.

Trailing 89-88, Tatum pushed the

ball in to the front court and drove easily past Mitchell Robinson for a dunk to put the Celtics back in front.

Brunson was fouled and connected on both free throws.

Hart said they are going home knowing they can still play better. “I don’t even think we know what we’re capable of,” he said.

## Thunder 149, Nuggets 106

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma City set an NBA playoff record for first-half points with 87 against Denver in Game 2 of their Western Conference semifinal series on Wednesday.

Oklahoma City surpassed the previous record of 86 set by the Cleveland Cavaliers against the Golden State Warriors in Game 4 of the NBA Finals on June 9, 2017. Chet Holmgren, who missed two critical free throws late in Game 1, made a pair with a second remaining to set the record.

The Thunder tied the record for points in any half of a playoff game. Milwaukee had 87 in the second half against Denver on April 23, 1978.

The Thunder shot 58.8% from the field and made 17 of 18 free throws to take an 87-56 lead at the break. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the way with 18 points. All five Thunder starters scored in double figures in the first half.

Denver won Game 1 121-119 on Monday night.

COLLEGE ATHLETICS

# NCAA settlement plan offers do-over for roster limits

By EDDIE PELLIS  
AP National Writer

Attorneys handling the \$2.8 billion NCAA settlement proposed a massive do-over Wednesday when it comes to roster limits, offering athletes who lost their spots a chance to play without counting against the new caps for as long as they have eligibility.

Under court order to come up with an updated plan, the attorneys in court filings suggested that schools compile lists of all the players they cut in anticipation of the settlement being approved — a number that certainly could be in the hundreds and perhaps far more.

Those “Designated Student-Athletes,” as they’re called in the new legal filing, can be invited back to compete for roster spots — no guarantees — or go to new schools.

Either way, those athletes won’t count against the new roster lim-

its that are coming under the plan unveiled last fall and given initial approval by U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken in October.

The proposal would also give the exemption to high school recruits who were promised spots that were later rescinded; the exemptions would last for as long as those players are eligible in college.

Wilken has already signed off on the key components of the settlement, which includes allowing each school to share up to \$20.5 million each year directly with their athletes and the nearly \$2.8 billion in back pay that will go to players who said the NCAA and five biggest conferences wrongly kept them from earning name, image and likeness money.

The latest proposal capped a two-week scramble after Wilken sent attorneys for both sides back to the negotiating table, saying the roster limit details of the plan as written were unacceptable.

The plan calls for replacing scholarship limits (85 for football and 9.9 for men’s wrestling, for example) with roster limits (105 for football, 30 for wrestling). A school can offer scholarships to every player on a team, but that will cost money and most predict that walk-ons or partial scholarship athletes will be left out.

Wilken clearly sympathized with the hundreds of players who lost roster spots as schools began preparing to implement terms of the settlement. About a dozen told their stories during an April 7 hearing.

Wilken asked lawyers to rework that part of the deal. The NCAA’s first response to Wilken’s request — which included the idea of “grandfathering in” current players to their roster spots — was to change nothing, arguing that undoing roster moves already in play would create more turmoil in an already chaotic process. Wilken

told them to do it anyway or put the whole plan at risk.

The plaintiffs’ attorneys said they did Wilken one better, not only giving schools a chance to bring back players they cut without it counting against their limit, but putting the exemption in play for a new school, as well.

“Plaintiffs believe that these changes to the settlement agreement exceed the protections that the court requested,” their court filing read.

The attorneys noted there is no guarantee that the athletes will win their roster spots back.

“While defendants insisted that the changes to the settlement agreement recognize that individual schools and their athletics departments retain discretion to independently determine which athletes will be on their rosters, that has always been the case; and it remains unchanged whether or not there are roster limits,” they

wrote.

The judge is expected to give opponents to the plan a brief window to file updated objections before her final decision. As Steve Berman, co-lead counsel for the plaintiffs, predicted earlier this week, some of those objecting to the plan were not satisfied with the new proposal.

“While the NCAA and Class Counsel have acknowledged our objection to roster caps is valid, their proposed mushy modification doesn’t go far enough,” said attorney Steven Molo, who represents a group of objectors. “Many, many student athletes have had something taken away from them. The fight will continue.”

The clock is ticking for the NCAA and its 1,200 member schools that have more than 500,000 athletes on various teams. Terms of the settlement were supposed to go into effect July 1 and football practice starts soon after.

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