

## Harris leads Pistons past Celtics in thriller; Thunder bounce back



Tobias Harris (left) celebrates with teammates

AFP | Los Angeles

Tobias Harris scored 25 points as the Detroit Pistons held off the Boston Celtics to score a 104-103 victory in their top-of-the-table Eastern Conference showdown on Monday.

Harris was one of four Detroit players to finish in double figures, with Jalen Duren adding 18 points and point guard Cade Cunningham scoring 16 points with 14 assists.

The win sees Detroit extend their lead at the top of the Eastern Conference to 31-10, 5.5 games ahead of second-placed Boston, who fell to 26-16 with the defeat.

Jaylen Brown led the Celtics scoring with 32 points and almost snatched victory in the final seconds, his attempted buzzer-beater bouncing off

the rim as Detroit clung on for a one-point victory.

"We wanted this game," Harris said afterwards. "Obviously, two of the best teams in the East; our group is always up for the challenge. It's a heck of a win for us."

The Pistons-Celtics showdown was one of a packed slate of fixtures as the NBA marked the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday in the United States.

Elsewhere in the Eastern Conference on Monday, the third-placed New York Knicks slumped to their fourth straight loss with a surprising 114-97 defeat to the Dallas Mavericks at Madison Square Garden.

Max Christie led the Mavs' scoring with 26 points, 24 of them coming from outside the arc, with Naji Marshall scoring 19 and Cooper Flagg 18.

## Djokovic jokes that he wants slice of Alcaraz's winnings



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz and Serbia's Novak Djokovic (L) hug at the net after a match (file photo)

AFP | Melbourne

Carlos Alcaraz's new-look serve at the Australian Open has been compared to Novak Djokovic and the Serbian great says he is expecting a slice of the Spanish superstar's winnings.

World number one Alcaraz has at times struggled with precision and a lack of consistency in his serving technique and has mixed it up for the opening Grand Slam of the year.

Eagled-eyed fans noticed that his more compact action now bears a striking resemblance to Djokovic, who was asked about it after coasting into the second round at Melbourne Park.

"As soon as I saw it, I sent him a message. I said, 'we have to speak about the copyrights'. Then when I saw him here, I told him we have to talk about a percentage of his winnings. Every ace I expect, you know, a tribute to me. Every ace that he makes here. Let's see if he's going to stick to the agreement"

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

ace that he makes here. Let's see if he's going to stick to the agreement."

Asked about his new serve ahead of the tournament, Alcaraz said he was flattered by the comparison to Djokovic, he insisted it was a coincidence.

"No. I didn't think about, or I wasn't thinking about making the same serve as Djokovic," he told reporters. "But at the end, I can even see the similarities."

# 'I never felt like a world-class coach', says Jurgen Klopp

● Klopp says he never viewed himself as elite coach

● Aims to support coaches in new role

● Values performance over results

AFP | Leipzig

Despite leaving Liverpool as one of the most highly regarded coaches in world football in 2024, Jurgen Klopp said he never thought of himself as amongst the game's best.

"I never considered myself a world-class coach," Klopp told AFP and other media in an interview in Leipzig, "because I still had so many questions when I finished."

"I was like 'how can I be world-class with these questions still?'"

After starting out at Mainz, where he took the club to the top flight for the first time, Klopp moved to Borussia Dortmund, where he won two Bundesliga titles and reached the 2013 Champions League final.

After signing with Liverpool in 2015, Klopp's Reds won every trophy on offer, including the Champions League and Premier League.

In his new role as Red Bull's global head of football, where he oversees a multi-club structure with teams including RB Leipzig, New York Red Bulls and Paris FC, Klopp said that he wants to help coaches answer those questions.

"My role with the coaches is to be the guy I never had. I sat in my office very, very, very often, very, very, very alone."

"A lot of people gave me advice and have great ideas... It's great to have ideas, but it's really not that easy to make the final decision."

"I want to be in moments when I know they are alone, or feel alone. I want to be there."

Klopp oversaw the firing of then-Leipzig coach Marco Rose, a long-time friend, in 2025 and said that being on the other side



German football coach and global head of Football at Red Bull, Jurgen Klopp (L) speaks with Paris FC's French President Pierre Ferracci (C) next to French representative of the Agache family holding company, Antoine Arnault (R) ahead of the French L1 football match between Paris FC and FC Metz at the Stade Jean-Bouin in Paris (file photo)

felt odd.

"Grave-digger of the coaches -- that's a title I never wanted to win!"

**'I never watch the goals back'**

From taking Mainz to the Bundesliga to breaking Liverpool's Premier League drought, Klopp improved clubs and players wherever he went.

Often taking over with teams at a low ebb, the coach would try and put things in perspective.

"How did I start a game? I would say 'the worst news is you can lose it' -- so let's try and win it... Do not try to avoid defeat -- try to win."

The coach said he told his players: "Giving your all doesn't mean you will get anything, but it's your only chance to get something. That's pretty much how you do it."

"We gave everything -- and sometimes we got something."

Klopp said that media and fans were too focused on results.

"I never watch the goals back, because I want to understand the game to the left and the right of the result."

"I want to understand why it happened... Results are the result of the performance. So we worked on the performance and the results came later."

The 58-year-old said that he

didn't take any pride" out of trophy ceremonies and parades. "I love being a part of it, not in the middle of it. You might see pictures where someone gave me a trophy and I'd take it, but I didn't need to touch it."

"For me, it was the journey that I loved. That gave me much more than the moment (of winning)."

**'You know if Jurgen Klopp is in the room'**

Klopp retains cult-like status at his former clubs, with fans remembering the German for

his sideline antics and everyman appeal as much as his successes.

RB Leipzig sporting director Marcel Schaefer told AFP that Klopp has brought the same presence into his new role, even if he is no longer on the sideline.

"He has something that is unique. He has a god-given talent which everyone knows from his coaching jobs."

"He can catch people in five to 10 minutes."

Schaefer said that Klopp plays an important role in player recruitment by "talking to families, talking to players about our vision, about our project."

"You know if Jurgen Klopp is in the room."

Since stepping down at Anfield, Klopp has been linked to an array of high-profile coaching jobs, but said that a return to the dugout is unlikely.

"I don't expect to change my mind, but I don't know."

"We're building a house right now and my missus wanted to have a really big trophy room. There was another small room and I said 'this is enough, because we know how many trophies we have, we will not add any'."

"It might sound arrogant, but I know I can coach a football team. But I don't need to do it until my last day."

## Man Utd greats tell Martinez to 'grow up' as feud rumbles on

AFP | London

Manchester United defender Lisandro Martinez has been told to "grow up" by Old Trafford greats Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt after his scathing response to their criticism.

Martinez challenged Scholes to come to his house to speak to him after the former England midfielder and his ex-United team-mate Butt had mocked the Argentine's height.

Scholes and Butt made fun of the diminutive centre-back's chances of winning his duels with towering Manchester City striker Erling Haaland during Saturday's derby.

The pair had joked that Haaland would pick up Martinez and "run with him".

But Martinez had the last laugh with a commanding dis-



Manchester United defender Lisandro Martinez in action (file photo)

play in United's 2-0 win, followed by his stinging response to the criticism from Scholes and Butt.

The pair had joked that Haaland would pick up Martinez and "run with him".

But Martinez had the last laugh with a commanding dis-

the latest episode of their podcast The Good, The Bad and The Football on Monday.

Scholes praised Martinez's performance but said he still has some doubts about the 28-year-

old.

"It fuels people," he said of criticism. "I think we have to take a bit of the credit for Martinez's performance on Saturday day."

"He's had one brilliant game, but when you start talking and shouting your mouth off, this game has a habit of coming and biting you back."

"I haven't changed my opinion yet. I'm still not sure you can win a league with him. He's got to do it over a period of time. What he did on Saturday, brilliant, but you've got to do it over a period of time."

Scholes claimed he had exchanged messages with Martinez on social media and given the player his phone number but had "not heard anything".