

NBA Playoffs:

Young stunner as Hawks beat Celtics; Nuggets, Suns advance

Sports Desk

Trae Young nailed a last-gasp three-pointer as the Atlanta Hawks stunned the Boston Celtics 119-117 to keep their Eastern Conference postseason campaign alive on Tuesday, while Denver and Phoenix booked their places in the next round with series-clinching victories.

A nerve-jangling game in Boston was settled when Young drained a 29-footer with 1.8 seconds remaining to silence the Celtics' TD Garden crowd and set up a game six in Atlanta to-night.

Young, who finished with 38 points, 13 assists and four rebounds, said the Hawks had been determined to extend the series following the suspension of key guard Dejounte Murray.

Murray was suspended for one game after a clash with a referee after game four on Sunday.

"We were missing a big piece of ours and we want him to play game six, so we want to go back home and have him with us," Young said of Murray.

Hawks coach Quin Snyder praised his team's refusal to buckle in a game that the Celtics had controlled for long periods.

"We were tough-minded," Snyder said. "It's tough to be down through the whole game. We were hanging in there and hang-



Hawks guard Trae Young (11) takes the game-winning shot over Celtics guard Jaylen Brown during the final seconds of Game 5 in a first-round NBA basketball playoff series at TD Garden, Boston, MA, US, on April 25, 2023.
● GETTY IMAGES

ing in there. We just didn't capitulate."

The Celtics, leading the series 3-1, had looked to be cruising to victory after dominating for most of the second half to lead by 13 points midway through the fourth quarter.

But with Boston poised to wrap up a 4-1 series victory, Young and the Hawks took over with a startling late rally in the closing minutes that whittled away the Celtics lead.

Young nailed back-to-back three-pointers to level the

scores at 111-111 with 2:42 remaining and then hit three free throws to help Atlanta take a 114-113 lead.

Robert Williams handed Boston a one-point advantage to make it 115-114 to the Celtics with 25.6 seconds left on the clock. But a rash foul by Boston's Marcus Smart presented Young with two more free throws to edge the Hawks into a 116-115 lead.

Young then had a nervous moment after conceding a foul on Derrick White, who

shot two free throws to put the Celtics 117-116 ahead with 7.3 seconds left on the clock.

Young however responded superbly, calmly bringing the ball up court before launching a pullup three-pointer to give Atlanta a 119-117 lead before Boston's final desperate last attack fizzled.

Suns, Nuggets advance

While Boston were left ruing a wasted opportunity to wrap up their series,

there were no such concerns in the Western Conference for the top-seeded Denver Nuggets and fourth seeds Phoenix.

The Nuggets squeezed home 112-109 against the Minnesota Timberwolves to complete a 4-1 series win while the Suns wrapped up their series with the Los Angeles Clippers by the same margin with a 136-130 victory in Arizona.

The Nuggets, who will face Phoenix in the conference semi-finals, were made

to work hard for their win by a Timberwolves team who jumped out to an early 15-point lead in the first quarter before gradually being reeled in.

Jamal Murray led the Nuggets scorers with 35 points while reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic bagged his second triple-double of the series with 28 points, 17 rebounds and 12 assists.

Minnesota's Anthony Edwards missed a three-point attempt on the buzzer that would have forced overtime as the Timberwolves' season came to an end.

Edwards finished with 29 points while Karl-Anthony Towns added 26.

In Phoenix, Devin Booker erupted for 47 points while Kevin Durant poured in 31 points to spark the Suns to victory over the short-handed Clippers.

The Clippers, missing the injured Paul George and Kawhi Leonard, fought bravely to lead by 10 early in the second half.

But when Booker took over with 25 of 50 Phoenix points in a lopsided third quarter, the Clippers were left chasing the game.

Los Angeles somehow managed to close to within two points with just under two minutes remaining before Durant settled Phoenix with a layup and two free throws to make the game safe.

Real will not repeat poor defensive display against City: Ancelotti



● LLUIS GENE/AFP

Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti was critical of his side's defence in the aftermath of their shock 4-2 defeat at the hands of Girona.

Valentin Castellanos, who is on loan from New York City FC, scored all four goals with Vinicius Junior and Lucas Vazquez netting consolation goals for Real Madrid, The Athletic reported.

The reigning Spanish champions remained 11 points behind leaders Barcelona having now played a game more following Tuesday evening's loss.

Ancelotti has promised Real Madrid's fans a better defensive showing during their upcoming Copa del Rey final against Osasuna and the two-legged Champions League semi-final against Manchester City. "It's tough, because when you lose it must be tough," said Ancelotti. "The match was bad in defence. And that was the key, because we did well on the ball, especially at the beginning."

"But we were not convincing in the duels, we were caught in two counter-attacks and from there, everything became more difficult. We tried to come back with individuals, not as a team. Because today the team didn't play. The individual level was also below normal, but not just some, but in general. The level was very low."

"Yes, it can (be good for the team). A defeat is never good, but the defensive commitment is too important and if we have it, we will always win."

"If we don't, it will cost us. It's the key, the key. Today we didn't have it. Out of the last seven matches, six clean sheets. And in this one, four goals. I hope my players have understood that. If not, I'll repeat it every day."

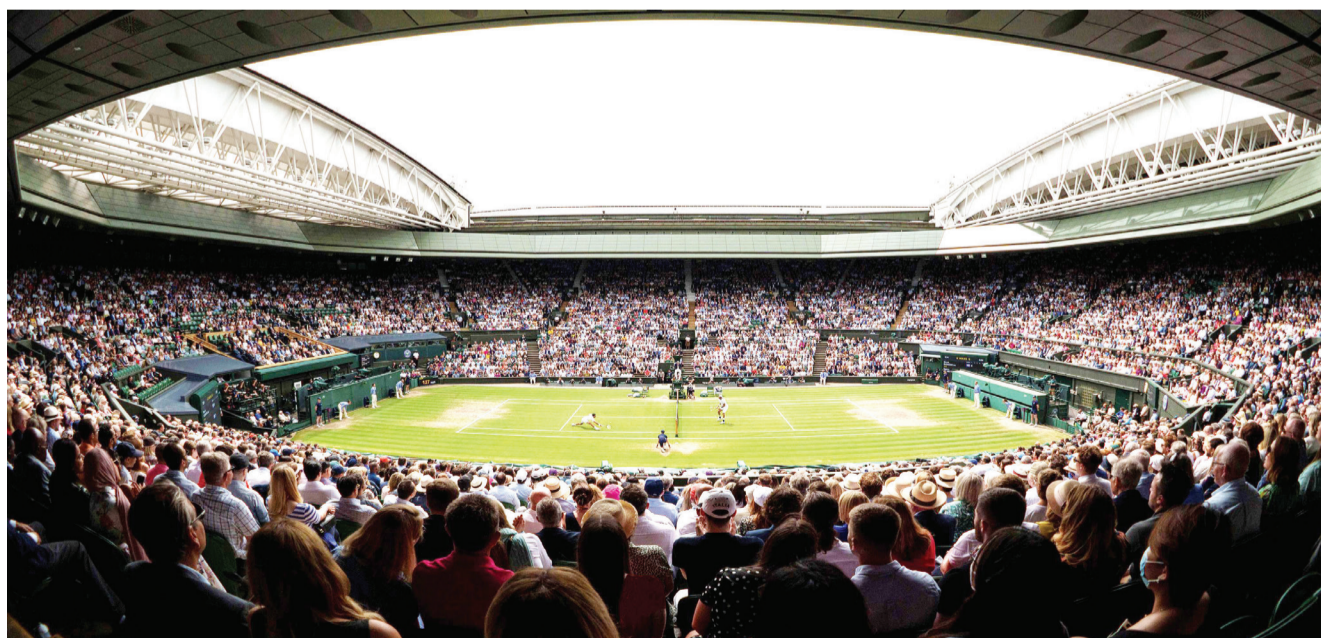
"I understand that the fans are hurt, we apologise. We are also hurt. But the fans know that we will be fine in the cup final, as well as in the semi-final (against City)."

"It's unbelievable. The team was on a good defensive streak. We conceded with a lack of forcefulness in the duels, lack of organisation."

"Every time they came out from the back they made uncontrolled transitions. And in one minute in the second half our legs were cut off. We are very hurt. We have to pick ourselves up. We have everything at stake."

"It's harder to say today, but this match does not represent Madrid. We apologise, but we must look ahead."

Russians, Belarusians have signed declarations to compete, Wimbledon says



● AFP

Several Russian and Belarusian players have already signed personal declarations that will clear them to compete as neutrals at this year's Wimbledon championships, the All England Club said on Tuesday. Wimbledon announced last month that it had lifted its ban which prevented athletes from the two countries playing last year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Reuters reported. Speaking at the club's pre-tournament Spring media conference, Club chairman Ian

Hewitt said the U-turn had been the hardest decision of his four years in the job.

"This was an incredibly difficult decision," he told reporters. "I think our statement on March 31 set out the position as clearly as we could, namely that there were a combination of factors and it was a combination of factors and developments since last year which led to our decision."

Wimbledon and the other British grasscourt tournaments stood alone in barring Russian and Belarusian players such as former world

number ones Daniil Medvedev and Victoria Azarenka last year.

The decision resulted in ranking points being stripped from the events and the Lawn Tennis Association being hit with huge fines by the ATP and WTA.

To compete this year, Russian and Belarusian players must agree to compete as neutrals, not to make statements supporting the war or the regimes involved and not to receive funding from either nation or state-supported businesses.

"The development of the wording of the declarations is obviously based on government guidance, working with the Tours, the ITF and our partners at the LTA," All England Club CEO Sally Bolton said on Tuesday.

"As soon as we made the announcement players were able to sign the declarations and they are able to right up until the entry deadline. I won't share the details of who but a number of players have already signed."

"We listened to the feedback from athletes from last year and that was that they wanted the choice to be able to sign the declaration. They fully understand what they are signing up to."

U-turn criticised

Wimbledon's U-turn attracted some criticism with Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba calling it "immoral".

Bolton said she had personally spoken to Ukrainian players at the time of the announcement and that the majority had understood the situation and the club's decision. Hewitt re-emphasised Wimbledon's "condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine", which Moscow calls a special military operation, and said that the tournament would continue to support players and refugees from the country.

Wimbledon will meet all of the accommodation costs of Ukraine players during the tournament and all of the build-up events in the British grasscourt season, while one pound will be donated to Ukraine relief efforts for every ticket sold - amounting to around 500,000 pounds (\$621,150.00).