

Nuggets defeat Heat in Game 5 for first NBA title



Nuggets owner Stan Kroenke lifts the Larry O'Brien Trophy after the Nuggets won the 2023 NBA Championship against the Miami Heat in Denver, CO, US, on June 12, 2023.
● RON CHENOY/USA TODAY SPORTS

Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (15) reaches for the ball against the Heat during Game 5 of the 2023 NBA Finals in Denver, CO, US, on June 12, 2023.
● KYLE TERADA/USA TODAY SPORTS

AFP—The Denver Nuggets sealed their first title in franchise history, defeating the Miami Heat 94-89 to end a 47-season wait for a maiden NBA championship.

Nikola Jokic scored 28 points with 16 rebounds as the Nuggets won the best-of-seven NBA Finals 4-1 to bring the Mile High City an NBA crown as a sellout crowd roared in delight and pondered what more the young squad could achieve.

"I've got news for everybody out there. We're not satisfied with one," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said afterwards. "We want more."

The championship filled the final gap in the impressive resume of Serbian star Jokic, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player and five-time All-Star center in his eighth NBA campaign.

Two days after countryman Novak Djokovic won the French

Open for his record 23rd Grand Slam tennis crown, Jokic was named the NBA Finals MVP.

"For us he's the best ever of course," Jokic said of Djokovic. "Now we have our NBA championship. It's a really good moment to be a Serbian."

Jokic delivered on a night when the team struggled with early shooting futility but blanked Miami for more than five minutes of the fourth quarter.

"It was amazing effort by the team," Jokic said. "It was an ugly game. We couldn't make shots. But at the end we figured it out, how to defend and we scored 90 points. That's why we won. I'm just happy we won the game."

"It's good. The job is done and we can go home now."

Michael Porter Jr. added 16 points and 13 rebounds and Jamal Murray added 14 points, eight rebounds and eight assists

for the Nuggets.

"We had the belief from the get-go," Murray said. "It's just great to see it through."

"To do it with this group of guys, nothing could feel better than this," Porter added.

Jimmy Butler led Miami with 21 points while Bam Adebayo added 20 and 12 rebounds.

Denver was the playoff top seed in the Western Conference while the eighth-seeded Heat, who had to win a play-in game just to reach the playoffs, lost in the finals for the third time in 10 seasons.

"One hell of a basketball team that we couldn't really find enough solutions to be able to get us over the top," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

With their seasons on the line, players brought intensity and physical defending over the final minutes to create an electric at-

mosphere inside Ball Arena.

The Nuggets, down by as many as 10 points in the first half, pulled within 51-44 at half-time despite going 1-for-15 from 3-point range, the worst-ever NBA Finals shooting half from beyond the arc.

'Out of a movie'

A Murray jumper gave Denver an 81-76 lead with 6:43 remaining while the Heat began the fourth quarter hitting only 2-for-14 from the floor and going scoreless for more than five minutes.

Butler, who had struggled all night, sank back-to-back 3-pointers and made three free throws after a controversial foul on Denver's Aaron Gordon was upheld on video review.

Butler and Jokic traded hoops and Butler followed with two free throws to give Miami an 89-88 lead.

Bruce Brown answered with a

rebound basket to put Denver ahead 90-89.

"Those last three or four minutes felt like a scene out of a movie," Spoelstra said. "Two teams in the center of the ring throwing haymaker after haymaker."

"It will probably rank as our hardest, competitive, most active defensive game of the season, and it still fell short."

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope stole a pass by Butler and sank two clutch free throws with 24 seconds remaining to give Denver a 92-89 edge.

"For me it was all about defense," Caldwell-Pope said. "We've got to get stops. Defense was going to win us a championship. I always told them that."

Butler missed a 3-pointer, Brown grabbed a rebound for Denver and then made two free throws to seal the victory with 14 seconds remaining.

Taremi on Milan radar: Report



● CATERINA MORAIS/KAPTA+

Sports Desk

Serie A club Milan is considering a move for Porto striker Mehdi Taremi, according to La Gazzetta dello Sport.

The Italian daily newspaper reported that the Iranian international along with French striker Marcus Thuram – now playing for Bundesliga outfit Borussia Mönchengladbach – and West Ham's Italian frontman Gianluca Scamacca are among Milan's summer transfer targets as the Italian giant is looking to replace Zlatan Ibrahimović, who hung up his boots at the end of the newly-finished season.

The seven-time European champion finished fourth in the Italian league and reached the UEFA Champions League semifinals, only to suffer an aggregate defeat against archrival Inter.

Meanwhile, Turkish journalist Ekrem Konur tweeted on Monday that the Rossoneri is willing to make an initial offer of 10 million euros for the 30-year-old Iranian, whose contract at Porto runs until the end of the next season.

Should Taremi refuse to sign an extension to his current deal, Porto will have until next January to sell the prolific striker rather than let him leave as a free agent next summer.

Other reports in recent weeks have suggested that the Saudi Pro League giant Al Hilal and Turkish side Fenerbahçe could also make a move for the Porto forward in this transfer window.

A remarkable campaign saw Taremi, who is now with the national team in Kyrgyzstan for the CAFA Nations Cup, bag 31 goals in 51 outings for Porto across all competitions, while providing his teammates with 12 assists.

Having joined Porto from Rio Ave in 2020, Taremi netted 22 goals to top the scoring charts in the Primeira Liga, though the Dragons settled for a runner-up spot behind Benfica in the Portuguese top flight before lifting the Taça de Portugal trophy for a second successive season.

Former Persepolis striker scored five goals in seven games as Porto won the Champions League group but was knocked out by Inter in the round of 16.

He was also part of the national team in last November's World Cup in Qatar, scoring twice in a 6-2 defeat against England in the group phase to become the country's all-time top scorer in the history of the competition.

Mbappe tells PSG he will not renew contract in 2024: L'Equipe

REUTERS – Kylian Mbappe has told Paris St Germain he will not take up the option of a one-year extension in his contract when it expires next June, L'Equipe reported.

Mbappe, a World Cup winner with France in 2018, confirmed his decision in a letter to the club and could even be sold this summer as PSG will seek to avoid losing him for free, according to the local reports.

The forward would be free to negotiate and sign a pre-contract agreement with a new club from January should he decide to see out the remaining year of his deal at PSG.

The French club, owned by Qatar Sports Investments, have already lost Lionel Messi on a free transfer after the Argentina forward left at the end of his two-year contract to join Major League Soccer's Inter Miami. Mbappe was widely tipped to join Real Madrid last season but rejected a move to Spain to sign a contract extension with PSG.

The 24-year-old has long been admired by Real, who had a bid reported to be as high as 200

million euros (\$215.50 million) turned down in 2021.

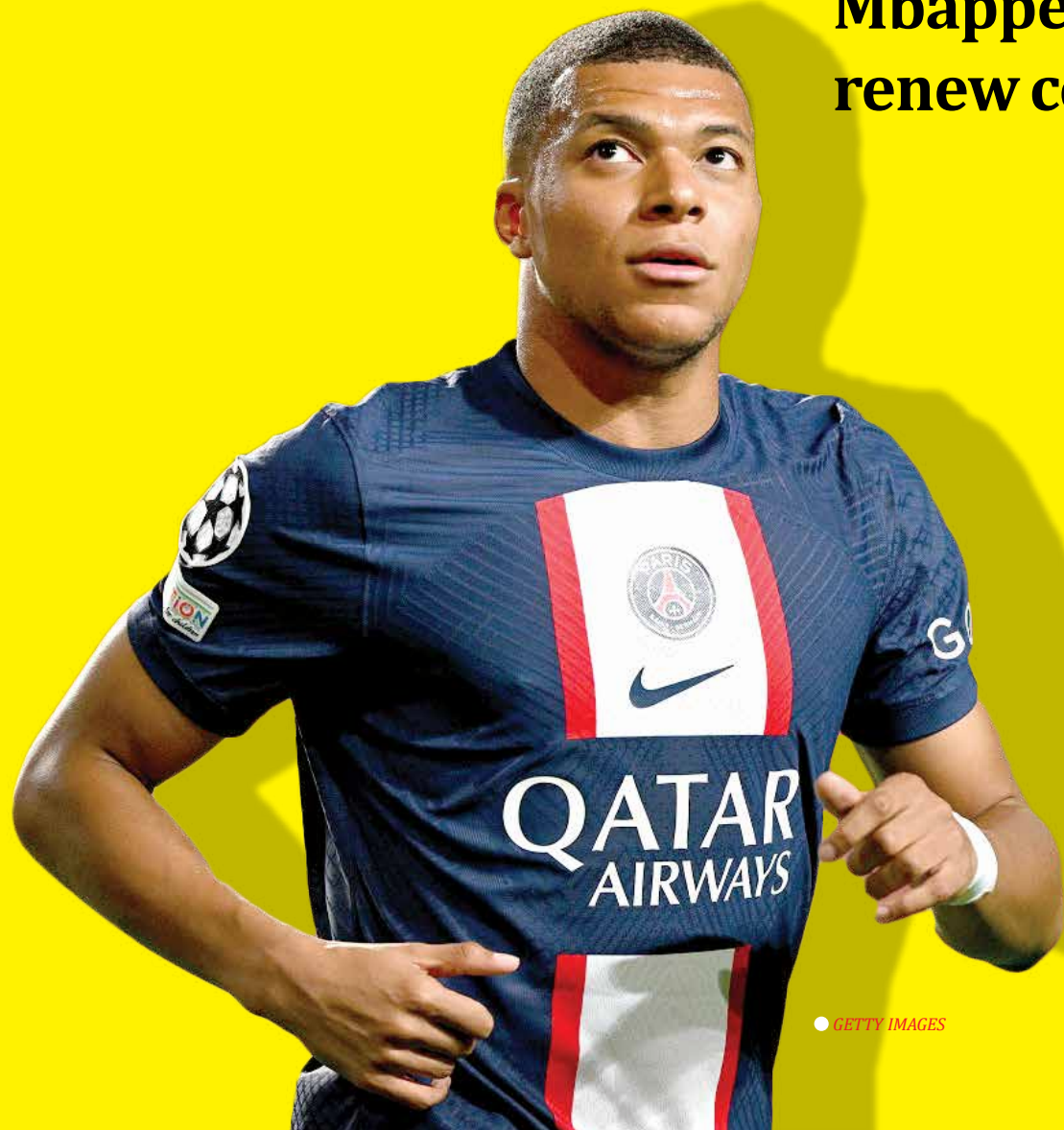
Real, who have already agreed a deal to sign England midfielder Jude Bellingham from Borussia Dortmund, could step up their interest in Mbappe following striker Karim Benzema's move to Al Ittihad in Saudi Arabia.

Mbappe, one of the game's finest talents who burst onto the scene as a teenager, has won five Ligue 1 titles with PSG but the Champions League trophy has remained out of reach.

PSG signed Mbappe from AS Monaco in 2017 in a deal reported to be around 180 million euros, making him the world's second-most expensive signing after Neymar, who joined them from Barcelona for 222 million euros.

Mbappe became PSG's all-time top scorer after netting 41 goals in 43 games in all competitions and helped the capital club win a record 11th French title.

He was named France captain after leading them to a second straight World Cup final in December, where he netted a hat-trick against Argentina before losing on penalties.



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