

Oilers edge Bruins in OT for rare win in Boston

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

BOSTON, Massachusetts — Defenseman Andrej Sekera converted his own rebound 41 seconds into overtime as the Edmonton Oilers **NHL** won their sixth game in a row and recorded the franchise's first win at TD Garden in almost two decades with a 3-2 decision over the Boston Bruins on Monday.

The Oilers, coming off their first 5-0 homestand since 1987, squandered a 2-0 lead but got 47 saves from backup goaltender Cam Talbot, who won for the first time since Oct. 29 in his second start since Nov. 14.

Sekera took a pass from right winger Jordan Eberle (goal, two assists) and had his shot blocked by defenseman Torey Krug. The puck came right back to Sekera, who got around right winger Landon Ferraro, picked up the puck and beat goaltender Jonas Gustavsson with his second goal of the season.

The puck never left the Bruins' zone in overtime. The win gave the Oilers,

whose new general manager, Peter Chiarelli, was dumped by the Bruins after last season, a sweep of the two-game series with the Bruins.

Talbot (4-8-1) recorded the first 40-save game of his career as the Oilers improved to 14-15-2 (7-2 in extra time) with their first win in Boston since Nov. 7, 1996.

Gustavsson, the Bruins' backup, made 21 saves as Boston fell to 16-9-4.

The Bruins tied the game on their 45th shot, with Ferraro coming over the blue line and setting up left winger Brad Marchand, whose 28-footer through a screen beat Talbot high on the stick side.

The Oilers challenged the play, saying defenseman Torey Krug was offside. But replays clearly showed Krug straddling the line and the goal counted.

Eberle scored one goal and set up center Ryan Nugent-Hopkins for a power play goal to give the Oilers a 2-0 lead after one period, with Nugent-Hopkins also notching an assist on the winner.

Left winger Matt Beleskey



BOB DECHIARA | USA TODAY

Edmonton Oilers goalie Cam Talbot (33) makes a save off of the shot Boston Bruins center Frank Vatrano (72) during the second period at TD Garden. Edmonton won 3-2.

got a soft one past Talbot to make it 2-1 at 13:29 of the second.

This was the third time this year the Bruins recorded at least 40 shots in a game, two of those games against Edmonton.

NOTES: Edmonton LW Taylor Hall was the NHL's second star for last week and came in with nine points in a four-game points streak. "This is probably the best I've felt and probably

the most positive I've been in the last six years," he told the Edmonton Sun. "It's a nice feeling." ... Bruins RW David Pastrnak, who missed his 19th straight game with a broken left foot, has re-

turned to practice but there is no timetable for his return to game action. ... Oilers D Oscar Klefbom was out with a finger injury and was replaced by recalled D Nikita Nikitin.

Central uses balance to beat Pirates

EAST CORINTH — The Central Red Devils used a balanced scoring attack to beat the Piscataquis Community Pirates 67-46 in high school boys basketball action Monday night.

HIGH SCHOOL ROUNDUP

Trevor Macomber scored 14 points to lead the Devils while Andrew Prescott added 13 points and Andrew Speed chipped in with 11.

Bryce Gilbert scored a game-high 26 points for the Pirates of Guilford.

PCHS: Morrill 1-2-4, Kane 2-0-4, Drew, Ranco 1-0-2, Gilbert 11-2-26, True 1-2-4, Leavitt 2-1-6

Central: Speed 3-3-11, Shaw 3-4-10, Ward, Poulin 0-2-2, Prescott 3-4-13, Clukey, Miller, Doucette, Gray 3-0-6, Mailman 1-0-2, Ham 2-5-9, Macomber 6-2-14

Orono 55, John Baptist 36

At the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor, the Orono Red Riots jumped out to a 25-13 lead at the half en route to the win.

Nate Desisto scored 10 of his 21 points in the first quarter for the winners. Imao Worldring added nine points for 3-0 Orono while Jake Koffman and Keenan Collett each netted eight points.

Nick Lakeman had seven points for 3-1 John Baptist. Alex Mooney and Nathan Smith each added six points.

Orono: Koffman 4-0-8, Desisto 9-0-21, Steelman, Farnham, Spencer 0-3-3, Collett 2-4-8, Moran, Robertson 2-0-4, McCluskey, Hines, Coutts 1-0-2, Marliere, Worldring 4-0-9

John Baptist: Hanscom 1-0-2, Higgins 2-0-5, Lakeman 3-0-7, A. Smith 1-1-3, Mooney 1-4-6, N. Smith 2-0-6, Joyce, Harman, Dieuveuil 1-0-2, Galinski, Tomah 1-0-2, Z. Lakeman, Baron 1-1-3

John Baptist 8-13-24-36
Orono 14-25-40-55
3-pt. goals: Lakeman, N. Smith 2, Higgins, Desisto 3, Worldring
JV: John Baptist 49-29

Girls Basketball

GSA 50, Bucksport 48

At Bucksport, Morgan Dauk poured in 24 points to help the George Stevens Academy Eagles edge the Golden Bucks.

Mazie Smallidge chipped in with 12 points for GSA of Blue Hill.

Cassie Coombs paced the Golden Bucks with 19 points and Breanna Coombs chipped in with 13 points.

GSA: Gutow, Snow, Chesney 0, Dauk 8-8-24, Gray 3-0-6, Brooks 2-0-4, Allen 2-0-

4, Smallidge 4-4-12, Crosby **Bucksport:** Craig, Jellison 4-0-11, C. Coombs 6-4-19, B. Coombs 5-2-13, Smith 2-0-4, Solomon 0-1-1

GSA 6-17-36-50
Bucks. 10-15-31-48
3-pt. goals: Jellison 3, C. Coombs 3, B. Coombs

Narraguagus 60, Shead 27

At Harrington, Kelli Kennedy had a game-high 27 points to help push the Narraguagus Knights past Shead. Cassidy Osgood netted 11 points and Madison Leighton chipped in with eight.

For the Tigers, Hannah Lank and Holly Preston each scored eight points while Cierra Seeley added seven.

Shead: Preston 2-4-8, Lank 4-0-8, Seeley 2-2-7, Wilder 0-1-1, Kilby 1-1-3
Narraguagus: Leighton 4-0-8, Reynolds 1-2-4, Osgood 2-7-11, Kennedy 12-3-27, Toppin 3-0-6, Reynolds 0-1-1, Pray 1-1-3
3-pt. goals: Seeley

Searsport 34, Sumner 26

At Searsport, Melinda Ogden led all scorers with 14 points as the Vikings erased a five-point halftime deficit to pull out the victory. Karigen Coffin added eight points.

For Sumner, Kala Young had 13 points.

Thornton 58, Biddeford 27

At Biddeford, Ashley Howe led all scorers with 23 points to power Thornton Academy to victory. Barrett Campbell chipped in 10 points.

Brittany Roy led Biddeford with 15 points.

TA: Howe 7-7-23, Campbell 4-2-10, Lee 3-1-7, Hart 2-0-5, Jordan 2-0-4, Robinson 2-0-4, Burns 1-0-2, Macomber 0-2-2, Paradis 0-1-1

Biddeford: Roy 5-4-15, Martin 0-4-4, White 2-0-4, Wildes 1-2-4

Thornton 22 34 48 58
Biddeford 6 10 19 27
3-pt. goals: Howe 2, Hart, Roy

Woodland 46, Machias 32

At Machias, Lauren Cox scored 12 points and Jennie Cox added nine to pace Woodland to victory over the Bulldogs.

For Machias, Tate Dolley led all scorers with 17 points while Karssya Norton chipped in 11.

Woodland: Cook 12, Cox 9, Beers 8, Fitch 6, Grass 4, Boies 3, Smith 2, Monk 2

Machias: Tate Dolley with 17, Karssya Norton 11, K Cox 2, M Haskins 2

Woodland 9 20 30 46
Machias 5 13 18 32

Pats' defense stands out in win over Texans

BY MOISEKAPENDA BOWER
THE SPORTS XCHANGE

HOUSTON — The Patriots rightfully celebrated the return from injury of tight end Rob Gronkowski on Sunday night, but it was the New England defense **NFL** that left the most lasting, unforgettable impression.

The Patriots' defensive front beat up Texans quarterback Brian Hoyer throughout and helped New England clinch a seventh consecutive playoff berth with a 27-6 victory over the Houston Texans at NRG Stadium.

Gronkowski set up the first touchdown in the first quarter and recorded the second late in the second quarter to provide the Patriots (11-2) with what proved to be an insurmountable 11-point lead at the break.

The cushion was comfortable thanks to the New England defense, which harassed Hoyer relentlessly as the Patriots snapped a brief two-game skid.

"These guys did a good job, they really did," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said of his defense. "We played a lot of different people as we've been doing on the front. Our linebackers did their job, they did coverage. We gave up three big plays, but on a down-in, down-out basis, I thought we competed well, tackled pretty well and we were able to get off the field on third down."

The Patriots regained possession of the top seed in the AFC standings after the Cincinnati Bengals (10-3) and Denver Broncos (10-3) lost earlier Sunday.

The Texans (6-7) amassed 17 yards on 17 plays in the third quarter, with Patriots ends Rob Ninkovich and Jabaal Sheard recording sacks of Hoyer that totaled 31 yards.

After the Patriots produced just a 49-yard Stephen Gostkowski field goal in the third quarter, New England stretched their lead to three touchdowns early in the fourth following yet another sack of Hoyer.

With the Texans pinned deep in their own territory, Sheard dropped Hoyer and forced a fumble that defensive tackle Malcom Brown recovered at the Texans 7. Three plays later, running back James White scored on a 2-yard run for a 27-6 lead with 12:04 left in the game.

"Couldn't move the ball on offense at all," Texans coach Bill O'Brien said. "Thought the defense did some good things, but not enough, and special teams, we didn't play very well."

The Patriots sacked Hoyer five times before knocking him out of the game midway through the fourth quarter. The Texans produced just 189 total yards and seven first downs, and they breached the red zone once.

Gronkowski stands out

Gronkowski is the straw that stirs the Patriots' drink. The Patriots were no offensive juggernaut against the Texans, amassing just 313 total yards. However, when Brady needed to make a play, he once again had Gronkowski to rely upon. Gronkowski produced a 45-yard reception to set up the first New England touchdown and scored over Texans safety Quintin



TROY TAORMINA | USA TODAY

Houston Texans quarterback Brian Hoyer (right) attempts to avoid pressure from New England Patriots defensive end Jabaal Sheard during the first quarter at NRG Stadium on Sunday night. The Patriots won 27-6.

Demps for the second. He clearly was missed last week while out with a knee injury. "It's always good to make a play, get a touchdown," Gronkowski said. "The icing on that cake is the win."

Bolden a reliable back

In a pinch, the Patriots can rely upon running back Brandon Bolden. Starting running back LeGarrette Blount was averaging 5.3 yards per carry and pacing the Patriots' ground attack before he was lost to a hip injury in the second quarter. Enter Bolden, who ran hard and effectively, producing 51 yards on 16 carries. The Patriots could not afford to abandon the run with Blount sidelined, and Bolden ensured that they would not.

Defensive depth

The Patriots' depth on

their defensive front continues to pay dividends. New England coach Bill Belichick lauded the performance of his defense, with allowed just seven first downs, 189 yards and produced six sacks of Texans quarterbacks. The Patriots' liberal rotations kept everyone fresh and allowed Sheard to deliver the knockout blow with his second sack of Hoyer early in the fourth quarter.

McCourty sidelined

Safety Devin McCourty suffered a sprained ankle in Sunday's game and will miss some games, according to reports Monday.

NFL Media's Ian Rapoport reported that X-rays were negative but the Patriots are not sure if the sprain is the high-ankle variety, which typically carries a more significant rehabilitation time.

Bengals QB won't have thumb surgery

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton, who fractured the thumb on his throwing hand while making a tackle on Sunday, won't need surgery and will be "week-to-week."

Dalton met with a hand specialist Monday to determine the extent of the injury.

"We got positive news on (Andy). We'll go week-to-week on it. He stays in a cast," Bengals coach Marvin Lewis told reporters Monday.

Lewis said that Dalton will not play this Sunday against the San Francisco 49ers.

"This was news we imagined ... it was the best-case scenario," Lewis said.

Lewis said he would not rule out the possibility of the Bengals signing a veteran quarterback to the roster.

The Bengals reportedly have reached out to quarterbacks Ryan Mallett and Christian Ponder.

"It's unfortunate that it happened at this point in the season," Dalton said after Sunday's 33-20 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers. "I'll do everything I can to get back as quick as I can to help this team. I'm doing fine. There are people way worse off than I am."

The injury occurred when Dalton tackled Steelers defensive end Stephon Tuitt after throwing an interception in the first quarter. Dalton said he wasn't immediately aware of the extent of his injury.

"I tried to grip a ball on the sideline and thought it was just a bruise I could (play) through," Dalton said. "But I went in and got the X-ray."

A.J. McCarron becomes the starter and is the only other quarterback on the active roster. The Bengals have Keith Wenning on the practice squad.

McCarron, who had just four career pass attempts, replaced Dalton on Sunday and went 22 of 32 for 280 yards and two touchdowns along with two interceptions. McCarron will make his first NFL start at San Francisco.

Mallett and Ponder were contacted by the Bengals, but no decision has been reached, a source told Pro Football Talk. Ponder was recently released by the Denver Broncos. Mallett recently worked out for the Baltimore Ravens and was cut by the Houston Texans earlier in the season.

Jason Campbell, who was the Bengals' backup last season, retired last summer and has previously said he is not interested in a return.

It was a disastrous Sunday for the Bengals, whose hopes of securing the top overall seed in the AFC took a hit with Dalton and tight end Tyler Eifert leaving the game with injuries.

Eifert was placed under the concussion protocol after taking a hard hit to the head during the Bengals' opening drive from Steelers safety Mike Mitchell, who was flagged for hitting a defenseless receiver. Linebacker Vontaze Burfict went to the locker room and was evaluated for a head injury in the second half.



Dalton

Ole Miss football player charged with possession

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

Mississippi defensive tackle Robert Nkemdiche was charged with possession of marijuana following a fall from a hotel wall on Saturday night.

The Atlanta Police Department released a report Monday and said seven rolled marijuana cigarettes in a hotel room were tied to Nkemdiche, considered a likely top-10 draft pick by NFLDraftScout.com, at the Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead.

Nkemdiche suffered cuts and was admitted to an area hospital Saturday when he fell approximately 15 feet down a wall at the Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead.

Nkemdiche was transported to Grady Memorial Hospital.

Ole Miss coach Hugh Freeze said in a statement Sunday: "We are still learning about the matter, but obviously Robert's wellbe-

ing is our greatest concern."

GI Squad and a Narcotics Unit responded to the scene with a Crime Scene Unit, according to a report released Sunday and published my multiple outlets.

"It appears that the victim broke the window and then walked approximately 15 feet and climbed over a wall and fell approximately 15 feet," according to the report.

Nkemdiche, a junior, has recorded 29 tackles and three sacks this season. Nkemdiche was named Sunday to the AP All-American second team. He missed two games for the Rebels this season after he suffered a concussion against Memphis on Oct. 17.

Nkemdiche is ranked as the No. 4 2016 draft prospect overall by NFLDraftScout.com.

Mississippi will play Oklahoma State in the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 1.