

## BASKETBALL

Kobe's 3-pointer  
at buzzer gives Lakers win

Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant is hugged by teammate Pau Gasol of Spain, as the rest of the team mobs Bryant after shooting the game-winning shot against the Sacramento Kings, Friday, Jan. 1, 2010. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Kobe Bryant hit yet another buzzer-beating 3-pointer and finished with 39 points as the defending NBA champions overcame a 20-point deficit to beat the Sacramento Kings 109-108 on Friday night. The last time the Lakers won a game in which they trailed by 20 or more points was Dec. 12, 2006, when they erased a 21-point deficit in a 112-101 double-overtime win against Houston at Los Angeles.

"It looked like they went into a zone coverage on the inbounds pass, and that side was wide open," said Bryant, averaging 35.7 points in his last 10 games.

"It was just a matter of me getting to that spot with enough time to get a shot off. Phil drew up a play for a 3. He wanted me to get a good look and knock it down. I think he wanted to get out of here."

Lamar Odom had a season-high 20 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for the NBA-leading Lakers (26-6). Pau Gasol had 17 points, 16 rebounds and four assists - one of which set up Bryant's clutch basket from in front of the Sacramento bench.

"Kobe's shooting the ball at a high percentage," Gasol said. "But he's not always going to shoot like that. We understand that, and I think he understands that, too. But when he's feeling it and the shots are going down, he's going to keep shooting."

Spencer Hawes had a career-high 30 points and grabbed 11 rebounds for the Kings, Omri Casspi scored 23 points, and Beno Udrih added 19 points and 13 assists.

"I am so proud of our team - but at the same time, it's disappointing," Sacramento coach Paul Westphal said. "We've played well enough to beat those guys twice, but they have a knack at the end of games. We got everything we needed, performance-wise, from everybody that played, and we couldn't close it out. That's one of the things that makes the Lakers so good. Kobe is an unbelievable player, no question about it."

One night after scoring a season-high 44 points and getting a season-best 11 assists, Bryant added another chapter to his Hall of Fame resume. This miracle shot came exactly four weeks after his off-balance 3-point buzzer-beating bank shot that pulled out a win over the Miami Heat at Staples Center. On Dec. 16 at Milwaukee, Bryant hit a 15-footer as time expired in overtime to give the Lakers a 107-106 win.

"These players - I don't know how they get themselves into those positions, but they do an unbelievable job of hitting shots that are remarkable shots, marvelous shots," Coach Phil Jackson said. "He's right there with Michael in that kind of breath you look at."

The Lakers came out as flat as half-empty champagne bottles left over from New Year's Eve, shooting 37 percent from the field in the first half and trailing 64-49 at intermission. Derek Fisher was the biggest offender, missing nine of 10 shots in the half while the Kings had the highest-scoring half by a Lakers opponent this season. Fisher, who had six points, played 9 minutes in the third quarter without taking a shot, then sat out the entire fourth quarter.

The sellout crowd let the Lakers feel their pain, booing them loudly after Jon Brockman's lay-up gave Sacramento a 38-23 lead with 9:12 left in the second quarter. The Kings built the lead to 20 at 52-32 with a 3-pointer by Ime Udoka that capped a 26-9 run with 5:06 left in the half.

"I think we kind of took the pedal off," Hawes said. "We knew they were going to make a run. It was inevitable. We knew that we couldn't sit up by 20 points the whole game. And they chipped away and chipped away to put themselves in a position to win it at the end. That's why he's Kobe. He makes big shots at big times."

In their previous game, Tuesday night at Staples Center, the Lakers fell behind by 15 points to Golden State and gave up 60 points in the first half before pulling out a 124-118 win. -AP

Lewis, Barnes help  
Magic beat Timberwolves

MINNEAPOLIS: Rashard Lewis scored 21 points, and Matt Barnes added 17 to help the Orlando Magic snap a three-game road losing streak with a 106-94 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Friday night.

Jonny Flynn led Minnesota with 23 points, Kevin Love added 17 points and 10 rebounds, and Al Jefferson had 14 points and 10 rebounds.

The Magic, who have won five of six overall, won despite below-average scoring nights from Vince Carter and Dwight Howard. The two entered the game averaging a combined 36.5 points, but Carter was held to 12 points and Howard had nine.

With Orlando's two leading scorers limited, the Magic relied on Barnes' energy plays and Ryan Anderson's 3-point shooting.

Magic coach Stan Van Gundy inserted Barnes into the starting lineup Wednesday against Milwaukee because he wanted to add more energy to the starting unit.

Barnes responded by leading Orlando in scoring

for the first three quarters against a Minnesota team that hung around against a Magic team that trails only Cleveland in the Eastern Conference.

In the fourth, Anderson's long-range shooting helped put the Timberwolves away.

The Magic led by only two points after three quarters, 73-71, and Minnesota briefly took a 77-75 lead when Wayne Ellington hit a 3-pointer with 10:06 to play.

But Orlando responded by making threes on its next four offensive possessions, three by Anderson. The final 3-pointer in the stretch gave Orlando an 87-81 lead with 7:56 to play.

Anderson, who entered the game averaging 9.3 points, made four 3-pointers and finished with 16 points.

Orlando, which leads the NBA with 10 made 3-pointers per game, finished with 15 long-range jumpers against Minnesota. When Jameer Nelson (16 points) made a 3-pointer with less than 5 minutes to play, the Magic lead was 95-88. -AP

## CRICKET

Consistency  
key for India, says Sehwag

DHAKA: India must maintain their momentum and play at a high level on a consistent basis to keep their place among the world's top-ranked teams, said vice captain Virender Sehwag.

India climbed to the top of the test rankings for the first time in December but the team has struggled to establish supremacy in one-day international cricket.

They start the New Year with a triangular one-day series involving Sri Lanka and Bangladesh from Monday, followed by two tests against Bangladesh.

"I think our target is just to play good amount of cricket. You know, last two years we were playing very tough and good cricket. So hopefully we will do it in 2010 also," Sehwag told reporters on Saturday after the team arrived at Dhaka airport.

"It's important for the team to play well consistently. If you do that you will stay there in number one or number two positions."

India are ranked second in the one-day format behind Australia but can close the gap with a good performance in the tri-series, which they start as favorites.

While Sri Lanka have made sweeping changes for the series, dropping key players due to injury and poor form, Sehwag said it did not make India's task any easier.

"When the new players come nobody knows what he will do or what he does. It's difficult for the teams to bowl or bat against them," said Sehwag.

"I think Sri Lanka still are a good side. It will be a tough task for us."

India defeated a full-strength Sri Lanka 3-1 in a recent home series dominated by batsmen. Sehwag, one of India's key performers, said he expected more of the same in Bangladesh.

"I think whenever you play in the subcontinent you will get the same kind of wicket," he added.

"It's a good track to bat on and later on the wicket gets slower and slower and if dews are here then its a big factor." -Reuters



Indian cricketer Virender Sehwag gestures to his unseen fans as he enters the ground for a practice session on Dec. 23, 2009. (AFP)

Clippers beat Brand,  
76ers without Dunleavy

LOS ANGELES: Chris Kaman had 26 points and 10 rebounds, and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Philadelphia 76ers 104-88 on Thursday night in the NBA's final game of the decade.

Clippers coach Mike Dunleavy missed the game after aggravating a herniated disc in his back while at home getting ready to go to Staples Center. Tony Brown, an assistant coach under Dunleavy in Portland and Los Angeles, ran the team in his place.

All the Clippers' starters scored in double figures, with Baron Davis contributing 20 points and seven assists. Marcus Camby added 14 points and 10 boards. The Clippers completed a season sweep of the 76ers after losing both meetings in each of the previous two seasons.

Lou Williams led Philadelphia with 19 points and Elton Brand had 17 in his first road game against the Clippers since he left town as a free agent. The 76ers, coming off victories over Portland and Sacramento, still haven't won three in a row this season.

Los Angeles fell behind by as many as 13 points after Brand intercepted a pass by Sebastian Telfair and converted the turnover into a breakaway dunk with 2:46 left in the first quarter to cap a 19-4 run.

But the Clippers sliced the margin to 51-49 by halftime, as Kaman led all scorers with 16 points despite missing nine of 15 shots.

Los Angeles pulled ahead for good at 55-52 on a 3-pointer by Rasual Butler with 9 1/2 minutes left in the third quarter and extended the margin to 78-63 on another 3 by Marcus Camby with 6.6 seconds left in the period. The Clippers finished 10 for 16 from behind the arc.

When Brand reported in with 3:18 left in the first quarter and Philadelphia leading 25-16, he was booed lustily by the crowd of 15,257.

Brand holds the Clippers franchise record with 4,710 rebounds. After he left, Dunleavy accused Brand of backing out of a verbal agreement to return to the Clippers and never giving an explanation. Davis signed with Los Angeles as a free agent prior to that, with the understanding that he would play with Brand. -AP

## TENNIS

## Rejuvenated Hewitt kicks off 2010 with win

PERTH: Former world number one Lleyton Hewitt opened 2010 with a victory in the Hopman Cup on Saturday but the Australian has already set his sights on earning a place in the season-ending Masters Cup in London.

The 28-year-old, who climbed back from injury to finish 2009 ranked 22nd, defeated Victor Hanescu in the hosts' Hopman Cup match against Romania.

Australia eventually went down 2-1 to the Romanians, but Hewitt was delighted with his form as he recovered to clinch a gruelling victory.

After having hip surgery in 2008, Hewitt worked his way back up the rankings last year and arrived in Perth saying he felt "as fit as ever".

And the Australian believes that a place at London's O2 as one of the world's top eight is well within his capabilities providing he stays fit.

"This month, the Australian Open is the main goal, not getting the ranking up," Hewitt said.

"But obviously through the year I want to try to get in the top 10 and get in the Masters Cup."

The former Wimbledon and US Open champion has won only two titles in the past three years but believes he is still capable of winning at the top level, perhaps even in Melbourne later this month.

"I pride myself on playing the big tournaments well and last year over five sets it took the best guys to beat me again," he said.

"I lost a tight one to (Fernando) Gonzalez in Australia, then Roddick, Nadal and Federer are the three who beat me. I feel like if I keep putting my-



Lleyton Hewitt of Australia plays hits a return during his match against Victor Hanescu of Romania at the first session of the Hopman Cup in Perth on Jan. 2, 2010. (AFP)

self in those positions, then things will turn around."

Hewitt hoped his seeding at the Aus-

tralian Open would deliver a kinder draw. "I'll be seeded so hopefully I will get a smooth passage through," he added.

"If I can get myself through the first week, then there is no question I can do some serious damage." -Reuters