

Durant leads Thunder past Bulls, 97-85

Kevin Durant extends number of consecutive games scoring 25 or more points to 32 on Monday in Chicago

By Andrew Seligman
AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO — Kevin Durant finished with 35 points and 12 rebounds, and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Chicago Bulls 97-85 on Monday night.

Russell Westbrook added 17 points after sitting out the previous day to rest his surgically repaired knee, and the Thunder rebounded from their most lopsided loss of the season.

They went on a 13-point run after the Bulls scored eight straight early in the fourth to cut the lead to one and pulled this one out after falling by 23 at home to Dallas on Sunday.

DURANT CONTINUES STREAK

Durant ran his streak of games with 25 or more points to 32, the longest in the NBA since Michael Jordan did it in 40 in a row during the 1986-87 season. He also chipped in with five assists.

Westbrook had nine rebounds and nine assists, although he did struggle from the field. He was 5 of 14, and the Thunder got by despite shooting just 41.3 percent.

The Bulls never found their rhythm, converting just 34.5 percent, and settled for a six-game split on a tough home-stand that included wins over defending champion Miami and Houston.

Joakim Noah, who's been hearing "MVP!" chants lately, had a

rather quiet night, although he just missed his fourth triple-double of the season. He shot just 2 of 8 but finished with nine points, 12 rebounds and nine assists.

Taj Gibson had 16 points and seven rebounds. Jimmy Butler scored 13, and Carlos Boozer chipped in with 12 points and 11 rebounds, but the Bulls came up short.

The Thunder were leading by nine early in the fourth when the Bulls scored eight straight points, Butler's breakaway dunk putting a charge in the crowd and back-to-back baskets by Gibson cutting it to 76-75 with about 10 minutes remaining.

The Thunder responded by scoring 13 straight to put this one away.

FISHER STARTS RALLY

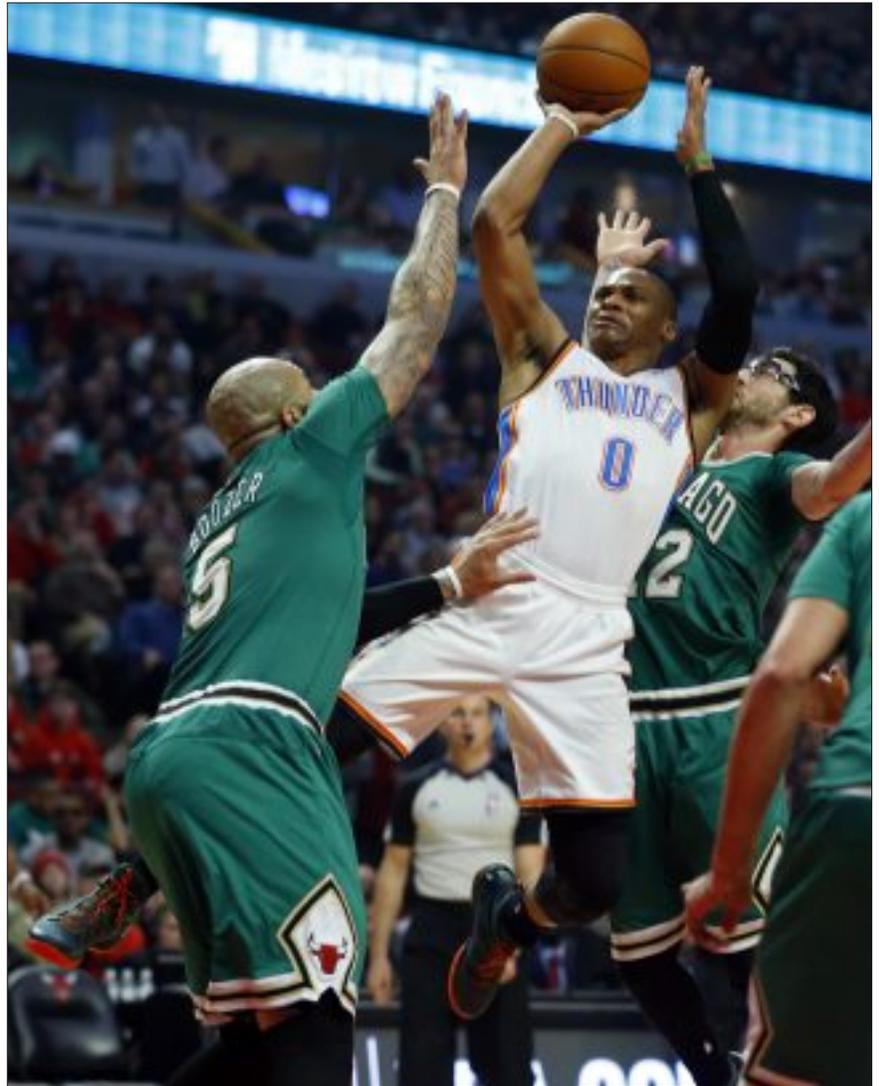
Derek Fisher started the decisive rally with a 3-pointer. A layup by Serge Ibaka, dunk by Durant, three free throws by Caron Butler, a driving bank shot by Westbrook and a free throw by the guard just over a minute later made it 89-75 with 3:45 remaining.

Westbrook was a bit out of sync at times after sitting out Sunday's game.

Occasional rest is part of the plan after he missed 27 games following his most recent surgery, his third procedure since he injured the knee in the playoffs last April, and the Thunder are in a busy stretch.

The games against Dallas and Chicago were the first of three back-to-backs on Oklahoma City's schedule by March 25.

Notes: Westbrook insisted Chicago's Derrick Rose can make a strong return from his latest season-ending knee surgery. The two have trained together in the offseason. "I talked to him numerous times," Westbrook said. "He's a tough guy as you guys know."



AP PHOTO

Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook, center, shoots over Chicago Bulls forward Carlos Boozer, left, and Kirk Hinrich during the game on Monday in Chicago. Kevin Durant continued his streak of scoring 25 or more points per game, bringing his record up to 32 games in a row — the longest in the NBA since Michael Jordan did it in 40 games in a row during the 1986-87 season.

Club provides life-changing opportunities

Ski & Snowboard Club Vail provides life-changing opportunities to young athletes through scholarship initiatives. The club has given out over \$1.1 million in scholarship funds over the past eight years. In this second installment of a two-part series, I want to share a few additional inspirational stories resulting from Ski & Snowboard Club Vail's scholarship efforts.



Aldo Radamus
Perspectives

JESSE MADDEX

Jesse is a Ski & Snowboard Club Vail alpine racing alumni and Ski

& Snowboard Club Vail Winter Tutorial graduate. He was born and raised in Leadville and started his alpine racing career at a young age at Ski Cooper. As a seventh grader and first-year J3 alpine racer, Jesse qualified for the J3 Junior Olympics and made the first of what would become lifelong connections with his peer group at Ski & Snowboard Club Vail.

After this competition, Jesse realized the need to explore Ski & Snowboard Club Vail further — a more established program with

more coaching, more resources and a stronger group of fellow racers.

And so Jesse enrolled in the Ski & Snowboard Club Vail weekend program the following season, staying weekends in the Vail Valley with two very welcoming host families. That season, Jesse won the J3 Junior Olympics downhill and super-G, was on the podium in GS and as a result represented the United States at Whistler Cup, the highest of accomplishments for alpine racers in his age class.

Jesse moved to the valley for high school and lived with a host family. He attended Battle Mountain High School and enrolled in Ski & Snowboard Club

Vail Winter Tutorial, enabling him to maintain a high level of academics alongside his athletics. Jesse returned to Leadville in the summers to work in his dad's construction business in order to earn funds for training camps.

Jesse was accepted to Williams College after high school, but knowing his racing career was at a crossroad, he deferred acceptance, training with Ski & Snowboard Club Vail and through the national development system, seeing the world through alpine racing, including multiple starts in overseas FIS races. Things took a very different turn at the start of this second post graduate year, a time

when he was poised to move on to the US national team or a great college racing career, when he had a serious crash on the Birds of Prey course, requiring surgery.

Although Jesse recovered well enough to race the following year as a freshman at Williams College, he underwent another surgery that spring ending his career. Needing to refocus his energy, Jesse transferred to Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles to pursue his undergraduate degree and another passion resulting from the devastating loss of his younger brother to leukemia

PERSPECTIVES

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when Jesse was just 10 years old. It was here that Jesse spent two years volunteering at Children's Hospital. Jesse eventually went on to receive his master's degree in social work from the University of California at Berkeley and is now the director of enterprise NGOs at Salesforce.com, serving the technology needs of some of the largest nonprofit organizations in the country.

Jesse remains forever grateful for the generosity of the families who took him into their homes and the Ski & Snowboard Club Vail coaches who were there to support him. Without the scholarship support provided by Ski & Snowboard Club Vail and individual Ski and philanthropists, Jesse said none of his experiences at Ski & Snowboard Club Vail would have been possible. Jesse shared that Ski & Snowboard Club Vail allowed him to develop the work ethic, determination, self-confidence, time management skills and goal setting capabilities needed to succeed academically and athletically as an elite snowsports athlete, and now in his life pursuits.

FAYE GULINI

Faye is a Ski & Snowboard Club Vail snowboard alumna, Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy graduate, U.S. Snowboard Team member and two-time Olympian in boardercross, competing in Vancouver 2010 and narrowly missing a medal in Sochi, finishing fourth.

Faye grew up in the Salt Lake City area, tragically losing her mother to an automobile accident when she was 5 years old. Her dad did everything in his power to raise Faye and her brother, only for her brother to be in a serious automobile accident when Faye was 12 years old. This landed her brother in the hospital for a year and left the family in debt.

Through this very difficult period in Faye's life, she was able to snowboard at a local mountain where she proceeded to get better and better at the sport, but with limited options to take her gift to the next level. As good fortune would have it, a childhood friend of her dad who lived in Vail told her dad about Ski & Snowboard Club Vail when Faye was 15 years old. One thing led to another and Faye was able to move in with the family who introduced them to Vail, attend Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy and train with Ski and Snowboard Club Vail. As a senior at Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy Faye qualified for the Vancouver Olympics. Taking classes at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Faye continues to pursue her athletic dreams as a member of the U.S. Snowboard Team.

Faye openly shared that she could never have gotten to where she is today without the scholarship support.

These are but a few of the many great stories of the support provided to kids by Ski & Snowboard Club Vail allowing them to follow their dreams regardless of their means. These stories play out every day among the 20 percent of Ski & Snowboard Club Vail members that benefit from financial aid. Many of them wouldn't be able to pursue competitive snow sports without that support. Our goal at Ski and Snowboard Club Vail is to insure that any child with the character, courage and commitment to pursue their dreams in a snow sport is able to fulfill their potential as a young athlete and ultimately to become a successful adult benefitting from the lessons learned in pursuit of that dream.

Aldo Radamus is the executive director of Ski & Snowboard Club Vail. For more information, go to www.skiclubvail.org, email sschmidt@skiclubvail.org or call 970-790-5161.

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