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(Colo.)-Jokic's Triple-Double Helps Nuggets Beat Wolves 107-106

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MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - Nikola Jokic had his 25th career triple-double with 13 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists, including a late full-court pass that set up a key basket to help the Denver Nuggets hang on for a 107-106 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Saturday night.

After a bad-pass turnover by Karl-Anthony Towns sailed out of bounds for the Timberwolves, Jokic caught Andrew Wiggins flat-footed and found Malik Beasley wide open for an uncontested layup with a length-of-the-court heave for a 107-104 lead with 1:02 left.

After a dunk by Luol Deng and a steal by Taj Gibson off Monte Morris, the Wolves took final possession with 14.5 seconds remaining. Deng's 3-pointer from the corner bounced out with 3.5 seconds to go, though, and the rebound by Towns was too late to create with.

Towns, locked in another classic big man battle with his fellow All-Star Jokic, had 31 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists.

Trey Lyles, who had 19 points on 8-for-13 shooting in another sharp game against the Wolves, hit a 3-pointer for Denver's biggest lead of the game at 98-92 midway through the fourth quarter. Dario Saric and Josh Okogie brought the home team right back, though, with consecutive 3-pointers to tie the game for the 11th time.

Jerryd Bayless had 15 points for the Wolves, who failed to take full advantage of Jokic's extended time on the bench in the second half after he argued a foul against him and was slapped with a technical foul by official Tony Brothers.

STILL DIGGING

The Nuggets, who are surging toward their first appearance in the playoffs in six years, haven't forgotten the way they missed out last spring by losing their 82nd and final game at Minnesota to watch the Wolves take the final spot in the Western Conference. They have won twice here this season, both one-possession decisions.

The Nuggets, who won their sixth straight game as they started a four-game road trip, added another accolade by ensuring that coach Mike Malone will head to the All-Star Game with Jokic by virtue of their NBA franchise-best 37-15 start.

Beasley had 22 points, Will Barton pitched in 20 points and Morris had 17 points and 10 assists for the Nuggets, who are 23-2 when Jokic has a triple-double. He moved into a tie for 13th place with Clyde Drexler on the NBA's career list, with the 25th of his career.

BAYLESS BOOST

The Wolves welcomed Derrick Rose back in a reserve role for their banged-up backcourt, after he missed the previous three games and 11 of the last 19 because of right ankle trouble. They're still missing point guards Jeff

Teague (six in a row and 15 of 23) and Tyus Jones (eight straight) to left ankle injuries. Then there's small forward Robert Covington, the centerpiece of the package that came back from Philadelphia for Jimmy Butler who has been out for 15 consecutive games because of a bone bruise on his right knee.

The afterthought in that trade was Bayless, who needed more than a month after his acquisition to finish his left knee rehabilitation before finally making his debut for Minnesota. With little choice for interim head coach Ryan Saunders but to play the 11th-year veteran, Bayless has scored in double digits in six straight games.

After Beasley's 3-pointer gave the Nuggets their biggest lead to that point at 71-66, Bayless set up Towns for a 3-pointer on the next possession. Then he wound up for a full-body bounce pass along the baseline for a backdoor-cutting Wiggins and a dunk to make it 71-all.

TIP-INS

Nuggets: Their optimal starting backcourt was out, too, with a fifth straight absence for Jamal Murray (sprained left ankle) and a second consecutive game missed by Gary Harris (right adductor strain). Harris has missed 18 games over the last two months with three different injuries. ... The Nuggets are 7-2 with Beasley and 4-0 with Morris in the starting lineup. This was Beasley's ninth 20-point game this season. ... The Nuggets are 8-1 in the second half of back-to-back games this season.

Timberwolves: Towns notched his 34th double-double and his 11th game with 30-plus points. ... Deng had 11 points off the bench. ... The Timberwolves led 38-29 after the first quarter, their largest of the game and their second-highest opening-period total of the season.

UP NEXT

Nuggets: Play at Detroit on Monday.

Timberwolves: Start a three-game road trip at Memphis on Tuesday.