Liberty Clips
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Hamilton's Kia Nurse and Liberty come up short despite late rally against Aces
The Associated Press · Posted: Aug 09, 2020 8:22 PM

A'ja Wilson scored 31 points and her short shot with seven seconds lifted the Las Vegas Aces past the New York Liberty 78-76 on Sunday.

Kia Nurse missed a jump shot after, and out of a timeout following an offensive rebound, the Liberty turned it over to end the game.

Wilson's game winner was only the second lead for Las Vegas the entire game. Jackie Young's layup with 7:29 before halftime put Las Vegas up 30-28. Kiah Stokes' layup with 3:34 left in the third quarter put New York up 56-46 before Las Vegas (5-2) went on a 12-5 run to close the quarter.

Wilson shot 10 of 17 from the floor and made 11 of 12 free throws. Young scored 15 and Dearica Hamby 13.

Amanda Zahui B. led the Liberty (1-6) with 20 points, Layshia Clarendon scored 15 and Joyner Holmes 11.

https://www.cbc.ca/sports/basketball/wnba-canadian-roundup-aug-9-aces-liberty-1.5680262
New York Liberty fall in a heartbreaker to Las Vegas (Highlights)

By: Geoff Magliocchetti - August 9, 2020

A’ja Wilson’s big day ended the New York Liberty’s chances at starting a winning streak on Sunday late afternoon in Bradenton.

The New York Liberty’s good fortune ended on Sunday evening against Las Vegas. A’ja Wilson’s game-winner with 6.9 seconds remaining capped off a 31-point performance from the WNBA’s leading scorer. It allowed her Las Vegas Aces to survive another strong effort from Amanda Zahui B and the Liberty, who fell just short of starting a winning streak in a 78-76 heartbreaker in the Bradenton bubble.

“I thought our team deserved to win that game. I thought our players deserved to win,” Liberty head coach Walt Hopkins said. “(Las Vegas) is a potential title team, this is a team that can be in the WNBA Finals. This is an extremely talented, well-coached team and we played them to the very end. We played them to the last possession.”

Coming off their first win of the season on Friday night against Washington, the Liberty (1-6) carried momentum into their Sunday showdown. They led for a majority of the game, going toe-to-toe with one of the league’s most complete teams. New York even led by as many as 12 throughout the course of the game.

Amanda Zahui B once again rose to the occasion with the Liberty missing both Sabrina Ionescu and Kylee Shook (right foot). The Stockholm-born interior threat picked up where she left off from Friday’s double-double performance, sinking six three-pointers over the first three frames. It was one short of the team record Zahui B tied during a 37-point performance in Los Angeles last season.

“We put ourselves in a great position to win,” Zahui B noted in her availability. “Keep pushing, keep building. I think the first thing we said when we got to the locker room was that we have really grown from our first game. If this had been a week ago, we could’ve lost by 30. We fought through the whole game, stayed together, and we got to keep on building. We’re a young team, nobody believes in us, and we’ve got to earn everything.”

Foul trouble, however, proved to play a role in the Liberty’s downfall. Picking her fourth infraction in the midway stages of the third, Zahui B took to the bench, allowing Las Vegas (5-2) to eat into the Liberty lead. Wilson tallied 18 points in the second half and visited the
foul line 12 times, missing all but one of her attempts. Vegas also enjoyed late heroics and forced turnovers from veteran newcomer Angel McCoughtry.

The Liberty still had an opportunity to escape with a victory after Wilson’s heroics. Kia Nurse’s would-be winner fell short but was touched by Las Vegas as it went out of bounds. The Aces’ defense thwarted Layshia Clarendon’s ensuing inbounds pass, but New York still had 0.5 seconds to work with. Another attempt saw a Clarendon inbound go to Leaonna Odom, who put in the apparent equalizer, but the clock had been started before the ball was touched, forcing yet another retry.

One last Vegas swat sealed the deal, and the Aces earned their fourth consecutive victory.

“We should be playing overtime right now,” Hopkins said. “I don’t know if it was a scoreboard malfunction or if it was actually the scorekeeper who started it early. I would guess it’s the scorekeeper because it’s not automated. So somebody made a really big mistake and stole the game from us.”

Despite the loss, the Liberty felt that they had several positives to work with. Clarendon tallied 15 points and fell two rebounds short of a double-double, while rookie free agent Joyner Holmes had an infantile career-best 11 points. Kiah Stokes had a season-best 12 rebounds, her best output since returning to the Liberty lineup after sitting out last season.

“I think we’re more focused, especially on the little things,” Stokes said. “We weren’t going as hard as we could. I think we really made an effort over the last couple of days to do the little things, especially clean up turnovers, box out. Obviously, we still have things to work on, but now we’re in games and winning games. It stinks that we lost today but it’s a step in the right direction and it shows how good we can be.”

The Liberty and Aces will meet up again on August 29. New York’s season will continue against Western Conference competition on Tuesday night against the Los Angeles Sparks (10 p.m. ET, Fox Sports Go).

WNBA Power Rankings: Las Vegas Aces jump to No. 2 behind Seattle Storm

By Mechelle Voepel – August 10, 2020

10. New York Liberty

Record: 1-6

Previous ranking: 12

The Liberty finally got a chance to celebrate Friday, as they became the last team to win a game this season. They almost made it two in a row Sunday vs. Las Vegas, but that one got away. Still, the Liberty have played well these past two games after a heart-to-heart meeting following a blowout loss to Minnesota on Wednesday.

The team is adding guard Paris Kea to the roster, and No. 1 pick Sabrina Ionescu went to see an ankle and foot specialist in New York on Wednesday. Veterans Layshia Clarendon, Amanda Zahui B. and Kia Nurse are stepping forward and trying to make the most they can out of this season.


BACK TO TOP
The Liberty gave the Aces a run for their money.

Las Vegas (6-2), the best rebounding team in the W, was matched nearly shot for shot and rebound for rebound in a nail-biter of a game. The Liberty fell to the Aces 78-76, but looked nothing like the discombobulated young group they were two games ago.

Tied 76-76, Aces’ two-time All-Star A’ja Wilson drove to the basket for a jumper, which put Las Vegas ahead by two with 6.9 seconds left to play. On the ensuing possession, Liberty guard Kia Nurse received the ball in the corner and missed a jumper from just inside the three-point line. The Liberty managed to grab the rebound with 2.1 seconds left on the clock, but following a chaotic series of events, the game slipped out of the Liberty’s hands.

The Aces argued that the Liberty stepped out of bounds after grabbing the rebound. Following an official’s review, Las Vegas received possession of the ball. But with 0.5 seconds left on the clock, the Aces stepped out of bounds, giving possession right back to the Liberty.

Layshia Clarendon inbounded the ball to rookie Leona Odom, who worked a perfectly drawn-up play in the paint to tie the game. But as fate would have it, the clock started too early and the buzzer went off before Odom even got the ball in her hands.

On their second attempt to tie the game, the Liberty tried to run the same play, but the Aces already knew what was coming and Clarendon’s pass was intercepted.

Game over.

“We executed that play — the one that the score keeper started the clock before the ball was touched... we should be fighting in overtime right now,” coach Walt Hopkins said minutes after the game ended. “I don’t know if it was the scoreboard malfunction or if it was actually the scorekeeper who started early, because it’s all automated. So, somebody made a really big mistake and stole the game from us.”

“What we really need to focus on... is all the growth,” Hopkins said.
That growth has been seen immensely in “baby vet” Amanda Zahui B., who has continued her evolution this season.

In three straight games, including against the Aces, the 25-year-old showed just how much her confidence has grown through this season in the wubble. Sunday, Zahui B. led Liberty scorers with 20 points, with all of her field goals coming from beyond the arc on a lethal 6-of-9 shooting. She also pulled down nine rebounds and logged her first game of the season without a turnover.

“My focus is different now,” Zahui B. said. "I hadn’t been giving my team what they needed in order to be successful in this league and win games. I’ve just re-evaluated myself and put a different kind of focus."

But she did get into foul trouble early and Hopkins was forced to pull her out while she was on a hot streak.

“We couldn’t afford to not have her in the fourth quarter,” Hopkins said of the decision to pull Zahui B. toward the end of the second quarter and midway through the third.

The Las Vegas Aces Comeback to win 78-76 over the New York Liberty

MAX O'NEILL | AUG 9, 2020

The New York Liberty blew a 12 point lead to lose to the Las Vegas Aces 78-76 at the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida. The loss drops the Liberty to 1-6 on the season. While the win improves the Aces to 5-2 on the season.

The game ended in a strange way with three reviews in the final minutes, for out of bounds and/or adding time on the clock. The last of the reviews came as a Liberty game tying layup came after the buzzer, on an early clock start. Liberty head coach Walt Hopkins puts this at the feet of the scoreboard operator, “somebody made a really big mistake and stole a game from us.” He also noted the amount of calls that A’ja Wilson got, taking 12 free throws, as “the stars get calls.”

With 8:03 to go in the third quarter, the Liberty were up 48-37, thanks to a jumper by Amanda Zahui B. That was Zahui B’s 20th point of the day, something she would be stuck with for the rest of the way, as she was subbed out two minutes later and did not return until, 7:45 to go in the 4th quarter. During which time the 12 point lead dwindled down to a four point lead. In regards to the substitution, Coach Hopkins, chalked it up the mere fact that Zahui B was in foul trouble, sitting on four fouls, and they could not afford to lose her for the fourth quarter.

The Liberty continued to struggle in the turnover department, turning the ball over 16 times in this game, slightly below their league leading 18.7 turnovers per game.

The New York Liberty try to get back in the win column, on Tuesday, August 11th, when they face the Los Angeles Sparks. The Las Vegas Aces look to make it five wins in a row when they face the Indiana Fever on Tuesday.