



JESSICA HILL/Associated Press

THE SPARKS' Chelsea Gray shoots over Connecticut's Jasmine Thomas in the first half to help keep the score close before the Sun pulled away to force a potential series-ending Game 3 Sunday at the Pyramid.

Sparks boarded directly to verge of elimination

L.A. is beaten badly in rebounds and faces an 0-2 deficit in the WNBA semifinals.

CONNECTICUT 94 SPARKS 68

BY WILLIAM PAXTON

UNCASVILLE, Conn. — It was the start coach Derek Fisher wanted.

An energized Sparks squad came out firing and was up by double digits early in the second quarter on the road.

The sizzle fizzled from there.

Connecticut's dominance on the boards turned the tide and the Sun rolled on to a 94-68 victory Thursday in Game 2 of the WNBA semifinals at Mohegan Sun Arena.

"One game at a time," said Sparks forward Nneka Ogumike, who led the team with 18 points and seven rebounds. "We were going to play a Game 3 anyway, so we just have to win Game 3."

The Sparks (22-15) were scheduled to fly home Friday morning, after an overnight bus ride to Boston, one game away from elimination in the best-of-five series.

Game 3 is at 4 p.m. Sunday at the Pyramid at Long

Beach State.

"It's important to view Game 3 as just Game 3," Fisher said. "The results in Game 1 and 2 have no relevance to how you play in Game 3."

The Sparks are 15-2 at home this season but have yet to play at the Pyramid.

The Sun (25-11) got big performances from a trio of starters — Jonquel Jones (27 points, 13 rebounds), Courtney Williams (25 points) and Alyssa Thomas (12 points, 13 rebounds) — but their work on the glass was key to a 2-0 series lead.

"I'm so proud of the energy and effort," Connecticut coach Curt Miller said. "We weren't perfect at the offensive end ... but we got so many second-chance opportunities that we had a lead when it didn't feel like a great first half offensively, and it was all because of rebounding."

"And that counted." Guard Riquna Williams, who scored just two points in Game 1, found her touch in the first quarter, scoring seven of her 14 points to help the Sparks lead 22-15.

The Sparks pushed it to 26-15 early in the second before that early energy started to fade away.

Connecticut had 29 rebounds in the first half, which broke the WNBA playoff record. Twelve boards came on the offen-

WNBA PLAYOFFS

SEMIFINALS

Connecticut vs. SPARKS
Sun lead series 2-0

Gm 1	Conn. 84, SPARKS 75
Gm 2	Conn. 94, SPARKS 68
Gm 3	Sunday at SPARKS, 4
Gm 4	Tuesday at SPARKS, TBA
Gm 5	Sept. 26 at Conn., TBA

Washington vs. Las Vegas
Mystics lead series 2-0

Gm 1	Wash. 97, Las Vegas 95
Gm 2	Wash. 103, Las Vegas 91
Gm 3	Sunday at Las Vegas, 2
Gm 4	Tuesday at Las Vegas, TBA
Gm 5	Sept. 26 at Wash., TBA

*Gms 4-5 if nec. | times PDT, p.m.

SUN 94, SPARKS 68

SPARKS—Gray 5-12 0-1 10, N.Ogumike 7-9 3-4 18, Parker 1-3 0-0 3, R.Williams 6-13 0-0 14, Ruffin-Pratt 1-7 4-5 6, A.Jones 0-1 2-2 2, Beard 0-4 0-0 0, Brown 1-1 1-2 3, C.Ogumike 4-6 2-3 10, Mabrey 1-3 0-0 2, Vadeaux 0-2 0-0 0, Wiese 0-2 0-0 0, Totals 26-63 12-17 68.

CONNECTICUT—A.Thomas 5-8 2-4 12, C.Williams 10-18 2-25, J.Jones 11-20 4-5 27, J.Thomas 3-10 0-0 7, Stricklen 1-7 0-0 3, B.Jones 1-2 0-0 2, Banham 3-5 2-2 11, Hiedeman 0-1 0-0 0, Holmes 2-5 2-2 7, Plaisance 0-1 0-0 0, Tuck 0-2 0-0 0, Totals 36-79 12-15 94.

Sparks 22 18 17 11-68
Connecticut 15 26 29 24-94

Three-point goals—Sparks 4-15 (R.Williams 2-6, N.Ogumike 1-1, Parker 1-3, Gray 0-1, A.Jones 0-1, Beard 0-1, Ruffin-Pratt 0-2), Connecticut 10-30 (Banham 3-4, C.Williams 3-5, Holmes 1-3, Stricklen 1-4, J.Thomas 1-5, J.Jones 1-6, Plaisance 0-1, Tuck 0-2). Fouled out—None. Rebounds—Sparks 24 (N.Ogumike 7), Connecticut 46 (J.Jones, A.Thomas 13). Assists—Sparks 15 (Gray 5), Connecticut 23 (J.Thomas 7). Total fouls—Sparks 17, Connecticut 18. Technical fouls—Connecticut coach Sun (defensive three seconds). A—8,051 (9,323).

side end and allowed the Sun to score 13 second-chance points.

"It started in the second

quarter when we were forcing them to miss shots, the way that they really invoked their will on the offensive glass, I thought that helped build their confidence," Fisher said.

For the game, Connecticut outrebounded the Sparks 46-24, converting 16 offensive boards into 28 points.

Despite the second-quarter shift, the Sun led only 41-40 at the half.

The Sparks even reclaimed the lead, 46-43, early in the third on two foul shots from Tierra Ruffin-Pratt.

But Courtney Williams stole the quarter, scoring 13 points, including the Sun's final two baskets to make it 70-57 and tie their largest lead. The Sparks' deficit only grew from there.

While Williams and backcourt mate Chelsea Gray (10 points) found their offense, Sparks star Candace Parker was held to three points — her fewest since scoring just two against Dallas on July 9. Parker took three shots, all three-pointers.

"I just feel that is kind of what the game dictated," Fisher said of Parker's quiet night.

"I think early to start the game we made an effort to get the ball inside ... but as the game went on, I think the game changed due to the rebounding and the second shots."

Alvarez and De La Hoya golden again

After months of drama, champion will fight Kovalev with familiar promoter.

BY MANOUK AKOPYAN

"Blade Runner," "The Dark Knight Rises," "Catch Me if You Can" — many movies have been filmed at Union Station, a key crossroads in Los Angeles.

On Wednesday, boxing's biggest star in Canelo Alvarez took his act to Tinseltown's main railway to announce his next fight, Nov. 2 against Sergey Kovalev.

The setting for the news conference was an unconventional backdrop to discuss the Mexican fighter's unpredictable career path as thousands of Angelenos went about their daily commute.

Alvarez, a natural middleweight, is stepping up two divisions and testing his strength by challenging WBO light-heavyweight champion Kovalev, a surprise move when there's seemingly unfinished business with Gennady Golovkin after two highly disputed decisions.

The dramatic road that eventually led Alvarez to Kovalev appeared at times to be a train going off the tracks.

After defeating Daniel Jacobs on Cinco de Mayo weekend, there was uncertainty around when Alvarez would return to the ring and against whom.

Alvarez has mostly been silent all summer, but his actions on social media have demonstrated serious displeasure.

He and promoter Oscar De La Hoya made their first public appearance together Wednesday to quell any concerns about their relationship and to promote Alvarez's next fight. Alvarez said he's pleased with himself for putting his foot down and holding his stance businesswise in recent months as many parts moved around him.

"It makes me feel very proud, because I'm someone who comes from nothing and not knowing anything. In life I have learned many things, and one of them is this," said Alvarez, sitting in a small back room at Union Station.

"Oscar and I have always worked well together," Alvarez said. "I believe we are a team and we need to do things together so everything comes out the way that it's supposed to.... This is how things are, and this is how business is done. We just have to overcome and continue forward."

Alvarez, 29, has been upset with a series of developments that have been brewing since at least the end of May.

First, De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions missed the mark in making a fight in

time for Alvarez to showcase his skills on his customary Mexican Independence Day weekend date. Alvarez wanted to fight with Kovalev on Sept. 14, but financial terms never got in order. Next, negotiations again became problematic because Alvarez had a mandatory defense against Sergiy Derevyanchenko for the IBF belt he won from Jacobs. After Golden Boy blew past the sanctioning body's deadline, Alvarez was stripped of his title — and infuriated — taking to Twitter and expressing disdain, saying he didn't "have the knowledge of the agreement that [the Golden Boy] matchmaker had signed."

As the months went by, Alvarez rejected every opponent proposed, chiefly Golovkin (who'll be fighting Derevyanchenko for the vacant IBF belt).

Even after his fight was announced Friday, Alvarez was still retweeting disparaging remarks directed at De La Hoya made by stablemate and training partner Ryan Garcia, who was dealing with an ugly spat himself with Golden Boy that has since been resolved with a multi-year agreement that was announced minutes before Wednesday's gathering. Garcia has since reversed course and deleted his tweets, and thus, Alvarez's retweets, and he'll serve as Alvarez's co-main event against Romero Duno come November.

Alvarez was asked Wednesday if he and De La Hoya are still good friends.

He took a breath, hesitated to answer, then halfheartedly stammered his way to a "yes" before looking away.

When The Times mentioned to Alvarez its report and interview Monday with De La Hoya in which the promoter said, "you will absolutely see Canelo and GGG fight next year," Alvarez directed a punch toward his boss and squashed any indication that a third fight with Golovkin would take place after his first in 2017 with the Kazakh fighter was ruled a draw, and the second in 2018 a disputed majority decision in favor of Alvarez.

"Oscar says many things that make no sense," said Alvarez. "Gennady Golovkin does not represent anything for me right now. He comes from practically fighting a nobody. He doesn't represent a challenge that I haven't had already in our two fights.... For me, yes, we are finished."

De La Hoya is no stranger to fights in and out of the ring. He sued Top Rank head Bob Arum at the turn of the century to get out of his contract with the promoter before closing the book on his Hall of Fame career.

"How 'bout these last few months?" De La Hoya said as he walked into a room filled with reporters. "It's been stressful, but this is what boxing is all about."

THE DAY IN SPORTS

German on leave via domestic violence policy

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

New York Yankees star pitcher **Domingo German** was placed on administrative leave Thursday under Major League Baseball's domestic violence policy, casting doubt over whether New York's top winner this season will be available for the playoffs.

Manager **Aaron Boone** was informed of the decision while he was driving to Yankee Stadium for a game against the Angels. New York clinched its first AL East title since 2012 with a 9-1 victory over the Angels. German is 18-4.

"Set baseball aside, this is a bigger issue, obviously," Boone said. "When you hear the words domestic violence, it's one of those things that stops you in your tracks."

Details on what prompted the action weren't disclosed. MLB said the leave "may last up to seven days, barring an extension."

The Yankees begin the AL playoffs on Oct. 4, likely at home.

ETC. FIFA urges Iran to lift ban

FIFA President **Gianni Infantino** raised hopes that Iran will lift a ban on women entering soccer stadiums before a World Cup qualifying game next month.

Attention on the ban intensified when a 29-year-old activist, **Sahar Khodayari**, died this month after setting herself on fire outside a courthouse. She had been detained for dressing as a man to enter a soccer stadium and believed she faced six months in prison.

Infantino said in a statement "now is the moment to change things and FIFA is expecting positive developments starting in the next Iran home match."

Iran, the top-ranked

team in Asia, hosts Cambodia at the 78,000-seat Azadi Stadium in Tehran on Oct. 10.

Lukas Michel of Australia twice came back from three-hole deficits and won the U.S. Mid-Amateur in Parker, Colo., becoming the first international winner in the event's 39-year history and earning a spot in the Masters.... In Virginia Water, England, **Rory McIlroy** made six bogeys and a double bogey in his last 11 holes to shoot four-over 76 at the BMW PGA Championship, leaving the world No. 2 already 11 strokes off the first-round lead held by **Matt Wallace**. ... **Tom Hoge** shot a bogey-free 64 to lead the Sanderson Farms Championship at Jackson, Miss., before first-round play was suspended because of weather.

The University of Connecticut removed a logo from its online athletic sites after discovering a key piece



LEON HALIP/Getty Images

THE YANKEES' Domingo German is 18-4.

of it was copied from a North Carolina State athletic logo. The logo, which featured three canines in the woods and the words "The Pack," was created to represent Connecticut's new official student section at sporting events.

But the image of the animals is identical to the wolves used in an N.C. State logo.

The Los Alamitos thoroughbred racing meetings next year were reduced from eight weeks to five as the California Horse Racing Board finalized racing for Southern California. Los Alamitos picked up an extra week in December as part of a compromise measure. Los Alamitos will race thoroughbreds from June 24 until July 5 and from Dec. 2 until Dec. 22, under the auspices of the L.A. County Fair meeting. In this compromise measure, Santa Anita gave up a week of simulcast revenue that could approach about \$1 million.

— JOHN CHERWA

Ottawa Senators defenseman **Thomas Chabot** agreed to an eight-year, \$64-million contract extension. The agreement locks up another member of Ottawa's young core.

The Kings lost in overtime 3-2 against the Vegas Golden Knights at Staples Center. **Jonathan Marches-**

sault scored the game-winner, beating **Jonathan Quick** on the glove side on a breakaway during the sudden death period.

Dustin Brown opened the scoring late in the second period for the Kings, burying a rebound on the power play. The Golden Knights scored twice late in the third period to tie the score.

— JACK HARRIS

The Clippers on Friday will announce the renaming of their practice facility as the Honey Training Center, part of a naming-rights deal with Honey, a tech firm that finds discounts for online shoppers, according to a person with knowledge of the logo.

The logo of the Los Angeles-based company also will be displayed on the practice courts and jerseys the team wears during practices. Terms of the deal were not disclosed but it lasts at least four years.

— ANDREW GREIF