

IN BRIEF

HOCKEY

Howe regresses

Gordie Howe's family says the hockey Hall of Famer "has taken a turn for the worse" after suffering another stroke recently. The 86-year-old former Detroit Red Wings star is bedridden.

NBA

Kobe gets 44 in loss

Stephen Curry had 30 points and 15 assists as the visiting Warriors beat the Lakers, 136-115, despite 44 points in 31 minutes by Kobe Bryant . . . James Harden had 19 points as the visiting Rockets beat the Thunder, 69-65. The last time a team won with fewer than 70 was Detroit's 64-62 win over Utah on March 13, 2005, according to STATS . . . Brandon Knight scored 20 as the visiting Bucks beat the Heat, 91-84.

COLLEGES

Florida State No. 1

Florida State (10-0) is No. 1 in The Associated Press college football poll. Former No. 1 Mississippi State (9-1) lost at Alabama, 25-20, and dropped to No. 4. The Crimson Tide (9-1) moved up four spots to No. 2. Oregon (9-1) is third and TCU (9-1) is fifth.

LIU Post in playoffs

LIU Post (8-3) earned a berth in the NCAA Division II football playoffs and will play at Virginia State (9-2) on Saturday.

TENNIS

Roger gives it to Novak

Roger Federer pulled out of the ATP Finals in London because of a bad back less than an hour before his match against Novak Djokovic, handing him a third straight title at the year-end event.

GOLF

Kim wins in Mexico

Christina Kim won the Lorena Ochoa Invitational in Mexico City for her first LPGA Tour title in nine years. She shot a final-round 1-under-par 71 for a 273 total to tie China's Shanshan Feng (66) and won with a par on the second playoff hole.— AP

Hulea nets Suffolk CC a title

NJCAA crown on his goal; Zapata makes big saves

BY STEPHEN HAYNES

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HERKIMER, N.Y. — It was as if an echo were traveling through the Adirondacks. One player after another, screaming into the cold night: "Nobody gave us a chance!"

The old battle cry of the underdog. But given that it was the fourth seed in a national championship tournament facing a team that had dominated them two months ago, not too many people could give Suffolk Community College much of a chance.

No matter. The Sharks gave themselves a title yesterday, edging No. 2 Richland (Texas), 2-1, to capture the NJCAA Division III men's soccer crown.

"I think we were underestimated from the start," said freshman Romario Hulea, a native of Sweden. "But we're champions now!"

Hulea scored the winner 3:04 into the second half. He gathered a deflection about 7 yards



The Suffolk CC men's soccer team poses with its NJCAA Div. III national championship plaque. The school also won it all in 2010.

to the left of the left goalpost and, with a defender approaching, awkwardly twisted his left leg and used his instep to flick a shot into the far corner. "It wasn't pretty and there was no power in it," he said with a grin. "Good placement, though."

Suffolk CC (21-4) earned a second national championship — the first was in 2010 — and redeemed itself for a loss in last year's final. The Sharks stunned

No. 1 Herkimer, the defending champion and host, in the semifinals on Friday, then topped a Richland squad that had beaten them, 5-2, in September.

Joseph Lopez put the Sharks on the board 28:56 before halftime. Hulea collected a loose ball and skipped a short pass to Lopez, who lined it into the right corner. Danny Barnard tied it eight minutes later for Richland (22-2-1).

NJCAA FINAL

SUFFOLK CC 2
RICHLAND CC 1



"Romario's game complements mine so well," said Lopez, a Brentwood native whose 32 goals this season is a Suffolk CC record. "Playing alongside him makes my job so much easier."

Nothing came easy for the Sharks as Richland controlled possession for most of the second half and applied pressure. But Jon Zapata, who was named game MVP, made six saves, including a spectacular diving stop to thwart a fast break with 11:31 remaining.

Sharks coach Frank Vertullo said "having two amazing forwards in Joseph and Romario" immediately convinced him this team could contend. From the preseason on, he said, they had designs on a championship.

Now it's designs for a championship ring. Vertullo, an art teacher in the Deer Park school district, said he would like to draw up the diagrams for his team's commemorative jewelry.

Why not? Give him a chance.

Harvick captures Cup for first time

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — Kevin Harvick charged through the field, picking off car after car, passing two other title contenders on a series of restarts. As he aggressively chased the victory and his first Sprint Cup title, it was clear that winning did indeed matter most in NASCAR's new championship formula.

Harvick won last night's season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway with a desperate drive from 12th to first over the final 15 laps. He didn't have to finish higher than the other three title contenders in this revamped Chase for the Sprint Cup championship.

But nothing short of a win was going to get it done on a night in which Harvick, Denny Hamlin, Ryan Newman and Joey Logano all showed up determined to claim their first career championship.

"You had all the championship guys show up at the front of the pack," Harvick said. "I was just going to hold the pedal down and hope for the best."

The four drivers all found themselves racing each other at the front of the field after the sun went down on the 400-mile race. It was Hamlin, a Charlotte Hornets season-ticket holder who had Michael Jordan cheering from his pits, who seemed to have the race in control until a caution with 20 laps to go.

Harvick restarted 12th with 15 laps to go. Then came another caution. Harvick, on four fresh tires, burst through the middle on the restart, driving through traffic to move into second.

There was one more caution, forcing Harvick to nail one final restart with three laps remaining, and he eased his way ahead of Newman and never looked back.

— AP



Kevin Harvick enjoys the moment after his Sprint Cup Series win.