

# ALL STAR GAME



## RED DIVISION

--- By Jim Bradley

### AMERICANS' THREE LATE "3-POINTERS" BEAT NATIONALS, 51-46

AMERICANS 7-25-37-51  
NATIONALS 12-24-37-46

Three players -- forward Darion Hodges (12 points), point-guard Michael Fritz (9) and center Mohamad Barada (6) -- helped break a 37-37 deadlock in the fourth-quarter and a trio of "3-pointers" within a 4-and-one-half minute span carried the American Team to a 51-46 victory over the Nationals in the annual MBA Red Division All-Star Game at United Center on Saturday, February 27.

Playing 10-minute quarters, each of these elite teams had 12 "Cream of the Crop" players on their roster and all played high-caliber basketball throughout a game that was closely-contended the entire way. The Nationals scored the first 10 points of the game on their way to a 12-7 first quarter lead. But seven American players, led by Malik Bazzi's four points, a "triple" by Malek Saleh, three points by Barada and two each by Brad King, Nick Flanery and Ethan Frakes and one by Oliver Elliott gave the Americans a 25-24 halftime lead.

Forward Kyle Bradley scored four points to lead team National in the second period, Anthony DiPonio drained a "3-pointer," Ali Mallah and Mohammed Makled each had a bucket for two markers and Derek sank 1-of-2 freebies for the Americans' 12 points in the second segment.

Both teams battled hard in a spirited third-period that saw the Americans take a 13-12 edge and knot the count at 37-all entering the fourth and final frame. DiPonio led the Nationals with a field goal and a key "three" for five points, Bradley had a driving lay-up and 2-of-3 free throws for four markers and Antonio Reviere and left-handed Christian Blevins each had two. Darion Hodges had the lion's share of the Americans'

12 points with eight markers on a pair of "3-pointers" and a field goal and Michael Slater had a short jumper for the other two.

Both defenses stepped up strongly in this game, holding the score much lower than expected. The Americans looked like the stronger team in the last quarter and although the score was tied at 30-30 and 32-all, the Nationals pulled ahead when Kyle Bradley sank both free throws to give his squad a 34-32 lead with 2:03 left in the third period.

Here is where the "long-ball" really helped the Americans take control of the game. Trailing 34-32, the Americans got one "from beyond the arc" from Oliver Elliott to make it 35-34 in their favor when shortly thereafter, DiPonio canned his own "3-pointer" to restore the Nationals' lead at 37-35 but Michael Fritz's jumper from the top of the key again knotted the score at 37-all at the end of the third period.

Then, in the last period, the Americans got a trio of "3-pointers" from Muhammed Zahr, Oliver Elliott and Darion Hodges (his third of the second half) and a basket from Michael Fritz on a spectacular "over the head" backwards pass from Muhammed Zahr that gave Fritz an easy uncontested lay-up. Those "triples" and lay-up sent the Americans on an 11-3 run for a 48-40 lead with 4:19 left in the game and they held the Nationals to six points the rest of the game to win by five, 51-46.

Summary: In unofficial statistics: **For the victorious American Team:** Hodges had 3 "triples," 12 points, 4 rebounds, 2 steals; Michael Fritz, 9 points, 3 rebounds, 1 steal; Mohamad Barada, 6 points, 8 rebounds, 1 steal; Oliver Elliott, 1 "3-pointer," 4 points, 1 rebound, 1 steal; Michael Slater, 4 points, 4 rebounds;

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Malik Bazzi, 4 points, 4 rebounds; Muhammed Zahr, 1 “three,” 3 points, 1 rebound; Malek Saleh, 1 “3-pointer,” 3 points;

Ethan Frakes, 2 points; Nick Flanery, 2 points, 2 rebounds, 1 steal; Brad King, 2 points, 6 rebounds; Keith Crowe-Sittig, 2 rebounds.

**For the Nationals:** Anthony DiPonio, 2 “triples,” 16 points, 6 rebounds, 3 steals; Kyle Bradley, 8 points, 5 rebounds, 1 steal; Antonio Reviere, 6 points, 7 rebounds; Christian Blevins, 4 points, 2 rebounds; Mohammed Makled, 4 points, 4 rebounds;

Jason Jaroszewicz, 3 points, 5 rebounds; Ali Mallah, 2 points, 3 rebounds, 1 steal; Aaron Clark, 2 points, 9 rebounds; Derek Flum, 1 point, 3 rebounds; Moe Dourra, 1 rebound; Ali Abdallah, 1 rebound; Ayman Youssef, 3 rebounds, 1 steal.

Coach Rick Arbogast and assistant Tony Iaquina worked together to guide the American Team to victory.

“My assistant, Tony Iaquina, handled all the substitutions and did a great job,” Arbogast said after the game. “He made a grid before the game to assure that all the players got equal playing time. We worked seamlessly together and it was a joy to work with him. As far as the game goes, we concentrated on two things: stop their penetration into the scoring zone and also keep them from fast-break baskets. We did both quite well, especially later in the game,” Arbogast said.

“They stopped us at first with their zone defense but when they went man-to-man, we had the ability to break through for baskets. We switched to a 3-2 defense later in the game and it worked quite well. Most of all the kids had a great time, and that’s what it’s all about,” Arbogast said.

Coach Kevin Wilkinson and assistant Ali Makled had a good time leading the National All-Stars. “The main philosophy is to win,” Wilkinson said. “And we didn’t do that but we accomplished some other good things. Like any All-Star game, we wanted the kids to show their skills and have uninhibited enjoyment of the game of basketball.”

Wilkinson appreciated the hard work his assistant, Ali Makled, did to help coach the team. “He did a fine job of seeing each of the players got equal playing time and helped in a great many way,” Wilkinson said.

Wilkinson, who “retired” from coaching in the MBA 11 years ago, was asked if he was ready to return as a coach. “I was ready to return after the game, but in two days from now – or by Monday, I’ll be over it,” Wilkinson laughed.

Wilkinson, a life-long sports addict and lover of basketball, has a keen analytical mind and loves to discuss all aspects of sports. “You know, our zone defense stopped them but when we went man-to-man they got back in the game,” he said. “We knew we had to stop their big men inside and we did. It was their guards and those three “3-pointers” in a row late in the game that beat us,” Wilkinson said.

Asked his biggest disappointment in losing Saturday’s All-Star game, Wilkinson answered, “I guess it’s losing to my buddy Rick Arbogast – that’s tough to take!”

The Red Division All-Star game was officiated by Refs William Pugh, Mike Flaishans and Jeff Bradley who did a commendable job to keep the game moving.



ALL STAR GAME – FEBRUARY 27, 2010

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# WHITE DIVISION ALL STAR GAME



## AMERICANS BUILD BIG LEAD, COAST TO 59-54 ALL-STAR VICTORY

**AMERICANS 11-33-46-59**  
**NATIONALS 8-13-28-53**

This All-Star game among the White Division 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders followed the same pattern as the earlier all-star game Saturday, February 27 at United Center when one team ran off a huge half-time lead before the other team finally put on its scoring shoes and made the score respectable.

Coaches Mark Sweetman and Chantelle Daifi had their American squad geared and ready to go from the starting gate as they took an 11-8 first quarter lead before jumping on the Nationals for a 22-5 second-period onslaught that gave the Americans an overwhelming 33-13 lead at halftime.

Coach Anthony Ramos and his assistant, Alex Ramos, finally got their National team players working together and they made a mini-run of 15-13 in the third period, but still trailed 46-28 after three horns. The Nationals opened the fourth quarter like a “gathering storm” – scoring 17 straight points overlapping the end of the third quarter and start of the fourth and outscored the Americans 25-13 in the final frame.

However, the closest they could come to the high-tailing Americans was at 58-53 with 1:18 left in the game. But a large crowd enjoyed every minute of it and was pleased by the ability shown by these 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade All-Stars. Nine of the 11 American All-Stars scored in the game and nine of the 11 Nationals also entered the scorebook.

Marouf Hamade came up with an astounding 22 rebounds in unofficial statistics, made two steals and led the winning American team with 17 points on seven field goals and 3-of-4 free throws. He scored 12 of his 17 in the second period. Point-guard Ali Zahr banked home eight of his 12 points in the second quarter, ended with six baskets and 0-of-2 from the line, grabbed five rebounds and made three steals.

Hussein Dourra scored 11 points on four buckets and 3-of-6 charity tosses, getting five markers in the first period and five in the last. He also had one rebound and four steals. Malek Rammouni collared six rebounds and stole a pass in addition to scoring six last-half points on three baskets. Hassan Makled and Zach Mihalik, a pair of 4-foot-8 sixth-grade guards each had four points on a pair of field goals, guided the offense and Makled had three rebounds and three steals, while Mihalik snared one carom off the board and nabbed a steal. Jordan Graham, a 5-foot-center, secured five rebounds, got a steal and scored two points. Aaron Mei

also had two points and one steal for the winners. Hibi Daifi, the tallest All-Star at 5-foot-six, pulled down six rebounds, snared three steals and sank 1-of-2 free throws for one point.

Neither Mohamed Zahr nor Jack Stemas scored for the American Team but helped in other ways. Stemas was very influential with eight rebounds and Zahr was good at setting up scoring plays. The Americans made 26 field goals and 7-of-16 free throws for their 59 points.

For the National Team, Brent Davis led with 16 points, 13 in the final period, on six baskets and 4-of-10 from the line. His aggressive play led to 11 rebounds and five steals. Left-handed Lorenz Frazier also got hot in the second-half, pouring in 11 of his 15 markers in that span and he added one rebound and six steals. Nick Esseily contributed three rebounds and five points on two baskets and a free throw.

Four points each by Jamal Saleh and Shane Moran helped the cause. Jamal Saleh had six rebounds and Moran added five rebounds and two steals. Jeffrey Saad’s quickness helped him get seven rebounds, snare five steals and score four points.

Jemail Saleh chipped in two points and one steal, Seth Denison added a field goal for two points, three rebounds and a steal, and Mohamed Bazzi was great around the boards with seven rebounds, added two steals and sank 1-of-2 free throws in the third quarter for one point. Sydnie Bruce and Isabelle Clark didn’t score but played aggressively all over the floor, Clark helping especially on defense and Bruce grabbing two rebounds and one steal.

Coach Mark Sweetman of the winning American squad was happy with the win. “We had five fifth-graders on our team,” he said, “and we were a little concerned about their inexperience. But they all worked together, we tried different plays and they did fine,” he said. “We had a ‘one-practice’ offense and told the kids to play and have fun, and they did!”

Coach Anthony Ramos of the Nationals said: “It was a tough game, they have a lot of good players. We started slowly but our guys played hard and we got it together in the second half and really made a game of it,” he said. “Win or lose, we’re gonna play hard and come out winners in the end. They all had fun, and that’s the most important part,” Ramos said. Assistant Alex Ramos did a fine job.

Referees Vince Lewis, Jeff Bradley and Colin Wilkinson called a good steady game and did a good job of officiating.

# BLUE DIVISION ALL STAR GAME



- By Jim Bradley

## NATIONALS USE HEIGHT AND SPEED TO RUN PAST AMERICANS, 46-34

**NATIONALS**            **7-23-39-46**  
**AMERICANS**        **6-09-16-34**

This All-Star Blue Division game was close for one period before the Nationals used their superior height and ability to outscore the Americans 32-9 in the next two quarters for a 39-16 lead after three quarters and run away with this season's match-up among the best players in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade MBA league.

United Center was the scene of the "shooting stars" on Saturday, February 27 but most of the spectacular plays were made by the Nationals who led 7-6 after one period, 23-9 at halftime and 39-16 after three buzzers. A 32-10 domination by the Nationals in the two middle periods sealed the fate of the Americans. Only a furious rally by the Americans in the final period – an 18-7 surge (and 12-0 run) – cut the final margin to 12 points after the Nationals enjoyed a huge lead most of the game.

Coaches Jeff Bradley and Todd Clark of the Nationals got to sit back pretty much the entire game and watch their talented youngsters break from a 7-6 first period lead to a 16-3 second stanza romp and build a 23-9 lead at halftime and increase it to 39-16 after three buzzers.

Three of the best players in the Blue Division – Luke Zacny and Luke Jaroszewicz of the Magic and Benjamin Clark of the Hawks – were paired up on the National team and had outstanding games. Playing 10-minute quarters, the Nationals got 14 points from Zacny, 10 by Clark and nine from Jaroszewicz in building their huge leads.

Zacny, who had 11 rebounds and one steal in the game, drained five field goals and 4-of-5 free throws for his total. Clark snared seven rebounds and grabbed six steals in addition to three baskets and 4-of-7 freebies for his 10. Jaroszewicz collared a team-high 15 rebounds, snatched an opponent's pass and dropped in four buckets and 1-of-2 free throws for nine points, five before intermission.

With every National All-Star player scoring, Zach Jawad, Hawks, (4 rebounds/ 1 steal) had two baskets and 1-of-2 free throws for five markers; and Yousef Saab, Sixers, two points; William Sweetman, Sixers, (5 rebounds/1 steal); Ali Makled, Magic, 9 rebounds/ 1 steal; and Kassem Adoure, Hawks, two points, 4 rebounds.

Coaches Dave Fritz and Kevin Bruce worked well

together in leading the American All-Stars. Point guard Youseph Saad of the Bulls played an outstanding game with 13 points on six field goals and 1-of-6 freebies – plus grabbing eight rebounds and getting three steals. Jalal Baydoun, a Heat player, brought the ball down court for the Americans, tossed in three baskets in the last quarter and also snared six rebounds and had a steal.

Patrick Kirby of the Bucks canned a basket and 3-of-4 free throws for five points, as well as producing four rebounds and two steals. Parker Lepage (what a wonderful athletic name!) of the Bucks played hard with a field goal and 2-of-4 charity tosses, while coming down with seven rebounds and a steal.

Mohamed Harajli of the Bucks had three points in the last half on a basket and 1-of-2 free throws. He was active on the boards with seven rebounds and grabbed three steals. Point-guard Ali Zahr of the Bucks had a third-period basket for two points and came down with two rebounds. Matthew Lynch, a Bulls' player, hit 1-of-2 free throws and was outstanding with 12 rebounds to lead his team.

Aric Ramos of the Bulls didn't score but his five rebounds helped his team immensely.

Coach Bradley felt the Nationals had a size advantage and tried to exploit it. "We had a lot more size, I felt," Bradley said, "so we told all our players to work hard on defense, pass to the open man and most of all, have fun."

Bradley said Todd Clark was a great help to him in coaching the third and fourth graders. "He was very knowledgeable and easy to work with," Bradley said of Clark. "Most of all," Bradley reiterated, "we let the kids play and told them to have fun!"

Coach Dave Fritz likewise was pleased with the help assistant coach Kevin Bruce provided. "Kevin coaches two teams – the Bucks in the Blue Division and the Clippers in the White Division -- so he knows a lot about the game of basketball," Fritz said.

"As far as the All-Star game goes, give the Nationals a lot of credit. They moved the ball well and had quite a few outstanding players. All our kids gave a good effort and hustled the entire game," Fritz said. "We told them most of all to have fun and they did!"

Refs Calvin Denson, Vince Lewis and Kevin Wilkinson did a good job in keeping the game moving.