KNICKS CONTINUE UNBEATEN STREAK

SAN ANTONIO — The New York Knicks continued their unbeaten run in the NBA after rallying in the final moments of their game to beat the San Antonio Spurs 104-100 on Thursday.

In the final seven minutes, the Knicks erased a 12-point deficit with a 27-11 run to hand the Spurs their first home loss of the season.

What made the Knicks’ comeback remarkable was how Carmelo Anthony played in the final minutes. Anthony had a poor shooting night (3 of 12) and did not attempt a shot in the pivotal fourth quarter.

He said: “There was a point in the game where I went to huddle everybody up and said ‘use me a decoy’. It worked.”

Anthony’s ability to trust his teammates resulted in him passing the ball to Raymond Felton, who was the Knicks’ top scorer in the game.

J R Smith added 17 points, Jason Kidd 14 and Tyson Chandler 13 for the Knicks, who closed on a 22-7 run.

Kawhi Leonard added 16 points and five rebounds to give the Spurs their first defeat of the season.

The Knicks’ Jason Kidd (in blue) shooting over Spurs’ Tim Duncan (right).

SPORE FENCERS FINISH ON A HIGH

SINGAPORE — It was a fruitful last day for Singapore’s fencers in the South-east Asian Fencing Federation Championships as they bagged three more medals to bring the tally to ten (two golds, three silvers and five bronzes).

The quartet of Ann Lee, Sharman Cheung, Felicia Yam and Christabel Yong was the first to deliver yesterday in Ho Chi Minh, winning bronze in the Women’s Sabre team event after going down to Vietnam 45-28 in the semi-finals.

The Singapore women’s epee team then made the finals after narrowly beating perennial rivals Indonesia 45-43.

But again it was the host nation that proved to be the strongest, beating the Singaporean quartet of Cheryl Lim, Victoria Lim, Goh Wan Qi and Ann Karin Melbye 45-41.

In the day’s final event, the men’s foil team capped off the tournament in style by thrashing the Malaysians 45-16 in the semi-finals and Vietnam 45-30 in the finals.

SPORTS ANALYSIS PROGRAM

SOFTWARE HELPS S’PORE ATHLETES WATCH THE BALL

SINGAPORE — The national women’s table tennis players may have shed many years of blood, sweat and tears preparing for last August’s London Olympics.

But they also had some help from a state-of-the-art object tracking and computerised sporting analysis software program called AutoScout to help them reach their peak before leaving for London.

According to the Singapore Sports Institute (SSI), AutoScout was used by the national table tennis coaches to generate video footage and statistical information about their paddlers’ playing styles.

Developed by the Advanced Digital Sciences Centre (ADSC) located at Fusionopolis, the software — which is still in a developmental stage — can be programmed to generate statistical information about a player’s techniques or a team’s tactical plays, not only for table tennis but almost any sport.

“What stands out about AutoScout is its ability to automate statistics,” said Shaunak Ahuja, a Sports Application Analyst at ADSC.

Based on our research, there is already tracking and analysis software out there doing a good job. But they are not automated and cannot do what ours can.

“For example, table tennis clubs need to hire many people to analyse the gameplay footage and take notes. In contrast, ours can extract and collate the information automatically.”

The ADSC had collaborated with the SSI to further develop AutoScout to suit the needs of the national table tennis teams.

According to Ahuja, some things the software could do include counting the number of backhand and forehand shots made by a player, detecting the type of spin on the ball and the points scored by players using different techniques, and even identifying whether a player concedes more points on his forehand or backhand.

The SSI had nothing but praise for the software.

“Our scientists, led by our Executive Director, Associate Professor Fabian Lim, designed the platform architecture, and ADSC delivered very well with their enabling technology and know-how in sports visualisation and analytics,” said SSI Assistant Director of Research and Development Su Chin Wei.

Su said the program streamlined the analysis process for coaches — only one coach was needed to perform the task as compared to before when an entire team of technical support staff was required.

Table tennis aside, AutoScout can also be used in football. It can re-create entire football matches in 3D graphics and even show the user the gameplay from any selected player’s perspective.

Indriyati Atmosukarto, a research scientist working on the project, explains that the software can be programmed to automate almost any sort of information.

“For example, football coaches can request for statistics for every player on the field in terms of passes completed and shots on goal.

Apart from that, it can also determine how long the ball was in the air and the distance travelled.

Atmosukarto added that the ADSC is currently getting input from several S-League clubs on what they would like to get out of the software. A beta version will be ready by about mid-next year.

Subsequently, AutoScout will be licensed out to companies which can provide clubs with information-gathering services.