

# All-Star worthy DeMar DeRozan leads Raptors past Heat

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By Israel Fehr

1/23/2016

TORONTO – DeMar DeRozan hasn't officially been minted as an All-Star, but at this point it's just a matter of time – six days to be precise – that he'll join Kyle Lowry, [named an All-Star starter](#) for the second straight season, on the Eastern Conference squad.

DeRozan scored 33 points and also had six rebounds and four assists in the Raptors' [101-81 win](#) over the Miami Heat on Friday, pushing Toronto's winning streak to seven games.

On the 10-year anniversary of Kobe Bryant's 81-point game against Toronto, it's only fitting that the Southern California native who grew up idolizing the Lakers superstar would pay homage

of sorts to the retiring Bryant with another exceptional offensive outburst. The way he's going about it is a reflection of his maturation as a player, now 26 years old and in his seventh year in the NBA. He's letting the game come to him and his improved ability to read the floor is allowing him to carve through opposing defences like never before.

"It's not like I'm going out there telling myself I'm going to go get 30, 40 points. I just got out there and try and win," said DeRozan after his third straight 30-plus point performance. "You try to think out two, three moves ahead and not just that next move. Understand what you can do, what your strengths are, where you like to be on the court."

The Heat entered Friday's game in the middle of a stretch where they play 14 of 16 games on the road and are severely banged-up. Chris Bosh was expected to be the only healthy regular Heat starter but Dwyane Wade was a surprise late addition to the starting lineup, able to suit up despite shoulder soreness. Ultimately, Wade's presence didn't matter much. Even with Wade scoring 22 and Bosh going for 26, Miami still only had nine healthy players and the seven not named Wade or Bosh weren't much help.

The Raptors raced out to a 9-2 lead less than two minutes in and were up 31-20 after at the end of the first quarter. After grinding out wins against Brooklyn and Boston that required their full effort in the first two games of the seven-game home stand, getting a relatively easy victory is a welcome change. However, it was close enough late in the fourth quarter – Miami cut the deficit to nine with four minutes to go – that Lowry and DeRozan weren't able to fully take advantage and rest, playing over 38 and 35 minutes respectively.

So Toronto's streak hits seven and DeRozan proved again why it's a certainty he'll get his due when the All-Star reserves are announced Thursday. Two representatives in a hometown All-Star game and a stretch of consecutive wins not seen around these parts since the Vince Carter days to boot; not too bad at all.



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