

13-0 Conference Champions Florida State Left Out of College Football Playoffs

OLLIE VELEZ

On Sunday, the College Football Selection Committee released the College Football Playoff (CFP) field. Each year, the CFP consists of the top 4 FBS (NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision) teams as determined by the committee. This year, No.1 Michigan, No.2 Washington, No.3 Texas, and No.4 Alabama were the four teams selected. The committee's decision led to a great deal of controversy as many believed it was incorrect and degrading to leave the Florida State Seminoles out of the CFP.

The Seminoles had a surprising and tremendous 2023 Season. Starting 11-0, their best win coming against top-ranked Louisiana State University (LSU), the Florida State Seminoles (FSU) seemed on pace for a historic season. However, after Heisman-caliber starting quarterback Jordan Travis suffered a season-ending leg injury against North Alabama, people were left unsure if FSU could close out the season. Despite the uncertainty, behind backup Tate Rodemaker, the Seminoles recorded an

impressive win over rival Florida. A week later, this time with third string quarterback Brock Glenn, they added to their undefeated season with a win over Louisville in the NCAA Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) championship. Finishing 13-0, it was hard for most people to think FSU should be left out of the CFP.

Despite this, one of the main reasons for FSU being excluded from the CFP was that committee members believed they were a weaker team the last two weeks of the season without Travis. One of the committee's guidelines mentions "unavailability of key players." The decision was met with much disapproval from members of the team, other athletes, and many people worldwide. Florida State head coach Mike Norvell expressed his aggravation, "I am disgusted and infuriated with the committee's decision today to have what was earned on the field taken away because a small group of people decided they knew better than the results of the games. What happened today goes against everything that is true and right in college football."

Jordan Travis also shared his thoughts on

Twitter, saying, "devastated [and] heartbroken. I wish my leg broke earlier in the season so y'all could see this team is much more than the quarterback."

Boo Corrigan, chair of the CFP selection committee, explained the decision, saying, "Florida State is a different team than they were through the first 11 weeks. But as you look at who they are as a team right now without Jordan Travis, without the offensive dynamic that he brings to it, they are a different team and the committee voted

Alabama four and Florida State five." The loss of Jordan Travis had too large of an impact in the eyes of the committee. "We had eight really good teams this year," Corrigan explained.

Corrigan continued, "Looking at the player availability was really important to what's going on. I think someone said there, you know, you can lose a running back, you can lose a wide receiver but a quarterback as dynamic as Jordan Travis, it changes their offense in its entirety and that was really a big factor with the

committee as we went through everything."

The Seminoles will compete against No. 6 Georgia in the Orange Bowl on December 30. Although a win would not change the outcome of the committee's decision, FSU would prove to everybody that they could compete in the CFP. No. 4 Alabama will take on No. 1 Michigan in the Rose Bowl on January 1. The winner will play the winner of No. 2 Washington against No. 3 Texas in the national championship.



Mike Norvell started coaching Florida State in 2019.

Rafael Nadal Announces Tennis Comeback in Melbourne for the Australian Open

ISAAC TIOMKIN

Rafael Nadal embodies the word "legend" in every conceivable way. He has the soul of a gladiator and a gritty tenacity that drives him towards victory no matter the circumstance. Those who grew up from the mid-2000s to the 2010s have been blessed with watching this warrior of a tennis player deliver thrilling

matches day in and day out. Although it seems like Nadal has been given all of the tools necessary to dominate, knee and back injuries have held him back at times, and he isn't getting any younger. Unfortunately, Nadal will most likely retire within the next few years, just as his lifetime rival Roger Federer did in 2022.

However, that time is not yet upon us. In fact, Nadal recently an-

nounced that he will be participating in the upcoming 2024 Australian Open Tournament. He currently sits in the top seven hundred ATP-ranked players in the world due to his lack of play in the past year, but he is almost certainly going to be given a wildcard into the tournament. In his video posted on X (formerly known as Twitter), he declared that "it's the right moment to

be back," sending shockwaves through the tennis world.

It was just under two years ago that Nadal won the Australian Open Title against Daniil Medvedev, coming back from a two set deficit. If there is anyone capable of re-entering the pinnacle of tennis after a year as a recluse in the lower rankings, it is certainly the King of Clay.

Speaking of clay, not only would this be important for the Australian Open, but if Nadal can remain healthy, it would also greatly impact the dynamics of the French Open and Madrid Open. Despite his advanced age for a tennis player, he would still be considered by many as the favorite in these tournaments. Put simply, if the surface is clay, bet on Nadal. His career win percentage on clay is a ridiculous 91 percent. He has won fourteen out of the eighteen French Opens that he has participated in. In terms of dominance in an aspect of a sport, there is no other athlete in history comparable to Nadal.

Many see this push to play in Melbourne from

Nadal to be an uneducated move. Their arguments do have validation. They propose that Nadal should save himself for the French Open. His chances clearly are best on clay, so it clearly is a gamble. My rebuttal to this is as follows: Nadal has been a top player in the pro circuit for over twenty years. He has dealt with monstrous injuries that have taken him out for over a year, but that simply means he understands his body better than before. Additionally, he has a team of highly educated specialists whose job securities depend on the longevity of Nadal's career. It is a fleeting and dubious thought at best that his team would endanger him. Trust in his judgment.

It will be a privilege for all the world to see Nadal light up the court again, whether or not it is his last rodeo. Rather than criticizing his decisions, we should graciously watch him fly across the court, battle through fatigue, and hopefully win another slam.



Rafael Nadal after winning in the third round of the 2015 Australian Open.



Paul Coll Ends 2023 With Three More PSA Titles

WILL WEISSMAN

Paul Coll, nicknamed “The Kiwi,” has been on an absolute tear the last couple of months, finishing 2023 with a decisive win in his home tournament, the New Zealand Open. Beforehand, he won back-to-back platinum tournaments in the U.S. Open and Hong Kong Squash Open, the highest

of four tournament levels.

Back in October, the Arlen Specter Center in Philadelphia hosted the U.S. Open, one of the largest tournaments of the year, with nearly 200,000 dollars in prize money spread across each draw. Coll began his campaign in the third round against Egypt’s Youseff Ibrahim, winning in a decisive three-game match. Next, The Kiwi faced strong op-

ponents in Egypt’s Mazen Hashem and Peru’s Diego Elias, falling 2-1 in games in both matches but coming back to win five-game thrillers, making him the first New Zealand to reach the U.S. Open finals in 37 years. In the finals, Paul Coll faced a scorching hot Ali Farag coming off four consecutive Platinum Tournament victories. However, Coll took an early lead this time, winning the first two

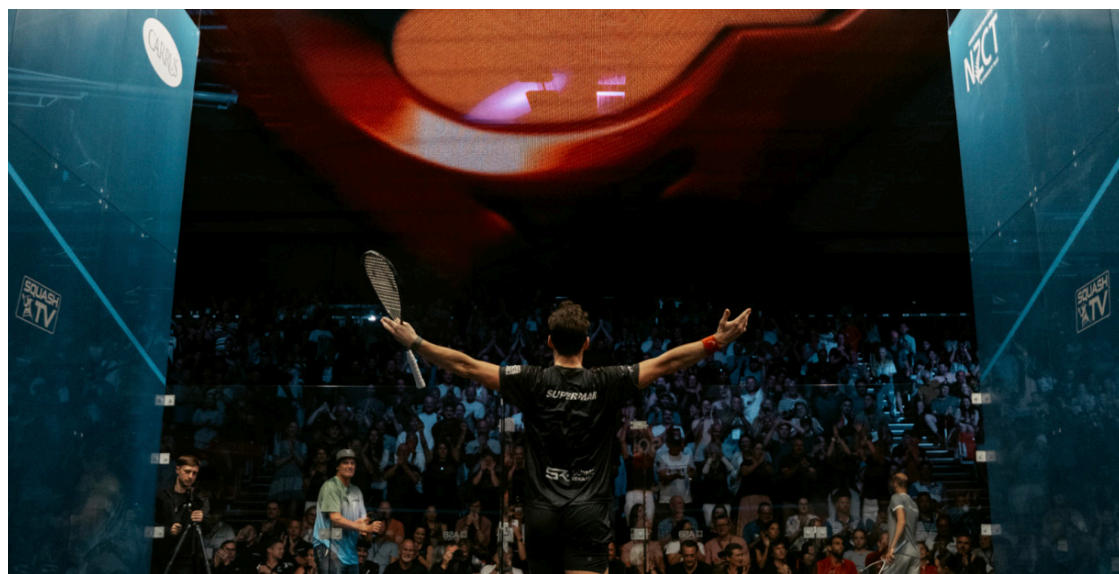
games 11-7. Farag fought back, equalizing the score into a fifth game where The Kiwi squeezed out another grueling battle.

After an impressive victory in Philadelphia, Paul Coll prepared for another platinum tournament set in Hong Kong. He breezed through his first three matches, dropping only one game. In the semi-finals, The Kiwi faced former world No. 1 Mohamed ElShorbagy, who he cleaned up in only three games. Once again, Paul Coll met Ali Farag in the finals, playing phenomenal squash to secure another title. Coll spoke after his match, saying, “I’m happy with my performances - not just tonight but all week. I’ve really tried to play some aggressive squash and this brand that I’m going for.” While considered a more passive and steady player, his attacking game has improved tremendously, demonstrated by his 55 percent of winners in front of the court compared to Farag’s 38 percent.

To finish the year, Paul

Coll claimed his third title in his home country at the New Zealand Open. After losing in the finals the previous year, Coll bounced back, dropping only one game in the first three rounds. Backed by the home crowd in the finals, the Kiwi dominated Egypt’s Marwan ElShorbagy, etching his name on another championship trophy. To make his hometown tournament even more special, Coll was accompanied by his fiancée and Belgian No. 1 Nele Gili, who won the women’s division.

Paul Coll will look to continue this streak in the new year, having looked impressive in the closing months of 2023. Coll has been unbelievably sharp, playing deadly drops from the front and demonstrating his superior strength, quickness, and endurance on the PSA Tour. After defeating the current world No. 1 in Ali Farag in back-to-back finals matches, The Kiwi undoubtedly still has the opportunity to gain the top spot once again.



Paul Coll celebrates after winning the New Zealand Open against Marwan ElShorbagy on December 10, 2023.

How Divers Krysta Palmer and Alison Gibson Made History At The 2020

CHLOE PARK

The U.S. Olympic Team Trials, diving in Indianapolis on June 10, 2021, witnessed a remarkable feat as Alison Gibson and Krysta Palmer secured their spots to represent Team USA in the 2020 Tokyo Games. This dynamic duo, with ages bridging a seven-year gap, became the first American divers to recently qualify for the synchronized 3-meter springboard event of the 2023 USA Diving Winter National Championships after competing for the first time for over two years.

Palmer’s path to the Olympics was unconventional, adding a layer to her diving career. Transitioning from competitive trampolining to diving at the age of 20, Palmer, an alumna of Western Nevada College (WNC), earned a bronze medal in the 3-meter springboard diving. The decision to navigate this shift, coupled with the aspiration to become an Olympic medalist, set the stage for a remarkable journey. Alison Gibson, a 22-year-old rising star, and Krysta Palmer dazzled spectators with their synchronized precision throughout the trials. Their performance

was evident, reaching its peak after a flawless fifth dive, securing their Tokyo-bound status. Gibson, reflecting on this moment, expressed, “I hit the water, and I was like, ‘okay, I’m pretty sure it was good enough.’ I just wanted to give Krysta a hug.”

At the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, despite initially placing eighth in the synchronized 3-meter springboard event alongside diving partner Gibson, Palmer utilized the break before her individual event to hone her skills and prepare for the challenges that lay ahead. The semifinals of the 3-meter springboard presented Palmer with a formidable task — qualifying in 14th place out of 18 divers. Facing a prior setback with a shoulder injury, Cassidy Bacon and Sarah Cook narrowed the gap, cutting the margin to 14.25 points. However, Gibson and Palmer steadily rebuilt their lead, finishing with a commanding 29.82-point cushion by the final dive and a fifth-place finish, setting a gripping final against competitors.

“Obviously, we’re competing against other teams,” Gibson remarked, “but it’s really us trying to put on a show for y’all and do the best

we can.”

Palmer, leading the individual 3-meter event after the semifinals, expressed confidence in their dive choice, 5154B, a forward 2 ½ somersaults with two twists. “It’s a hard dive for women to do, and there’s not very many girls that do this dive, let alone synchronized teams,” she noted. “For us to be bringing this onto an internal stage will be really good for USA Diving.”

In the finals, the pair stood on the podium, and both delivered a heroic performance. Each dive was executed with preci-

sion, culminating in the clinching of the bronze medal, a mere five points shy of the silver. Palmer, with limited Olympic experience compared to her counterparts, along with Gibson, joined the ranks of Olympians selected since 1984. They received Olympic rings from Laura Wilkinson and Michele Mitchell, two legends in diving history. This achievement marked a historic moment for the U.S. Olympic Diving Team, with Palmer being the first American woman to medal in the 3-meter event since 1988 and the first U.S. woman

to medal in individual diving since 2000.

“Someday if my kids are like, ‘Mom, you’re not cool,’” Gibson jokingly added, “I can be like, ‘I’m an Olympian though.’” As they prepare to dive on the international stage, the synchronized 3-meter springboard event promises not only competitive prowess but a dazzling display of artistry and skill from Team USA. The legacy of Gibson and Palmer is etched alongside the greats, and fans eagerly anticipate their performance.



Krysta Palmer (left) and Alison Gibson (right) on the first day after finals at the Olympic Team Trials-Diving.



Caeleb Dressel Secures First Win Since Return at the 2023 US Open



Caeleb Dressel celebrates after winning the 100m fly.

JAY WEI

Caeleb Dressel is arguably one of the most impressive swimmers of all time. His exemplary fitness level and impeccable technique have carried him to the pinnacle of swimming, breaking world records held by the legendary Michael Phelps, earning multiple Olympic gold medals for the United States, winning dozens of World Championship titles, and pushing the limits of the sport further and further.

After taking a hiatus from swimming at the 2022 World Swimming Championships, Caeleb Dressel returned to swimming over the summer. He competed first at the Atlantic Classic in May, followed by the US International Team Trials in June. Just this past week, Dressel competed at the annual US Open, where he won the 100 fly, earned 4th place in the 50 free, and 10th in the 100 free. Not only was this Dressel's best time since his break from swimming, but swimmers and community members were incredibly happy to see him win again. Despite not fully back to being in shape for international meets, Caeleb Dressel is certainly looking to make a comeback in the swimming world as he

prepares for the upcoming Paris Olympic Games next summer.

Born in Green Cove, Florida, Caeleb Dressel specializes in sprint events and butterfly. His talent was exposed early on, breaking the 13-14 National Age Group Record in 2011 (23.50) and many more later. He swam for the University of Florida during college, holding 3 NCAA records in the 50 free (17.63), 100 free (39.90, only person ever to break 40), and 100 fly (42.80, only person ever to break 43). Dressel represented the US at the Rio Olympic Games, winning a gold medal in the 4 x 100 free relay (3:09.92) with Nathan Adrian, Ryan Held, and Michael Phelps. He also swam the 100 free as an individual event, going 48.02 to earn 6th place in the finals. Dressel's rise to worldwide fame came in 2019, after he broke Michael Phelps' 100m fly world record, going 49.50 at the Gwangju 2019 World Championships and becoming the second person ever to go under 50 at that time. At the 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games, all eyes were on Dressel as he swam the 100 fly, 50 free, 100 free, and the relay events. Dressel won each time he touched the water for his individual events, going 47.02 in the 100 free (Olympic Record), 21.07 in the 50 free

(Olympic record), and 49.45 in the 100 fly (World record). Over 7 years, Dressel has earned 7 Olympic Titles, 13 World Championship Titles (LCM), 6 World Championship Titles (SCM), 10 NCAA Titles, and much more. Undoubtedly he is one of the most decorated swimmers of all time, and perhaps the greatest swimmer of his time.

In 2022, Dressel entered into the meet as the defending World Champion in the 100 fly, 50 fly, 50 free, and 100 free. After winning the 50 fly (22.57) on the first day, Dressel pulled out of the World Championships entirely on day two. He then commenced an 8-month break from swimming, where he sought counseling and worked on his mental health. In fact, Dressel isn't the only one struggling with mental health. Some of the other biggest names in the sport, like Adam Peaty, world record holder in the 50 breast and 100 breast, and Kristof Milak, world record holder in the 200 fly, have shared the same complications. "The easiest way to put it is my body kept score. A lot of things I had shut down, and it all came boiling up," Dressel said at the US National Championships over the summer, "It wasn't just one thing where I was like, 'I think I need to step away.'

It was a bunch of things that kind of came crumbling down at once. And I knew that was my red flag right there. Multiple red flags. It was a giant red flag."

Dressel returned to swimming in spring, training with Florida head coach Anthony Nesty on his former team. He was entered into the Atlantic Classic in May as his first meet since his return and the US International Team Trials in June. Despite not being in his best shape, Dressel was able to earn 5th in the 100 fly (51.66) and 3rd in the 50 fly (23.35) at the team trials, just missing the qualification for a spot on Team US. "He's very happy where he's at now. Now we have a starting point and we can go from there," Nesty said in an interview about Dressel. "Obviously he wanted to do better, but for us, it's just posting times that he could improve upon."

From November 29th to December 2nd, the annual US Open was held in the Greensboro pool facility. Open to both domestic and international swimmers, the US Open rallies hundreds of the fastest swimmers in the world. Dressel was entered in to swim the 50 free, 100 free, and 100 fly. In the 50 free, Dressel secured a win in the B-Final with a time of 21.99, going under 22 for the first

time since his return. In the 100 free, Dressel earned second place in the B-Final just behind Josh Liendo, going 48.85. After a solid swim in the 100 fly in prelims (51.83), Dressel came into finals seeded 3rd place behind Josh Liendo and Ilya Kharun. Competition was tight for Dressel as he hoped to secure his first win. Swimming in lane three, Dressel was 6th place at the 50-meter mark, splitting 24.42 compared to Santo Condorelli (24.03), who touched first. However, of all the competitors, Dressel had the best back half of the field and finished the race with a time of 51.31, winning the race. "That got the biggest cheer since we got here," commentator Rowdy Gaines said as Dressel won the 100 fly, "The crowd erupted...it feels good to see his name up there in first, it's been a long time since we've seen that." In a post-race interview, Dressel expressed how it was "just fun to be back" and racing with everyone. His unmatched determination and persistence while recognizing what his body needs is an inspiration to the future generation, and things will surely get better for Dressel from here on out.



NBA In-Season Tournament Predictions and Analysis



The NBA In-Season Tournament lasts from November 3 to December 9.

ZACHARY YUAN

By the time this article comes out, the winners of the In-Season tournament will have already been revealed. Therefore, to keep the predictions fair, this article will be split into two parts. The first part will be my predictions of the In-Season tournament semi-finals, which I wrote on December 7, 2023. The second part will be correcting my predictions, which I wrote on December 10, 2023 after the finals. But to start things off, here's a brief explanation of the new In-Season tournament.

What is the in-season tournament?

According to the official NBA website, the In-Season tournament is a tournament held during the normal NBA season to keep the players competitive and get the fans engaged. The tournament is composed of two stages, the group stage and the knockout stage. In the group stage, all 30 NBA teams have been randomly drawn into groups of five within their conference based on win-loss records from the 2022-23 regular season. Each team will play four designated Group Play games on "Tournament

Nights" — one game against each opponent in its group, with two games at home and two on the road. Eight teams will advance to the Knockout Rounds: the team with the best standing in Group Play games in each of the six groups and two "wild cards" (the team from each conference with the best record in Group Play games that finished second in its group). The Knockout Rounds will be single-elimination games in the Quarterfinals, Semi-finals, and Championship. The qualifying teams will compete for a prize pool and the new In-Season Tournament trophy, the NBA Cup.

Semi-finals 1: Indiana Pacers vs Milwaukee Bucks

Looking at this match-up, the Bucks are arguably the stronger, more favored team, being second-seeded in the eastern conference with a 15-7 record. The Bucks have superstar duo Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard, as well as many reliable players like Brook Lopez, Kris Middleton, and Malik Beasley.

On the other hand, the Pacers are looking strong coming into this game. Having just pulled off one of the biggest upsets in the tournament by beating

the first-seeded Boston Celtics and robbing fans of a Bucks versus Celtics match-up, Tyrese Haliburton is playing like, arguably, the best point guard in the league. Even though the Pacers are sixth in the table with a 12-8 record, the Bucks have played two more games than the Pacers. Let's not forget the other players on the Pacers, notably Buddy Hield and Myles Turner, who have solidly contributed to the team. Therefore, with the Pacers riding a high off the Celtics win, I predict the Pacers pulling off a narrow upset in a high-scoring, exciting game.

Winner: Indiana Pacers

Semi-finals 2: Los Angeles Lakers vs New Orleans Pelicans

The Lakers are definitely the favorites to win this game and even the tournament. They are currently fourth in the Western Conference, with a record of 14-9. Going into this game, the Lakers have just narrowly edged out the Phoenix Suns, with LeBron James playing 40 minutes with 31 points, not to mention Anthony Davis and Austin Reaves with solid contributions. They have a strong starting five and a very reliable bench. They also have an incredible defense,

with Davis and James both doing a great job.

Moving on to the Pelicans, they are currently eighth in the Western Conference with a record of 12-11. The Pelicans topped their In-Season tournament group and edged out the Sacramento Kings in the quarter-finals. Some solid performers on this team are Brandon Ingram, CJ McCollum, and, most importantly, a healthy Zion Williamson. However, the Pelicans are far from their incredible run at the start of the 2022 season, and Williamson doesn't look like his old self anymore. Looking at this match-up, I have the Lakers winning by a blowout due to their strong defense, as the Pelicans team just doesn't have enough fuel to beat them.

Winner: Los Angeles Lakers

Finals: Indiana Pacers vs Los Angeles Lakers

This will be an incredibly tense and exciting matchup, with both teams coming into the game strong. Going into this game, the Pacers have defeated both the first and second seed in the eastern conference, while the Lakers have won by blowing out the Pelicans in style. This game will be a very tense matchup, with

the scoring very close throughout the match. I predict the Pacers will pull away in the fourth quarter thanks to some clutch threes by Tyrese Haliburton. The Lakers won't have enough firepower to defeat the Pacers, and Haliburton will score north of 40 points. I have the Pacers winning the first-ever In-Season tournament and, more importantly, their first-ever trophy. Additionally, thanks to his dominant performance throughout the tournament, I predict Tyrese Haliburton will win the MVP.

Winner: Indiana Pacers

Winner of the 2023 In-Season Tournament: Los Angeles Lakers

So...my predictions were right until the finals.

Why were my predictions wrong in the finals?

First, I didn't account for the Lakers' defense. The Pacers have a relatively small starting five, and the gigantic Lakers' defense was too much for them. Anthony Davis was a beast throughout the game, ending with 41 points and 20 rebounds while playing an incredible 41 minutes. Austin Reaves



In-Season Tournament Predictions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

balled out in the first half with 22 points, and LeBron James was still as strong as ever at 38 years old, with 24 points and 11 rebounds. The Lakers' strategy throughout the game was to double-team Tyrese Haliburton. They were also lucky, as the Pacers couldn't knock down crucial threes in the fourth quarter. When looking at the Lakers floor, it was significantly bigger than the Pacers, with the Lakers

playing both 6'10" Davis and 6'7" Cam Reddish. After Myles Turner fouled out for the Pacers with 7 minutes to go, the only spark in the team was T.J. McConnell and Tyrese Haliburton. Just to show how the Laker's defense has affected the Pacers, the Pacers have scored at least 104 points in every game they've played this season and 105 in every game Tyrese Haliburton has played. With a little less than three minutes remaining, the Lakers have held them to 99. And even though they scored 109 points

in the end, this was the best defense that anyone has played against the Pacers so far this season. The Lakers have put an end to the fairytale run of the Pacers, winning the inaugural NBA Cup, and I guess the Pacers will have to continue waiting for their first-ever trophy.

Also, I wanted to point out that James won the In-Season tournament MVP. I respect that, but I would have loved to see Davis win the MVP instead, as without him, the Lakers could have never overcome the Pacers.

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Is Shohei Ohtani Worth \$700 Million?

TEO CHOI

On December 9th, 2023, Shohei Ohtani announced via Instagram a record-breaking 10-year contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers for a whopping \$700 million dollars. Another surprising element of this contract was that \$680 million of that \$700 million was deferred until ten years later.

Before determining if the contract was worth it or not, we must compare it with other deals. According to the Richest Contracts in all of Sports, Shohei Ohtani leads this list with a comfortable \$26 Million. Of those contracts, you can see that most of them are from soccer: superstars like Lionel Messi, Kareem Benzema, and Cristiano Ronaldo. Another list, the Biggest North American Contracts, states that Ohtani leads the 2nd biggest contract, Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes' 10-year \$500 million, by a cool \$200 million. Finally, in the Biggest MLB Contracts ever, you can see that he leads that list by \$280 million.

What does Shohei Ohtani bring to the table? First of all, he's a monster on offense. This season, he won the American League MVP, with dominating stats such as a .304 batting average, 44 home runs, and a league-leading 1.066 OPS. This alone would have gotten him a large sum of money, but

he has more in store; he pitches and pitches well. In his last full season of pitching, he recorded 15 wins and 9 losses with a 2.33 era and 1.01 WHIP. This season, though injury-riddled and cut-short, he recorded 10 wins, and 5 losses, with a 3.14 era and 1.06 WHIP. Third, and quite underrated, is the influence he brings. As a Japanese player, he brings the entirety of not just Japan, which has 21.26 million active viewers, but most of Asia's interest to the Dodgers. Furthermore, his ability to be both an exceptional hitter and batter brings a lot of attention to how he plays, but also the team he plays. All this combined creates a big plus factor for the Dodgers organization.

However, it's not all smooth sailing. There are still certain uncertainties that should be considered. First off, his injury history. Of the last 5 years he played, he tore his UCL (Ulnar Collateral Ligament) twice while also receiving one of the most degrading surgeries in the Tommy John Surgery. He is also not expected to be able to pitch until the 2025 season due to current arm injuries. Another aspect we must factor in is his age. Ohtani is currently 29 years old. That means his contract will end at age 39. Who knows the production he will be able to maintain by then? An example of a failed contract due to age is that of Albert Pujols. His age



Shohei Ohtani (left) conversing with new teammate Mookie Betts (right) after Ohtani gets on base.

caught up to him, and he lost against time. Furthermore, pitching and batting simultaneously will only deter him from maintaining constant production.

So, what would be an acceptable and reasonable contract? In my opinion, it is inevitable that the deal would be unprecedented. But with age and toll in consideration, a length of 8 years would be acceptable. The trend of the MLB players signing lengthy contracts, 8 years, does not seem too over-the-top. Also, \$70 million a year would be a stretch. An annual salary of \$60 million would be alright. Thus,

creating an 8-year \$480 million contract.

Finally, going back to the deferral on his current contract, the one that pays him \$680 million over the span of the ten years after his ten-year contract, there are some interesting aspects to it. One may ask, why would Ohtani and the Dodgers agree on this crazy clause? This clause is, in fact, a win-win deal. The Dodgers get to save money, a massive \$68 million, and can splurge on other superstars. Also, the remaining \$680 million is without interest, meaning the value will go down quite a bit. For Ohtani, getting his \$680

million later, although with inflation, is also quite beneficial. People may ask, is \$2 million a year not too little for his MVP caliber production? However, Ohtani also gets tens of millions from endorsements alone, so no worries there. But why take the money later? This is because, by the time he takes the \$680 million, he'll most likely be retired and living in Japan, where no US state tax or federal tax applies. For Ohtani, that value is actually much more worth it.



UC Berkeley Wins NCAA Men's D1 Water Polo Championship Over UCLA

JEFFREY LIM

In a thrilling display of skill and determination, the University of California, Berkeley, emerged victorious in the NCAA Division I water polo championship against UCLA. The highly anticipated match showcased the talent and resilience of both teams, but ultimately, it was the Golden Bears who claimed the title.

UC Berkeley's water polo team, known for their strategic prowess and cohesive teamwork, as well as key players like Nikolaos Papanikolaou and Max Casabella, demonstrated their dominance throughout the championship game. The players exhibited exceptional agility and precision in the water,

maneuvering past their opponents with remarkable skill. The championship clash reached its peak in the final moments as both teams fought their hardest for the title. The tension in the arena was intense, with fans on the edge of their seats while players were trying to best each other. In a heart-stopping turn of events, Berkeley secured a decisive goal, unleashing triumph among their players and fans alike.

The Golden Bears' celebration marked the culmination of a season-long journey filled with hard work, dedication, and unyielding spirit. This victory for UC Berkeley was not just a triumph for the players and coaching staff; it was a testament to the university's commitment to excellence in sports. The water polo

championship win solidified Berkeley's status as a powerhouse in collegiate athletics, adding another illustrious chapter to the university's storied history. As the cheers of victory echoed through the arena, UC Berkeley's water polo

team basked in the glory of their achievement. The championship win not only showcased their athletic prowess but also served as a source of inspiration for aspiring athletes within the university and beyond. The Golden Bears' triumph

in the NCAA Division I water polo championship will undoubtedly be marked in the archive of sports history, showcasing the indomitable will and spirit of UC Berkeley's athletes.



UC Berkeley wins third straight NCAA Men's Water Polo Championship.

The NBA's Best Starting Five May Not Be Who You Think

BEN DEGANI

What makes a strong NBA team? Well, that's not a very simple question to answer. In fact, I would go as far as saying that there are several key components to a championship roster: chemistry, good coaching, as well as a constructed offensive and defensive scheme, and even a little luck. However, above all is a starting five that is nothing short of symphonic. A harmony of players that mixes together talent, experience, and playing roles that need to be filled. I closely examined each and every NBA team in this 2023 to 2024 season, and I can tell you with 100 percent certainty that I found my pick.

The best place to start

would be with our honorable mention — a team that shows a lot of potential but doesn't quite have it figured out yet. For this, the New Orleans Pelicans (NOLA) fit the bill. Starting things with NOLA, they have a great core of guys. Zion Williamson has finally decided to play basketball and is doing very well, averaging 22-5-5 with fairly good efficiency. Coming off the trade with the Portland Trail Blazers, C.J. McCollum is having one of his best seasons to date, with increases in assists, rebounds and steals by good margins and consistency in scoring. Herbert Jones and Jonas Valanciunas are also very solid role players who will occasionally step up and consistently carry their weight. Bringing it all together is all-star and most improved player Brandon Ingram,

having so far his greatest season to date averaging 23-5-5. So, where do these guys go wrong? They seem to really have it together until taking a closer look. I'm not the first to say that Zion looks like a shell of his collegiate self. His double chins are nearing the double digits, and although stats back him up, it looks like he struggles to get up and down the court, rarely seeing any bursts of athleticism on the offensive and defensive end. In addition, McCollum suffered a lung injury and missed extended time, only making his return recently, which halted their offense quite a bit. He is also having efficiency issues, with McCollum being 40 percent from the field and 36 percent from beyond the arc. All that being said, the blueprint is laid out,

and I can see the currently ninth seeded Pelicans climb back up to seven or sixth — potentially making deep runs in the future.

Before moving on to the best starting five in the league, it's worth mentioning the Los Angeles Clippers. If you told me in 2017 that James Harden, Russell Westbrook, Kawhi Leonard, and Paul George would be on the same team, I would've questioned your reasoning. But alas, it's 2023, and we're seeing this roster straight from 2K come to fruition. Now the glaring drawback is that all of these players are ball dominant shooting guards or small forwards who are way beyond their primes. But let this still serve as living proof that anything is possible.

Now, after reviewing each of the top teams in the league, the best starting five in the NBA is the Boston Celtics. Even if you don't consider yourself a big NBA fan, it shouldn't be much of a surprise. The team has no weaknesses. MVP caliber player Jason Tatum coupled with all-star Jaylen Brown, have been one of the most high scoring and electrifying duos in the NBA, and their chemistry on the court is very evident. New additions Kristaps Porzingus and Jrue Holiday complement the lineup and each other perfectly. Kristaps Porzingus lives up to his nickname "the Unicorn" not only for his towering figure but his distinctive playstyle. Averaging 19-6-2 with 55 percent from

the field, Jrue Holiday is also the best perimeter defender in the league right now and an absolute necessity to any championship roster. He did it with Giannis, and it seems history is bound to repeat itself, as he's averaging 13-7-5 with a steal and a block a game.

Furthermore, Derrick White is an underrated role player who has shown several times that he can step up, averaging nearly 50 percent from the three on multiple instances. While Jayson Tatum continues to show improvement with an average of 28-9-4, he hasn't quite grasped the championship trophy yet. Along the same lines, Jaylen Brown is an excellent second option averaging 22-5-3, but has failed to win a championship.

Despite this, not much else can be said against this Celtics team. On paper, they have it all this year. Talent, chemistry, and a flawless balance of playstyles and skillsets. However, one issue that the Celtics need to overcome to make the final push for gold is efficiency. No player is averaging more than 60 percent true shooting percentage, an advanced statistic that measures a player's efficiency. But time and time again, the NBA shows that simply having the numbers on your side isn't enough, and although Boston is No.1 in the East at 16-5, only time will tell if they can finally bring it home in the postseason.



The Boston Celtics' starting five for the 2023-24 NBA Season.



European Championship 2024 Group Predictions

NAREK HAMBARDZUMYAN

With the upcoming European Championships in six months, it is that time again. The predictions. A time when people try and give their take on what the outcome of the tournament will be in the end. Some obvious takes, some controversial takes, and some outright ridiculous takes will always come up, but I will try to come up with something that will hopefully make some sense.

Group A: Germany, Hungary, Scotland, Switzerland

With the German hosts gaining instant qualification, they have been drawn in Group A alongside a quite competitive group with Hungary, Scotland, and Switzerland. Germany should be the clear favorite to go top in this group; however, a question for second place can be any one of these other countries.

Scotland had an incredible qualifying campaign, with Scott McTominay leading the way to make qualification. Hungary took first in their group, and the Swiss took second under Romania. I think it will go down to the wire, but I will back Scotland to make it out of the group. They fought off Norway with Erling Haaland and Martin Odegaard to qualify and only

got second to Spain.

Prediction: 1. Germany 2. Scotland 3. Hungary 4. Switzerland

Group B: Spain, Albania, Croatia, Italy

Certainly living up to its name, the "Group of Death," it consists of the powerhouse countries of Spain, Croatia, and Italy. Albania has qualified for their first-ever Euros, and it is quite unfortunate to end up in a group like this.

Croatia has been excellent in recent times, with a third-place finish in this last World Cup and runners-up in the UEFA Nations League, losing to fellow group member Spain. Spain has an incredible young squad filled with stamina and creativity, so I'm going to say they will top the group. Second place is a lot more difficult, but I think Croatia have that sort of spark in their team. They got second in their group, one point behind an underdog Turkey, while Italy barely scraped by on goal difference against Ukraine in the qualifiers. It is worth mentioning Italy and Ukraine played each other in the last match of the qualifiers, where Ukraine was not given a penalty in the last moments of the game. Additionally, Croatia has that experience throughout their squad, so I think they will make it through and knock out the current champions.



Prediction: 1. Spain 2. Croatia 3. Italy 4. Albania

Group C: England, Denmark, Slovenia, Serbia

Another talent-filled group, with last year's runners-ups England, a Denmark team that reached the semi-finals of the last Euros, and a star-studded Slovenia and Serbia squad.

I think undoubtedly England should go top, as they are one of the heavy favorites going into this tournament, and I think second place also seems pretty obvious. The Denmark team that was once semi-finalists is far from what they are now. They are an aging team and no longer have it in them to win. Additionally, I just don't think Slovenia has enough to cause an upset

and go through against a rising Serbia team. A strike partnership of Aleksandar Mitrovic and Dusan Vlahovic seems unstoppable, and they are surrounded by an incredible midfield with the likes of Dusan Tadic and Filip Kostic.

Prediction: 1. England 2. Serbia 3. Slovenia 4. Denmark

Group D: France, Austria, Netherlands, Poland/Wales/Finland/Estonia

These last three groups haven't been decided yet because there are play-off qualifications still left to go, but it doesn't look like it will affect Group D, as all of the countries that could qualify don't inspire me too much.

France, who were 2022 World Cup finalists, will

definitely go top, and World Cup quarter-finalists Netherlands will be behind them, as they only lost out of penalties to the eventual winner Argentina. Out of the four teams that could qualify, I don't think any of them have a chance of moving on past the group stage, so this group turned out to be fairly simple, as Austria doesn't have the squad depth that France and the Netherlands have.

Prediction: 1. France 2. Netherlands 3. Austria 4. Poland/Wales/Finland/Estonia

Group E: Belgium, Romania, Slovakia, Bosnia/Ukraine/Israel/Iceland

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Superstar Juan Soto Traded To New York Yankees

SEBASTIÁN VERMUT

After an MLB Insider reporter leaked a trade that included many Yankees players in exchange for superstars Juan Soto and Trent Grisham, the baseball world immediately took all attention off Shohei Ohtani and Yoshinobu Yamamoto. The trade for young Soto was a long-time goal of the Yankees, and it just took a disappointing season from both the San Diego Padres and the Yankees to incentivize the trade.

The trade involved five pitchers from the Yankees, including MLB's No. 99 prospect Drew Thorpe. This trade immediately affects the Yankees' lineup, adding

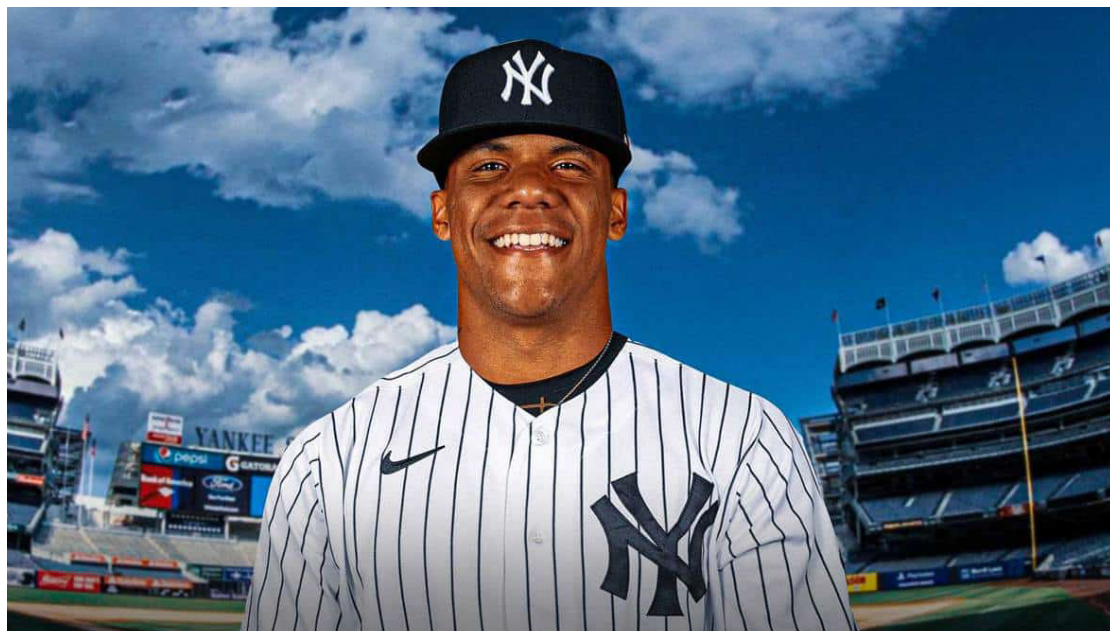
a much-needed lefty power hitter to take advantage of Yankee Stadium's short right field, which gives lefties a huge advantage. Along with the new Alex Verdugo trade, the top of their lineup looks much more powerful than in previous years: Gleyber Torres, then Juan Soto, then Aaron Judge. MLB.com named this trio the 4th best in the major leagues. This new team is now one of the few that could compete with Ohtani and Bett's LA Dodgers.

Now, what this trade means for the Padres is uncertain. After a huge disappointment of a season last year, the Padres must rethink their strategy. Free agent additions such as Cody Bellinger would still be possible after the se-

vere decline in market cap usage. This trade is still bad news for the Padres as they have lost a Hall-of-Fame caliber hitter. This being said, the move is very

beneficial to the Yankees. Their odds of winning the American League pennant more than doubled. As long as Carlos Rodon pitches the way we know he

can, and the Yankees lineup stays healthy, we could easily see a pennant winning team. This team is unstoppable while healthy.



Juan Soto in a Yankees Uniform.



Kevin Durant Enters Top 10 All-Time Scoring List

HARRY MURPHY

There have been dozens, hundreds even, of amazing scorers in the history of the NBA, but only a few have been able to keep up that production over the course of a long career. That is what makes the NBA's all-time scoring list such an accomplishment; it distinguishes the great scorers from the transcendent ones.

A trend you notice when looking at a sample of the top 15 scorers in the NBA is that all but two were all-around players rather than just dynamic scorers. Inevitably, a player's scoring ability will decline as they get up in age and pass their prime, so in order to stay in starring roles, players with incredible longevity need to have all-around games. Take Carmelo Anthony as an example; he maintained his scoring ability

for an extra long time, so he finds himself ninth all-time on this list, but right as his scoring was not at a superstar level, he flared out of the NBA. A player who only offers scoring to a team is not a valuable player unless their scoring can make up for all of their other faults. This is what makes entering the top ten all-time scorers magical. The all-time scoring list is more than an indication of all-time scorers, it is an indication of the greatest players of all time.

Kevin Durant passed Moses Malone in a 119-111 loss to the Denver Nuggets to enter the top ten. He scored a little less than 50 percent of his points with the Thunder and has scored the rest with the Warriors, Nets, and Suns. Durant is arguably the NBA's most dynamic scorer of all time, scoring from all three levels at nearly seven feet tall. He is a trailblazer for the next generation of



Kevin Durant is a two-time NBA Champion and one-time MVP.

basketball, with more tall players with guard skills entering the NBA every year.

The question is, how far can Durant take this? He has dealt with injuries throughout his career, notably a broken foot and torn Achilles, so it is hard to imagine that he will

play until his early 40s. However, Durant is quoted saying, "I want to play until I can't no more," so he clearly has no intention of retiring at his current age of 35. Durant's best year saw him score 2600 points, but now, with injuries, those years are far behind him. A fair

projection of around 1500 points for five to six more years could boost him into the top five and maybe even challenge Karl Malone for that third spot.

What Makes The Browns Defense So Lethal?

JOHN MORAN

Through the first fourteen weeks of this year's NFL season, the Browns' defense has been dominant. The defense's stoutness is the only reason the team has stayed above a .500 win rate in a season when a dominant offense has been led by a multitude of quarterbacks. The team has hopped from their \$250 million flop quarterback Deshaun Watson to the 38 year old

veteran Joe Flacco, who they signed right off the couch (and has actually played just fine). But what makes this defense so strong? What makes it able to allow the lowest number of yards per game in the league, at only 263.0 yards per game?

The first answer is obvious: Myles Garrett. The four-time Pro Bowler is a force in his own right. His 13 sacks place him seventh in the league, and his 94.3 pass rush grade on PFF is the best in football.

His 71.0 run defense grade also places him in the quartile of edge rushers. Garrett is the engine of the Brown's solid defensive line.

But there are other massive contributors outside of Garrett's success. The Browns also hold the title of best-passing defense, allowing only 159.7 yards per game and 16 passing touchdowns. While the pass rush

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Myles Garrett is the centerpiece of an outstanding Cleveland Browns defense.

Caleb Williams Expected To Go #1 In 2024 NFL Draft

ZACH GODSEY

As the 2024 NFL draft starts to draw nearer, many NFL fans, especially those whose teams have struggled in this past season, are wondering who leads the race for the No. 1 overall pick of the 2024 draft. The most blatant No. 1 option is the University of Southern California's (USC) quarterback, Caleb Williams. Williams has been a consistent big-play maker for the last three years at USC. He can run the ball in on his own while also throwing a seamless deep ball. His ability to improvise and make a play off of the script is highly praised and demonstrates his readiness for the NFL. While his nine fumbles in this most recent season raised concerns about his ability to protect the ball and take hits, his overall track record with ball security has been strong. He is one of the strongest draft prospects since Joe Burrow in 2020 and Trevor Lawrence in

2021. While Caleb Williams is the obvious answer, I'd like to highlight a few other standout players who are also invaluable. Others have shown enormous upside, such as Marvin Harrison Jr., son of former Colts legend Marvin Harrison Sr., who is a star wide receiver for the Ohio State Buckeyes. He earned the 2023 "Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year" and was just the third wide receiver ever to win the award. Standing at 6'4", 200 pounds, he is surprisingly nimble with flawless route running and technique. His hands are of WR1 caliber, and his body control allows him to make the catch in the toughest situations.

Another top prospect is North Carolina quarterback Drake Maye. Maye has shown that his arm potential is at the NFL level, slinging hard throws with speed and accuracy. He is a pure and smooth pocket passer

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Tottenham Hotspur Fall to Fifth Place in the Premier League After Loss Against West Ham

ALEX LEE

Following the conclusion of Matchweek 10 on October 29, Tottenham Hotspur were two points clear of Arsenal and Manchester City at the top of the Premier League. Six games later, they have fallen to fifth place. Disappointing losses against Chelsea, Wolves, Aston Villa, and West Ham have resulted in the Spurs taking only four points from a possible 18. These points came from their 3-3 draw against Manchester City and 4-1 win over Newcastle. Over this poor stretch, the team set an unwanted record. They became the first in Premier League history to lose three consecutive home games despite having a 1-0 lead in each match.

Their sudden downfall

can be attributed to long-term injuries to key players. Their current injured list includes Ivan Perisic, James Maddison, Rodrigo Bentancur, Micky van de Ven, Ryan Sesessgon, Eric Dier, and more. Many of these players became key starters for Spurs over the early part of the season, such as James Maddison, who provided eight goal contributions in 11 games before suffering a severe ankle injury. Micky van de Ven was also having a stellar season, quickly becoming one of the first names in the starting XI following his move from Wolfsburg in Germany. These injuries forced the Spurs to field an unfamiliar team that lacked conviction and chemistry. The spontaneous combination of inexperienced players like Destiny Udogie and Brennan Johnson, age 21 and 22, respectively,



Tottenham are the first team in Premier League history to score the first goal in five successive matches without winning any of them.

mixed with older players like Ben Davies, led to a team that desperately needed familiarity and identity.

Moving ahead, Spurs and their fans can look

forward to the return of Maddison and van de Ven, who are both expected to return shortly into the new year. Considering the returns of these players along with their

current position in the table, the team should remain hopeful about their chances of competing for a Champions League spot and potential Premier League title.

PWHL League To Feature Canadian and American Teams

ANNABEL CURRY

In late June of 2023, the PHF (Premier Hockey Federation) and the PWHPA (Professional Women's Hockey Players Association) came together to form a new league, the PWHL (Professional Women's Hockey League). This union was formed by the two competing women's leagues under multiple ownerships, including tennis legend Billie Jean King.

The new league will begin with six original franchises, located in Boston, Minneapolis St-paul, New York, Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa. While a single league has many positive connotations, professional women's hockey is going from ten teams between two leagues to six teams overall. All of the PHF contracts were voided, and player rep-

resentation comes exclusively from former PWHPA players,

The league released team names but has announced a reconsideration after backlash. The league's jerseys originally faced a lot of backlash for their simplicity, but the league has stated that they are temporary for this inaugural season. Fans have a lot of hope for the league, but there is a lot to say about the popularity of the former PHF franchises. For example, the Boston Pride was a popular team that sold out games and had consistent merchandise sales. As the PWHL is a merger, one might suggest utilizing the fanbase and marketing of an already popular team that has a great name and multiple jerseys.

Before the January inauguration, the PWHL held scrimmages in early December, where

tickets were sold, and rules were tweaked, such as penalty kill icing. The games have already become a hot ticket, as Toronto season tickets sold out in two days. The first game will ring in the new year on January 1, 2024, with Toronto playing New York.

A 72-game schedule is set from January 2024 through May 2024, with a break in between during late March for the World Championship. For the NHL All-Star weekend in Toronto, the league has a three-on-three exhibition game scheduled, as well as a match between

Toronto and Minnesota on February 3, 2024. Depending on the person, a fresh start may or may not be what women's hockey needs, but this new league will be exciting and hopefully profitable enough to stay in one league.



Hilary Knight will captain the PWHL Boston women's team.

What Makes The Browns Defense So Lethal?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

of Garrett is a factor, Martin Emerson Jr. has 4 interceptions, and Denzel Ward has had a similarly strong season in his own right. Ward is a two-time Pro Bowler

and is likely to return to a high level after battling injuries last year. Greg Newsome II has also been a stand-out corner.

Finally, their recent defensive draft picks have been excellent.

Newsome and Emerson Jr. were first round and third round picks, respectively. Furthermore, safety Grant Delpit has been an excellent addition. These draftees, under the tutelage of the aggres-

sive defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz, have created a young, powerful defense.

The Browns have been excellent defensively, and it will be exciting to watch that side of the ball in Cleve-

land as the offense languishes. The GOAT can't wait to see what Cleveland will cook up next.



Euro 2024 Group Predictions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

This group is very unique, as it doesn't have a clear favorite to go through. The Belgium squad is aging, but the other qualified teams don't necessarily have the best squad in terms of depth and individual quality. The teams that have the potential to qualify also don't have the experience or quality to make it past the group stage.

It is hard to say, but I think Romania will top this group solely because their qualifying run was very good, and they definitely have a decent chance against the other teams in this group. I would also think that Belgium should get second; however, I think that Ukraine could get second if they qualify because they have a pretty good squad that could even get them to that top spot. But for the time being, I will say Romania will go first, with Belgium behind them. Slovakia also

doesn't have the quality of players in their squad to go through and compete with the likes of France and England.

Prediction: 1. Romania 2. Belgium 3. Slovakia 4. Bosnia/Ukraine/Israel/Iceland

Group F: Portugal, Turkey, Czechia, Georgia/Luxembourg/Greece/Kazakhstan

This group is fairly easier than the last one, with two clear favorites to go through. Turkey beat out Croatia to top

their group, and Portugal has been one of the top teams in recent years. Czechia just doesn't have that type of squad for this tournament, which was shown through their qualifying, where they got second to an underwhelming Albania side, and the other teams that could qualify don't have a realistic chance.

The question is for first and second place, which can go either way. I think an upset will happen, with Turkey going top and Portugal coming in behind.

Prediction: 1. Turkey 2. Portugal 3. Czechia 4. Georgia/Luxembourg/Greece/Kazakhstan

Conclusion

These are my predictions for the group stage of the upcoming Euros. They will draw the knockout rounds with the results from the groups, so I can't predict what will happen in the long run, so we will just have to wait for the summertime.

Caleb Williams To Go #1 In 2024 NFL Draft

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

who will fit into most franchises without a problem. Right now, he is the only one of these three draft prospects to have formally declared for the 2024 NFL draft. However, it looks increasingly likely that Caleb Williams will declare soon as well. Marvin Harrison Jr. appears to be undecided at the moment, still waiting to see whether he will look to take his career to the next level in the NFL.

Given all this talk

about the No. 1 overall draft prospect, it raises the question: what team would this player most likely go to? At the moment, it looks as if the Bears will have the No. 1 overall draft pick for the 2024 draft. While they took quarterback Justin Fields just three years ago with the 11th overall pick, he has yet to show that he is a good fit for the Bears. They have also struggled at the quarterback position with Mitchell Trubisky, who was replaced as well. This has led to many consecutive dis-



Caleb Williams is a capable playmaker who leads the race for the No. 1 overall draft pick.

appointing seasons for the Bears, as they once again find themselves at the top of the draft order. However, may-

be all that they need is a big-time playmaker who can step up and make a change in the team for the better,

leading them to a successful season.

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