

Lionel Messi Wins Ballon d'Or For Eighth Time

NICOLAAS KRAMER

Lionel Messi, an Argentine football legend, has once again etched his name in football history by winning the Ballon d'Or for the eighth time. The Ballon d'Or is the pinnacle of awards to win as a soccer player and to do so eight times is phenomenal. Winning it this year grants him a new record, becoming "the first MLS-based player to claim the coveted prize," though "the triumph comes largely on the back of his exploits with his country in Qatar." This historic performance displays Messi's international class, even at 36 years old, and challenges the myth that players who transfer to the MLS lose their competitiveness.

While winning the award, Messi proudly remarked, "I couldn't imagine having the career that I've had. Everything that

I've achieved." His immense journey started when he was a passionate young football player from Rosario, Argentina, and has since become a legend in the sport. Even before Monday's ceremony in Paris, no player had ever won the Ballon d'Or more times than he did. He first won it in 2009 and then again in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019, and 2021. These extraordinary achievements highlight the consistency of his football career.

However, what truly reaches the audience is his humility and dedication to the sport, and it is those traits that will make his legacy endure for generations to come. An example of his humility can be seen at the awarding ceremony, where he respected a player who came before him. "During his acceptance speech, Messi made a point of wishing Argentina countryman Diego Maradona happy birthday." His rev-

erence for Maradona, a soccer icon who came before him and wore the same jersey, shows his genuine appreciation for those who paved the way before him.

In winning the Ballon d'Or for the eighth time, Messi not only made history but has reignited the

age-old debate of who the greatest footballer of all time is. His name is almost always mentioned in the same breath as other legends like Pele and Diego Maradona, and his eighth Ballon d'Or win certainly strengthens his case for that title. The comparisons and de-

bates will continue, but there is no denying that Messi's consistency and longevity at the highest level of the sport set him apart, making his legacy an enduring testament to the beauty and brilliance of football.



The Immediate Impact of the 2023 Draft on the NHL

ANNABEL CURRY

As the NHL finishes the first month of the 2023-24 season, it is important to reflect on changes in the league. One of the brightest changes this year has been the new class of rookies who have joined the league. With fourth overall pick Will Smith playing the year with Boston College (shameless plug, go read my article on the relationship between college hockey and development), this leaves Connor Bedard, Adam Fantilli, and Leo Carlsson. All three have made their NHL debut,

and this article will focus on how they have adjusted to their new teams, especially in comparison with last year's draft.

Taken first in the draft, Connor Bedard was described as a generational talent who could save any team from the bottom of the standings. Drafted by the Chicago Blackhawks, Bedard made his debut against his childhood idol Sidney Crosby and finished the game with a point to aid the Blackhawks' 4-2 win. Bedard scored his first goal against the defending Vezina winner, Linus Ullmark, and the Boston Bruins, who are coming

off the best season in NHL history. Through 11 games, Bedard leads the Blackhawks in goals, with five shots on goal with 34. There is no question whether the rookie has fit right into the league.

Taken second in the draft to the Anaheim Ducks was Leo Carlsson. Due to injury, Carlsson started later than Bedard and Fantilli, but his presence was immediately felt with a goal in his first game against respected goaltender and Boston University alum Jake Oettinger. Carlsson is joining a young Ducks core that struggled last year but has found its stride

since. Alongside Mason McTavish, Troy Terry, Ryan Strome, and Trevor Zegras, as well as consistent play from goalies, the Ducks may find themselves not at the bottom of the standings!

Third in the draft to the Columbus Blue Jackets was Michigan star Adam Fantilli. Fantilli is a physical player, which has already begun to show through his young career. In a preseason game, he was hit hard but got right back up, which showed a lot of promise. He has begun to throw big hits around, including against Carter Verhaeghe of the Florida Panthers. However, Fantilli is more than the weight he can throw around. In 12 games, he has six points, and he is already playing alongside Dimitri Voronkov and Kirill Marchenko on the second line.

In comparison to the 2022 draft picks, first round picks have totaled 109 games between seven players, half of which were played by the first overall pick in 2022, Juraj Slafkovsky. In comparison to Bedard, Slafkovsky has 12 points in 51 games, giving him 0.24 points per game. Within this first month of the season, four members of the 2023 first round draft have played, totaling 37

games. In comparison to Slafkovsky, Bedard has 0.63 points per game and is only heating up. This comparison is not to say Slafkovsky or the 2022 Draft is necessarily a bust, but to showcase how stacked Bedard and the rest of the 2023 Draft are. Members of the most recent draft have quickly adapted to the NHL level, while 2022 Draft members, for the most part, have taken a little more time to develop. Regardless, the most important part of the draft is not necessarily the first couple of years. After all, New Jersey Devils star Jack Hughes took a couple of years to develop but is now a top player in the league.

Overall, the top three picks in the 2023 NHL Draft have shown that they deserved to be picked. However, they are not a Calder lock-in. Rookies like Luke Hughes, Devon Levi, Matthew Knies, and Matthew Poitras all have proven they all have potential. In a group of rookies that have this level of talent, it is impressive that the younger group of recent draft picks have made such a dent.

All views and opinions are my own and do not represent the National Hockey League.



The top three picks in the 2023 NHL Draft.



LeBron James vs. Michael Jordan: Debate or Fact?

ISAAC TIOMKIN

Who is the greatest of all time? This is the question that haunts every sports fan, tears apart friendships, and causes uncles to smash their fists against the table at Thanksgiving dinners. For basketball, this debate usually comes down to two individuals: LeBron James and Michael Jordan. Old heads will die for their stance on MJ be-

ing the greatest, whereas new fans will turn into keyboard warriors to defend LeBron. I will try to answer this question here, despite how daunting and impossible this task may be.

The most basic statistic to look at is career averages. Michael Jordan has averaged 30.1 points, 6.2 rebounds, 5.3 assists, 2.3 steals, 0.8 blocks, and 2.7 turnovers. Compared to LeBron's 27.2 points, 7.5 rebounds, 7.3 assists, 1.0 blocks, 1.7 steals,

and 3.6 turnovers, it really cannot be said who is better overall. Here is where a stat known as box plus-minus comes in. This statistic is based on every single contribution a player has made, whether negative or positive, such as a defensive stop, an assist, or even a screen. The more positive someone is, the better game they have. LeBron James has an absurdly impressive +8.75 score; Michael Jordan has a +9.21 score.

Another statistic that can be used to demonstrate how crucial a player was to a team winning a certain game is win shares per forty-eight minutes. Michael Jordan has a groundbreaking average of 0.2505 win shares per forty-eight minutes, meaning that he contributed to just over a quarter of his team's success throughout his career. Seven spots down, at eighth place, is LeBron James with an average of 0.2259 win shares per forty-eight minutes. Once again, Michael Jordan seems to have put LeBron in his place.

One argument that LeBron fans may use is his ridiculous longevity. Although LeBron may not have been as successful in individual seasons, near the end of his career, he is essentially still in his prime, averaging 28.9 points, 6.8 assists, and 8.3 rebounds just last year. Fortunately for the King James fans, this argument is undeniable. LeBron has the most points in NBA history and has the fourth most assists in NBA history. His long-term dominance in the NBA is utterly undeniable.

Michael Jordan fans, don't lose hope. Greatness doesn't equal dominance, longevity, or even how good someone is. Influence has to be taken into account. Before "Black Jesus (Jordan)" joined the Chicago Bulls, they were a franchise ridden with poverty and consumed with drug addiction. Jordan's lights-out performances inspired others to watch his talent. Not only did this help the Bulls, but it also gave the NBA a more international audience. Parisians and Beijingers began to chant his name throughout the streets; ten years prior, there was no semblance of organized basketball in their minds. Although LeBron James's name is known throughout the world, he has not been the same ambassador for basketball that MJ was.

The overt influence that Michael had, to me, gives him the edge over LeBron James. He inspired hundreds of millions to pursue the sport of basketball and is arguably the reason that we see such worldwide dominance and passion for the sport today.



Fan-made image of LeBron playing against Michael Jordan.

Andy Murray Is "Not Enjoying" Tennis Anymore, Time to Retire?

JEFF SHEN

On September 10, 2012, tennis fans from around the globe gathered at the Arthur Ashe Stadium in Flushing Meadows, New York, for the highly anticipated US Open men's final. The stage was set for two of the sport's brightest stars: Novak Djokovic of Serbia and Andy Murray, representing Great Britain. As the reigning US Open champion in his stellar 2011 season and holding the second spot in the world rankings at that time, Djokovic stood as the undeniable favorite. Additionally, prior to this tournament, Murray had reached four Grand Slam finals, falling short of being considered one of the "big three" in tennis: Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal, and Roger Federer. Fans believed that this time would be no different. Yet after one of the longest US Open finals in history of 4 hours and 54 minutes, it was Murray who was handed the ceremonial first-place cup. Murray became the first British player in 76 years to win a Grand Slam title since the legendary Fred

Perry in 1936.

Murray's unexpected 2012 victory thrust the 25-year-old into the spotlight, and what followed entailed the beginning of a new chapter in tennis history: The "big three" was now the "big four" and Murray's name was firmly etched alongside the likes of Djokovic, Nadal, and Federer.

Though Murray's career and popularity saw a meteoric rise in the 2010s as he reached the number one ranking in 2016 and claimed two more grand slams, what followed was a challenging period marked by incessant injuries. In 2013, he suffered both a wrist injury and a back strain, the latter of which resulted in surgery in late 2013. In 2017, Murray's career was once again halted – this time by a much more serious serious hip flexor injury.

He would never fully recover from this back injury, as his second surgery in early 2018 (involving a replacement titanium hip) led his ranking to drop below the top 100 as he missed most of the 2018 season. This was the lowest the Brit had been

ranked in 12 twelve years. Though the 32-year-old returned to the top 100 for the first time again in February 2020, he would be caught yo-yoing between the top 50 and top 75 for the next year-and-a-half. Following a tough first-round loss to Alex de Minaur of Australia in the October Paris Masters, Murray admitted in the post-match interview that he is "not enjoying" his tennis anymore and is "going to need a lot of work" to continue play-

ing.

Ultimately, do I think that Murray's career is over? The simple answer is no; Murray has proved time and time again that he is not one to stand down to adversity. Especially considering that two of the "Big 3" are now out of the picture, Murray should have a much easier time making it deep into the draws of major events as soon as his body re-adjusts to the rigorous demands of playing on the tour.

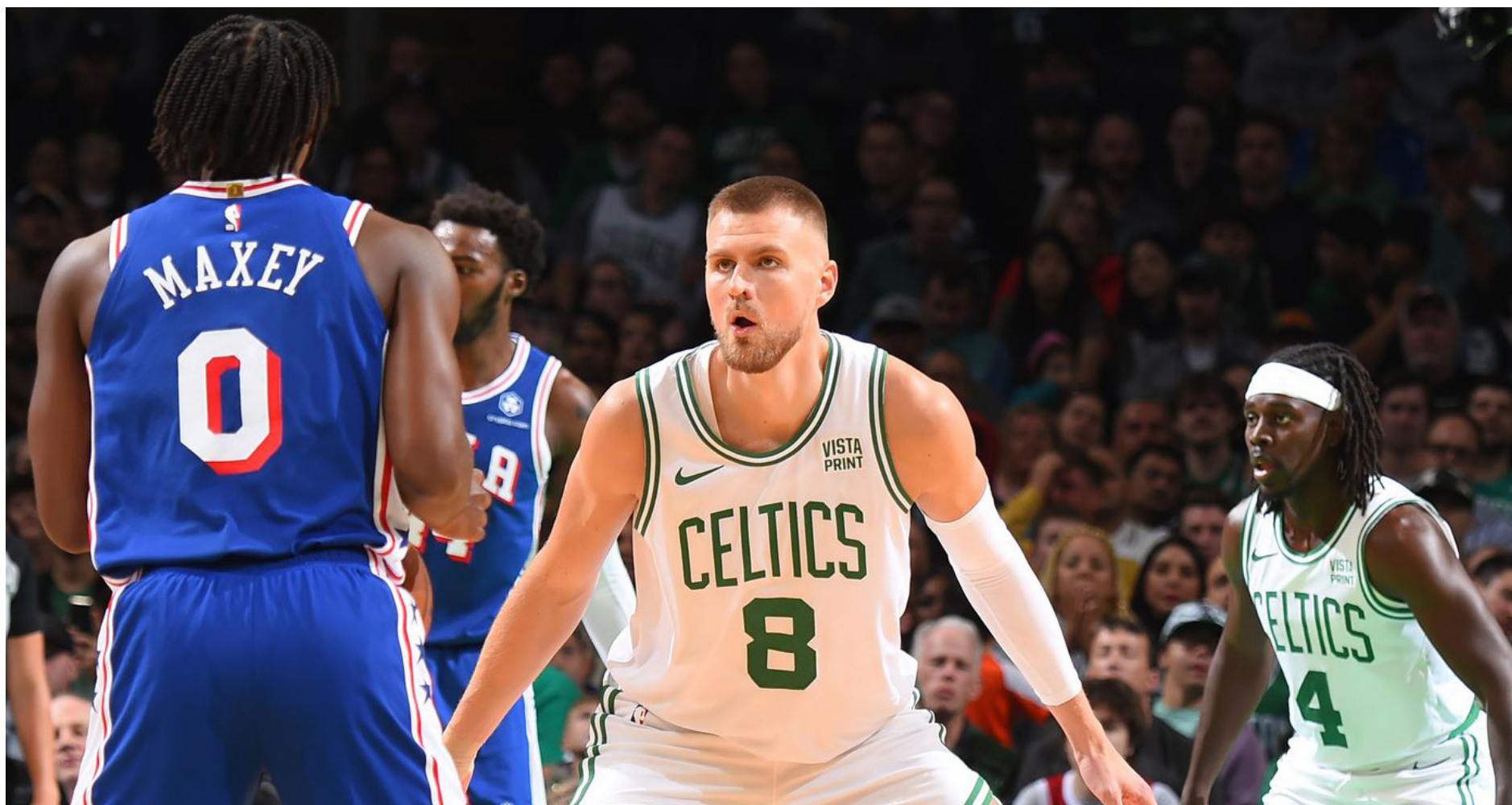
Perhaps reaching a nadir late into one's career will benefit Murray, just as it did for Andre Agassi in the 1996 to 1997 seasons or Michael Chang's brief struggle in 1999 due to a chronic wrist injury. All in all, regardless of Murray's future in the sport, he will remain a legendary figure in the eyes of tennis fans all over the world, and his achievements solidify him as one of the strongest players in the Open Era.



Andy Murray after getting ousted in the 2023 Paris Masters.



Why Kristaps Porzingis Is Crucial In The Boston Celtics' Championship Hopes



Kristaps Porzingis debuts for the Celtics in a preseason game against the Philadelphia 76ers.

ZACHARY YUAN

To admirers, he's known as The Unicorn for his amazing skills and mobility. To his haters, he's known as Tingus Pingus. Standing at 7 foot 3, Kristaps Porzingis is one of the tallest players in the current NBA world, just falling slight of Boban Marjanovic of the Rockets and rookie sensation Victor Wembanyama of the Spurs, who both stand at 7 foot 4. However, Porzingis displays incredible athleticism and overall skill sets for his remarkable height. Porzingis recently got traded from the Washington Wizards to the Boston Celtics in a three-way deal, with Marcus Smart going to the Memphis Grizzlies and Tyus Jones going to the Wizards. This is an incredible trade, as Porzingis is one of the best centers in the league currently. When asked about Porzingis, 13-time NBA All-Star Kevin Durant said, "He can shoot, he can make the right plays, he can defend, he's a 7-footer that can shoot all the way out to the 3-point line." And in his first few games in a Celtics jersey, Porzingis has proven just that.

3 Point Shooting

A key piece that Porzingis brings to the Boston Celtics team is his

incredible three-point shooting for a man of his height. Porzingis hit nine three-pointers in his first four games for the Celtics with a 55% three-point shooting percentage, which is extremely impressive. What's shocking is when you compare this to Stephen Curry, arguably the best three-point shooter in the league's history. In his first four games, Steph made 46.5% of all his threes. Even though it's true that Steph takes a lot more three-point shots than Porzingis, Porzingis' accuracy is still incredibly amazing. Another comparison is to the rookie sensation Victor Wembanyama, another 'unicorn' with amazing mobility and a complete skill set. In his first 5 games, Wembanyama made 50% of his shots, which is also incredibly high, but still trails behind Porzingis. What does this mean for the Celtics team? With other three-point shooters like Jayson Tatum, Derrick White, and Jaylen Brown, Porzingis will be another reliable option at the three-point line, making the three-ball a significant part of the Celtics' game this year. Moreover, since Porzingis is an outside shooting threat, defenders have no choice but to limit the space he gets. This opens up another window of Porzingis' game: Driving.

Driving and Finishing

Most 7-foot-3 NBA players don't tend to take shots outside of the paint or drive the ball. Porzingis is different. He's not afraid to pull up outside the paint for a jumper or use his size to bang his way into the paint for a dunk. Last year, only 46% of Porzingis' shots came from the paint, which is relatively low for a big man. For example, we can compare Porzingis to Lakers' center Anthony Davis, who shot 71% of his shots in the paint. This will be incredibly helpful to the Celtics offense, as Porzingis can also be a driving threat alongside Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown and almost a guaranteed bucket. This brings great balance to the team and gives the opponents a lot to worry about.

Post Play

A crucial aspect of most teams' offense that the Celtics haven't had for the past few years is a reliable man in the post. In the recent few years, the Celtics never had a true and reliable center to dominate the post and guarantee buckets. Celtic's starting center for the past few years has been Al Horford, who stands at only 6 foot 9 and is already 37 years old, which is even older than the head coach Joe Mazulla. Even though Al Horford is a great player

to have on the team, he isn't a traditional center and lacks strength and skill in the post. The addition of Porzingis, who, with his height, is a reliable post option, will propel the Celtics to a new level. Opponents will not only have to worry about the driving and shooting threat, but they will also need a strong center to counter Porzingis. And even when Porzingis is resting on the bench, old Al will always step in and help keep the game going with his unique skill set.

Pick and Roll

Another must-have of every team's offense, especially in these recent decades, is the ability to run pick-and-rolls that usually finish with lob passes to the basket. The Celtics have had pick-and-roll options in Robert Williams III and Al Horford, yet pick-and-rolls have never been a big part of their game, as Rob Williams doesn't start, and Al Horford prefers to pop out to the perimeter for an open three instead. This is when Porzingis comes into the picture. Porzingis, again with his alien height, is able to tower over any defender and smash the ball into the basket. He's a master at the pick-and-roll, and with him on the team, this can be another scoring option for the Celtics. And once again, if Porzingis is on the

bench, the Celtics can revert to the old and different strategy of pick and pop for Al Horford to get open looks. It sounds increasingly impossible to stop this Celtics team, but hold on, there's more.

Defense

As the famous saying goes, "Offense wins games, but defense wins championships." Celtics have always been one of the best defending teams, ranking as the second-best defensive team last season. However, in the Porzingis trade, the Celtics lost 2021-22 Defensive Player of the Year Marcus Smart to the Grizzlies. The question that many fans were wondering is can the Celtics replace Smart with Porzingis? Porzingis is a very different player. Smart is a guard, extremely versatile, willing to fight and dive for every ball. Porzingis is the traditional center, a big man who can defend the rim, post-ups, pick-and-rolls, and get some good blocks. Porzingis has a 7 foot 6 wingspan, which allows him to block many shots, including three-point shots. The Celtics' primary defender in the paint in the last few years was Al Horford, and Porzingis is a massive upgrade there. However, Porzingis isn't exact-

Continued on Page 5



Thomas Heilman and Maximus Williamson Commit to Virginia For Swimming



Thomas Heilman and Maximus Williamson commit to Virginia on the same day.

JAY WEI

Just two weeks ago, the University of Virginia Swim team posted on their Instagram a reel captioned, “THE ENTIRE SWIMMING WORLD JUST TURNED UPSIDE-DOWN!!” What was thought to be a hype video for the upcoming NCAA D1 Season was revealed three days later by five swimmers from the class of 2025, committing to the Virginia Men’s team. What was even more surprising was the fact that four out of these five commits were in the top 20 on Swimsam’s “Way-too-early class of 2025 rankings”. The group of commits included numbers 1 and 2 on the rankings, teenage superstars Thomas Heilman and Maximus Williamson. Both already being arguably the fastest high schoolers in history, questions of whether Virginia is in search of building a superteam are circling within the swim community.

Virginia Swimming

The University of Virginia has been one of the top teams in the NCAA Swimming D1 in the

past few years. Success has been highlighted by the Women’s team, who completed the treble by winning the NCAA in 2021, 2022, and 2023. With the help of some of the fastest swimmers in the world such as Kate Douglass, Alex Walsh, Gretchen Walsh, and Claire Curzan, the Virginia Women delivered one of the fastest performances in NCAA Championships history, breaking multiple NCAA records and posting the fastest times in the world. The men’s side, on the other hand, finished 15th at the 2023 NCAA Championships and did not match the success of their women’s team. However, the Cavaliers men haven’t been excluded from D1 college swim discussions. Just last week, the Cavaliers took the headlines on Swimsam and other swim media by snatching a win in a special dual meet against the Texas Longhorns. Both men and women prevailed, winning 109-58 and 119-48 respectively.

Recruiting top 20 swimmers like Thomas Heilman, Maximus Williamson, Thomas Mercer, and Josh Howat will not only help the Cavaliers win more dual

meets and earn more points at NCAA, but it will also create a versatile team that has people specializing in each stroke.

Thomas Heilman

Ranked number one on the Swimsam’s “Way-too-early class of 2025 rankings”, Thomas Heilman specializes in butterfly events and holds the top times of his class in four different individual events. He is undoubtedly one of the most accomplished teenagers in the sport of swimming accumulating a total amount of 23 National Age Group Records (NAG). Over the summer, Heilman represented Team USA at the 2023 Fukuoka World Championships. Being the youngest member on the team, Heilman went 1:53.82 in the 200 fly to tie Ilya Kharun for fourth place. This time put Heilman at the fastest ever 18 and under from the United States in this event, as well as continuing to shatter his own record in this event, which had previously been a world record set by 16-year-old Michael Phelps at the 2001 World Championships before Heilman broke it at the 2023 In-

ternational Team Trials. With all that said, Heilman’s experience at an international and professional level could greatly benefit the Cavaliers by providing them with what could be one of the fastest fliers in the upcoming years.

Maximus Williamson

Without a doubt, being the most versatile swimmer in his class, Maximus Williamson ranks 2nd in the class of 2025, just behind Thomas Heilman. Holding six of the best times in his class, Williamson specializes in pretty much every mid-distance to sprint event, only lacking in breaststroke. Similar to Heilman, Williamson has a history of breaking NAGs as well as representing Team USA at an international level. He competed at the 2023 World Junior Championships in Netanya, Israel, earning two individual gold medals (100 free: 48.45, 200 IM: 1:57.29) and four relay golds, including a blistering 47.57 100 free split to anchor the 400 medley relay. His strength of having multiple events in which he could dominate during swimming season could help the Cavaliers earn

more points across a variety of events at dual meets and championship meets.

What’s Next?

By recruiting Heilman and Williamson, the Cavaliers have built a solid group of swimmers that could potentially change the course of their swimming program. Outside of Heilman and Williamson, however, the class of 2025 is relatively weaker compared to previous classes. The Cavaliers may be looking to seek swimmers from other classes, such as the class of 2026 or the class of 2027. Rising stars like Luka Mijatovic, who broke nearly every NAG in the books for 13-14 mid-distance/distance free events, Ian Call, who broke the 100 breaststroke NAG (1:02.22 LCM), and others may be in question for future recruitment, not only for the Cavaliers but all D1 competing colleges. Only time will tell as faster times are produced in the upcoming years.



The Importance of Kristaps Porzingis

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

ly able to replace Smart as an on-ball defender. But even for his size, Porzingis is extremely versatile, and with his incredible wingspan, he can poke away balls, and his blocks are extremely valuable. Porzingis averages 1.8 blocks per game, and in his first few games for the Celtics, he has shown his worth, especially in the 4th quarter. Moreover, the Celtics front office has also solved the Marcus Smart problem by trading for arguably one of the best on-ball defenders in the league, Jrue Holiday. Coupled

with Jayson Tatum, Jaylen Brown, Al Horford, and Derrick White, who are all able to defend well and have put on some muscle during the off-season, the Celtics' defense will be one of the best in the league and could win them the NBA championship.

Does this make the Celtics unstoppable?

Not necessarily. Yes, the Celtics are currently the favorites to win the championship, and after starting off the season with a 5-0 record, no team looks like they can beat them. With a recent stunning 51-point win, and some late comebacks, the Celtics team

is definitely on a run to the championship. However, it's still too early to say if the Celtics are going to win. One major concern is injuries. Currently, most of the points the Celtics get in games are from the starters. If one person gets injured, especially Porzingis, suddenly, the entire team could fall apart. However, for now, the Celtics and Porzingis are definitely true contenders, and let's sit back and see whether this season for the Celtics ends in an 18th Championship for the Boston Celtics or another play-off exit.

The people who brought this issue together:

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Kevin Niu

MANAGING EDITORS

Daniel Seong

Amy Oku

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Ben Shin

SECTION EDITORS

Charles Vest

Claire Cheng

SECTION HEADS

Annabel Curry

Anthony Yang

John Moran

CREATIVE WRITERS

Rishi Rane

Michael Mechegia

SENIOR WRITER

Zach Godsey

Alex Lee

Harry Murphy

Brandon Horne

UEFA Champions League Matchday 3 Recap

ALEX LEE

Following the conclusion of Matchday 3 of the Champions League, many of the competition's major contenders, such as current champions Manchester City, Bayern Munich, and Real Madrid find themselves at the tops of their groups with perfect records. Other teams, like Manchester United and AC Milan, have struggled to live up to expectations, putting them in a difficult position if they still wish to advance to the tournament's knockout rounds. Let's look at both games these teams played and analyze their chances of turning it around and advancing out of their group.

Manchester United went into their third UCL game on zero points, after losing narrowly to Bayern Munich and Galatasaray. Their matchup was a home game against F.C. Copenhagen, likely one of their easiest fixtures. So, there were strong expectations from both the fans and players to win and give them hope of advancing to the round of sixteen. Despite a tense beginning to the match in which both teams shared possession, Manchester United came away with a 1-0 win as a result of a late goal from defender Harry Maguire. In the dying minutes, Copenhagen was awarded a penalty after a Scott McTominay

foul inside the box. Luckily for United, though, Andrius Onana read a poorly placed penalty from Jordan Larsson, securing all three points. Onana spoke after the game, saying that "the most important thing is to win against a tough team." United currently sit in third place, with their next Champions League game being away against Copenhagen. Although they are only behind second-place Galatasaray by one point, a win against Copenhagen is essential to keep their chances of advancing alive.

Due to AC Milan's group consisting of themselves, PSG, Borussia Dortmund, and Newcastle United, they knew from the beginning that reaching the knockout stages of the tournament would be no easy feat. However, after the first three games, Milan find themselves in an unlikely position to move out of their group into the next round. They are at the bottom of their group, taking only two points from the opening three matches. They faced PSG in Matchday 3, who were first in their group. After

failing to score in their previous four Champions League games, Milan desperately needed goals. However, their 3-0 loss to PSG extended this streak to a total of five UCL matches without a goal. Despite conceding in the 32nd minute, Milan was able to put up a fight in the first half, primarily through chances from Christian Pulisic and Rafael Leao. After halftime, though, Milan seemed to collapse, failing to pose a real threat and conceding twice more in the second half. AC Milan striker Olivier Giroud gave his

thoughts after the game, saying that they "lacked a cutting edge in the box and after the break [they] made mistakes that cost [them] dearly." Still, he remained optimistic, advising his teammates to "put [their] heads back on [their] shoulders." They play PSG again in Matchday 4, with Milan now absolutely needing a win to keep any prospect of advancing out of their group.



Harry Maguire scored the game winning goal against Copenhagen.



Puca Nacua's Explosive Record-Breaking NFL Debut

ZACH GODSEY

In the 2023 NFL draft, the Los Angeles Rams made a bold move by selecting Makea "Puka" Nacua, a promising Samoan prospect hailing from Brigham Young University (BYU). Referred to by some as the "discount Deebo Samuel," Nacua was their fifth-round pick, and he arrived with a bit of skepticism regarding his versatility. During his time at BYU, he had often been deployed as a hybrid gadget player rather than being considered a "legitimate" wide receiver. Yet, he came to play, breaking the NFL record for most receptions in the first two games as a rookie.

His tough, physical mentality was praised by scouts, and his explosiveness was described as "devastating." And devas-

tate he did; over the first two games of the season, Nacua tallied an NFL-high 25 receptions, putting him ahead of big-name stars like Justin Jefferson and Tyreek Hill. His ability to gain substantial yardage after each catch made him an elite threat, as he led the NFL with 111 yards after the catch in his first two games. Such talent was evident from his time at BYU, as he would often be counted on to convert on critical fourth-downs, finding a way to "drag a defender or two, another 2 or 3 yards."

All this from an unheralded fifth-rounder Rams coach Sean McVay called "a real pleasant surprise" during training camp. Those who have followed Nacua's journey longer than McVay, like the BYU offensive coordinator Aaron Roderick, saw this success coming, as he stated, "I thought

that he would be a great pro, and I thought that everybody that passed on him would regret it. And looks like I'm right." However, in the wake of Nacua's standout NFL debut, some critics attribute his success to the

injury of Rams teammate Cooper Kupp, saying that his production will slow once Kupp is fully recovered. In response, Nacua, speaking about the veterans in the Rams' receiver room, emphasized that they've only "acceler-

ated my learning." As of now, Nacua shows no signs of slowing down, firmly establishing himself as a rising star with a record-breaking start to his NFL career.



Nacua's physicality and explosiveness have generated offensive success for the Rams.

The Downfall of Deshaun Watson: Why The Browns' \$230 Million Dollar Man Isn't Performing

JOHN MORAN

Deshaun Watson, the former first round pick by the Houston Texans, was once upon a time seen as the future of the quarterback position in Texas. Coming out of a national championship winning Clemson, his play in the first four seasons of his career (2017 to 2020) was incredible. He ended his 2020 season with a league leading 4,823 passing yards and a QB rating that beat the likes of Patrick Mahomes and Josh Allen. He was on fire.

And then, his story changed. Numerous women came forward

with allegations of sexual assault, and rightfully so, his career was derailed. The Cleveland Browns made the incredibly unexpected moral decision of bringing in a known sexual predator into the locker room as the starting quarterback, and they didn't just bring him in for pennies on the dollar. They traded three first round draft picks for Watson and signed him to a 230 million dollar contract, all of which was fully guaranteed. Putting the moral arguments aside, as this is a sports publication, let us talk about the football argument. Let me warn you: the football argument is not very compelling ei-

ther.

In his 2022 season, the debut year of the Watson era in Cleveland, Watson delivered an abysmal six games to the city that gave up three first round players for him. The league had suspended him for the first 11 games of the season, and in the remaining six, he went 3-3. His performance that season was awful, leading to a 79.1 passer rating and only 1,102 passing yards. If he had maintained that clip over the course of a whole season, it would have led to only a 3,100 yard season; that mark would have only been 15th in the league, hardly worth three first round picks and his contract of

\$230 million dollars.

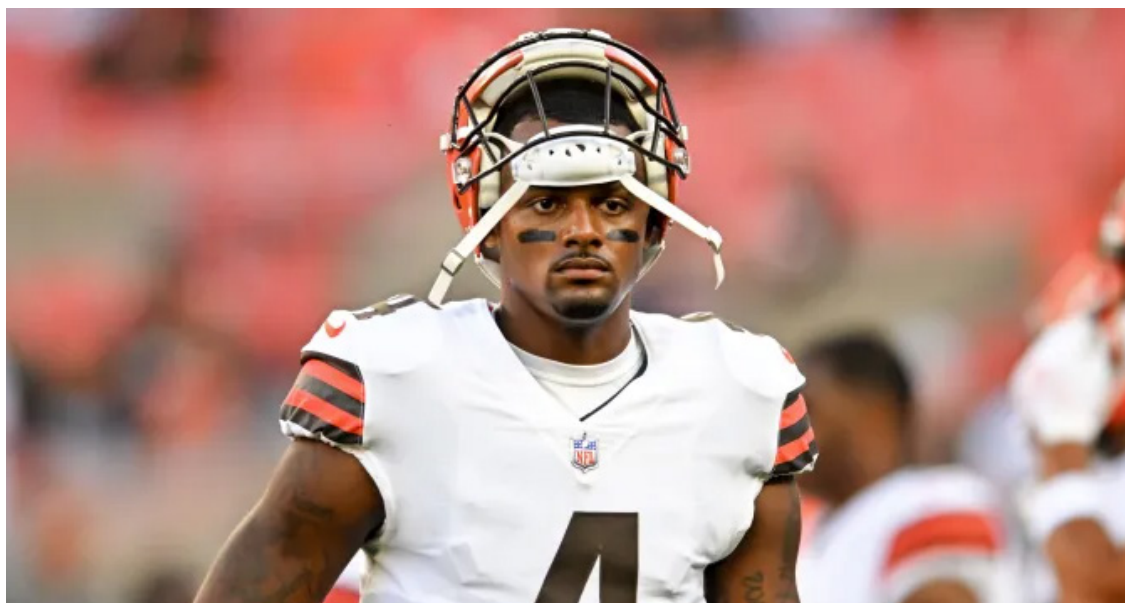
In 2023, his first full season since the allegations were released, he has played in only five games (this article was written post Week 10), throwing for 902 yards and a passer rating of 86.7. His numbers are as unexciting as last year was. And beyond the numbers, Watson just doesn't pass the 'eye test' anymore; he looks as if he's moving slower than everyone on the field. He doesn't show off his exciting arm talent the way he used to, and he seems to be scared to use his legs, which had formerly been a massive asset to his game.

What caused this dramatic downturn in performance, from one of the league's rising stars to one of the many fallen prospects? The first explanation is that his absence in the 2021 season and his missing half of 2022 certainly led to him being rusty. But football players and quarterbacks, more specifically, have sat out for whole seasons and come back to be dominant in the past. Tom Brady's 2008 ACL tear didn't stop him from winning multiple Super Bowls later in his career. Peyton Manning missed the entire 2011 season and followed it up with the best season of his career in 2013, setting records in single-sea-

son passing (5,477) and touchdown (55) numbers. So, that excuse isn't fully viable. The second, and to me, more likely explanation is this: he doesn't need to play anymore.

What I mean by this is that his future is secure. He got his contract, and more importantly for him, he got it fully guaranteed. Read that again. Fully guaranteed. All 230 million dollars will be paid to Watson. It doesn't matter how poorly he performs under the lights. He's getting his bag no matter what. The Cleveland Browns can't escape that. Watson no longer has a monetary incentive to chase, and because of that, he doesn't want to play anymore.

The Cleveland Browns dug themselves into a monetary hole with Watson, one they can't dig out of, and I have no sympathy. An organization that makes the moral decision to pay a man like Watson 230 million dollars is one that deserves their fifth of a billion dollar asset to fail them. So, to all the Browns' fans this season, good luck handling the burden of watching your quarterback flounder at the bottom of the league while your defense looks like a Super Bowl contender. The Browns are done for as long as Watson is their starter.





The History of Red Bull's Second Driver Situation post-2018

BRANDON HORNE

In late 2018, Formula 1 began what is collectively known as the “silly season,” in which drivers switch teams and sign new contracts for upcoming seasons. For this particular silly season, there was a significant development that was unresolved. At Red Bull Racing, Daniel Ricciardo was out of a contract and was looking to sign a new one for the coming seasons. Throughout his time with Red Bull, Ricciardo was an excellent driver, finishing both the 2014 and 2016 seasons in third place in the Drivers Championship. However, none of his Red Bull cars were quick enough to ever put him in real championship contention, and he often was plagued by horrific reliability issues with the team's Renault supplied engine. This Renault engine was absolutely terrible, frequently blowing itself to smithereens mid-race, forcing Ricciardo into a shocking 18 Did-not-finishes (DNFs) in his four years with the team from 2014 to 2018.

From mid-2016 onwards, Ricciardo was paired with the formi-

dable young talent, Max Verstappen, who quickly became level with Ricciardo in terms of pace. As Verstappen's immense potential was realized, Red Bull seemingly began favoring him, as if preparing for a future where he was their top driver instead of Ricciardo. In response to this treatment, as well as his team's unreliable car, Ricciardo made a shocking decision: he dumped Red Bull Racing for one of their closest rivals, the Renault F1 Team. This move made little sense, as Ricciardo was effectively moving from a top tier team (although not championship contenders at the time) at Red Bull, who were third place in the Constructors Championship, to Renault, who were below Red Bull in fourth. In response to Ricciardo's departure, Red Bull chose to bring up a junior, Pierre Gasly, from their sister team, Toro Rosso, thus beginning the saga that leaves us with Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull car today.

As any current fan of Formula 1 knows, Verstappen is currently at the peak of his dominant prowess. He is a three time world champion, winning in 2021, 2022, and 2023. Unfortunately, ever



Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo celebrates after winning the 2018 Monaco Grand Prix.

since Ricciardo's departure in 2018, Red Bull have struggled to find an effective second driver to pair with Verstappen. As previously mentioned, after Ricciardo left, Red Bull moved Gasly into the second car. However, Gasly proved to be inexperienced and crumbled under the pressure, culminating in being lapped by his teammate Verstappen at the 2019 Hungarian Grand Prix. When

paired with his frequent crashes, this slow pace proved to be the last straw, and Red Bull made the decision to demote Gasly back down to Toro Rosso for the remainder of the season. In his place, they brought up another promising junior, Alexander Albon. While Albon proved to be significantly faster at adapting than Gasly, he too frequently made mistakes, crashing and breaking many a rear

wing. Neither Albon nor Gasly were close to Verstappen in the standings in 2019. Despite this, Red Bull stuck with Albon for the 2020 season. Sadly, Albon was not able to perform at the level Red Bull were expecting, finishing the season in seventh place, 105 points behind Verstappen in third. As

Continued on Page 12

MLB's Hottest 2024 Free Agents

SEBASTIÁN VERMUT

Let's start with the obvious. This year's hottest free agent is Shohei Ohtani, the greatest baseball player we've ever seen. His tenure on the Los Angeles Angels is over. He is expect-

ed to leave Anaheim as they continue to leave him and all Angels fans in a state of perpetual depression at their terribleness. He is expected to go to the highest bidder, so rich teams like the San Diego Padres, Los Angeles Dodgers, San Francisco Giants, and New York Mets

are top contenders. The New York Yankees are expected to pass on the Ohtani bid, but we'll talk more about that soon.

He will surely provide a great bat and a great arm to whatever team he goes to. My prediction is the Giants. They had a disappointing off-season last year, miss-

ing on huge names such as Carlos Correa and Aaron Judge. Although Ohtani is currently on the injured list due to a UCL tear, he is expected to sign a contract for around 500 million dollars. For those who miss out on the Ohtani bid, Blake Snell is the next best thing. He had a killer year this season, posting an insane ERA of less than 1.50. He is likely to be auctioned off to the same rich teams as before.

Another interesting pitching prospect is Yoshinobu Yamamoto, a young Japanese arm who just came off a year where he won Japan's equivalent of the MVP award and the Cy Young award. He is expected to have a lot of buzz with teams attempting to sign. We have already seen Yankees General Manager Brian Cashman make a trip to Japan to watch him pitch. He happened to witness Yamamoto's second no-hitter from the front row of

the stadium. Speaking of the Yankees, Cody Bellinger, who had a comeback season this year, could provide the left-handed power the Bronx Bombers need.

Aaron Nola is another pitching free agent, although he has much less buzz as he is expected to re-sign with the Philadelphia Phillies. He has found a lot of success with them, and I would doubt he would leave any time soon. These names are among many others that would have little impact on teams. Only time will tell where they will sign.



From left to right: Blake Snell, Cody Bellinger, Luis Urias, and Shohei Ohtani.



Squash Will Become an Olympic Sport in 2028

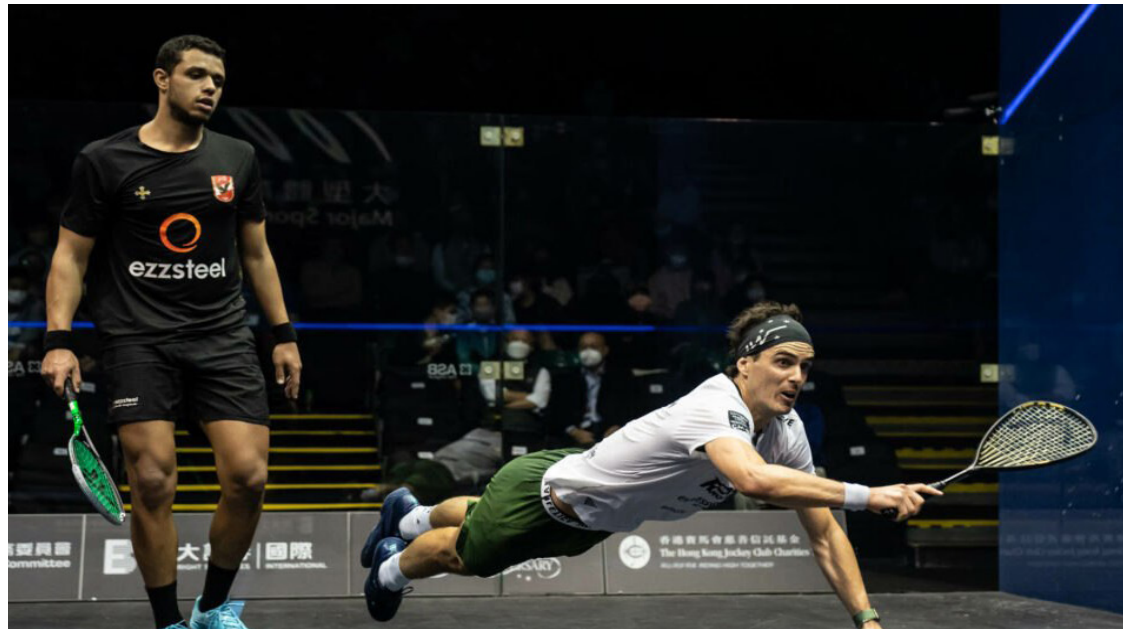
WILL WEISSMAN

On October 6, squash was officially selected to become an Olympic sport in the LA28 Games, marking a long-awaited and highly anticipated moment for the sport. The news may be a breakthrough for squash, finally being played on the world's biggest stage and bringing a new audience to the game. For the first time, squash's very best will compete for their country to win in one of two medal events: men's and women's singles competitions.

Squash, an indoor racquet sport played in a four-walled court, began in the 18th century when London prisoners started hitting balls against prison walls. The game developed in the 19th century when English students replaced the hard racquetball with a slower rubber ball. Since then, squash has experienced a major growth in popular-

ity worldwide, with over 20 million players in 185 countries. Professional squash has become a prominent contributor to its expansion, especially since the introduction of the Professional Squash Association (PSA) in 1993. Broadcasting and the establishment of SquashTV have made the sport accessible to enthusiasts worldwide.

The recent news surrounding the Olympics created a flurry of excitement among the squash community as juniors and current professionals set their eyes on 2028. World No. 5 of the USA Amanda Sobhy, said, "It's everything that you can dream of as an athlete to be able to compete in the Olympic Games. To be able to compete for an Olympic gold medal, and just say that you were an Olympian, is something that no one can ever take away from you." Not only will the Olympics provide athletes with a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but the event can



Paul Coll (right) diving for a shot against Mostafa Asal (left) in the Hong Kong Open.

provide the sport exposure to a new audience. New Zealand's Paul Coll and current world No. 4 said, "[The Olympics] will hopefully expand our sport to more countries and hopefully expand in individual countries, which will in turn grow the sport globally." Having been omitted from

the list of sports included in previous Olympic Games, squash players finally have the opportunity to compete for a medal.

As many athletes like Paul Coll have expressed, the Olympics could be a breakthrough for squash. Watching these athletes play at the highest lev-

el will inspire the youth across the world to pick up a racquet. The introduction of squash into the LA28 Games may be the most significant event for the sport since its birth over 200 years ago.

Premier League Matchday 9-10 Recap

NAREK HAMBARDZUMYAN

These two weekends were filled with comebacks, shocking results, and a total of 63 goals across both match days. Here are the main take-aways.

Player of the Weeks: Erling Haaland

It is no shock at this point that Haaland is banging in goals every single weekend. He got a goal for himself in the

2-1 win over Brighton on matchday 9, then got 2 goals and an assist in the 0-3 win in the Manchester Derby. He sits top of the Premier League scoring charts with 11 goals, and there are certainly more to come.

Result of the Weeks: Arsenal 5-0 Sheffield United

Arsenal's win over the Blades on Matchday 10 was indicative of both good for some, and bad for others. Eddie Nketiah

got his first career hat trick for the Gunners, while star boy Declan Rice also impressed. Arsenal sits in fourth place with 21 points and are still in contention for the title.

However, this wasn't a good omen for Sheffield United. They currently sit bottom of the Premier League with one point, with a goal differential of -20. They need to make some changes soon, or else they might be going for Derby County's record of the worst Pre-

mier League season of 11 points.

Shock of the Weeks: Chelsea 0-2 Brentford

Brentford sunk Chelsea at Stamford Bridge with a 0-2 win, which saw Ethan Pinnock score a header and Bryan Mbeumo get an open net after Robert Sanchez went up for a corner in the 96th minute.

Chelsea's poor run of form may suggest this wasn't a 'shock,' but this team has spent hundreds of millions of dollars. There should be some chance of a win. Chelsea currently sit 12th, behind the likes of Crystal Palace and West Ham, while Brentford are just above Chelsea themselves.

Stat of the Weeks:

A five-goal thriller saw Aston Villa continue this season's strong showing by defeating West Ham at 4-1 home. Goals from Douglas Luiz, Ollie Watkins, and Leon Bailey secured the win for the Villains. This makes it their 10th straight win at Villa Park, a record feat for the club.

Other Notable Results:

Chelsea 2-2 Arsenal: This intense game had Chelsea up 2-0 at the start of the second half but crumbled towards the end, as Declan Rice and Leandro Trossard helped Arsenal clinch the draw.

Manchester United 0-3 Manchester City: The Manchester Derby saw City bring home another win over United, with Haaland scoring one from the spot and from open play, and also providing Phil Foden with an assist. This saw United's weakness get exploited as their poor run of form continued.

Liverpool 2-0 Everton: Liverpool kept their unbeaten run against Everton since 2021, with a standout performance from Mohamed Salah—a goal in the 75th minute from the penalty spot and a stoppage-time goal to seal the game.

Game week 9 and 10 were filled with shocks and surprises, with standout performances throughout. The Premier League never disappoints, and it will be back for Matchday 11 and 12.



Erling Haaland celebrates a second goal against Manchester United.



NBA Week One Recap: Everything You May Have Missed

BEN DEGANI

Lebron James is still a freak of nature. James Harden might as well be forcing a trade to the Seattle Seahawks next. Nikola Jokic is still treating the NBA as a side job while being the most dominant offensive force the league has seen in decades. Victor Wembenyama is, in fact, drawn to scale. Steph Curry seems only to keep improving with time. And even as a Brooklyn Nets fan, who the hell is Cam Thomas? The NBA has only begun regular season play for not even two weeks, and it's already evident that this is gonna be a season for the ages. So here's everything you may have missed in the first week of the NBA.

Is it too early to be speculating about the 2023-2024 NBA season after a week? Absolutely. Doesn't mean we won't do it anyway. At the ripe age of 38, James is still holding onto father time with a struggling Los Angeles Lakers team averaging 22-9-7 on 62 percent shooting while playing the least minutes a game in his entire career. Unfortunately, Anthony Davis and him are being anchored down by teammates such as Gabe Vincent who can't make a three even if you gave them ten million dollars. I don't think people understand how impressive averaging seven percent from beyond the arc is.

Honey-bun Harden has

now forced a trade three times in four seasons, proving that if you're good enough, you can honestly do whatever you want. This is really awesome for whoever has the pleasure of Harden sitting on their bench in fantasy this year.

On the contrary to disloyalty and mass trading, Jokic is still proving that he is indisputably the best player in the world right now. Averaging 28-13-8 on nearly 70 percent true shooting percentage. The Denver Nuggets are winning games by an average of 15 points, so good luck to your favorite team.

Scoring still doesn't seem to be an issue because, at this point, scoring 40 points has now become as common as Luka Doncic averaging numbers that sound like it came from a 2k my-player. Luka and many other stars, such as Damian Lillard, are already making history. A more specific example of that is Kristaps Porzingas, the first Boston Celtics center to score 30 points in a regular season game since Kelly Olynyk A WHOLE DECADE AGO. In all seriousness, the Celtics are showing signs of actually winning a championship. Videos of Jaylen Brown finally learning how to dribble with his left hand are circulating, so you can tell they mean business this year.

On the subject of promising signs, this year's rookie class is most certainly one of them. The photo at the



Rookie Victor Wembenyama blocking all star Warriors guard Chris Paul.

head of this article is not edited. Wembenyama makes people shorter than 6'10" look like third graders with his freakish length. Let me paint a picture for you. You're watching the NBA with your dad on a Thursday night, sweating over a parlay, and then suddenly you see the manifestation of Slenderman reaching from the three point line to steal a ball being dribbled at the free throw line. So yeah, he's pretty good. Other rookies like Brandon Miller, Derek Lively, and Asuar Thompson are already making impacts on their franchises, and Scoot... let's just say he's still "acclimating to the league."

This year's power rank-

ings haven't shown much surprise. Portland Trail Blazers, Houston Rockets, and Washington Wizards are on the bottom. The Memphis Grizzlies are dropping 13 spots because the rest of the lineup is possibly following Ja Morant's footsteps of missing half the season. The Pelicans moved up seven spots because Zion Williamson finally decided he was gonna start playing basketball. And finally, to nobody's surprise, the Nuggets, Celtics, and Bucks keep their throne as the NBA's big three. No mystery there.

However, the greatest mystery will always lie within the Nets as Ben Simmons can throw pass-

es from across the court and grab ten rebounds a game, but still, as a point guard in the NBA, he can't make a jump shot. But do not fear because Thomas once again rises from the boonies and fantasy waivers and is scoring like a prime Micheal Jordan, averaging nearly 30 a game.

As you can see, the NBA is riddled with talent, surprises, new standards, and even more surprises. But the long several month wait is over, and the NBA is finally back. What will soon be known as one of the most prolific seasons of basketball in the greatest basketball league in the world is just getting started.

What is Next for Mac Jones and the New England Patriots?

BRUCE MCLAREN

Introduction

Something is wrong with the New England Patriots. This is not an easy thing to admit, as we have seen this franchise produce over twenty years of dominance in the NFL. The Patriots stand at 2-7 going into week 10 and are in last place in the AFC. This is territory we haven't seen New England in since the mid-90s, as the last time the Patriots had a top-five pick was in 1994. The Patriots have only scored over 20 points this season one time against the Bills in a game that they won.

Offensive Issues:

There are glaring issues on the offense, which is where I think the major changes need to be made. The first thing that many fans will point to offensively for New England is the quarterback, Mac Jones. Jones has not been a positive on offense this year, as he is tied for the most in the NFL with 10 touchdowns and 9 interceptions. It is certainly crucial for the Patriots to evaluate and decide whether he will be their guy for the upcoming seasons. Personally, I have not seen anything that shows them that he should be.

The wide receivers are another glaring issue. There are only two guys on the wide receiving core who have been consistent so far this season, namely

Kendrick Bourne and Demario 'Pop' Douglas. Bourne tore his ACL last week in the game against Miami, and this week against Washington, we truly saw how thin the Pats are at wide receiver specifically. Douglas, on the other hand, has looked like a gem that the Patriots found in this year's draft as he has been making all kinds of explosive plays for New England, a rare bright spot in this year's offense. The other receivers, however, have been extremely disappointing, as the supposed "big-name" signing of the offseason for New England, Juju Smith-Schuster, has been horrible. He only has 140 yards receiving and one touchdown so far this year, including a huge drop

that led to an interception at the end of the Commanders' game. Juju was chosen over Jakobi Myers, who is excelling for the Las Vegas Raiders, with 442 yards and 5 touchdowns so far this season. Devante Parker, Jalen Reagor, and Kayshon Boutte have little to nothing to show for themselves either on the receiving end. Boutte specifically hasn't played since week one, which may have to do with his inability to catch a potential game-winning throw at the end of the Eagles game.

The offensive line has also been a major issue throughout the season, mainly because of injuries, as they have allowed 18 sacks so far this season. The run blocking has been

equally bad, as the Pats are only gaining 3.9 yards per carry. Guard Sidy Sow and tackles Trent Brown and Mike Onwenu have been bright spots in the last few weeks, as Belichick decided to change Onwenu from guard to tackle before the Buffalo game, though, and these players could be people that they can build off of and use as building blocks for the future..

Defensive Issues/ Front Office Decisions

The defense this year has been around average, with the secondary having some injury-related and other strug-

Continued on Page 10



What's Next for Mac Jones and the Patriots?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

gles. The other main concern of Pats fans has been the front office, specifically with Bill Belichick. That being said, I think that the claims for Belichick to be fired as a coach are laughable, as he has eight Super Bowl rings and has brought over twenty years of success for the Patriots. However, his personnel decisions have been questionable at some points, as Belichick is not only the head coach of the Patriots but is also the general manager. For example, I mentioned that Belichick decided to sign Juju Smith-Schuster over Jakobi Myers this offseason, which has been refuted this

season by fans and statistics. We have also seen him bench Kayson Boutte this season, which I disagree with, as we will not be able to see how he can develop without him playing in games, especially when we can see that the Patriots will clearly not be making the playoffs.

Conclusion

So, what is next for the Patriots and Mac Jones? Well, if I were advising Robert Kraft, the owner of the Pats, I would do one of two things in the upcoming offseason. The first option that I would give Kraft is to make significant changes in the roster, specifically at the QB position. Kirk Cousins is a free agent this offseason and could be an option, or if Kraft wants to have



Mac Jones makes a tricky pass.

Belichick draft a young QB in the draft (where they'll likely have a top-five pick), that can be an option, too. The other option that Kraft has is to go into a complete rebuild and fire Bill Belichick, which I would not want. If the Patriots continue to display a poor product, though, this could happen. Overall, the Patriots have many options at the end of this year, and although

they are not a good football team at the moment, being a bad football team could be exactly what they need to improve in years to come.

Best XI in Europe So Far This Season

NAREK HAMBARDZUMYAN

Heading into the start of November, this season has been an exciting start in Europe so far, as soccer players from around Europe have been playing at their best.

With some familiar faces and some new ones, I have compiled a list of the best eleven players in Europe this season so far. Varying from many different leagues, all these players are playing with pure class.

GK: Marcine Bulka (Nice)

Marcine Bulka has had an incredible start to his season in France. Nice sits in second behind reigning champions PSG, only behind by two points, with a game in hand. Bulka has had seven clean sheets out of ten matches played, which is an incredible stat line alone. He has also only conceded four goals in that same ten-game period, with a save percentage of 82.6, the sixth highest of any other goalkeeper in the top five leagues.

DEF: Ruben Dias (Manchester City)

Since the start of the season, Ruben Dias has been the heart of Manchester City's defense. After winning Player of the Season in 2020/21 for being the most complete defender in the league with having the most blocked shots and clearances for Manchester City, he continues to bring that form into this season.

DEF: Christian Romero

(Tottenham Hotspur)

The leading man at the back for Spurs' incredible start to their campaign, the best in their history. In the Premier League, he is in the 92nd percentile for tackles won per 90 (1.58) and in the 91st percentile for tackles plus interceptions per game (4). Not only that, he also is in the 94th percentile for progressive passes per 90 (6.32). Although he got a red card against Chelsea just on Monday, he still has been a crucial aspect of Spurs' start.

DEF: Kieran Trippier (Newcastle)

6 assists (second in the premier league) as a defender should say it all. Trippier has always been incredible throughout his career, and he continues to show it at Newcastle. Not only has he been excellent on defense, but he has also been a threat up top.

DEF: Joao Cancelo (Barcelona)

After a hectic move around last season, Joao Cancelo went on loan to Barcelona and has not disappointed. He has made monumental changes for Barca and is their best defender at the moment. He has both been a defensive anchor for Barcelona, but also an attacking threat. In LaLiga versus other fullbacks, he is in the 99th percentile for tackles won per 90 (2.64), successful take ons per 90 (2.26), carries per 90 (49.65), through balls per 90 (0.38), and in passes in the final third (5.66). If that doesn't prove he is



Jude Bellingham celebrating a goal with teammates Rodrygo, Dani Carvajal and Vinicius Jr.

the best fullback in La Liga, I don't know what does.

MID: Jude Bellingham (Real Madrid)

Jude Bellingham is unreal. He has had ten goals and two assists in 11 matches, including clutch last-minute winners against Union Berlin and Barcelona. He leads La Liga in scoring and sits top with Real Madrid. He is the leading candidate for next year's Ballon d'Or and will certainly live up to his 110 dollar million price tag.

MID: James Maddison (Tottenham Hotspur)

Along with Romero, James Maddison has been crucial to Spurs' success this season. Three goals and five assists don't tell the full story, as he has been playing amazingly alongside Heung-Min Son. If they both remain fit, it will be an incred-

ible season for them both.

MID: Pedro Neto (Wolves)

Although the Wolves themselves haven't had the greatest start, Pedro Neto has been playing some incredible soccer. He is leading the Premier League in assists, with seven in 11 games, and it is probably the reason Wolves aren't in the relegation zone right now.

FW: Lautaro Martinez (Inter)

Serie A's top goal scorer has not disappointed so far this season. Lautaro Martinez has 12 goals in 11 games and has led Inter to the number-one spot in the league. He has been a lethal striker and one of the very best.

FW: Erling Haaland (Manchester City)

Is this a surprise at this point? Haaland once again leading the Premier League in scoring, with 11 goals and 11 matches. He has led Manchester City to the top spot, and the Norwegian has not failed to disappoint.

FW: Harry Kane (Bayern Munich)

Harry Kane is one of the few strikers in the modern game that can both score and assist. He has 15 goals and five assists in ten matches in his debut season for Bayern. He has had to adapt to a new environment and he has succeeded astronomically.

That is the Best XI for the season. A team full of superstars from all over Europe who have been the very best in their own field. If they stay fit and healthy, I am sure all of these players will have an excellent season.



Early Season NBA Power Rankings

TEO CHOI

We're officially two weeks into the 2023 to 2024 NBA season. How's everything looking?

1. Boston Celtics (5-1)

So far, the Celtics look absolutely incredible! Despite not playing that many games, they were able to show the world its strengths. Their big four of Jayson Tatum, Jaylen Brown, Jrue Holiday, and Kristaps Porzingis look monstrous, and there don't seem to be many teams that could even challenge this squad. They even have solid supporting pieces with Derrick White, Al Horford, and Payton Pritchard, just to name a few. The losses of great players such as Malcolm Brogdon, Marcus Smart, Robert Williams III, Grant Williams, and more were deemed to have a huge impact on the record, but it seems like the team, led by Joe Mazzulla, is cruising through the league.

2. Denver Nuggets (7-1)

Obviously, we cannot forget about the defending champions. With the best record in the league, the Nuggets are clearly showing why they won the championship last year. Despite not having a star-studded team like the aforementioned Celtics, the balance of superstars like Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray, along with versatile players like Aaron Gordon and Michael Porter Jr., seems to be working for this Nuggets team.

3. Philadelphia 76ers (5-1)

Despite the James Harden drama, the 76ers seem to be doing great. They seem to be winning games with much ease, and it seems like they are smooth sailing. With the reigning MVP in Joel Embiid and young star Tyrese Maxey stepping up, the 76ers successfully quelled the opposition with sheer skill. Through the James Harden trade, they received many key role players, and despite lacking a third star to help, ultimately, it will be their undeniable depth in team members like Tobias Harris, Kelly Oubre Jr., or Robert Covington that will bolster this team.

4. Milwaukee Bucks (4-2)

All that has to be said for this team is Freak Time. The combination of Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard just seems like too much for the other teams. With two-time MVP Giannis and a top point guard in the league right now, the teams seem to fear them a lot. With Dame's ability to knock it down from wherever, and Giannis' superiority in the paint, opposing teams just can't catch a break. Despite some inconsistencies, like the 76ers, the depth of this team helps them get by. With borderline all-stars like Brook Lopez and Khris Middleton and solid role players like Pat Connaughton, Malik Beasley, Jae Crowder, and Cameron Payne, this team seems like legitimate contenders.

5. Dallas Mavericks (6-1)

The Dallas Mavericks are a surprisingly great team this season! Despite last season's disappointments, regarding their inability to even make the play-in, the team has managed to turn it around. They didn't even make crazy adjustments to the team. Luka Dončić is the wizard he is, and Kyrie Irving is showing why he is still a top player in the league. All in all, the team is cliquing, hence the great record it has.

6. Golden State Warriors (6-2)

The Warriors always have high expectations. The addition of Chris Paul was met with some scrutiny, but with the way the team from the Bay is showing, it seems like it was worth losing Jordan Poole and some change. The Warriors maintained its core of Steph Curry, Klay Thompson, and Draymond Green, and with all-star level players like Chris Paul and Andrew Wiggins, it wouldn't be surprising if they put up a fight for the finals spot.

7. Atlanta Hawks (4-3)

Despite Trae Young's rough start to the season, the Hawks have been faring quite well. Dejounte Murray has been on fire all season, and it seems like the Hawks have the potential to make a deep run in the playoffs. However, it does seem like they are missing that one piece to get them over the hump, maybe some form of



Anthony Davis tries to guard Nikola Jokic on opening night.

veteran leadership.

8. Minnesota Timberwolves (4-2)

The Minnesota Timberwolves are doing well thus far. To be clear, Anthony Edwards has been doing great this year. And that is an understatement. Honestly, Rudy Gobert and Karl Anthony Towns have not been much help. I think this season, we can see an All-NBA Selection for the Ant-man. We'll have to watch and see how long this stretch of wins will last for the Wolves.

9. Oklahoma City Thunder (4-3)

There is no doubt this team has the best future in the league. With maestro GM Sam Presti, the Thunder were able to procure a bunch of picks, which they can use to draft quality young players or trade for a star. For this team, players like Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Josh Giddey, along with Chet Holmgren, are really impressive for this young team.

10. New Orleans Pelicans (4-3)

The Zion Williamson led Pelicans seem to be in better shape than it was in previous years. With players like Brandon Ingram and CJ McCullum, too, the Pels look like they could shoot for a high spot in the Western standings.

11. Los Angeles Clippers (4-2)

With the new addition of James Harden and the stars they have, like Russell Westbrook, Kawhi Leonard, and Paul

George, the Clippers are legitimately looking scary. If you think depth is a problem, they still have players like Bones Hyland, Terance Mann, and Norman Powell. It wouldn't be a surprise if the Clips went all the way. But at this moment, health is a big factor. With both Kawhi Leonard and Paul George having lengthy histories of injury, a major question is whether they stay healthy when playoff time comes around. Another problem they may encounter is their imbalance in ball dominance between its stars.

12. Los Angeles Lakers (3-4)

The Los Angeles Lakers had great expectations this season. However, they have not lived up to the hype yet. The team we thought to have the deepest roster showed holes. The absence of Jarred Vanderbilt may have been an excuse, however. When it comes to the Lakers, the ceiling is always high. It'll be interesting to see if the team can finally turn it around.

13. Phoenix Suns (3-4)

It's safe to say that the Suns have disappointed. A team of Kevin Durant and Bradley Beal should be able to dominate. However, injuries have riddled this team. I think it's safe to assume that when healthy, this team can be a real threat to the league.

14. Orlando Magic (4-3)

The Magic have a relatively young team compared to the teams

this high on the list. With young players such as Franz Wagner and Paolo Banchero, this team has a bright future.

15. Cleveland Cavaliers (3-4)

There is always much speculation about the Cavs. However, we can assert for sure that a team with Donovan Mitchell, Darius Garland, Evan Mobley, and Jarrett Allen should be able to make a push.

16. Indiana Pacers (4-3)

17. Sacramento Kings (2-4)

18. New York Knicks (3-4)

19. Brooklyn Nets (3-4)

20. Toronto Raptors (3-4)

21. Miami Heat (3-4)

22. Utah Jazz (2-6)

23. Portland Trail Blazers (3-4)

24. Houston Rockets (3-3)

25. Memphis Grizzlies (1-6)

26. San Antonio Spurs (3-4)

27. Chicago Bulls (3-5)

28. Detroit Pistons (2-6)

29. Washington Wizards (1-5)

30. Charlotte Hornets (2-4)



The History of Red Bull's Second Driver Situation post-2018

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

a result, the Bulls chose to drop Albon, and resume the search for a long-term replacement at their second driver. For 2021, their lineup was to consist of Verstappen and former Racing Point driver Sergio Perez.

Red Bull's fortune would change in 2021, as they produced a significantly more competitive car than the previous year. Perez would have a decent year, despite often being forced to play the team game and help Verstappen by swapping places. His biggest heroics would take place at the season finale in Abu Dhabi, where his defense on Lewis Hamilton would ultimately put Verstappen in the place to overtake Hamilton on

the last lap to claim the Drivers Championship. This was an incredibly controversial race, as the race director made the odd decision to allow lapped cars to pass the safety car after the crash of Nicholas Latifi, something that never occurred under typical safety car procedures. Had this decision not been made, it's almost certain Hamilton would have remained in first and won the championship, but Verstappen ended up pulling through. Digressing on this situation, Red Bull were pleased with Perez, and kept him for 2022. In 2022, Perez had another decent season, finishing the season in third, behind Verstappen, who won, and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc in second. This led him to signing a two year contract extension, valid until the end of 2024.

Complicating matters, Perez's recent string of results has called his future position at Red Bull into question. Despite a great start to the year with two wins, Perez has had a bit of a miserable year. He is currently in, by far, the most dominant car in Formula 1 history, which has won all but one race the entire season. In spite of this, he has only managed to claim two wins, behind his teammate Verstappen, who has (to-date) won 17 races this season. Somehow, Perez is still in second in the Drivers Championship, but most people, including myself, have chalked this up to be due to his car, rather than his merit as a driver. He has frequently found himself miles behind Verstappen in terms of pace, often knocked out before the final stage of qualifying and finding himself start-

ing many races outside the top ten.

Adding to this, the recent resurgence of former Red Bull driver Ricciardo has significantly complicated Perez's future in the sport. After leaving for Renault for 2019-2020, Ricciardo moved to McLaren for 2021-2022 but endured a car that did not suit his driving style. This left him a shell of his former self, his self-confidence shattered after two humiliating seasons of losing to his teammate Lando Norris. He signed with Red Bull as a reserve driver for 2023, prepared to spend the season on the sidelines. However, due to the poor performance of Alpha Tauri – previously known as Toro Rosso – driver Nyck de Vries, Ricciardo was called back into action. Red Bull, specifically Helmut Marko, head of driver develop-

ment, chose to drop de Vries and brought Ricciardo back from his hiatus to race at the junior team. This is because Red Bull owns two teams, Red Bull Racing, and Scuderia Alpha Tauri, and can thus swap drivers between teams at will.

After breaking his hand midway through these duties, Ricciardo has returned with a vengeance, out qualifying Perez at the Mexican Grand Prix. He did this in the Alpha Tauri, the eighth best car this season, while Perez is in the aforementioned best car, the Red Bull. This shock result has further called Perez's recent missteps into question and leaves Red Bull with a decision to make: whether to keep Perez for 2024 or to go back to the old and bring Ricciardo back.

Questions or Want to Join *The GOAT*?

Contact yniu25@andover.edu or 914-374-2225



THE GOAT
GREATEST OF ALL TIME
A NEW PUBLICATION
SHOWCASING IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS
AND OP-EDS



TRADITIONAL
SPORTS



FANTASY
SPORTS



ESPORTS

SHARE YOUR WRITING
WRITE ABOUT WHAT INTERESTS YOU
BE PART OF A TEAM

CONTACT KEVIN NIU
YNIU25@ANDOVER.EDU

A new Andover publication showcasing in-depth analysis and op-eds about spor



Traditional Sports



Fantasy Sports



eSports



Join us!

Be a founding member

Join us!

Write about what you love

Join us!

Leave your mark at Andover

Contact Kevin Niu yniu25@andover.edu
the-goat.org