Lionel Messi Wins Ballon d’Or For Eighth Time

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 bright spots 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 analytics 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 generation-al talent who could save any team from the bottom of the table. 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 O’tinger. 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 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 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 2022 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 of 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 Poirras all have proven they 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.
Andy Murray Is “Not Enjoying” Tennis Anymore, Time to Retire?

JEFF SHIN

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 of Britain. As the reigning US Open champion, Andy Murray was widely expected to win his second consecutive title.

However, Djokovic proved to be a formidable opponent, and the match went to five sets, with Murray emerging victorious in the end. This win solidified his status as one of the world’s top players and gave him a new chapter in tennis history: the “big three.”

In 2017, Murray’s career took a turn for the worse as he suffered a wrist injury and a serious hip flexor injury, which led to his ranking dropping below the top 100. Murray’s unexpected victory in 2012 set the stage for what could have been a meteoric rise in the sport, but his struggle in 1999 due to a serious injury, as his second surgery on the hip, led his ranking to drop to eighth place. Murray’s future in the sport, in all, regardless of Murray’s career, is not certain, and Murray has proved to be a replacement titans.

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 ground-breaking 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 Michael Jordan 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. For Murray, 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.

Although LeBron may not have the same physical ability as he did in his prime, he is essentially still in his prime, averaging 28.9 points, 6.8 assists, and 8.3 rebounds just last year. For Murray, 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 of people to pursue the sport of basketball and is arguably the reason that we see such worldwide dominance and passion for the sport today.
Why Kristaps Porzingis Is Crucial In The Boston Celtics’ Championship Hopes

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 Marjanović 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 Tyes 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-foot-3 player that can do all the way out to the three-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 five 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 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 Mazella. 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.

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, and lob passes to the basket. The Celtics have had pick-and-rolls like Jayson Tatum, Jaylen Brown, and Marcus Smart since 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 lower 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.

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 lose 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, and lob passes to the basket. The Celtics have had pick-and-rolls like Jayson Tatum, Jaylen Brown, and Marcus Smart since 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 lower 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.

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Continued on Page 5
Thomas Heilman and Maximus Williamson Commit to Virginia For Swimming

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 UP-SIDE-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 commitments were in the top 20 on Swimswam’s “Way-too-early class of 2025 rankings”. The group of commitments included numbers 1 and 2 on the rankings, teenage superstars Thomas Heilman and Maximus Williamson. Both already being arguably the fastest teenagers in the sport, 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 headline on Swimswam 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 Swimswam’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 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.

Without a doubt, being the most versatile swimmer in the 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 Mitrovic, who broke nearly every NAG in the books for 13-14 mid-distance/distance free events, may be in question for future recruitment.

Virginia Swim team post on Instagram a reel captioned, “THE ENTIRE SWIMMING WORLD JUST TURNED UP-SIDE-DOWN!”

Thomas Heilman and Maximus Williamson commit to Virginia on the same day.
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 versa-
tile as he can play both outsid-
ble 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 exponentially in the 4th quarter. More-
over, 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 mus-
cle during the off-sea-
son, the Celtics’ defense will be one of the best in the league and could win them the NBA champion-
ship.

Does this make the Celtics unstoppable?

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

is definitely on a run to the championship. How-

ever, it’s still too early to say if the Celtics are going to win. One major concern is injuries. Cur-
rently, most of the points the Celtics get in games are from the starters. If one person gets injured, especially Porzingis, sud-
denly, 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 Celt-
ics ends in an 18th Cham-
pionship for the Boston Celtics or another play-
off exit.

UEFA Champions League Matchday 3 Recap

ALEX LEE

Following the conclu-
sion of Matchday 3 of the Champions League, many of the competition’s ma-

jor contenders, such as current champions Man-
chester City, Bayern Mu-

nich, and Real Madrid find themselves at the tops of their groups with perfect records. Other teams, like Manchester United and AC Milan, have strug-
gled to live up to expec-
tations, putting them in a difficult position if they still wish to advance to the tournament’s knock-
out 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 ex-
pectations from both the fans and players to win and give them hope of adv-
ancing 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 dy-
ing minutes, Copenhagen was awarded a penalty after a Scott McTominay foul inside the box. Luck-
ily for United, though, An-
dré Onana read a poorly
drilled free kick, and Onana spoke after the game, saying that “the most im-
portant 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 sec-
ond-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, Borus-
sia Dortmund, and New-
castle 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, Mi-
lan 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, primari-
ly through chances from Christian Pulisic and Ra-
fael Leao. After halftime, though, Milan seemed to collapse, failing to pose a real threat and conced-
ing twice more in the sec-
ond 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, ad-
vising 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.
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

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 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 either.

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 1,162 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 back in 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 fall from grace 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-season 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. Fully guaranteed. All 230 million dollars will be paid to Watson. If he doesn’t perform 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, 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 fumble at the bottom of his wallet while your defense looks like a Super Bowl contender. The Browns are done for as long as Watson is their starter.
MLB’s Hottest 2024 Free Agents

SEBASTIAN 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 expected to leave Anaheim as they continue to leave him and all Angels fans in a state of perpetual depression at their miserable franchise. 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, missing 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 him. 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.

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 driver’s 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 shockingly slow pace, which 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, even 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 Ricciardo made the decision to game over with Toro Rosso for the remainder of the season in his place, they brought up another promising junior, Alexander Albon. While Albon was their top driver in the 2019 season, he was unable to perform at the level Red Bull were expecting, finishing the season in seventh place, 105 points behind Verstappen in third.

As Verstappen’s immense talent often dwarfed Ricciardo’s, it became clear that absent Verstappen, 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.

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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 popularity 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 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 level 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 HAMBARYAN

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

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 of the Premier League with one point, and 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 Premier 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 net an open goal 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.
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 Wembanyama 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 Patriots have only begun regular season play for not even two weeks, and it’s already the offseason that this is gonna be a season for the ages. So here’s everything you might have missed in the first week.

Is it too early to be speculating about the 2023-2024 NBA season after a week? Absolutely. Don’t think 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 35 minutes a game in his entire career. Unfortunately, Anthony Davis and Lonzo Ball are being anchored down by teammate Cornman Vincent who can’t make a three even if you gave them dollars. I don’t think people understand how impressive averaging 27 points seven percent from beyond the arc is.

Honey-bunned 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 pointage. 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 a lat. Doncic averaging numbers that sound like it came from a 2k myplayer. Luka and many other stars, such as Donovan Lilard, are already making history. A more specific example of that is Kristaps Porzingis, the first Boston Celtics player to put up a 20-20-5 stat three consecutive games since Kelly Olynyk in WHOLE DECADE AGO. In all seriousness, the Celtics are showing signs of actually winning a championship. Viewers of Jaylen Brown finally learning how to dribble with his left hand are already noticing, so 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 head of this article is not edited. Wembanyama makes it look like he’s taller than 6’10!” look like third grader with his freakish length. I mean 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, Dekker Lively, and Asaur 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 ranking hasn’t shown much surprise. Portland Trail Blazers, Houston Rockets, and Washington Wizards are on the board. 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 passes 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. Do not fear because Thomas once again rises from the boonies and fantasy wannabes and is scoring like a prime Michael 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 not had a losing record 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 has found himself 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. We 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 this 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 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 season 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 39.6 yards per carry. Guard Isidry 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 struggles.

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What’s Next for Mac Jones and the Patriots?

The leading man at the back for Spurs’ incredible start to their campaign is now one of 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 99th percentile for tackles plus interceptions per game (4). Not only that, he also is in the 94th percentile for progressive passes per 90 (9.63). 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 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).

FW: Erling Haaland (Manchester City)

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 incredible season for them both.

FW: Harry Kane (Bayern Munich)

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: Lautaro Martinez (Inter)

Series 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.

What’s Next for Mac Jones and the Patriots?

The New England Patriots have been a delight to watch this season, and with Mac Jones at the helm, fans are optimistic for the future. The quarterback has shown immense potential, and his performance has been praised by many.

The Patriots have been a model of consistency, with their defense leading the way. The unit has been particularly impressive against the run, with multiple big tackles and sacks. Mac Jones has also been a key factor in their success, with strong performances in both the passing and rushing games.

However, there are still areas for improvement. The team has struggled at times in the red zone, with a series of turnovers and missed opportunities. Additionally, the defense has had some issues with coverage and pass rush.

Nevertheless, the Patriots are a talented team, and with a strong coaching staff, they have the potential to become one of the league’s top teams. They have a solid foundation, and with the right adjustments, they can achieve great things.

What’s next for Mac Jones and the Patriots? The future is bright, and with continued hard work and dedication, they have the potential to reach even greater heights.
Early Season NBA Power Rankings

1. Boston Celtics (5-1)
2. Philadelphia 76ers (7-1)
3. Milwaukee Bucks (6-1)
4. Golden State Warriors (6-2)
5. Minnesota Timberwolves (4-2)
6. Oklahoma City Thunder (4-3)
7. Atlanta Hawks (4-3)
8. Memphis Grizzlies (4-3)
9. Orlando Magic (3-4)
10. Los Angeles Lakers (3-4)
11. New Orleans Pelicans (3-4)
12. Phoenix Suns (3-4)
13. Sacramento Kings (3-4)
14. Cleveland Cavaliers (3-4)
15. Indiana Pacers (3-4)
16. Memphis Grizzlies (3-4)
17. Brooklyn Nets (3-4)
18. New York Knicks (3-4)
19. Detroit Pistons (3-4)
20. Toronto Raptors (3-4)
21. Chicago Bulls (3-5)
22. San Antonio Spurs (3-5)
23. Houston Rockets (3-5)
24. Charlotte Hornets (3-5)
25. Memphis Grizzlies (3-5)
26. Miami Heat (3-5)
27. Atlanta Hawks (3-5)
28. Los Angeles Lakers (3-5)
29. Orlando Magic (3-5)
30. Toronto Raptors (3-5)
The History of Red Bull's Second Driver Situation post-2018

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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 being forced to play the team game and help Verstappen by swapping places. His biggest heroes 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 season. 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 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 starting 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 development, 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.