Classic Physique Body Builder Chris Bumstead Wins Fifth Mr. Olympia

ARTHUR WU

In the realm of Classic Physique Bodybuilding, Chris Bumstead has etched his name in history as the most dominant force, easily securing his fifth Mr. Olympia title. Along with his hard work and dedication to the sport came physical challenges and rule changes. Bumstead’s journey to become one of the most celebrated bodybuilders of his time is nothing short of remarkable. With a blend of unparalleled physique, dedication, and a relentless pursuit of excellence, Bumstead continues to redefine the standards of success in the bodybuilding world.

Born with an innate passion for fitness, Chris Bumstead’s rise in the bodybuilding scene began as a promising journey. As he stepped onto his first bodybuilding stage at 19 years old, it was evident that Bumstead was not just a contender but a potential legend in the making. His commitment to sculpting his physique with precision and dedication caught the attention of enthusiasts and judges alike.

The recent Mr. Olympia competition marked Bumstead’s fifth consecutive win, solidifying his status as a dominant force in the bodybuilding universe. Even against experienced bodybuilders such as Ramon Dino and Urs Kalenic, Bumstead continued to conquer the Olympia stage. With a balance of skillful posing and a shredded physique, each pose served as testament to his unwavering discipline, grueling training routines, and the relentless dedication to pushing the boundaries of physical prowess.

However, his journey to a fifth win did not come easily. During his prep, unadvantageous changes in the IFBB bodybuilding rules were announced only months before the competition. The IFBB announced that shorter competitors were now allowed to add an extra 7.10 pounds of muscle. Classic Physique is a competition of both muscle balance and size, and having an extra 7.10 pounds could be the tipping point between first and second place. Bumstead, a 6’3 athlete, was put at a great disadvantage against his greatest threats, Ramon and Urs, who were both shorter. Nevertheless, his astounding performance and confidence on the stage led to his triumph, surpassing all barriers.

The narrative of Bumstead’s success is not just about the physical transformation; it was about mastering the art of confidently presenting a sculpted masterpiece to the world. In the aftermath of his fifth Olympia triumph, Bumstead expressed gratitude for the unswerving support from fans, mentors, and his relentless drive. He acknowledged the competitive field, recognizing the caliber of athletes he stood against, making the victory even more significant. Although limitless competitions await Chris, factors like his wife’s pregnancy and his reluctance to continue steroid use are game-changers that allude to his early retirement.

Will Shohei Ohtani and the Dodgers Run the MLB Next Season?

ANDY DU

The Los Angeles Dodgers had one of the most historic offseasons in the history of Major League Baseball ahead of the 2024 season with the signing of Shohei Ohtani, the two-time American League Baseball Player Award recipient. Ohtani, a recently acquired 29-year-old superstar pitcher and designated hitter from the Los Angeles Angels, initially came to the United States in 2017 and is now baseball’s highest-paid player in its entire two-hundred-year history with a new contract totaling $700 million over a 10-year period. The historic and legendary franchise of the LA Dodgers, already loaded with superstar talent, signed Ohtani in addition to World Series champions like Mookie Betts and Clayton Kershaw. The Dodgers’ new roster is considered one of the best in the league, with players such as Dustin May, Walker Buehler, and Tony Gonsolin leading the charge.

Ohtani’s addition to the Dodgers’ lineup has been transformative. In his first year with the team, Ohtani hit .273 with 26 home runs and 102 RBIs. The Dodgers ended their season last year with a 100-62 record and sat atop the NL West after they lost three straight games in the NLDS to the Arizona Diamondbacks. The Dodgers have been known for their powerful hitting lineup, but Ohtani’s addition has brought an extra level of competitiveness to the team.

Offensively, the Dodgers have been known to have a powerful group of hitters capable of getting on base consistently and driving in runs. Mookie Betts led the team offensively as the designated hitter and was perhaps the most dominant hitter in the league. However, Ohtani’s signing has added another level of offensive firepower to the lineup. His ability to hit for power and his skill on the field have made him a valuable asset to the Dodgers.

In terms of pitching, the Dodgers have some of the best arms in the league. Clayton Kershaw, Walker Buehler, and Tony Gonsolin have all shown their potential to dominate on the mound. The addition of Ohtani has only added to the depth of the pitching staff, making the Dodgers favorites to win the NL West.

The Dodgers have a talented roster, but they will need to stay healthy and perform consistently throughout the season to have a shot at another World Series title. With Ohtani’s addition, the Dodgers have become even more formidable, and fans are excited to see how they perform in the 2024 season.
CJ Stroud Should Win the Offensive Rookie of the Year Award in 2024

ZACH GODSEY

As the 2023-2024 NFL regular season comes to an end, fans are already engaging in debate over who will receive the Offensive Rookie of the Year award for this past season. This season especially has seen the emergence of some electrifying new talent. However, there are two that stand above the rest, each consistently putting up impressive stat lines every Sunday. Los Angeles Rams star wide receiver Puka Nacua and Houston Texans quarterback CJ Stroud have both had historic seasons, breaking records and leading their teams to the playoffs.

Stroud has had a remarkable year, continuing to prove doubters wrong time and time again. After he scored dead last out of all quarterbacks in the 2023 draft class on the S2 cognition test, many questioned the hype surrounding this young quarterback out of Ohio State. Still, Stroud got drafted by the Texans with the second overall pick in the draft and never once looked back from there. Stroud finished the season with 4180 passing yards, 23 touchdowns, and just 5 interceptions. He also broke the single-game rookie record by throwing a staggering 470 passing yards and throwing five touchdowns to edge out the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in a nail-biting week 9 game. However, what makes his rookie season so impressive is the effort that he has had on the Texans organization. In the 2022-2023 season, the Texans displayed a highly disappointing record of 3-13. In this 2024 season, Stroud has led the team to a 10-7 record to win the AFC South and make the playoffs. He also displayed proficiency in the playoffs, winning his first-ever NFL playoff game comfortably in a 45-17 victory against the Cleveland Browns. The surprising impact that he has had on the Texans organization and the league itself is undeniable and sets him as the frontrunner for this award.

However, Puka Nacua is not going down without a fight. The fifth-round pick out of BYU has a knack for finding the open field, and he was the top target for the Rams this season. The wide receiver has been absolute electric throughout the entire season, accumulating 1486 receiving yards and ranking fourth in the league among all wide receivers. Additionally, he boasts 105 receptions and 6 touchdowns over his season, breaking the rookie receiving yards and receptions records. He is a force to be reckoned with, with renowned physicality and an innate ability to run after the catch.

That said, CJ Stroud’s exceptional rookie season has been nothing short of a revelation, making him the rightful favorite for this year’s Offensive Rookie of the Year award. Overcoming initial doubts and wildly surpassing expectations, Stroud’s resilience, precision on the field, and composed nature have set him apart. Stroud’s journey reflects what the Offensive Rookie of the Year award seeks to honor—exceptional talent, consistent performance, and a positive overall influence on the game.

Soccer Legend Franz Beckenbauer Dead At 78, Remembering His Legacy

XAVIER MORAN

On January 7, 2024, a soccer legend passed away. Franz Beckenbauer, nicknamed “The Emperor,” is considered to be one of the greatest soccer players to ever play. Born in Munich right after World War II, Beckenbauer was surrounded by poverty and destruction. When Beckenbauer was only 13 years old, he joined the professional soccer team Bayern Munich. He received recognition as a strong defender because he was trying things no one else had tried before.

In the 1950s, teams were putting all their players on the offense. They had ridiculous formations like the 1-1-8 and the 1-2-7, where over half the team would fully press the other side. This would lead to the defense being completely overwhelmed. Beckenbauer saw a solution to their team being scored on so frequently. He started to hang back behind two or three full-backs, and whenever a ball or a player would break through, he had the freedom of his own half to move to the ball and clear it back out to his offense. His position was then called the “sweeper” where they would sweep side to side depending on where the attack was coming from. The freedom and the space given to sweepers would allow them to do more than just being the key defender. They could also push up past half-field when their team had possession. Throughout his career, Beckenbauer scored over 100 goals and 100 assists as a defender. He also scored crucial goals in the World Cup, where he dressed for West Germany three times.

In 1966, Beckenbauer’s first World Cup, he played every single minute of every match. He scored goals that knocked Switzerland, Uruguay, and the USSR out of the tournament before eventually losing to England in the finals. In the semifinals of his second World Cup in 1970, Beckenbauer scored a winning goal in a rematch against England. Facing off against Italy in the semifinals, Beckenbauer dislocated his shoulder. However, his team ran out of substitutions, so he played the rest of the game with his arm in a sling, and his shoulder still injured. While West Germany lost the game to Italy, they still ended up in third place after beating Uruguay. Finally, in 1974, Beckenbauer’s last World Cup as a player, he finally got a taste of victory after beating Johan Cruyff and the Dutch in their home stadium in West Germany.

While that was his last World Cup as a player, Beckenbauer had an extremely successful managing career after he retired from playing in 1984. He managed the West German team to the finals of the 1986 World Cup, unfortunately, placing second in the next World Cup. He once again led the team to the finals where they finally became victorious once more, beating the famed Diego Maradona of Argentina. He then became manager of the Bayern Munich, the team he started playing with over 25 years before. He led Bayern Munich win a couple more trophies before deciding to organize the 2006 World Cup in Germany. He continued working with FIFA, helping choose each location of the World Cup until he decided to retire from managing in 2010.

After he retired, he focused on spending time with his wife, his five children, and his two grand children. He lived in Salzburg, Austria, in a massive house at the base of a mountain, where he would ski every winter. Beckenbauer passed away on January 7, 2024, from natural causes. While he is gone, the impact that the world of soccer he has had will last forever. He will always be remembered as one of the greatest soccer players ever to have played.

29-year-old Franz Beckenbauer celebrating his first World Cup win in Munich, Germany.
Early Swim Predictions For the 2024 Paris Olympic Games

JAY WEI

The Olympic Games, a global tradition that has captivated billions of people for the past century and a half, again showcases the pin-
nacles of sport at the national and international cam-
raderie. According to the Olympic Charter, the 3.05 billion people gath-
ered around their TVs to watch this event in 2021. With other huge sporting events such as the Su-
pper Bowl, the World Cup, and the NBA, the Olym-
pic Games promote in-
dividual sports. The top four most viewed sports, according to a Statista report, were all individ-
ual sports, followed by basketball coming in at fi-
th. Swimming has at-
ttracted a huge audience for the Olympic Games, with 34 percent of view-
ers watching one or more events for swim-
ing. This is one of the most exciting meets to watch, with athletes competing in their best shape to earn a gold med-
al for their home country. However, unlike the pre-
vious Olympic Games, the Paris Olympics will be far more difficult to predict than in previous years. None of the events are dominated by a spe-
cific swimmer or nation, and there is certainly a sense of ambivalence as to who will ultimately win. Below, I will give my predictions as to who will win the events that I think will be the most exciting and competitive.

Men's 200 IM (Leon Marchand)

The 200 IM is one of the most competitive events, with huge names like reigning Olympic cham-
pion Wang Shun (China), Leon Marchand (France), 400 IM SCM world record holder Daiya Seto (Ja-
pan), Shaine Casas (USA), and others. The two big-
gest contenders for the spot are Shun and March-
and, both thrilled to compete for France 2024 under 1:55 (Shun: 1:54.62, Marchand: 1:54.82). Al-
though Shun has a faster time currently, I do think Marchand has proved to be a more consistent swimmer, and that edges him in my top spot for the 200 IM top spot.

Men's 200 Breast (Qin Haiyang)

To many people, Qin Haiyang (China), the current world record holder in the 200 breast (2:05.48), is the favorite in this event. His powerful strokes through the wa-
ter, coupled with his abil-
ity to keep his body high on the luge, make him a formidable competitor. However, I do think that Marchand shouldn't be left out of the conversa-
tion. This past summer, he swam a 2:06.40 unshav-
ed and anchored the French Nationals meet, which put him at the fourth fastest time in his-
tory. He certainly has the potential to drop lots of time and most definite-
lly has a shot at the gold.

Women's 400 freestyle (Summer McIntosh)

McIntosh certainly has the po-
tential to drop lots of time from the 2021 IM, will not be an easy task as she is up against 17-year-
old sensation Summer McIntosh. Breaking the 400 free world re-
cord this past summer (3:56.08) at the Canadian Swimming Trials, which was later broken by Tim-
itus (3:55.38), McIntosh caught the world by storm after breaking mul-
tiple world records just as a 16-year-old. Despite a somewhat disappoint-
ing swim in this event at the 2023 Fukuoka World Championships, where McIntosh placed fourth place and out of the po-
dium spot (3:59.94), I do think that she is capa-
bable of dropping a decent amount of time from the taper. Keeping in mind that she has already bro-
ken world records at 16, McIntosh certainly has plenty of potential, and I put her in my top spot for the 400 freestyle.

Without question, this is not a complete list of the most exciting races to watch out for at the Paris Olympics (Men's 100 back with Ryan Mur-
phy, Xu Jiayu, and Thomas Ceccon; Women's 100 back with Kaylee Mackeown and Regan Smith; and others). Many questions are circling the swim-
making community about the potential returns of Caeleb Dressel, Adam Peaty, and Kristoff Milak, all of whom hold world records and are reigning Olympic Champions. Yet, regardless of how they do in the months leading up to the competition, the meet will be just as electrifying and compet-
tive. I mean, this is the Olympic Games – great-
ness will surely unfold.

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UFSA Champions League Round of 16 Predictions

The UEFA Champions League (UCL) round of 16 draws took place on December 18th, and ever since then, fans have been speculating as to who will come out on top in each one. The fixtures will start starting February 13th. This comes with predictions from fans all around the world and causes debate in the football world. Today, I will try to come up with reasonable predictions utilizing current form, history, and other factors.

FC Copenhagen Vs Manchester City

The first match alongside RB Leipzig and Real Madrid will be Copenhagen versus the current champions of the Champions League, Manchester City. This also happens to be one of the easiest predictions to make out of any of the other matches. Manchester City have a very deep squad, and they are going strong. Although currently 4th in the Premier League, the current Premier League champions are always a force to be reckoned with. Copenhagen sat 3rd in the Danish League and got out of their group stages in the likes of Manchester United and Bayern Munich. However, they simply won’t be good enough to overcome the current champions of Manchester City. Manchester City plays a very possession style of football and will squeeze for Real Madrid, control for Real Madrid, but it could also come down to the wire.

1st Leg: RB Leipzig 1-2 Real Madrid
2nd Leg: Real Madrid 3-2 RB Leipzig
Aggregate Score: RB Leipzig 2-5 Real Madrid

PSG Vs Real Sociedad

This Valentine’s Day match isn’t as clear-cut as it appears. Real Sociedad has not been doing great in La Liga recently, being in 6th as of January 19, 2024. However, they did top their UCL group coming out on top against the likes of Inter and Benfica. It is a bit hard to decipher how they will fair now in the knockout stages, because of their inconsistencies in La Liga and how they have been playing this season. It is important this being only their second time making it out of the group stages in their history. Then you have PSG, the most dominant French club in recent history and the most underwhelming club in recent UCL history. PSG has had many fails over past few years in the UCL, including five rounds of 16 exits in the last seven years.

Both have their faults; it will be a close tie, but PSG should come out on top. They have a significantly better squad with stars like Kylian Mbappe, but Real Sociedad shouldn’t be counted out. PSG will have to rely on their stars heavily in this one, as they lack star talent in specific areas like their midfield. PSG will most likely narrowly make it through, but anything can happen in the UCL.

1st Leg: PSG 2-1 Real Sociedad
2nd Leg: Real Sociedad 1-1 PSG
Aggregate Score: PSG 3-2 Real Sociedad

Lazio Vs Bayern Munich

This is one of the toughest matchups for the round of 16, as both teams have been phenomenal this season. Starting, Lazio hasn’t lost a game in the Dutch League this season or even drawn a game so far! They have won every single game in the Eredivisie, with 17 matches played and 17 won. They came 2nd in their group, with Arsenal topping the group, but still played very convincingly. Then, when you look at Borussia Dortmund, you understand how tight this fixture will be. Although being underwhelming in the Bundesliga this season, currently in 4th place, they topped their UCL group with probably the most balanced group the Champions League has ever seen. This group saw AC Milan, PSG, and Newcastle go head-to-head, with many predicting Dortmund to finish last (including myself).

This will be a very tight fixture, and it could go either way, but I think PSG will have the edge over Dortmund. If we are talking about recent form, they have drawn four games and won one, which isn’t great, but isn’t horrible either. Dortmund have had their defense struggles in the German league, with 25 goals against them, the most out of the top 6. PSG has been incredible, and I think they will continue their form into the knockout stages, with Xavi Simons leading the way as their star player.

1st Leg: Lazio 1-3 Bayern Munich
2nd Leg: Bayern Munich 3-0 Lazio
Aggregate Score: Lazio 1-6 Bayern Munich
PSG Vs Borussia Dortmund

This is one of the most intriguing matchups of this round. Borussia Dortmund has been very good in Serie A this season, currently in 5th place, they topped their UCL group with Inter, Liverpool, Chelsea, and Napoli. You should expect nothing short of a blowout win for Bayern Munich.

1st Leg: Lazio 1-3 Bayern Munich
2nd Leg: Bayern Munich 3-0 Lazio
Aggregate Score: Lazio 1-6 Bayern Munich

Continued on Page 12
Jordy Love vs. Justin Fields: A Cross-Division Study in Quarterback Development

NOAH RINKOWSKI

In Week 18, Jordan Love and the Green Bay Packers went up against the Chicago Bears and Justin Fields. Fields' 138 yards and touchdown helped win the game to qualify for the playoffs. In the game, which the Packers dominated, is probably the last game for Fields ever to play for the Bears. This game displayed how the two rival franchises have differed with player development for the last three decades. There are many reasons young QBs fail, and the Jordan Love vs. Justin Fields is a perfect case study in the need of success and pitfalls of failure in quarterback development.

Factors that should be considered when analyzing Love's development versus Fields' are the preservation of confidence and the consistency of his team's offense and coaching. This is critical and difficult things to accomplish for a team. There are numerous quarterbacks, such as David Carr, Sam Darnold, and more, who possessed traits you want to see from a prospect but, because of their situation, crumbled. While Love learned for three years behind a future hall of famer Aaron Rodgers, Fields was forced into the starting role as a rookie. Fields had a long struggle to throw the ball downhill, and it is clear he has “happy feet,” describing his throwing habits and lack of confidence. You would hope that by the end of his third year, he would have eliminated these issues, but they still appear far too often. You can even hear the term “the game slows down” when speaking about the processing speed of quarterbacks, but when they continue to get hit and left out to dry, this never improves and, in some cases, regresses. When viewing Fields and Love, a high sack rate of 10.6 percent exhibits not only a poor line but that he holds the ball too long. This is even more prevalent because of the Bears' short pass game, which should get the ball out quickly but fails to do so. While viewing Love, he appears calm and executes great anticipation. While he is the lesser of the two, Fields, his pocket presence is far smoother. He has been able to grow in a controlled environment with minimal pressure. Love's success does not only come from learning and practice, but it comes at a level for three years, but in the fact that time was under the same management, coaching staff, and offense.

The general manager and head coach who drafted them practiced the system in mind remain in Green Bay, and while the assistants have changed, the offensive scheme has not. He has worked for and developed in an offensive scheme for four seasons and now knows this system like the back of his hand. This stability has given Love a championship run, and he has been able to build on what he learned and does not have to relearn his thought process, footwork, and mechanics every offseason. This is important because Love is known to struggle under these conditions as he suffered a regression from his junior to senior seasons in college due to the loss of receivers, running backs, and linemen, as well as a whole new offensive system. This occurred because his coach left for a better job, and his offensive coordinator was either transferred or graduated. He was the only one, and, despite these issues, he was mediocre, and the Bears resorted to using a running offense and underperformed. Going into 2023, they shifted the offense to be a quick, screen-based West Coast offense. And once again, field's stats were mediocre and showed little growth. How can you be expected to grow as a passer when your system shifts every year? This restarts a whole year of progress, effectively keeping him in a limbo state of development.

Despite three years starting, Justin Fields has only shown a fraction of the production Jordan Love has shown in one season. His failure in Chicago is due to complete mismanagement from the Bears staff. He is a warning of what can happen when you drop a talented but raw player into a poorly constructed team. Jordan Love demonstrates the importance of building a QB for yourself, not throwing one onto it.

The 2024 NHL Winter Classic

ANNABEL CURRY

The 2024 NHL Winter Classic was played on January 1st at T-Mobile Park, home to the Seattle Kraken. The Kraken played the Vegas Golden Knights in a game to encapsulate what it means to be in Seattle. It is a great city to visit for a game. It was a thoroughly quick process to get into the building, and with the visibility from the seats was pretty good. As the teams took the ice, the level of detail that was put into the event became clear. From the ice, the teams looked as if they were surrounded by a beautiful building.

The game was incredibly entertaining, a true testimony to the quality of the NHL. The Winter Classic was a beautiful display of the NHL's ability to produce exciting games. Despite the challenges the teams faced, they were able to put on a show for the fans.

Thank you to the NHL for the incredible trip! All opinions are my own and do not represent the NHL!
LeBron James, disgruntled after a no-foul call, complains to the referee.

SEBASTIÁN VERMUT

Shohei Ohtani is overrated. Boom. I said it. The player who everyone seems to be calling the “unicorn of baseball” or the “greatest of all time” has a very hit-or-miss future. At age 29, Ohtani is not a superstar. Signing a 700 million-dollar contract is no small feat (in fact, it’s nearly double the previous highest baseball contract), and if you add all the brand deals that pay him hand over fist to wear his products, he might become baseball’s first billionaire. He was offered so much not only because of his baseball abilities but also because of the money he brought in from Japanese advertisements. We’ve seen the Los Angeles Angels’ stadium become much more multicultural since his arrival. These international advertisements almost entirely repay the money the Los Angeles Dodgers are spending on him. For this reason, the 700 million dollars is almost not enough.

He’s a great baseball player, one of the best of our time, without a doubt. He definitely is not the greatest of all time, however. He just injured his pitching arm, which requires a UCL implant, and has only been able to play 23 games or so, the Lakers have been this bad? Then why have they been this bad? Darvin Ham seems to be a terrible coaching staff. A terrible roster, one of the best players in the league, and other members have been complain ing about the fluctuating rhythms of the teams. If you see the coaches that Los Angeles Lakers have won championships with, Erik Spoelstra and Ty Lue, they garner the respect of the fans. This makes him an excellent player. However, if injuries keep bogging him down, at one point, he will have to stop pitching. And once he can’t pitch anymore, he’ll be a great hitter. Ohtani is a sure-fire Hall of Fame first ballot admit but not the best to play the game, he has a very long way to go before we can truly compare him to players like Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron. He is the latter of which really is the greatest of all time. Ohtani has the offensive production of someone like Kyle Schwarber. He has the pitching power of Freddy Peralta Put together, this is a superstar, but not the greatest of all time. What makes Ohtani so incredible is his persistence. He is almost always available to play and will be a plus on any team. As he ages, his dependence will go down, however, he will sell himself more and more. To say that Ohtani is overrated is not to say that he is not an incredible player. Der ek Jeter, one of the greatest New York Yankees of all time, was overrated. Clayton Kershaw, a certified ace, is overrated. Bryce Harper is an incredible player, but he, too, is overrated. The list goes on. The bottom line is that almost every person that people call the best of all time usually isn’t. We’ll see in 2025 and beyond if Ohtani will live up to his hype, but I sure wouldn’t want to be the Dodgers in 2035, who will have to dish out 68 million dollars a year to Shohei for an empty roster spot.

Why The Los Angeles Lakers’ Have Been Struggling

The Los Angeles Lakers this season have been a disappointment, to say the least. After coming off a conference final loss to the Denver Nuggets and what seemed to be an out of the money the Los Angeles Angels’ stadium become much more multicultural since his arrival. These international advertisements almost entirely repay the money the Los Angeles Dodgers have been spending on him. The Los Angeles Lakers too much to prove, and it will take a lot of moves to prove that they are still perennials. They have just been playing quality basketball. However, the future is not too bleak for this team. They could make big trades during the deadline and flip the team over like they did last year. There are mentions of big-name players like Dejounte Murray and Zach Lavine. They could fire Darvin Ham and change the system they play in. One guaran teed is that Rob Pelinka and the Lakers front office will make moves. Whatever they do, the Lakers must be careful to keep their current team, whether it’s identity or style. They have much to prove, and it will be interesting to see how the rest of their season goes.

NBA analyst for the Athletic. “There is currently a growing disconnect between Darvin Ham and the Lakers locker right now.” Darvin Ham’s extreme rotational changes and lineup changes frustrated the players too. Several players have been complaining about the fluctuating rhythms of the teams. If you see the coaches that Lakers have won championships with, Erik Spoelstra and Ty Lue, they garner the respect of the young and upcoming players, but also the key veterans. Darvin Ham seems to lack that. A third reason, and the greatest one, is their no-ounce downgrade in the level of playing. The team currently has the 23rd-highest defensive rating, 12th-highest defensive rating, and 20th-highest net rating. If you compare this to the 2020 Lakers championship team, you see the stark difference. The Lakers three-point shooting has also been abysmal, attempting the 5th least three-pointers. All of this, along with an offense concentrated only on Anthony Davis and LeBron James, has resulted in the 24th most offensive efficiency. Defensively, they were quite good, with players like Davis, Reddish, and Vanderbilt holding their own down to that end. But offensively, they just have not been fluid enough.

Prior to the season, everyone thought this Lakers team was the deepest of them all, with a great combination of stars and role players. But you can see how big the gap is. 39-year-old LeBron James and Anthony Davis have carried the team, while Austin Reaves, Rui Hachimura, Jarred Vanderbilt, and D’Angelo Russell, four of the main guys who championed their previous run, do not seem to produce on that level anymore. New signings like Cam Reddish, LaMarcus Aldridge, and Christian Wood are just not playing as expected.

The team lacks motivation. LeBron James seems more interested in watching his son play, and other players do not seem hungry. This Lakers team has the most to prove, and show that they are still perennials, and that they are still the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2035, who will have to dish out 68 million dollars a year to Shohei for an empty roster spot.
Michael Huff Earns Title of Junior Grandmaster in Taekwondo

CHLOE PARK

To all Taekwondo practitioners, achieving the title of Seventh Dan Junior Grandmaster is a remarkable feat that requires dedication, hard work, and years of training. This is the story of Michael Huff, a Mendon native and Ypsilanti resident, who recently attained this prestigious title in Taekwondo, marking a significant milestone in his 46-year journey in martial arts that others rarely have the opportunity to achieve.

Huff’s journey in Taekwondo began in an unexpected way. Following a broken leg from an unprovoked fight, he stumbled upon a flier for Taekwondo classes at the Jackson Y center. Intrigued by the promise that earning a black belt would mean no one would ever hurt him physically, Huff decided to give it a try. Little did he know that this decision would set him on a path of discipline and self-discovery.

Huff’s Taekwondo journey took a unique turn when he joined the class led by Tae Zee Park, a ninth-degree black belt and a national Taekwondo champion in South Korea. Park’s teachings, combined with the dedication of senior students, guided Huff to rapidly progress through the ranks, achieving a first-degree black belt in just 18 months.

Over the years, Huff balanced his commitment to Taekwondo with a career and family life. Despite the challenges, he opened the Huff Institute of Tae Park Taekwondo in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1985, contributing to the promotion of the martial art.

Taekwondo, with its core tenets of respect, courage, integrity, humility, courtesy, confidence, discipline, and perseverance, played a crucial role in shaping Huff’s character. He emphasizes that the positive impact it has on individuals, helping them grow both mentally and emotionally. The martial arts became a means of escape and emotional release for many, teaching valuable life skills such as self-confidence and high expectations. Huff now actively involved in teaching seminars and judging tournaments, seeing this achievement as an opportunity to influence the future growth and development of Taekwondo globally. His dedication and success reflect not only personal accomplishment but also a commitment to the principles of Eastern Dan philosophy, emphasizing respect for elders and those of accomplishment.

Michael Huff’s journey from Mendon to becoming a Seventh Dan Junior Grandmaster in Taekwondo is emblematic of his unwavering dedication, perseverance, and proof of the transformative power of martial arts. His story serves as an inspiration for aspiring practitioners and a celebration of the profound impact Taekwondo can have on one’s life, including my own, as I transition to my fourth dan. As he looks ahead, Huff remains open to new goals, continuing his pursuit of excellence in the martial arts that has shaped him into the master he is today.
Joel Embiid Remains Favorite To Win Back To Back NBA MVP

ZACHARY YUAN

The Detroit Pistons' historic 28-game losing streak finally came to an end on December 30 with a 129-127 victory over the Toronto Raptors. The streak lasted from Oct. 28 to Dec. 30, surpassing the 2010-11 Cleveland Cavaliers and 2013-14 Philadelphia 76ers for the most consecutive losses in one season (both teams had a 26-game losing streak). The streak is now tied with the 2015 Philadelphia 76ers for the longest losing streak in NBA history.

The Pistons' victory against the Raptors was a close game, with the Pistons winning by 2 points at home. Pistons guard Cade Cunningham put up 30 points and 12 assists to propel the team to victory. “It’s just amazing,” Cunningham said during the post-game press conference. “We just kept battling. It’s been a long stretch, all these losses, but I’m just happy to be part of a group of guys who don’t quit.”

The Pistons were missing key players, having just traded O.G. Anunoby, Precious Achiuwa, and Malachi Flynn to the New York Knicks a few hours earlier. In turn, they received RJ Barrett and Immanuel Quickley, but they were not available to play during the Pistons game.

“I’ve been in a ton of locker rooms my whole life, but that’s first for me,” Pistons head coach Monty Williams said. “Guys were screaming. I was almost in tears. I’m just so happy for our guys and for everyone in the locker room.”

Ironically, the Pistons started the season well. They lost by just one point to the Miami Heat on opening night, then beat the Charlotte Hornets and Chicago Bulls, suggesting that perhaps this would be the season that the young roster showed its promise. Instead, it spiraled out of control, and the Pistons have a 4-37 record.

Moreover, the future is not promising for this young Pistons team, as they are on track to one of the worst seasons in NBA history. Currently, the 1972-73 Philadelphia 76ers hold the record for the worst season in NBA history, with 9 wins and 73 losses. But why are the Pistons so bad?

The Pistons are currently ranked 30th out of the 30 teams in the league defensively, scoring only 107.3 points out of 100 possessions. They are 29th in turnover percentage and turnovers per game, 16th in field goal percentage (.472), 27th in 3-point percentage (.346), and 30th in points allowed per game (121). With most of these stats dead last in the league, it is easy to understand why the team has such a bad offense.

Meanwhile, on offense, the Pistons have the 28th defense in the league, allowing 121 points per 100 possessions. It ranks 24th in field goal percentage allowed, 25th in 3-point field goal percentage allowed, 29th in points allowed off turnovers per game (20.3), and 24th in points in the paint allowed per game (53.6). The defense isn’t helping the team.

The Pistons have a young roster, with an average age of 24.9. This is one of the youngest teams in the league, and having a young team has its pros and cons. The main reason for this terrible season is the age of the players. The team needs a seasoned veteran to lead the team, as all the other players are very inexperienced. However, the future is bright with this team. Cade Cunningham, Jalen Duren, Jaden Ivey, and Ausar Thompson are all promising prospects and future all-stars. Maybe, just maybe, in a few years, the Pistons will be back in playoff contention.

But for now, the 2023-24 Pistons team will forever be remembered as having the longest losing streak, and possibly the worst record in NBA history.

The Detroit Pistons are tied with the 2015 Philadelphia 76ers for the longest losing streak in NBA history.
The Shocking Collapse of The Philadelphia Eagles

Will Weissman

On October 31, 2023, former MVP James Harden was traded from the Philadelphia 76ers, with teammate PJ Tucker in exchange for Marcus Morris, Nicolas Batum, Robert Covington, Kent Bazemore, and multiple draft picks. The Clippers gained their fourth superstar player, with 5-time All-Star Russell Westbrook, 8-time All-Star Paul George, and now 10-time All-Star James Harden all heading the way in Los Angeles. However, do the Clippers have too many superstars? Over the last ten years, few teams have compiled rosters with more than two superstar level players. The Brooklyn Nets and Golden State Warriors were some of the only teams that started to build chemistry in their rotation. The Nets then became too reliant on inconsistent production from their trio, having only played 16 games together. Nets fans were hopeful of winning a championship in 2022, but their aspirations were soon diminished after being swept in the first round of the playoffs by the Boston Celtics.

However, the Golden State Warriors proved having multiple superstar stars on a team can lead to championships, as shown by their success in the mid to late 2010s. The Warriors were the league’s powerhouse, making finals appearances in five straight years. Their star players, Steph Curry, Klay Thompson, Draymond Green, and Kevin Durant, were all within their primes, ranging in age from their late 20s to early 30s. However, the core of the Clippers roster are all in their early to mid-30s, likely past their prime. Even if the Clippers succeeded in the upcoming playoffs, their success will probably be short-lived as their superstars inch toward retirement. Not only will they begin to slow down on offense, but their quickness and physicality will begin to become a liability on defense.

Nevertheless, the Clippers can still make a playoff run this year, but their starting rotation must gain chemistry. Westbrook recently moved out of the starting five and now comes off the bench, allowing Leonard, George, and Harden to share the offensive responsibilities more effectively. Harden and Westbrook’s new roles focused on passing are important in getting the entire team involved in scoring. Even though Harden and Westbrook’s scoring averages have dipped from previous years, their combined 13.1 assists per game will support the team tremendously.

The Clipper’s record is 31-15, ranked number three in the Western Conference, as one of the league’s best teams. Because of the Clipper’s unselfish play so far this season, their team has a legitimate chance of making a deep run into the playoffs. If their highest contributing players gain experience playing together in the next couple of months, they may find more success than the Nets did in 2022. However, their aging team may prove to be a problem in the next couple of years.
NBA 2024 Rookie of the Year Predictions

Ben Degan

Now nearing the halfway mark of the 2023-24 NBA season, there have been several rookies who have been making waves in their first months. Victor Wembanyama has been showing his defensive presence and offensive gravity even in his restrictive minutes. Chet Holmgren has been putting up All-Star-level performances night after night. Other rookies, such as Jamiere Jaquez Jr. and Dereck Lively II, are showing that they can fit a role in a system and contribute to successful rosters. But the question still remains: Who will be crowned the Rookie of the Year?

Before getting into who I believe are the top contenders for the Kia NBA Rookie of the Year award, I want to gloss over some ‘glows and grows’ of these incom ing rookies. There’s a new standard in the NBA: efficiency and scoring are at an all-time high, and players are expected to dominate right from the jump. So it comes as no surprise that there’s a fair number of rookies that fall short of these massive expectations. However, loyal fans, do not despair because all you need to do is give some of these guys time to blossom into the players they have the potential to become. Starting things off with Scoot Henderson. Scoot’s been subpar, for lack of a better term. As the third pick in the draft this year to the Portland Trail Blazers, a team in a massive rebuild phase. Scoot was tasked with filling a Joaquin Nogueria role as the young franchise player that can carry Portland to the promised land in Damian Lillard’s new absence. This was not the case. So far, Scoot’s averaging 12.7 ppg, 3.1 rpg, and 5.0 apg, which honestly is not too bad until you look at the efficiency: 36% from the field and 27% from the 3-point line. Those are atrocious numbers for a guard, even if it shows that he is still confident in his abilities. With that mentality, he’ll either become an all-star caliber player or the next starting point guard of the Beijing Bucks.

Now, getting into the next two guys who are the cut-cut options for the rookie of the year, I think it’s fair to say that at this point, anything can happen. They’re both performing at All-Star levels and will be a rivalry the NBA will enjoy for the next decade to come. I’m talking about Victor Wembanyama and Chet Holmgren. Averaging 19.6 ppg, 10.3 rpg, 3.2 bpg, and 17.4 ppg, 7.3 rpg, 2.5 bpg respectively, these two are on a whole other level among all rookies, and both are in the top 10 for total blocks this season among all NBA players. Wembanyama has been stopping the most dominant forces in the NBA, such as Giannis and Embiid with his inhuman frame and athleticism. Wenybi is also an offensive cheat code, as his inside scoring is nearly impossible to stop, although his shooting efficiency could be a little better. The most impressive feat and what really pushes him above Chet, in my opinion, who is honestly the more complete overall player, is that Wemby is doing all of this in an average of 26 minutes of on-court time a game. To put this into perspective, Chet plays 31 minutes a game, and most NBA players with their numbers are playing an average of 34 minutes a game. Victor Wenybi is putting up near All-Star level numbers and is the best shot blocker in the NBA with a minute handicap.

So even beyond the Rookie of the Year award, the new question becomes: Just how good will Victor Wembanyama get?

Alex Lee

UEFA Champions League and Copa America winner Luis Suarez has agreed to a move to Inter Miami for the 2024 Major League Soccer season. His prime years, Suarez was known for his speed, his finishing and aware ness to partner with his former teammates, especially Messi, who he will need to focus on these to still have success against some of his other skills, such as his awareness, movement, and finishing. These are much less affected by age, so he will need to focus on these aspects of the game as much. I also think his former teammates, especially Messi, who he will be playing in attack with, will help him adapt in this manner. After leading the attack together for several seasons at Barcelona, they will be used to each other’s movements, helping bring out the best of Suarez. As long as he can adapt this new playstyle, he still has the potential to bring success to Inter Miami and improve the league’s overall standard.

Luis Suárez Set to Join Inter Miami:
Has David Beckham’s Superteam Been Assembled?

Signed from Brazilian club Gremio, Luis Suarez is set to join Inter Miami for the 2024 Major League Soccer season.
USA Boys Team Wins Gold in World Junior Hockey Championships

ANNABEL CURRY

On January 5th, the United States beat Sweden 6-2 to take home the gold in the 2024 World Junior Championship. World Juniors is one of the biggest tournaments in hockey and a great way for fans to root for their country, as NHL players are not allowed to play in the Olympics. The U20 tournament is also a way for recently drafted or future draft picks to showcase their talent under the big lights.

Last year, Connor Bedard stole the show as he brought Team Canada to gold, contributing to 65% of all goals during the tournament. Bedard was hyped beyond belief and has been a standout player in the NHL as one of the best rookies and an NHL all-star. This year’s prospective first pick is 17-year-old Boston University freshman Colten Cebrini, who previously played for Shattuck St. Mary’s and the Chicago Steel, currently leads BU in points, having 31 in 18 games. He plays there along with World Juniors teammate and Montre- al Canadiens prospect Lane Hutson. While Cebrini led team Canada in points with 8 in 5 games, the focus of the tournament fell to Rut- ger McGroarty and the USA team after Canada’s disappointing 2-0 loss to Sweden and then 2-3 loss to Czechia in the quar- terfinals of the medal round.

Team USA was a star-stacked team including Ducks prospect Cutter Gauthier, Columbus Blue Jackets prospect Gavin Brindley, Captain and Jets prospect McCroarty, 4th overall pick Will Smith. Blues prospect Jimmy Snuggerud, and Hudson from BU. The only undrafted player on this team was Zeev Buim, who is in his first year at the University of Den- ver. The US got off to a good start, beating Nor- way 4-1 and Sweden 3-1. They were then shocked in their 3rd game by the Czechs, who the US only managed to beat in a shootout. From there, the US returned to their high-scoring games with a 10-2 win over Slovakia and a 7-2 win over Latvia. Overconfidence seemed to be a killer in the next game, as the US found themselves barely beat- ing Finland in the semi-fi- nals 3-2 to send them to the gold medal game.

USA player Gabe Per- reault scored the first goal with 3 minutes left in the first period, which was answered early in the second by Otto Sten- berg. USA’s Isaac Howard scored 2 goals in that pe- riod, with Jonathan Lek- kerimaki lessening the gap to 3-2 very late in the period. The third period was all USA, with Buim and Ryan Leonard scor- ing to make the score 5-2. Before McGroarty de- cisively ended the game with an empty netter. The other notable game was the regulation game between Germa- ny and Norway. Germany started off hot, beating Finland for the first time in history, but quickly fell apart in the second and third period. Germany’s tight game went overtime but ended almost a minute in as the Germans avoided regulation. While Norway is sent down a level, fans can look forward to the inclusion of Kazakhstan in next year’s tournament.

The Brilliance of the NBA In-Season Tournament

HARRY MURPHY

Since taking over from David Stern as the commis- sioner of the National Basketball Association, Adam Silver has had no shame in making bold moves for the better- ment of the league. He began his tenure by ex- pelling former Los Ange- les Clipper’s governor, Donald Sterling, for rac- ist remarks and contin- ues to add new, exciting rules like flattening the draft odds, the play-in tournament, and most recently, the NBA In-Season Tournament.

Modeled after professional soccer, specifically the Premier League’s FA Cup and UEFA Champions League, the NBA In-Season Tour- nament features a group stage made up of six teams selected based on teams’ previous records. Five teams per group play four games in the entire group stage, two home and two away. Then, the six-group winner and two other teams with the best group re- cords advance to a sin- gle elimination quar- ter-final. Each team that makes the quarter-finals will earn 50,000 dollars, and as each player wins games, the prize pool increases to 100,000 dollars, 200,000 dollars, and 500,000 dollars per person on the championship team. The top 3 prize pools, the winning team gets to lift the NBA Cup, and the runners-up get to lift the NBA In-Season Tour- nament MVP. Leading up to the inaugural In-Season tour- nament, many doubts were swirling around NBA spaces. Fans were most concerned with players’ willingness to care about the stakes in this tournament, worry- ing that it would end up with the same lackadais- cal attitude players came to the All-Star game with. The money served as more than sufficient reward, as NBA players on a minimum contract can earn nearly 50 percent more than their cur- rent salary if they win the NBA Cup. The concern that fans held was whether or not the NBA Cup would overshadow the already packed NBA schedule. The NBA has one of the largest regular seasons in professional sports, with an 82-game season. With the play-in and the playoffs, NBA fi- nals teams could play up to 112 total games. Silver foresaw this and made it so that NBA In-Season tournament games — except the final — were counted as regular-season games.

In the 2023 In-Sea- son Tournament, the Los Angeles Lakers came out victorious over the Indiana Pacers. The cup achieved one of the main goals when it was creat- ed, to give smaller mar- ket teams more spotlight and to give fans of strug- ging teams more to look forward to.

If you were a fan of European Soccer before this season, you knew that the In-Season tournament was going to be a success. More stakes and more action mean more fan interest. In its first season, the In-Season Tournament championship tripled the over 59 million viewers of regular sea- son games. The question now is: what new thing will Silver integrate next: expansion, relega- tion, high school draft- ing, shortened regular season, international club tournaments?
Two Goals in One Shot: What is Wrong With The Ottowa Senators?

MARIO CALVO

This image comes courtesy of a meme I saw while scrolling through social media before winter break, and I found it nothing short of hilarious. However, this little meme is more than just a meme, I believe this to be a true microcosm of the Ottowa Senators thus far in the 2023-2024 NHL season.

On the surface, this is a bad team. Under the surface, this is a really bad team. The team currently stands at 16 wins and 24 losses, last in the Atlantic Division with a measly 32 points compared to the first-place Boston Bruins standing at 64 points. On the ice, the Senators combine an average offense with a terrible defense. This team seems to be unable to stop even a nosebleed, given that the Senators are in the top 10 for goals given up, and their penalty kill is an abysmal 3rd-worst in the NHL as well. Their offense is 17th in the NHL for goals scored and have the 24th-ranked power play, nothing too shiny at all. As it pertains to coaching, the Senators have already fired coach D.J. Smith after an 11-15 start, and at 5-9, Jaques Martin does not seem to have improved the Senators’ standing in the NHL significantly. The bottom line is that an aging Claude Giroux is simply incapable of leading the Senators to the promised land by himself. While Giroux’s stats are undeniably good, the team has simply been unable to provide any support for him throughout the season. While Ridly Greig and Mathieu Joseph are bright spots, the rest of the team is simply not good enough to be competitive against top-tier competition in the rest of the NHL.

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UCL Round of 16 Predictions

UCL. They have a dominant goal-scorer in Lautaro Martinez, and excellent role players to surround him. Meanwhile, Atlético Madrid sit 5th in La Liga, and even though they topped their group, they don’t seem like serious contenders for this one, as this is the hardest match to decide. The current Serie A and La Liga champions will go head-to-head in the best match the round of 16 has to offer. Napoli has had a very bad injury crisis, with many star players being out and potentially not being able to play in these knockout matches. It really could go either way, but I think Napoli will come out on top because of their goal-scoring ability and great midfield.

1st Leg: Napoli 1-2 Barcelona
2nd Leg: Barcelona 0-2 Napoli
Aggregate Score: Napoli 3-2 Barcelona

Inter and Atletico Madrid sit 2nd and 1st in La Liga, respectively. Meanwhile, Napoli sit 2nd in Serie A. Meanwhile, Barcelona is in 4th place in La Liga and is not in the greatest form. Napoli has stars like Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Victor奥斯- himen, and Barcelona has stars like Pedri and Ronald Araújo.

In the end, I think Napoli will come on top. They have shown they can play in knockout rounds in the Super Coppa, while Barcelona has failed in their Supercoppa final. In addition to all of this, Barcelona has had a very bad injury crisis, with many star players being out and potentially not being able to play in these knockout matches. It really could go either way, but I think Napoli will come out on top because of their goal-scoring ability and great midfield.

1st Leg: Napoli 1-2 Bar-celona
2nd Leg: Barcelona 0-2 Napoli
Aggregate Score: Napoli 3-2 Barcelona