

Classic Physique Body Builder Chris Bumstead Wins Fifth Mr. Olympia

ARTHUR WU

In the realm of Class 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 like Ramon Dino and Urs Kalecinski. Fighting against the doubts cast by numerous social media influencers, Bumstead continues to conquer the Olympia stage with a balance of skillful posing and a shredded physique. Each win serves as a testament to his unwavering discipline, grueling training routines, and lifestyle dedicated 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 contenders 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 can 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

without its challenges. The world of competitive bodybuilding demands sacrifices, resilience, and mental fortitude. Bumstead's past challenges of anxiety, stress, and kidney surgery have been extreme burdens on his back.

Throughout the competition, Bumstead showcased his meticulously sculpted physique, emphasizing the perfect balance of size, symmetry, and definition. His routine on stage was a captivating display of muscle control, posing artistry, and an undeniable stage presence that left audiences and judges alike in awe. Bumstead's journey to the fifth title wasn't

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 Mr. Olympia triumph, Bumstead expressed gratitude for the unwavering 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 retire-

ment.

As Chris Bumstead celebrates his fifth Mr. Olympia victory, the bodybuilding community anticipates what the future holds for this iconic athlete. Will he continue to dominate the stage, pushing the boundaries of his physique? Will new contenders rise to challenge his reign, or will he retire early, as previously hinted in his Instagram posts? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain - Chris Bumstead's journey is a testament to the indomitable spirit of a champion who has left an indelible mark on the legacy of Mr. Olympia.



Chris Bumstead (right) poses against rival and friend Ramon Dino (left).

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, a two-time American League MVP and a three-time ESPY Best Major League Baseball Player Award recipient. Ohtani, a recently ac-

quired 29-year-old superstar pitcher and designated hitter from the Los Angeles Angels, originally 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 ten-year period. The historic and legendary franchise of the LA Dodgers, already loaded with superstar talent with

household names such as Mookie Betts and Freddie Freeman, looks to begin yet another season as one of the top teams in the MLB. However, considering what happened with the New York Mets last season and their ultimate collapse with similar superstar talent, is it too early to say that the Dodgers will run the MLB next season?

The Dodgers ended their season last year with

a 100-62 record and sat atop the NL West before they lost three straight games in the NLDS to the Arizona Diamondbacks and were quickly eliminated from World Series contention. One of the biggest weaknesses of last year's Dodgers team was health in their starting pitching rotation. The team saw starters such as Dustin May, Clayton Kershaw, Walker Buehler, and Tony Gonsolin leave the team debilitated and weak from the pitching aspect. After signing another Japanese superstar in Yoshinobu Yamamoto this offseason in addition to Shohei Ohtani, the Dodgers look primed to make a big comeback in 2024 with the additions of two Japanese superstars capable of playing the one and the two in the starting rotation. With Dustin May and Walker Buehler coming back from injury, this Dodgers rotation could be one of the scariest that baseball has seen in recent history.

Offensively, the Dodgers have been known to have a powerful group of hitters capable of getting on base and driving in runs. Mookie Betts led the team offensively as he slashed for a .307 average with 39 home runs and 107 RBIs, and fellow teammate Freddie Freeman contributed substantially as well, hitting for an impressive .331 average and 102 RBIs. The Dodgers will get yet another powerful batter in Shohei Ohtani, a player who can seemingly just do it all. After hitting an outstanding 44 home runs last season with a .304 average, Shohei looks primed to help propel this Dodgers offense to a new dimension.

It may be too early to say, but the addition of Shohei Ohtani to an already-loaded Los Angeles Dodgers team gives them the early edge in preseason power rankings and has them as my favorites to win the 2024 World Series.



Shohei Ohtani puts on a Dodgers cap and uniform during his introductory news conference at Dodgers Stadium.



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 amassing 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 effect 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 resounding 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, as he was the top target for the Rams this season. The wide re-

ceiver has been absolutely electric throughout the entire season, accumulating 1,486 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.



Stroud, a rookie, has made waves in the NFL this year, leading the Houston Texans to a 10-7 record.

Soccer Legend Franz Beckenbuer Dead At 78, Remembering His Legacy

XAVIER MORAN

On January 7, 2024, a soccer legend passed away. Franz Beckenbuer, nicknamed "The Emperor," is considered to be one of the greatest soccer players to ever play. Born in Munich right after World War II, Beckenbuer was surrounded by poverty and destruction. When Beckenbuer was only 13 years old, he joined the professional soccer team Bayern Munich in 1958 and made his first soccer debut in 1963. Ever since his first game, he became a crucial defender for 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. Beckenbuer 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, Beckenbuer 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, Beckenbuer'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 quarterfinals of his second World Cup in 1970, Beckenbuer scored a winning goal in a rematch against England. Facing off against Italy in the semifinals, Beckenbuer 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, Beckenbuer'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, Beckenbuer 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, plac-

ing second. In the next World Cup, he once again led the team to the finals, where they finally became victors once more, beating the famed Diego Maradona of Argentina. He also managed Bayern Munich, the team he started playing with over 25 years before. He helped Bayern Munich win a couple more trophies before leaving them 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 fo-

cused on spending time with his wife, his five children, and his two grandchildren. He lived in Salzburg, Austria, in a massive house at the base of a mountain, where he would ski every winter. Beckenbuer passed away on January 7, 2024, from natural causes. While he is gone, the impact on 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 Beckenbuer 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 viewers time and time again, showcases the pinnacle of athletic prowess and international camaraderie. According to the Olympic website, around 3.05 billion people gathered around their TVs to watch this event in 2021. With other huge sporting events such as the Super Bowl, the World Cup, and the NBA, the Olympic Games promote individual sports. The top four most viewed sports, according to a Statista report, were all individual sports, followed by basketball coming in at fifth. Swimming has attracted a huge audience for the Olympic Games, with 34 percent of viewers watching one or more swim events. For swimmers, this is one of the most exciting meets to watch, with athletes competing in their best shape to earn a gold medal for their home country. However, unlike the previous Olympic Games, the Paris Olympics will be far more difficult to predict than in previous years. None of the events are dominated by a specific swimmer or nation, and there is certainly a sense of ambivalence as to who will ultimately win. Below, I will give my predictions for some of 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 champion Wang Shun (China), Leon Marchand (France), 400 IM SCM world record holder Daiya Seto (Japan), Shaine Casas (USA), Michael Andrew (USA), and others. The two biggest contenders for the spot are Shun and Marchand, both entering 2024 under 1:55 (Shun: 1:54.62, Marchand: 1:54.82). Although Shun has a faster time currently, I do think Marchand has proved to be a more consistent swimmer, and that edges him over Shun 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 ability to keep his body high on the lunge, make him a formidable competitor. However, I do think that Marchand shouldn't be left out of the conversation. This past summer, he swam a 2:06.40 unshaved and untapered at the French Nationals meet, which put him at the fourth fastest time in history. He certainly has the potential to drop lots of time and most definitely has a shot at the gold medal.

Men's 400 Medley Relay (China):

Team USA, world record holders in this event from the 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games (3:26.78), were shocked by team China's performance this past September at the Asian Games. The Chinese relay dropped the second-fastest swim in history, going an astounding 3:27.01 with World Champion Xu Jiayu as the backstroke leg (52.05), World Record holder Qin Haiyang as breaststroke (57.63), Wang Changhao as fly (50.68), and Asian Record holder Pan Zhanle as free (46.65). Comparing these splits with the American relay in 2021, the most noticeable difference is Caeleb Dressel's split on the butterfly leg, where he went 49.03 compared to Wang Changhao's 50.68. However, due to Dressel's current shape, I think that Team USA is most likely going to put someone else in his place (Dare Rose or Shaine Casas), but neither of these world-class athletes can closely match Dressel's speed and power through the water. Because of that, I think Team China has a bigger shot at the gold-medal spot than Team USA. Nevertheless, if Dressel can make a huge comeback in these next five months before the Olympic Trials in June, Team USA has a pretty good shot at repeating their Olympic title.

Men's 400 free (Ahmed Hafnaoui):

As a distance event, the 400 free may be quite boring for people looking for an exhilarating race that won't be over two minutes long. However, I can assure you that the 400 free this summer will be one of the best events to look out for. With swimmers like Sam Short (Australia), reigning world champion, Ahmen Hafnaoui (Tunisia), current 400 free Olympic champion, and Daniel Wiff-



For the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, Frenchman Leon Marchand looks to obtain his first Olympic Gold Medal in the 200 IM.

en (Ireland), SCM World Champion in the 800, the 400 free is stacked with swimmers who can easily go under the 3:45 mark. Not only is this event going to be an incredible race between the swimmers themselves, but many people have also been looking forward to the potential downfall of Paul Biedermann's world record (3:40.07), which is one of the only few remaining records set before the ban of super-suits in 2010. Looking at the 2023 Fukuoka World Championships' results, I believe that there is a high chance of swimmers breaking the 3:40 mark. The fact that Short and Hafnaoui are 20 and 21 respectively, the distance world is looking very promising for future generations to come. Chinese swimmer Sun Yang might also make an appearance at the Paris Olympics, with his doping suspension set to end in May. According to a Swimsam Article, Sun Yang has been training in and out of the pool during his suspension despite not competing at an official meet since 2020. Whether or not he will swim well leading up to the Paris Olympics, he is still a swimmer to look out for in these next few months. To answer the question of who I think will win this event, I'm picking Hafnaoui as my top spot.

Women's 400 free (Summer McIntosh):

On the women's side, the competition doesn't get much easier. Ariarne Timitus (Australia), the reigning world champion and world record holder in this event, is looking to secure her second Olympic title. However, this

will not be an easy task as she is up against 17-year-old sensation Summer McIntosh. Breaking the 400 free world record this past summer (3:56.08) at the Canadian Swimming Trials, which was later broken by Timitus (3:55.38), McIntosh caught the world by storm after breaking multiple world records just as a 16-year-old. Despite a somewhat disappointing swim in this event at the 2023 Fukuoka World Championships, where McIntosh placed fourth place and out of the podium spot (3:59.94), I do think that she is capable of dropping a decent amount of time from the taper. Keeping in mind that she has already broken world records at 16, McIntosh certainly has plenty of potential, and I put her in my top spot for the 400 free.

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 Murphy, Xu Jiayu, and Thomas Cecco; Women's 100 back with Kaylee Mckeown and Regan Smith; and others). Many questions are circling the swimming 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 competitive. I mean, this is the Olympic Games — greatness will surely unfold.

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UEFA Champions League Round of 16 Predictions

NAREK HAMBARDZUMYAN

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 of these matches 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 only gotten better since their treble-winning season just last year, and they are still going strong. Although currently 4th in the Premier League, the current Premier League champions are always a force to be reckoned with. Meanwhile, Copenhagen sit 3rd in the Danish League and got out of their group with 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-dominant style of football and will squeeze Copenhagen into their own half for the majority of the game. Copenhagen would have to rely on quick counterattacks if they want a chance, but it is unlikely they will be able to pull this off, as they aren't necessarily known for their counter-attacking play. They could put up a good fight in the first leg at home, with their vibrant atmosphere lifting up the team, but it most certainly won't last to the second leg.

1st Leg: Copenhagen 1-2 Manchester City
2nd Leg: Manchester City 3-0 Copenhagen
Aggregate Score: Copenhagen 1-5 Manchester City

RB Leipzig Vs Real Madrid

Alongside Manchester City and Copen-

hagen, Real Madrid and RB Leipzig will be the first match to kick off the round of 16. However, this tie seems to be a lot closer than what most people think. Real Madrid have been historically excellent in the Champions League, with a record 14 wins in the club's history, including a win just two years ago. They sit second in La Liga, just a point behind a rising Girona squad. RB Leipzig is also doing decent for themselves, with a 4th-place position in the Bundesliga now.

Real Madrid has many great stars, Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Junior, Rodrygo, and many more. They also have a much deeper squad with great players on the bench, as well as an experienced squad in comparison with a young and inexperienced RB Leipzig squad, with an average squad age of 25.5 years. Real Madrid can easily put severe pressure on the wings as they have very pacey players who can outrun their full-backs (with the exception of David Raum). They also have deadly threats through the middle with Bellingham, so their attacking forces will be too much. It should be cruise control for Real Madrid, but it could come down to the wire.

1st Leg: RB Leipzig 1-2 Real Madrid
2nd Leg: Real Madrid 3-1 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, most importantly, 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 failures over the 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,



The UCL matchups for the round of 16.

but Real Sociedad should not 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

The other match being played on Valentine's Day will be Lazio versus Bayern Munich. Bayern has been a consistent powerhouse in the Champions League for several years, with them always being title contenders every year. They sit 2nd in the Bundesliga right now and topped their group with Manchester United and Copenhagen. Lazio has been underwhelming this season in the Serie A, sitting in 6th place currently. They came out 2nd in a decent group with Atletico Madrid, Feyenoord, and Celtic.

Bayern Munich should take the win in this tie, and it probably won't be close. They just have way too much squad depth, benching Kingsley Coman and Leon Goretzka, players who would

be starters on the Lazio team. You should expect nothing short of a blow-out 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

PSV Vs Borussia Dortmund

This is one of the toughest matchups for the round of 16, as both teams have been phenomenal this season. Starting, PSV haven'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 5th place, they topped their UCL group with probably the most competitive 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).

self).

This will be a very tight fixture, and it could go either way, but I think PSV 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. PSV 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: PSV 1-0 Dortmund
2nd Leg: Dortmund 1-1 PSV
Aggregate Score: PSV 2-1 Dortmund

Inter Vs Atletico Madrid

On first look, the match looks like a tight tie between two powerhouses, but upon further inspection, it seems to be very clear-cut. Inter have been very good in Serie A this season, sitting in 1st place, while only losing one game. They came 2nd on goal difference to Real Sociedad and reached the final last year in the



Jordan Love vs. Justin Fields: A Cross-Division Study in Quarterback Development

NOAH BINKOWSKI

In Week 18, Jordan Love and the Green Bay Packers went up against the Chicago Bears and Justin Fields in a must-win game to qualify for the playoffs. This game, which the Packers dominated, is probably the last game Justin Fields will ever 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 into areas of success and pitfalls of failure in quarterback development.

Factors that should be looked at to analyze Love's development versus Fields' are the preservation of his confidence and the consistency of his team's offense and coaches. Preserving a young QB's confidence is one of the most 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 demonstrated a struggle to throw the ball

downfield, and it is clear he has "happy feet," displaying nerves and a lack of comfort. 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 often 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' stats, his 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 passing game, which should get the ball out quickly but fails to do so. When viewing Love, he appears calm and exhibits great anticipation. While he is the lesser "athlete" to 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 practicing at an NFL 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 Love with their 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 chance to improve as he has been able to build on what he learned and does not have to rebuild 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 teammates either transferred or graduated from the program. This downgrade in weapons and a worse coach hindered the potential he flashed in his

junior year. Green Bay's stability is paired with Quarterback Coach Tom Clements. When Rodgers brought him back to Green Bay, it felt like when he was originally hired to get the most out of an old Brett Favre and develop the mechanics and mental processing of a young Rodgers. Fields' staff has been an entirely different story. After the entire staff was fired when his rookie season ended, he came into 2022 with new management, a new coach, and a new coordinator. As a result, he improved and had a generational running season, but his passing stats, 2242 yards, 17 touchdowns, and 11 interceptions, were 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 your team, not throwing one onto it.

The 2024 NHL Winter Classic

ANNABEL CURRY

The 2024 NHL Winter Classic took place on January 1st at T-Mobile Park, home to the Seattle Mariners. The Kraken played the Vegas Golden Knights in a game between the two newest teams in the league.

The morning before the game, the NHL fan fair opened at 9 am next to the arena. It included shooting games, giant air hockey, the chance to meet Paul Bissonette, the Stanley Cup, and different vendors with their own individual activities. Watching fans enter the park was like seeing a kid walk down the stairs on Christmas, as soon as they got through the gate, they would start skipping, and those who didn't fully commit were visibly trying to control their sheer excitement. As the fan fest was directly next to the stadium, there was an incred-

ibly long line to get in, and fans started lining up hours in advance to enjoy and soak in the excitement behind a game like this. Seattle as a city was a great place to enjoy the game, as it was the perfect temperature to walk around outside without getting cold. From New Year's celebrations at the Space Needle to the food at Pike's, it is a great city to visit for a game. It was a fairly quick process to get into the stadium, and 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 spectacular jerseys that felt like they encapsulated what it meant to be in Seattle to the guys hanging from the helicopters during the national anthem flyover, the event was massive, and fans were loving it. Another amazing detail was during Seattle's walk-on, where guys dressed in fishermen's outfits rec-

reated the iconic fish toss in between the players.

The game itself was incredibly entertaining, as the Kraken controlled the game, winning 3-0. Game MVP and Kraken goaltender Joey Daccord recorded the first shutout in Winter Classic history and was a crowd favorite. For much of the game, the entire stadium was filled with chants of "Joey! Joey! Joey!" After the game, the fan atmosphere continued outside the stadium as Seattle is an easy city to walk. What felt like the entire stadium walked towards the downtown area, with the majority wearing the Seattle Winter Classic jerseys. At the end of the day, what makes the Winter Classic special is not only how it's played outdoors but the city and culture in which it's played. From replicating the Pike's fish toss to bringing out Seattle sports legends, the game encapsulated what



it means to be in Seattle. Even as the newest city to have an NHL team, Seattle showed out in incredible numbers and together made the day special.

for the incredible trip! All opinions are my own and do not represent the NHL!

Thank you to the NHL



Is Shohei Ohtani Overrated?

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 no doubt 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 their 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 this is the second time he has torn it. During the 2024 season, he will be constrained to a designated hitter spot while his arm heals. Once it does, who’s to know whether he will be the dominant pitcher he was in the 2023 season? In 2023, he was a good pitcher and a great hitter. 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, as he has a very long way

to go before we can truly compare him to players like Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron (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 as he injures himself more and more. To say that Ohtani is overrated is not to say he isn’t an incredible player. Derek Jeter, one of the greatest New York Yankees of all time, was overrated. Clayton Kershaw, a certified ace, is overrated. Bryce Harper is an in-

credible 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.



Shohei Ohtani signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers in December of 2023.

Why The Los Angeles Lakers’ Have Been Struggling

TEO CHOI

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 outstanding offseason, retaining key players and signing new ones, expectations were high for the Lakers.

However, the dysfunctional team has not been underperforming for the whole season. For the first 23 games or so, the Lakers were beginning to show their true potential. They had a respectable record of 14-9 and had just come off an incredible In-Season Tournament, becoming the inaugural champions. They were expected to

cruise through the season as clear contenders. Then, suddenly, it just all fell apart. As of the time of writing, the Lakers are 21-22, the tenth seed in the West, and barely scraping the surface of the Play-In. They went on multiple losing streaks, and their game just seemed to be off.

The Lakers’ struggles do not stem from a singular discrepancy but rather multiple minor holes in general. First off, injuries. Now, injuries simply cannot be an excuse for a team to be bad, but you still cannot discount them. Gabe Vincent sustained two knee injuries this season and has been sidelined for quite some time. So far, he has played 5 out of a possible 42 games. Rui Hachimura, a big part of last season’s playoff suc-

cess, has been injured five separate times, with a concussion, two nose injuries, a wrist injury, and a calf injury, respectively. Last season’s defensive anchor, Jarred Vanderbilt, also has only been able to play about half of the games. However, the Lakers’ main stars, LeBron James, and Anthony Davis, have been surprisingly healthy, despite James’ old age and Davis’ injury history. With a top duo in the league, they should have won games. Then why have they been this bad?

Another reason is their terrible coaching staff. A sophomore head coach, Darvin Ham, has been under heavy criticism for his bone-headed rotation strategies and lack of control over players. According to Shams Charania, an

NBA analyst for the Athletic, “There is currently a growing disconnect between Darvin Ham and the Lakers locker room 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 LeBron James has 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 noticeable downgrade in the level of playing. The team currently has the 23rd-highest offensive 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 clunky offense they possess. Defensively, they were quite good, with players like Davis, Reddish, and Vanderbilt holding it 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, Taurean Prince, Jaxson Hayes, and Christian Woods are just not playing as expected.

Finally, the team lacks motivation. LeBron James seems more interested in watching his son play, and other members do not seem hungry. This Lakers team has the most to prove, and show that they are still perennial contenders, but that just has not been happening. They rank 3rd to last in offensive rebounds and 6th highest in turnovers. They just have not 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 Zack Lavine. They could fire Coach Ham and change the system they play in. One thing guaranteed is that Rob Pelinka and the Lakers front office will make moves. Whatever they do, the Lakers must become a whole different team, whether it’s identity or playstyle. They have much to prove, and it will be interesting to see how the rest of their season goes.



LeBron James, disgruntled after a no-foul call, complains to the referee.



At Age 72, College Football Coaching Legend Nick Saban Retires

ISAAC TIOMKIN

When considering someone as the greatest, people frequently just consider players. However, attaining the title of greatest as a coach is a far more daunting task and arguably an even more prestigious title. Nick Saban most certainly achieved this title within the world of college football. As of January 10, 2024, Saban, the iconic head coach of the University of Alabama's Crimson Tide football team, announced his retirement. This marked an end to the career of a phenomenal coach, one who is revered by those who follow the sport. When he finally made the announcement, the room was enveloped in a sorrowful atmosphere, yet the surge of gratefulness from the alumni as well as the teary-eyed players was felt by everyone.

Saban began his head coaching career at Toledo in 1990 and later found success at Michigan State and Louisiana State University. In fact, from 2004 to 2006 he even coached the Miami Dolphins, an NFL team. Sa-

ban led his final and most noteworthy school, the University of Alabama, to six national championships and revitalized its football program. Before his arrival, the football program was at an all-time low. They failed to address their players' needs and were consistently barraged with NCAA sanctions, nearly receiving a one-year ban in 2002. When Saban arrived in 2007, he immediately whipped the team into shape. He molded his players into football machines that could physically compete with the best collegiate athletes day after day. He engineered the team to national championships in 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017, and 2020.

The 72-year-old coach, known for his unparalleled success and unwavering commitment to excellence, expressed gratitude for his time at Alabama. "It's been an incredible journey, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of the University of Alabama family," Saban said. "The decision to retire was not an easy one, but I believe it is the right time for me and for the



Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Nick Saban after a Victory over Georgia in 2021.

program to embrace new leadership." Saban's career is one that can most certainly be considered breathtaking, with his lifetime college football record being 292-71-1. During his tenure at Alabama, Saban transformed the Crimson Tide into a powerhouse, instilling a lasting culture of discipline, hard work, and excellence.

His coaching philosophy not only produced remarkable on-field success but also shaped the lives of countless young

athletes. Under Saban's guidance, Alabama became synonymous with championship football. The University could once again find a source of pride in being home to one of the greatest, if not the greatest, collegiate football programs in history. Saban's ceaseless pursuit of perfection and meticulous attention to detail earned him the nickname "The Process," a moniker that became emblematic of his coaching legacy.

As the warm Alabama

sun sets on this era of college football, one question remains. Will the chants of "Roll Tide" die out through the night, or will there be another who can take up the torch and lead Alabama just as Saban has for the past 17 years? The man who will decide that answer is Kalen DeBoer, a coaching transfer from Fresno State. Football fans across the world, do not blink. History is being written.

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, skill, 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 nose 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 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

self-esteem.

Huff's recent achievement of the Seventh Dan Junior Grandmaster title involved a rigorous test in Paducah, Ky. Testing in front of seasoned practitioners, including seventh to ninth-degree black belts, he demonstrated his skills in various poses (forms), sparring, and marble-breaking. The pressure of the test was immense, with success meaning a permanent place among the elite ranks of Taekwondo practitioners.

Earning the seventh-degree black belt comes with responsibilities and

high expectations. Huff, now actively involved in teaching seminars and judging tournaments, sees 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 Taekwon-

do is a testament to 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 myself, 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.



Michael Huff receives his title of Seventh Dan Junior Grandmaster in Taekwondo during a ceremony at the Gerald Ford Fieldhouse.



Joel Embiid Remains Favorite To Win Back To Back NBA MVP

ISAAC LEEPER

Last year, Joel Embiid had a monster season with the Philadelphia 76ers that ended up falling short to the Boston Celtics in the second round of the playoffs. During the 2022-2023 regular season, Embiid averaged 33.1 points per game (ppg), 10 rebounds and 4 assists. During the following season, Joel Embiid's star teammate, James Harden, left to join the LA Clippers. Rumors speculated that Embiid and the Sixers were headed in a downward spiral. Little did they know that they were only going to get better. During free agency, the Philadelphia 76ers signed Kelly Oubre Jr. to surround the big two of Joel Embiid and Tyrese Maxey. Four months later, Philadelphia sits at 29-13, third in the Eastern Conference. This success can largely be credited to Joel Embiid, as he has been on a tear all season.

Currently, Embiid is

averaging 36 ppg, 12 rebounds, and 6 assists, showing tremendous improvement in his prime at age 29. These stats have earned him a place on top of the Most Valuable Player (MVP) rankings, right above his rival Nikola Jokic and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. Embiid is deserving of the MVP award for a multitude of reasons. First off, on Monday, January 15th, Joel Embiid joined four-time MVP Wilt Chamberlain and six-time MVP Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the only player in NBA history with 16 straight 30-plus points and 10-plus rebound games. The big man has also accumulated two 50-plus point games this season, along with several more 40-plus point games. Furthermore, history was made when Joel Embiid dropped 70 points and 18 rebounds on the San Antonio Spurs on January 22nd. This mark broke Wilt Chamberlain's franchise record of 68 points set on Dec. 16, 1967. It is safe to say that Embiid is



Joel Embiid drives to the paint in a game against the Brooklyn Nets.

single-handedly warning the league that the 76ers are a force to be reckoned with.

The only thing keeping Joel Embiid from securing the MVP is his health. This year, the NBA implemented a rule that states that in order to qualify for an MVP award, players must play in 65 regular season games. This could

pose an issue for Embiid as he has already missed 10 games, and we are still before the all-star break. The root of these problems are from his knee, as has been struggling with it his whole career. Embiid said in an interview after a game against the Houston Rockets, "It doesn't matter how many games I play; the goal is to

be healthy the rest of the year." Although an MVP trophy would be nice to add to his resume, Embiid, and the Philadelphia 76ers have their eyes on the ultimate goal of finally winning a championship title for the city of Philadelphia.

The Detroit Pistons Break Historic Losing Streak With Win Against The Toronto Raptors

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.

"I feel 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 Raptors 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 a 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 this 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 offensively, 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 3-pointers made per game (10). 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 defense, the Pistons have the 28th defense in the league, allowing 121 points per 100 possessions. It ranks 24th in field goal percentage allowed, 21st 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

OLLIE VELEZ

In February 2023, the Philadelphia Eagles lost in the Super Bowl to the Kansas City Chiefs. The Eagles responded to this loss with a productive off-season, including trading for D'andre Swift, drafting defensive tackle Jalen Carter, and resigning key players like center Jason Kelce. The Eagles started the 2023-2024 season extremely strong, going 10-1 and leading the National Football Conference (NFC). However, they could not maintain their tremendous record, losing 5 of their last 6 games, some of which they were highly favored to win. Their second loss came on December 3 against one of the strongest teams in the league, the San Francisco 49ers. Many thought this had the potential to be the game of the year as, at the time, the 49ers were 8-3 and the second in the NFC. However, the 49ers completely dismantled the Eagles, winning 42-19. The

Eagles looked to bounce back the next week against their division rival, the Dallas Cowboys, but again, they lost big by a score of 33-13. The Eagles went into Week 15 as clear favorites against the Seattle Seahawks, who, at the time, were battling a four-game losing streak. However, with quarterback Jalen Hurts battling a sickness, the Eagles fell to the Seahawks 20-17, giving them a record of 10-4.

Following their third straight loss to the Seahawks, Jalen Hurts shared, "We didn't execute. I don't think we were committed enough, you know. Just gotta turn it around." This seemed to fuel Hurts and the Eagles the next week. In Week 16, their losing streak was snapped after a 33-25 win against division rival, New York Giants. The Eagles were determined to win this game and turn it around and Jalen Hurts being completely healthy for this game helped seal the victory. Although the Eagles did not play their best game, they were happy to finally get back in



Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts is sacked for a safety against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

the winning column and hopefully remain there for their last two games. In spite of that, the Eagles had a weak finish to the season, losing 35-31 to the Cardinals and 27-10 to the 5-11 Giants.

Going into the NFL playoffs, the Eagles were determined not to let their rough end into the regular season carry over. With an 11-6 record and second in the NFC East

division, the Eagles were the fifth seed, set to play the fourth-seeded Tampa Bay Buccaneers. In Week 3, these two teams faced off, and the Eagles put up a strong performance, winning 25-11. However, this time, quarterback Baker Mayfield and the Buccaneers dominated the struggling Eagles. The Buccaneers won the game 32-9, ending Philadelphia's season.

With their season coming to an end in poor fashion, the Eagles organization will have many questions to ask themselves. Is Head Coach Nick Sirianni the right fit? Who will replace recently retired Center Jason Kelce? The Eagles now have to look ahead to next season and make off-season moves that can help them compete for a Super Bowl in 2025.

Do the Clippers Have Too Many Superstars Past Their Prime?

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, Kenyon Martin Jr, and multiple draft picks. The Clippers gained their fourth superstar player, with 5-time All-Star Kawhi Leonard, 9-time All-Star Russell Westbrook, 8-time All-Star Paul George, and now 10-time All-Star James Harden all leading 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 star-level players. The Brooklyn Nets and Golden State Warriors were some of the only teams that shared this resemblance with the Clippers. The Nets previously had an exciting trio of Kevin Durant, James Harden, and Kyrie Irving. While the team was filled with elite basketball players, they struggled 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 superstars 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 succeed 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 pass-

ing 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.



Los Angeles Clippers players James Harden, Brandon Boston Jr, Russell Westbrook, Kawhi Leonard, and Paul George sit on the bench against the Dallas Mavericks on November 10, 2023.



NBA 2024 Rookie of the Year Predictions

BEN DEGANI

Now nearing the half-way mark of the 2023-24 NBA season, there have been several rookies who have been making waves in their debut months. Victor Wembanyama has been showing his defensive presence and offensive gravity even in his restrictive minutes. Chet Holmgren has been putting on All-Star-level performances night after night. Other rookies, such as Jamie 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 incoming 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 Ja Morant 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. 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 Ducks.

Now, getting into the next two guys who are the clear-cut options for the rookie of the year, I think it's fair to say that at this point, anything



Oklahoma City rookie Chet Holmgren defends a pass by San Antonio rookie Victor Wembanyama during their first regular-season game at Paycom Center in Oklahoma City.

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 dom-

inant forces in the NBA, such as Giannas and Embiid, with his inhuman frame and athleticism. Wemby 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 are playing an average of 34 minutes a game. Victor Wembanyama 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?

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

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 following a one-year stint for Gremio in Brazil's top division. The iconic

Uruguayan striker will be reunited with Lionel Messi, Jordi Alba, and Sergio Busquets, with whom he won four La Liga titles and a treble at FC Barcelona. Suarez netted over 500 goals throughout his career, becoming one of only 24 players ever to reach this tally. His prior talent and goal-scoring ability are undeniable,

but does he, at 37 years old, still have the quality to help Inter Miami's aspiration of winning the MLS Cup?

Unlike his previously mentioned teammates, Suarez did not arrive at Inter Miami directly from Europe. After departing from Atletico Madrid in 2022, he spent two years in South America, play-

ing for boyhood club Nacional and also Gremio, signifying a drop in his ability. These leagues are also much less competitive than the MLS and especially La Liga, so this move will force him to readjust to a higher standard of play. In these two years, Suarez was dealing with several muscular problems, including a knee problem that has only gotten more severe with age.

His physical decline is clear, but I still believe Suarez can play an influential role at Inter Miami if he adjusts his game.

In his prime years, Suarez was known for his directness, terrorizing defenders by running straight at them and using his pace and strength to get past them. He was also relentless in his pressing, always chasing down defenders and maintaining a high work rate. However, due to his age and recent injuries, this style of play will no longer be possible. For Suarez to remain effective and useful for his new team he will need to adapt and hone in on

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 to still have success against much faster, physical opposition.

In my opinion, this is not that drastic of a change for Suarez. Of course, as one of the greatest strikers of his generation, he also had the finishing and awareness to partner with his physical ability, but he did not need to rely on these aspects of his 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 adopt this new playstyle, Suarez still has the potential to bring success to Inter Miami and improve the league's overall standard.



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 stand-out 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 Macklin Celebrini. Celebrini, 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 Montreal Canadienne prospect Lane Hutson. While Celebrini led team Canada in points with 8 in 5 games, the focus of the tournament fell to Rutgers McGroarty and the USA team after Canada's disappointing 2-0 loss to Sweden and then 2-3 loss to Czechia in the quarterfinals of the medal round.

Team USA was a star-stacked team including Ducks prospect Cutter Gaithier, Columbus Blue Jackets prospect Gavin Brindley, Captain and Jets prospect McGroarty, 4th overall pick Will Smith, Blues prospect Jimmy Snuggerud, and Hutson from BU. The only undrafted player on this team was Zeev Buium, who is in his first year at the University of Denver. The US got off to a good start, beating Norway 4-1 and Sweden 3-11. 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



Team USA poses after winning the gold medal over Sweden in Gothenburg, Sweden.

game, as the US found themselves barely beating Finland in the semi-finals 3-2 to send them to the gold medal game.

USA player Gabe Perreault scored the first goal with 3 minutes left in the first period, which was answered early in the second by Otto Stenberg. USA's Isaac Howard scored 2 goals in that period, with Jonathan Lekkerimaki lessening the gap to 3-2 very late in the period. The third period was all USA, with Buium and Ryan Leonard scoring to make the score 5-2.

Before McGroarty decisively ended the game with an empty netter.

The other notable game was the regulation game between Germany and Norway. Germany started off hot, beating Finland for the first time in history, but quickly fell apart for the rest of the tournament. The tight game went to 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

WJC.

The 2024 World Junior Championship differed from past tournaments because the focus was on NHL prospects instead of draft prospects. College hockey has truly changed the game as most prospects are taking a year in the NCAA instead of going straight into the NHL or the minors. However, the U20 tournament is exciting because every year, the roster changes dramatically and one never knows what might happen.

The Brilliance of the NBA In-Season Tournament

HARRY MURPHY

Since taking over from David Stern as the commissioner of the National Basketball Association, Adam Silver has had no shame in making bold moves for the betterment of the league. He began his tenure by expelling former Los Angeles Clipper's governor, Donald Sterling, for rac-

ist remarks and continues 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 the UEFA Champions League, the NBA In-Season tournament features a group stage made up of six

groups 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 records advance to a single elimination quarter-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. Beyond cash prizes, the winning team gets to lift the NBA Cup, and one player gets named the NBA In-Season Tournament MVP.

Leading up to the inaugural In-Season tournament, many doubts were swirling around NBA spaces. Fans were most concerned with players' willingness to care about the stakes in this tournament, worrying that it would end up with the same lackadaisical attitude players come to the All-Star game with. The prize money served as more than sufficient reward, as NBA players on a minimum contract can earn nearly 50 percent more than their current salary if they win the NBA Cup. The next concern that fans held was whether or not the NBA Cup would oversaturate 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-Season Tournament, the Los Angeles Lakers came out victorious over the Indiana Pacers. The cup achieved one of the main goals when it was created, to give smaller market teams more spotlight and to give fans of struggling 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 average 1.59 million viewers of regular season games. The question now becomes, what new thing will Silver integrate next: expansion, relegation, high school drafting, shortened regular season, international club tournaments?



LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers lifting the NBA Cup after a win against the Indiana Pacers.



Two Goals in One Shot: What is Wrong With The Ottawa 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 Ottawa 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 Ridley 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.



UCL Round of 16 Predictions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

UCL. They have a dominant goal-scorer in Lautaro Martinez, and excellent role players to surround him. Meanwhile, Atletico Madrid sit 5th in La Liga, and even though they topped their group, they don't seem like serious contenders for the title. They have an aging squad, and I don't see them going far.

I think Inter should comfortably beat them and keep their cool throughout. They play a very wide type of football, stretching the field out using their fullbacks and wingers, as well as the main man in the middle, Martinez. Atletico Madrid could have a

chance through Antoine Griezmann, but I just don't see it happening.

1st Leg: Inter 3-1 Atletico Madrid

2nd Leg: Atletico Madrid 0-0 Inter

Aggregate Score: Inter 3-1 Atletico Madrid

Porto Vs Arsenal

This match also seems like a clear-cut match but can easily become an upset. Arsenal are serious title challengers in the Premier League but currently sit in 4th after a very poor run of 4 points in 5 games. They also have an inexperienced and young squad that has not been in this situation before. Meanwhile, Porto was in the UCL round of 16 last season and got

knocked out after a very tight match versus Inter. They are currently 3rd in the Portuguese League, with serious title hopes.

I think Arsenal will prevail, even if they don't have the experience that Porto most certainly has. They have a better squad that is built for this competition, and they should have a comfortable win against them.

1st Leg: Porto 0-0 Arsenal

2nd Leg: Arsenal 2-0 Porto

Aggregate Score: Porto 0-2 Arsenal

Napoli VS Barcelona

I think leaving the best for last has helped me 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 had a historic season last year, winning the Scudetto for the first time in over 30 years and making it to the quarterfinals of the Champions League. However, this year they have been very underwhelming, falling to 9th place in the 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 Osimhen, and Barcelona has stars like Pedri and Ronald Araujo.

In the end, I think Napoli will come on top. They have shown they can play in knockout rounds in the

Supercoppa, while Barcelona have failed in their Supercopa 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 Barcelona

2nd Leg: Barcelona 0-2 Napoli

Aggregate Score: Napoli 3-2 Barcelona

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