

## The Impact of the Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant Trades on the Dallas Mavericks and Phoenix Suns

HARRY MURPHY

In January 2021, the Brooklyn Nets built an offensive powerhouse by acquiring James Harden for a handful of first round picks and young assets. This trade resulted in a team that consisted of three of the most prolific scorers and highlight machines in the league. As a trio, they were uber successful. They were 13-3 in total, 8-2 in the regular season and 5-1 in the playoffs, destroying teams through offensive firepower and dominating the eventual champion Milwaukee Bucks in the conference semifinals together. However, this team did have a downfall; they were constantly injured. On average, the three of them played 55% of the available games in both the 2020-21 and 2021-22 seasons. When the Nets gave up on their trio, they got Ben Simmons in return, who was mentally and physically shattered, never living up to the expectations in Brooklyn. Among both on-court unavailability and off-court problems, the Nets then decided to move on from their core, sending Kyrie Irving to the Dallas Mavericks and Kevin Durant to the Phoenix Suns.

Led by Luka Doncic, the Mavericks reached the conference finals in last year's playoffs, putting up a valiant effort against the future champion Golden State Warriors in a thrilling seven game series against the Suns. Recently, the 2022-23 season has seen the Mavericks sustain a slightly above .500 record with Luka Doncic. With these records, Don-

cic put himself back into MVP conversations once again, averaging 33 points 8 rebounds and 8 assists. However, it has been historically evident that a heliocentric offense does not win championships; take for example, the James Harden Houston Rockets, the 2018 Cleveland Cavaliers, and the 2016 Oklahoma City Thunder. With history strongly against their favor, the Mavericks were forced to make a move for a second star to both appease Luka Doncic and fully open up their title window.

The second star: Kyrie Irving. Irving is an efficient and dynamic 3-level scoring point guard. He has averaged 28 points per game on great efficiency this year. Though many are concerned with the idea of two ball dominant players being on the same team, and the possibility of them detracting from each other's success, that will not be the case for this duo. First, watching Luka Doncic play clearly shows that he has too much offensive burden. He frequently tires out in the second half of games, which visibly impacts his defensive motor and impact. Second, Kyrie Irving has proven multiple times his capability to excel in a secondary ball handler situation, both with James Harden and LeBron James. With Kyrie Irving and Luka Doncic surrounded by Christian Wood, Tim Hardaway Jr., and Reggie Bullock, the Dallas Mavericks are sure to be an elite shooting offense. However, the question of defense still remains. The Mavericks only redeemable defensive attribute is their head coach Jason Kidd, who may be able to

keep them at best slightly below average defensively. Regardless, the Mavericks will be an amazing watch for any NBA fan, and their path to lifting the Larry O'Brien trophy is outgunning every other team offensively.

In terms of the Phoenix Suns, the team was coming off a finals appearance two years ago and a relatively successful playoff run last year. Despite their recent success, point guard Chris Paul is aging and it was imperative to take advantage of their closing championship window as soon as possible. They did so by making a blockbuster trade for NBA superstar Kevin Durant. In return, they let go of Cam Johnson and Mikal Bridges, both extremely impactful players, and a load of first round picks. They now have a stacked core of Chris Paul, Devin Booker, Deandre Ayton,

and Kevin Durant. On paper, there doesn't seem to be many questions regarding the potential success of the team. They have arguably the smartest point guard of all time at the helm, Chris Paul, who will surely lead a structured and efficient offense. Devin Booker and Kevin Durant are also both world class 3-level scorers who can operate on and off the ball. Furthermore, Deandre Ayton will be a constant lob threat and brick wall setting screens on offense, and is essentially the prototype play finisher.

Defensively, Chris Paul is far from what he once was, but both Kevin Durant and Devin Booker are above average man defenders. Nonetheless, with Deandre Ayton's staggering presence in the middle, providing some of the best rim protection in the league, all of their weak-

nesses are covered. The main problem with the Suns is the evident lack of ability past their four star players. But it wouldn't be something to worry about very much, given their elite coaching staff, Monty Williams will be able to make the best out of average players, especially when being helped out by Chris "Point God" Paul.

Basketball is a stars game, especially come playoff time, so it is safe to say the Suns and the Mavericks have cemented themselves as contenders for the Western Conference and maybe even the NBA finals.



Kyrie Irving and Luka Doncic after a game between the Dallas Mavericks and the Brooklyn Nets before Kyrie was traded to the Mavericks.

## After 23 Years in the NFL, Legendary Quarterback Tom Brady Retires

THEO SFIKAS

On Wednesday, February 1, 2023, NFL legend Tom Brady announced his retirement. His epic career consisted of seven Super Bowl victories, five Super Bowl MVP awards, three NFL MVP awards, 15 Pro Bowl selections, and even more awards.

Despite his title as the greatest of all time, Brady's retirement was

met with shadows of controversy and disappointment. In 2020, against the wishes of many New England Patriot fans, Brady signed with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. After playing with the Patriots for 19 years and leading a sports dynasty like no one before, many people were surprised that Brady had decided not to retire with the team. Even with the Buccaneers, it was only in the

first season that Brady led the team to defeat the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl, winning their second in franchise history. During the 2022-2023 season, the Buccaneers ended the season with a loss to the Dallas Cowboys in the NFC wild card game. Despite this, Brady's hardships did not simply end on the field.

At some point early in the season, Brady was faced with a decision.

His options were to either retire or separate from his wife, Gisele Bündchen. When he chose football, Gisele filed for divorce and, at the end of 2022, they officially separated.

At the end of the season, and after 23 long seasons in the NFL, Brady finally announced his retirement from the league for good, leaving fans questioning why Brady would sacrifice his marriage for a single

losing season. Despite all the controversy and setbacks, Brady remains arguably one of the best players to ever step foot on the field.



## MLB Changes: Pitch Clock, Larger Bases, New Rule to Reduce Position Players Pitching

HENRY HANSEN

As we steamroll into the 2023 season, baseball in the MLB has received some major updates in rules and on the field that could be game-changing. Ever since 2019, pitchers have been throwing harder than ever before. An 100mph fastball used to be something that would awe fans and players alike, but now even the average starter can easily reach that three-digit mark. As technology advances, pitching techniques also continue to advance, and in the modern day, a pitcher's velocity depends solely on mechanics. Due to the sudden increase in the speed of pitches, hitters have been hitting bombs far more often, smashing the record of total number of home runs in a season that was set back in 2019. Long-time baseball fans and enthusiasts would all agree that a game is much more enjoyable when the ball stays in the park. The San Francisco Giants are infamous for their "small-ball", an old-school technique that consisted of getting small, sneaky hits, stealing a base, and then hitting a sac-fly to score a run. Baseball is most entertaining when tension exists on the field between the teams, not when a pitcher strikes most batters out, walks a few, and then lets up a home run. Although home runs are an iconic aspect of the sport, they simply can't beat the feeling of teetering on the edge of your seat as the bases are loaded by

your favorite ballclub. The league wants to bring back that feeling, so that is why they have decided to make changes, some major and others minor, that will affect the upcoming season and the overall entertainment of the game.

One of the most significant changes on the field regards the distances between the bases on the diamond. First and third base will be moved three inches closer to home plate, while second base will be moved 4.5 inches closer to both first and third bases. Each of the bases, not including home plate, will also be increased in size by 3 square inches, pushing them from 15 to 18 inches. In 2022, before MLB widely implemented these adjustments, they tested them on the minor leagues, analyzing how closer bases could affect the game. After implementing the larger bases, injuries that occurred on the base paths and around bases decreased by roughly 13%. The closer bases will also instigate more action on the base paths, as they encourage stealing and more aggressive base running.

The other influential change was very much expected, and has been talked about frequently on sports analysis shows like Pardon the Interruption on ESPN. The MLB has decided to drop the hammer on shifts. In past years, many outs that could have been base hits were the result of infield shifts. Infield shifts deeply reduced the number of base hits per game. The league, as well



Aroldis Chapman, closing for the Cincinnati Reds, used to be known for throwing some of the hottest fastballs in the league, but has recently fallen into mediocrity due to the normalization of faster pitching.

as many fans, have deemed that letting infielders drop deep into the outfield or roam over to one side of second base to create an almost impenetrable wall of three defenders is unfair. For the 2023 season, two infielders must always be on each side of second base, and all four infielders must be completely inside of the infield when the pitcher has his foot on the rubber. These changes motivate infielders to rely more on raw skill and ability to make a play instead of moving to a position that requires minimal effort. In the minors, batting averages increased and strikeouts

decreased with these changes.

Some small tweaks were also made to the pitch clock to shorten games slightly and reduce time between pitches. Pitchers now get 15 seconds between pitches with empty bases, and 20 seconds when there is at least one runner on base. On the hitter's side of things, the number of timeouts has been set to one per at-bat, and they must be inside of the batter's box before the pitch clock goes below eight seconds. Pitchers can now only disengage from the batter twice per at bat. A disengagement

consists of either a pick-off to a base with a runner on it or just a step-off. Stolen-base attempts were increased by 26% in the minor leagues.

The essence of the sport of baseball isn't about power-hitting and strikeouts. Classic baseball consisted of small-ball and strategy: Skilled fielding, risky base running, and consistent hitting were all key elements of the game. These aspects have ever so slightly faded in the past 4 years, but MLB's new changes promise to bring back the old baseball better and more exciting than ever before.

## Matija Pecotic Wins ATP 250 Match Against Former Top Ten ATP Player

BEN SHIN

Matija Pecotic's Tuesday night match may seem like any other match, but it is actually one of the best stories this tennis season. On February 14, Matija Pecotic beat former top-ten player, Jack Sock. The two met in the first round of the Delray Beach Open, an ATP 250 tournament. Pecotic won in split sets, losing the first 4-6 and then dominating in the last two sets, 6-2 and 6-2.

Matija Pecotic is a 33-year-old and has a full-time job as the Director of Capital Markets for a real estate investment company. He also plays semi-professional tennis and ranks 784th in the world. As a junior, Pecotic never broke into the

Top 1,000 ITF Junior rankings. He went to Princeton University from 2009 to 2013 and was a three-time Ivy League Player of the Year. Additionally, he was ranked second in the college tennis rankings. Pecotic began his professional tennis career in 2014 and achieved his career-high ranking of 206. In 2016, he received a small stomach surgery, which forced him to stop playing for almost a year. Pecotic said his surgery had "changed the trajectory of [his] tennis timeline and [his] tennis career."

While he had time off, he decided to apply to business school. He ended up getting accepted into Harvard Business school and chose that over his professional tennis career. When Pecotic was at

Harvard, he got to know a member of the Harvard men's tennis coaching staff, Andrew Rueb, which then led to him becoming a volunteer assistant coach. After he graduated from Harvard, he gave himself another chance to be a professional tennis player. He made some good progress, however, Covid-19 stopped him, and he had to get a regular job. He currently is the Director of Capital Markets for Moxford Real Estate Investors, and still tries to play tennis in the morning prior to work.

Pecotic signed up as an alternate to the qualifying draw for the Delray Beach Open. He just dropped his racquets off to get strung and didn't expect to get in. The next morning, he went to pick up his racquets, and the



Matija Pecotic defeated Jack Sock 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 in Delray Beach.

supervisor said that a player might pull out. This meant that he might have a chance to play in the qualifying draw. Pecotic only learned he got into the tournament 30 minutes before he was going to play. To the surprise of many, he went on to beat world no. 224 Stefan Kozlov and later, no. 409 Ten-

nys Sandgren 3-6, 6-3, 6-2. To continue this amazing run, he beat Jack Sock, a former top-ten player.



## The Hypersexualization of Gymnasts: The Tolls of a Spotlight

CYRUS SIGNAN

The image of female gymnastics as an athletic event has long been associated with grace, power, and strength. But in recent years, the sport has faced increasing scrutiny as commentators, media outlets, and fans have increasingly sexualized the athletes.

The prevalence of hypersexualization in gymnastics has been evident for some time. At the 2016 Olympic Games, an 18-year-old Romanian gymnast, Larisa Iordache, was photographed wearing a low-cut leotard and received a barrage of comments from people who sexualized her. There was an outcry from the public, with some arguing that Iordache was being unfairly sexualized due to her age and the context of the event.

This trend has not just been limited to individual gymnasts; it has also spread to the marketing of the sport. At the 2018 World Championships, a “sexy” calendar was released featuring female gymnasts posing provocatively in the hopes of generating interest and sales.

In a more recent scandal, SafeSport, an organization dedicated to pro-

tecting athletes revealed that athletes felt coaches “created an environment at [their] gym that had little positive enforcement and made minor[aged] gymnasts constantly feel scared, degraded and humiliated.”

To gain a better understanding of how gymnasts are sexualized or objectified, it is important to first look at why it occurs. Examples of objectification, or the use of athletes as objects and objects of pleasure, have been around for a long time in all sports, including gymnastics.

From coaches to media outlets, many people within the sport have been found to take part in this practice. This can take the form of the selection of a more “marketable” athlete instead of the most talented, or the presentation of gymnasts with age-inappropriate clothing.

Perhaps one of the most visible examples of what objectification looks like within the sport is the frequent use of flattering photoshoots with female gymnasts, as well as the common belief that they must look a certain way to perform well.

The hypersexualization of gymnasts, in many cases, is done by those who are ultimately in charge

of their success or failure. Coaches, parents, and officials in the sport can often be guilty of creating an environment that is highly sexualized and focused on physical appearance rather than skills and ability.

These pressures and expectations can lead to diminished self-worth, eating disorders, and other psychological distress in athletes. There is an argument to be made that sexualization can be used to an athlete’s advantage. In a world where looks have traditionally been used to sell products, it is not surprising that some athletes might choose

to use their appearance to boost their popularity and gain more attention for the sport.

While this can be beneficial to the athlete and the sport, it is important to note that it should never come at the expense of an individual’s well-being. Fortunately, there is some hope for those who might be uncomfortable with the hypersexualization of gymnasts.

There have been efforts to change the narrative around the sport and to raise awareness of the dangers of objectifying athletes. Organizations, such as the Women’s Sports Foundation, are

striving to create a level playing field for athletes and to help foster an environment that embraces both hard work and healthy bodies.

While the hypersexualization of gymnasts is still a problem that needs to be addressed, it is encouraging to see that there are people who are working to make changes to the current narrative. With this growing support, we can make important strides in ensuring the safety of the athletes and building a healthier, more considerate approach to the sport.



Sunisa Lee took gymnastics and the media by storm after winning gold in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

## Premier League Charges Manchester City With Over 100 Rule Breach Violations

CHARLES VEST

British soccer club Manchester City has been charged by the Premier League for breaking several financial rules over the past nine seasons. The alleged breaches are said to have occurred from 2009 until 2018. City has denied the claims, calling the allegations “shocking”. The investigation, which was opened in 2019, found that City had broken over 100 of the league’s rules requiring the club to provide “accurate financial information that gives a true and fair view of the club’s financial position”. During the time of the alleged rule-breaking, City had won the Premier League title three times.

Leaked documents appeared to show that City had been inflating the val-

ue of sponsorship deals from companies in Abu Dhabi, as well as channeling money from the country to themselves. The documents also suggested that the manager of the club, Roberto Mancini, had been taking a second, secret salary during his time at the club that the league was unaware of. The league has also claimed that the club had failed in its responsibility to provide full details of how much the players and managers were getting paid. It was further alleged that, over the course of the investigation, City had not only refused to cooperate or assist with the process but also actively attempted to slow or halt the investigation altogether.

In a response to these allegations, City issued a statement saying that

“Manchester City FC is surprised by the issuing of these alleged breaches of the Premier League Rules, particularly given the extensive engagement and vast amount of detailed materials that the EPL has been provided with. The club welcomes the review of this matter by an independent Commission, to impartially consider the comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence that exists in support of its position. As such, we look forward to this matter being put to rest once and for all.” It comes as no surprise that City wants to move past the situation, because, if proven true, these allegations would be the greatest offenses committed by a club in the league’s 31-year history; harboring a punishment of suspension, point deduction, or

possibly expulsion from the league.

In my opinion, should these allegations be proven, Man City should be punished to the fullest extent. A club worth \$4.43 Billion should have no reason to hide extra money just so that the owners and their friends can line their pockets with money that isn’t theirs. The worst part is that the people who are most affected by the charges aren’t the exec-

utives making the calls, but rather the players who might have to sit out games they know that they could play and win, and the fans, who have to watch the team that they love go downhill. Luckily, we still don’t know if the charges are true; so stay tuned with The GOAT to find out the club’s fate.





## Patriots 2023 Mock Draft Rounds 1-7

AJAY MISTRY

The Patriots had a disappointing 2022-2023 year—earning just an 8-9 record and only averaging 21 points per game this season. Team owner Robert Kraft was also disappointed, promising season ticket holders that he will make “critical evaluations of all elements of [their] football operation.” These evaluations will no doubt begin with a strong draft. Bolstering the offensive line and receiving corps are most needed along with acquiring a lockdown cornerback. Here are my predictions of what the Patriots will do with their 11 picks in the 2023 drafts.

### Round 1 Pick 14: Broderick Jones, Offensive Tackle Georgia

I have the Patriots selecting Jones as 14th overall. Offensive Tackle is a huge need for the Patriots. Isaiah Wynn is a free agent and Trent Brown allowed eight sacks this season. With Wynn's opening, Jones at 6'4" and 310 pounds, who comes from a team that only gave up nine sacks the entire season, will help fill that weakness.

### Round 3 Pick 76 (Via Carolina Panthers): Kelee Ringo, Cornerback Georgia

After the departures of Stephon Gilmore and JC Jackson, the Patriots have lacked a true CB1. With Jonathan Jones being a free agent, the Patriots need to find a long-term corner in the draft. Ringo is tall at 6'2" and played an outside corner role at Georgia.

### Round 4 Pick 117: Zach Harrison, Edge Rusher Ohio State

The Patriots are bound to select an edge rusher to pair with Matthew Judon and Josh Uche. Harrison is a 6'6" edge rusher whose biggest strength is his length. Although Harrison might not make an impact immediately, his potential with defensive-minded head coach Belichick is through the roof.

### Round 6 Pick 184 (Via Carolina Panthers): Chamarrri Conner, Safety Virginia Tech

The only reason I don't have the Patriots selecting a safety in earlier rounds is that Jabril Peppers and Devin McCourty may resign. If McCourty retires and Peppers leaves, the Patriots would need a top-tier safety to pair with Kyle Dugger. As for Conner, he is a 6'1" corner who ranks tenth all-time in tackles for Virginia Tech. However, he tallied 13 missed tackles on the season.

### Round 6 Pick 192: Kenny McIntosh, Running Back Georgia

In past years, the Patriots have tended to take running backs in the late rounds. With Damien Harris being a free agent next year, there is no doubt they will continue this trend into the 2023 draft. McIntosh totaled 824 rushing yards and 509 receiving yards while averaging 5.5 yards per carry. McIntosh has great hands and could play the role of a pass-catching back, a role almost non-existent on the Patriots since Ty Montgomery's injury.

### Round 7 Pick 258 (Projected Compensatory Pick): Taron Vincent, Defensive Line Ohio State

Vincent tallied one sack in his 2022 season at Ohio State. He may never get minutes with the Patriots, but hopefully can develop under Bill Belichick and learn from veteran Defensive Lineman, Lawrence Guy.

### Round 2 Pick 46: Michael Mayer, Tight End Notre Dame

The Patriots have been looking for Rob Gronkowski's replacement since he left in 2019. And with the Patriots bringing in Bill O'Brien, the same offensive coordinator who coached the Patriots' famous dual tight end offense in 2013, there is no doubt the Patriots select Mayer. Mayer can pass, catch and block, tallying 67 receptions for 809 yards and nine touchdowns.

### Round 4 Pick 107 (Via LA Rams): A.T. Perry, Wide Receiver Wake Forest

The Patriots will take another pass catcher in Perry at pick 107. Perry is an incredibly tall receiver at 6'5", but is on the smaller side at 205 pounds. Perry amassed 81 receptions for 1,100 yards and 11 touchdowns in 2022.

### Round 4 Pick 135 (Projected Compensatory Pick): Durell Nchami, Edge Rusher Maryland

In hopes to double up on edge rushers in the fourth round, the Patriots are sure to select 6'4" 260-pound Nchami. Nchami tallied three sacks and 13 hurries in 13 games at Maryland. Like Harrison, Nchami will not make a significant impact immediately but has the best chance of unlocking his full potential under Belichick.

### Round 6 Pick 187 (Via LV Raiders): Carter Warren, Offensive Tackle Pitt

The Patriots will also double up on Offensive Tackles after selecting Warren. Warren is huge standing at 6'5" and 325 pounds. Carter Warren allowed one sack and three hurries in only four games this season. In 2021, his last fully healthy season, Warren allowed five sacks and 18 hurries through 14 games.

### Round 6 Pick 210: Mohamoud Diabate, Linebacker Utah

Some may argue that a linebacker should be drafted earlier in the draft, but I am inclined to disagree. I believe Uche and Ja'Whaun Bentley are good enough to not justify taking a linebacker in the first five rounds. As for Diabate, he is just what the Patriots are looking for, as Diabate played in the box throughout his college career and ran an unofficial 40 time of 4.59. Diabate tallied seven sacks and 15 hurries last season.



## The Controversial Holding Call at the End of the Super Bowl

JOHN MORAN

The Kansas City Chiefs are Super Bowl champions once again, claiming the title for the second time in just four seasons. The victory was over the Philadelphia Eagles, taken in an exciting game which ended as the Chiefs scored a last-minute field goal to break the tie and avoid overtime, winning 38-35. But this article isn't about the game as a whole, but rather on a singular, pivotal moment that may have been the deciding moment of the entire championship: the holding call on Eagles cornerback James Bradberry, which allowed the Chiefs to revive their drive and win the game.

On third and eight, at the Eagles 15-yard line, with one minute and 48 seconds left in the game, the Chiefs attempted a passing play. Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes lobbed a pass far over wide receiver Juju Smith-Schuster's outstretched hands. The pass was incomplete, but the result of the play wasn't negative for the Chiefs. A flag was thrown on the field for defensive holding, committed by Bradber-

ry upon Smith-Schuster. The penalty for defensive holding is five yards and a first down, so this call took the Chiefs onto the Eagles ten-yard line with four downs to work with. This renewal of the Chiefs' drive led them to kicking the tie-breaking field goal, and the call has drawn a lot of criticism.

At first glance, the hold that was called doesn't appear to be very egregious. Bradberry was behind Smith-Schuster and tugged on the back of his jersey, but it didn't appear to slow Smith-Schuster's momentum by much. Bradberry removed his hand from Smith-Schuster's back quickly, so the hold was only momentary. Also, the pass was overthrown by a large amount, leading certain fans and pundits in the NFL community to believe that it wasn't a catchable ball even if no holding occurred.

After the game, James Bradberry was asked about the crucial play. "It was a holding. I tugged his jersey. I was hoping they would let it slide," said Bradberry. Realistically, by the rulebook, it was holding. As the referees explained, "The receiver went to the inside, and he was attempting to release

to the outside. The defender grabbed the jersey with his right hand and restricted him from releasing to the outside. So, therefore, we called defensive holding." The nature of Smith-Schuster's route meant that holding would alter the flow of the play greatly, more than a holding call would on an outside route or a go route. So by the rules, the call would make sense.

But the rules aren't always what dictate a good call. Sometimes, discretion and intuition are necessary. If an of-

fensive hold occurs on the left side of the line when it's a play going to the right, then the hold has almost no effect on the play. This happens in almost every play in football, and while the rules would call for a penalty, the referees use their understanding of what the important calls are to avoid these "ticky-tacky" penalties. The Smith-Schuster holding play might have been one of those penalties. It is very difficult to judge, but the ball would have been very difficult to catch even if Bradber-

ry hadn't laid a finger on Smith-Schuster.

Most of all, this call is a frustrating one. Referee discretion is difficult to judge, and this one really could have gone either way. The most affirming piece of evidence in favor of a holding call is Bradberry himself supporting the call, and perhaps that is all the information we need, but this call will almost certainly haunt Eagles fans for years to come.



The infamous holding call by James Bradberry (in green) on Juju Smith-Schuster (in white).



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## Women's Professional Hockey Leagues: The Premier Hockey Federation and the Professional Women's Hockey Player Association



Kaleigh Fratkin and The Boston Pride raising the Isobel Cup after winning in 2019.

ANNABEL CURRY

Professional Women's hockey has come a long way, but there is still a long way to go. There is often surprise that there is not only one, but two professional leagues. But who are these leagues? Why are there two? This article will give an overview of both leagues and where they currently stand with a quick summary at the bottom.

To begin, a professional women's hockey league is significant because men's hockey has historically been and continues to be prioritized in the hockey world, while women's hockey players are pushed to the sidelines. As professional women's hockey has grown the impact has been seen. For example, the Boston Pride in Boston has consistently sold out games and there is no shortage of love and support for the team. A professional women's hockey league also has an impact on the children who grow up watching the sport. Young hockey players watch and aspire to be like those they see on the TV and are held on a pedestal in their community. The growing popularity of women's hockey brings more girls into the sport because they see women out there playing an incredibly high level of hockey and being celebrated for it. Let's get into it:

### The PHF:

The Premier Hockey Federation (PHF) was founded in 2015 under the name National Women's Hockey League (NWHL). This name was changed before the 2021 season, marking the first professional women's league in North America to not include gender in the name. The league commissioner Tyler Tumminia said, "The Premier Hockey Federation is home to some of the

best professional athletes in the world who deserve to be recognized for their abilities and to be empowered as equals in sport." The new logo features three stars which resemble a crown and a "W" to show how the league and women's hockey is rising.

In the leagues first year (2015-2016) it included four teams — the Metropolitan Riveters, the Boston Pride, the Buffalo Beauts, and the Connecticut Whale. In 2016, the New York Riveters relocated to New Jersey, and the following year the first true expansion team, the Minnesota Whitecaps, was added. 2019 marked a big year for the PHF as they added their first Canadian team, but lost many players to a new league, the Professional Women's Hockey Players Association (PWHPA). The most recent team to be added was the Montreal Force this season.

Throughout the season these teams have a very similar goal to that of the National Hockey League's (NHL) teams. The Stanley Cup is one of the most famous trophies in sports and arguably one of the most difficult to win. The trophy is named after Lord Frederick Arthur Stanley. The Stanley Cup is awarded as the championship trophy in the NHL. Lord Stanley's daughter, Lady Isobel, who was one of the firsts female hockey players in Canada gave the PHF champion's trophy its name: The Isobel Cup. The front of the cup reads, "The Lady Isobel Gathorne-Hardy Cup 1875-1963. This Cup shall be awarded annually to the greatest professional women's hockey team in North America. All who pursue this Cup, pursue a dream; a dream born with Isobel, that shall never die. EST. 2016." It's champions include the Boston Pride (2016, 2021, 2022), the Buffalo Beauts (2017), the Metropolitan Riveters (2018), and the Minnesota White Caps

(2019).

In similar structure as the NHL, the PHF briefly entertained a draft for new players, but decided to scrap it after the 2022 season. Instead it has unrestricted free agency for all players. The current salary cap for a PHF team is 750,000 dollars. While this is incredible growth since the 2021 season's 150,000 dollars cap there is still much to be done as the current salary cap is the minimum an individual NHL player must be paid. Recently, the PHF announced its plan to double the salary cap for the upcoming season to 1.5 million dollars. The salary cap has its pros and cons. Without the draft the PHF is in a spot where many great players out of college will look nearby for a team. For example, the dominant Boston Pride currently have a roster made up of mostly players that played in the northeast, specifically Boston. Another issue of this is that since the salary cap can not provide a living wage for most players. From coaches to nurses these players are busy juggling being a professional athlete with separate careers and jobs. Increasing the salary cap will allow them to be paid for the work they do.

### The PWHPA:

The Professional Women's Hockey Players Association (PWHPA) was formed after the fall of the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL) in 2019. Many players including Hilary Knight and Kendall Coyne were torn about their options. The PHF, especially in its beginning stages had a very similar problem to the CWHL, incredible lack of funding and sponsorships. Due to this inadequate funding, promises of a players union and health insurance were not being met, and player salaries were continuously being cut. In May of 2019 over 200 players announced they would not be playing in the

PHF's upcoming season. A couple weeks later the PWHPA was formed. It is important to note that the PHF had made incredible progress as detailed above and now is able to offer a more professional environment that the players have earned.

The PWHPA has a different format than the PHF. For example, it is primarily run through past and present players Hilary Knight, Kendall Coyne Schofield, Sarah Nurse, Kimberly Sass, Noora Raty, Brianna Jenner, Alyssa Gagliardi, Karell Emard, and Jocelyne Lamoureux Davidson. One of the main problems with the PHF was representation. Liz Knox was quoted saying, "We don't make enough to have no say in this." The PWHPA model of a player run league allows for player needs to be heard and met in a way that is sustainable. Kristin Richards was also quoted on this saying that having trust in the boards to prioritize the players is an important part of the league.

The league has run through the Dream Gap Tour, which previously had players split up into five regional teams. A lot of work has been done behind the scenes in order to push the league towards a traditional format. This current 2022-2023 season has a change in the roster selection. The four team will include Team Adidas, Team Harvey's, Team Scotiabank, and Team Sonnet. In order to accommodate for the August timeline of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) World Championship, rosters are decided by an experienced selection committee. Afterward the top 100 players were invited to join the league. This new set up allows for great players to finally team up.

Now it has been recognized that running two leagues does have its cons. It is difficult to elevate women's hockey as a professional sport if there isn't a collec-

tive league. The split causes each league to get only half the support that could be provided to the game as a whole. In a situation like this where viewership and fans to bring in money has been an issue, one league would help to advance the league past these issues. Many teams in the NHL have sponsored and shared support, for example the Boston Bruins with the Pride, and eleven NHL teams with the PWHPA. Furthermore, the NHL has begun to recognize and include female hockey players in the annual all star game. Despite all of these positive efforts unity remains a problem. The NHL has stated that they would gladly provide a great amount of financial assistance, but under the condition that the leagues merge. This past spring the PHF and PWHPA were together trying to find a common ground to unite, but the truth is they have different priorities. Even with the consistently growing salary cap, PWHPA representatives are unhappy with the lack of a cap floor or minimum salary. Another conflict includes ownership. PWHPA players do not like that certain groups (BTM Partners) own multiple teams, creating a conflict of interest. This group also includes a chairman of Yandex, a Russian technology company that the NHL has ended all partnerships with.

The PWHPA also has the goal of centralizing the talent and "resources, infrastructure, and pay that allows players to truly be professional athletes year-round, versus requiring athletes to work extra job to make a living and practice late at night to accommodate players' 9-5 jobs." Further uncertainties such as league commissioner stepping down and PHF players association director being fired led to the PWHPA's unanimous decision to end further collaboration.