

Why Jimmy Butler and the Miami Heat are Built for the Playoffs

HARRY MURPHY

When the Miami Heat went up 2-1 on the Milwaukee Bucks in the first round of this year's NBA Playoffs, many wrote them off by using the excuse of Giannis Antetokounmpo's injury. However, when Giannis returned from injury in games four and five, Jimmy Butler scored 56 and 42 points respectively. The Jimmy Butler led Heat have been notorious playoff risers. They made the finals in 2020, the conference finals in 2022, and once again find themselves up 1-0 in the conference finals in 2023 as the eighth seed. The Heat are a team built for the NBA playoffs.

The NBA is a star driven league, and the Miami Heat have their superstar in Jimmy Butler. In this year's playoffs, Butler has averaged an efficient 32 points, 7 assists, and 6 rebounds, a wild increase from his 22 points per game in the regular season. This is nothing new for Jimmy; for example, in the 2020 season, Butler averaged 19 points per game and 26 in the finals. Deciphering why Jimmy Butler may be the best playoff riser in the league is quite simple. Butler's play style is the reason he reaches such

heights in the playoffs. Butler is a tough shot maker and thrives in the mid range, essential for the notoriously physical basketball of the NBA playoffs.

Not only do the Heat have a generational playoff riser in Jimmy Butler, but they also have a roster constructed perfectly around him. Bam Adebayo is a multiple time all-star center who is also a perennial all-defense candidate. He is a pretty standard pick and roll big man on offense, but where he truly shines is on the defensive end of the ball. He is shockingly nimble for someone who's 6'9 and can defend both on the perimeter and in the paint at an elite level. Their point guard is aging star Kyle Lowry who has transformed his game. He used to be a physical point guard who leveraged his strength to get to his spots, but since losing a step athletically, he has become more cerebral. He is consistently top of the league in charges drawn and is nifty in drawing fouls on the offensive end of the court. Finally, they surrounded their core three with a vast array of spot up shooters in Gabe Vincent, Tyler Herro, Caleb Martin, Max Strus, and Duncan Robinson. Thus, they always have two elite shooters on the floor to make up for Jimmy and Bam's lack of

three point ability.

The final piece of the puzzle is legendary coach Eric Spoelstra. He is a multiple time NBA champion and coach of the year winner, and is not slowing down any time soon. The one flaw in the roster seems to be defense outside their big three, but Eric Spoelstra makes up for it. They often play in a zone to make up for their lackluster perimeter defensive talent. They generally have two players run-

ning around the perimeter of the three point line, two players on the low block, and one player protecting the paint. A common zone, but it works so well because the players have relentless effort no matter what. Their legs are always fresh because of all their ability to rotate players on and off of the court without fear of bench performance.

It is hard to judge this Miami Heat team by their regular season performance,

as they have a roster built for the playoffs. They have been the underdog in both series they have won so far and are up against the heavily favored Boston Celtics in the conference finals. Don't be surprised if Jimmy Butler leaves the 2023 playoffs as an NBA champion.

Editor's Note: This article was written prior to the conclusion of the Celtics-Heat series.



Jimmy Butler after setting a Miami Heat franchise record with 56 points.

Ali Farag and Nour El Sherbini Retain PSA World Titles in Chicago

WILL WEISSMAN

On May 12, Ali Farag and Nour El Sherbini of Egypt won the 2022-2023 PSA World Championships for a consecutive year. After coming off a recent injury, World No. 4 Ali Farag was more hungry than ever to compete in another World Championship. Farag breezed through his first two-round matches, dominating India's Ramit Tandon

and England's Adrian Waller in only three games. England's Nathan Lake and New Zealand's Paul Coll posed Farag's first challenge, but he took down both opponents in four games to make another semifinals appearance.

In the semifinals, Farag faced Egypt's Mostafa Asal, who has recently been on a tear, becoming the third-youngest World No.1 at only 21 years old earlier this year. Asal has already compiled an impressive resume,

including two major titles, establishing him among the best squash players in the world.

Facing the tournament's number-one seed, Farag played exceptional squash. He came out on top in only four games, winning the final game decisively, 11-2. Then, in the final match, Farag faced yet another former World No.1, Egypt's Karim Abdel Gawad, who has recently been playing superbly after coming off a seven-month heel injury. Gawad

had beaten current World No.1 Diego Elias and World No. 2 Mohamed Elshorbagy to reach his second World Championship Final.

Egypt's Gawad came ready to play, dominating in the opening minutes, hitting incredible drops and quickly creating a 9-5 point lead. But Farag soon settled into the match, doing what he does best — playing at his own tempo, cutting Gawad's shots off, and effectively moving his opponent from corner to corner. After stealing the first game 12-10, Farag continued his unbelievable squash in the following games, calmly winning both 11-6 and making him a four-time World Champion.

On the women's side, defending champ Nour El Sherbini played amazingly throughout the tournament, winning her seventh World Championship. El Sherbini came into the tournament red-hot, coming off an impressive British Open win in April. She swept through her first four matches, beating Egypt's Hana Moataz, France's Mari Stephan, England's Sara-Jane Perry, and England's Georgina Kennedy in three games apiece. In the semifinals, El Sherbini faced Joelle King of New Zealand, who is also the current World No. 4. She took out her opponent in four

games to reach another World Championship Final.

In the final, El Sherbini played Nouran Gohar, also from Egypt. As the current PSA World's No.1 and No. 2, high expectations were set for a battle to claim the title. The first game began as anticipated, with long and hard-fought points and a score of 5-5 in the first game. However, after a backcourt winner and a beautiful volley cross drop, the defending champ took the critical opening game 11-6. El Sherbini continued her superb squash into the second game, winning decisively 11-4. Gohar came with urgency in the third game, taking advantage of El Sherbini's slowing movements to the ball. It looked like Gohar was back in the match with four-game balls, but El Sherbini won the following six points, winning her seventh World Title and regaining her spot as World No. 1.



Farag celebrates after beating World No.1 Diego Elias and winning his fourth World title.



Is College Hockey the Best Way to the NHL?



Luke Hughes, Adam Fantilli, and Matthew Knies - three players who began from the collegiate level.

ANNABEL CURRY

What is the best route to the National Hockey League (NHL)? This question has been asked and researched without a clear answer.

Recently, college hockey players have dominated both the draft and the rookie season. I am not going to include the 2022 draft because players – including Logan Cooley and Jimmy Snuggerud – continue to develop and have not yet played at the NHL level, which prevents any fair comparison to players like Shane Wright and Juraj Slafkovsky.

From previous years, amazing players have come out of college hockey. In the 2021 draft, the first two picks, Matty Beniers and Owen Power, came from the University of Michigan. Both players took an extra year to develop at the college level and are now two out of the three Calder Memorial Trophy nominees. Luke Hughes and Kent Johnson, picks four and five, similarly came from University of Michigan. Draft success continues with players like first pick Jack Hughes and first-round pick Trevor Zegras.

The list of talented college hockey players in the NHL is extensive: Quinn, Jack, and Luke Hughes from the University of Michigan, Dallas Stars Captain Joe Pavelski, Alex Turcotte from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Thatcher

Demko, Johnny Gaudreau, Alex Tuch, Andover alum Chris Krieder '12, young star Joseph Woll from Boston College, Matt Grzelcyk, A.J. Greer, Clayton Keller, Charlie McAvoy, Jake Oettinger, Brady Tkachuk, and Trevor Zegras from Boston University. This list continues with stars like Devon Levi, Adam Fox, Jake Guentzel, Andover alum Garnet Hathaway '10, Connor Hellebuyck, Torey Krug, Johnathan Quick, Troy Terry, Tage Thompson, and Johnathon Toews. The list goes on and on. (See end for more)

In addition to draft success, college hockey players have had great transitions to the NHL. As mentioned above, Calder Nominees Beniers and Power are both nominated for the Calder trophy, after taking an extra year for college. Within these 2023 Stanley Cup playoffs, all eyes have been on Matthew Knies from Minnesota College and Luke Hughes, after they joined their respective teams once the college season ended. Both of these players made incredible transitions, Knies scoring a goal and three assists in seven playoff games, and Hughes having two points in three games, additionally tallying 25 minutes of ice time in the final game of the New Jersey Devils. Both of these young stars made quick and easy transitions directly into the heat of the playoffs.

Another example is Devon Levi. Levi was the Northeastern goaltender, joining

the Buffalo Sabres after his season. Levi jumped right in and averaged a 0.905 save percentage over seven games. He won five out of seven games and beat several red-hot playoff teams. He may be one of the final pieces, along with breakout stars Tage Thompson and Owen Power. On the West Coast, the Anaheim Ducks have strengthened their rebuild with All-Stars and former college hockey players Troy Terry and Trevor Zegras.

When it comes to prospect development, college is the best option. While superstars such as Connor McDavid and Sidney Crosby may be able to succeed right away, the most consistent development strategy is college hockey, specifically an extra year. This past year, players like Slafkovsky and Wright have been criticized for being busts or not living up to their hype. It is important to note that it is not only the college league that is consistently setting up stars for the future but also the patience to develop. Within an extra college year, players have time to mature around players their own age and truly master their skill before it is tested at the next level. While it can be exciting to have a new prospect with a bright future, the key is to let them develop at the right pace. It is better to have a mature player a year later, than a young kid that struggles to make the immediate adjustment.

Notable College Hockey Players:

Matthew Knies - Minnesota College
 Luke Hughes - University of Michigan
 Jack Hughes - University of Michigan
 Cole Caufield - University of Wisconsin
 Connor Clifton - Quinnipiac University
 Devon Levi - Northeastern
 Thatcher Demko - Boston College
 Adam Fox - Harvard
 Johnny Gaudreau - Boston College
 AJ Greer - Boston University
 Matt Brzelcyk - Boston University
 Jake Guentzel - University of Nebraska-Omaha
 Garnet Hathaway '10 - Brown and Andover
 Connor Hellebuyck - UMASS Lowell
 Quinn Hughes - University of Michigan
 Clayton Keller - Boston University
 Alexander Kerfoot - UMASS Lowell
 Phil Kessel - Minnesota College
 Alex Killorn - Harvard
 Chris Kreider '12 - Boston College
 Torey Krug - Michigan State University
 Dylan Larkin - University of Michigan
 Alex Lyon - Yale
 Cale Makar - University of Massachusetts Amherst
 Charlie McAvoy - Boston University
 Jake Oettinger - Boston University
 TJ Oshie - University of North Dakota
 Joe Pavelski - Wisconsin
 Johnathan Quick - University of Massachusetts Amherst
 Jeremy Swayman - University of Maine
 Cam Talbot - University of Alabama
 Brandon Tanev - Providence College
 Troy Terry - University of Denver
 Tage Thompson - Connecticut
 Brady Tkachuk - Boston University
 Devon Toews - Quinnipiac University
 Jonathan Toews - University of North Dakota
 Jacob Trouba - University of Michigan
 Alex Tuch - Boston College
 Alex Turcotte - University of Wisconsin
 James van Riemsdyk - University of New Hampshire
 Joseph Woll - Boston College
 Trevor Zegras - Boston University



MLB's Most Disappointing Teams So Far

JOHN MORAN

The Major League Baseball (MLB) season always starts with predictions of who'll be hot, who won't be, what teams will overachieve, and which will underachieve. The speculation rages, even through the first 20 or so games, until sample sizes are big enough to have a real picture of the league. But we're now around 45 games into the season, and The GOAT has decided it's time for our decisions on the most disappointing teams in this first quarter of the season.

The first team is the team you came to this list for: the New York Mets. You knew they were going to be here, and the Mets know it too. Steve Cohen, the Mets owner, is footing the largest player payroll in baseball. Can you guess how much? 340 million dollars, with a 375 million dollar luxury tax. Can you guess what their record is based off of that? As it stands at the time of the writing of this article, they are 21-23. That's two games under .500. How is a team paying a third of a billion dollars not even above .500? Prior to the start of the season, the Mets were seen as the team to beat in the

National League (NL) East. In fact, some were saying they could go the distance. Now, they're sitting at third in a relatively weak division. It is truly abysmal in Queens right now.

New York's woes don't end there, either. New York City can't catch a break, as the New York Yankees are also sitting with a sub-par record when compared with their payroll. The Yankees are doling out 267 million dollars to the players and sit at fourth in the American League (AL) East, only five games above .500. It is true that they have a significantly better record than the Mets with a far cheaper payroll, but it is also far below their expectations. This is the team with Aaron Judge, Anthony Rizzo, and Gerrit Cole. It's a cast studded with stand-out players, but they can't get it moving for the life of them right now. It's a cold team, and their cold record shows it.

The next unfortunate subject of our list is the San Diego Padres, all the way across the country. I've made enough fun of the East Coast for the day. The Padres also are up on the payroll board, in third with 236 million dollars being handed out to their players, and honestly, when I look at their list of players, I would guess



Three of the highest players in the MLB, all whom are underperforming.

it to be more. The San Diego Padres are, in the opinion of many, myself included, the most talented team in baseball. They have fiery young gun Juan Soto. They have established veteran Manny Machado. They have generational talent in Fernando Tatis Jr. They have established excellence in Xander Bogaerts. The bullpen isn't anything to snuff at either, with studs like Yu Darvish and Blake Snell on tap. And they are sitting four games below .500 at 20-24. This is abysmal for a team as young and exciting as the Padres are. People are wondering

if the Red Sox will beat the Padres in their upcoming series. Seriously. The Red Sox, a team that posted a .481 record last season. The Padres' downfall this season has been unlike any other. In my opinion, they are the most disappointing team in baseball.

As I've said in articles past and present, baseball is a game of highs and lows, hot streaks and cold streaks. These teams are definitely cold. But with the expectations and more directly, the monetary consequences being placed onto them, this performance is really unac-

ceptable. It simply can't happen with teams like these, the supposed juggernauts that should be marching through their divisions into the playoffs. But they aren't. There's always a chance that these teams pick up their hot streaks later in the season. The Mets could start playing like a World Series contender tomorrow, and I wouldn't be incredibly surprised. But until these teams turn it around, they are the most disappointing teams in baseball.

Russ's Redemption: Can a Struggling Russel Wilson Rediscover his Red Zone Magic?

ZACH GODSEY

As of November 2022, Russel Wilson was the worst quarterback in the NFL in terms of red zone production. His total quarterback rating (QBR), once 91.9, has dropped down to an abysmal 6.3. While part of the blame can fall on his age, Wilson's decline can be mostly attributed to a poor coaching situation and a weak supporting offense. Once considered as one of

the league's most efficient quarterbacks, with an 8.2 percent touchdown percentage in 2018, Wilson's sudden decline has become a massive cause for concern. In 2020, his 60.4 QBR placed him at a respectable 16th in the NFL, but the 2021 season saw him drop to 21st, and the disappointment continued into 2022, as his QBR plummeted to a lowly 27th in the league. This soon became evident on the field, as the Broncos finished the regular season

with a disappointing record of 5-12. Gone is the quarterback who could be relied upon to deliver under pressure near the goal line, and now Wilson finds himself in the unenviable position of a struggling passer. If he could rediscover his red zone magic, Wilson may salvage the back half of his career, posing the question: can Russel Wilson be fixed?

If anyone is capable of orchestrating a turnaround, it is Sean Payton. Payton has earned a reputation for

being one of the league's best play callers, and his impact on Drew Brees' career stands as a testament to his aptitude. While Payton's coaching paved the way for the Saints' 2009 Super Bowl run, his true brilliance shines through in Drew Brees' veteran years, during which Brees' arm strength had declined significantly. In his final season, the 41-year-old Brees was throwing an average of only 7.5 yards per throw. Despite this, Payton's adaptability generated new ways to get in the end zone, taking the Saints to the playoffs in five of their last ten seasons.

While an aging Wilson is now facing the harsh reality of both physical decline and a new receiving core, the prospect of Sean Payton's intervention offers a glimmer of hope. Payton's track record of adapting his offensive strategies to suit both the strengths and limitations of his quarterback makes him the ideal candidate to change Wilson's declining trajectory. The football community has vocalized their confidence in Payton, with longtime veterans such as Tony Romo offering a vote of confidence

for the pair. In an interview on a recent podcast, the Dallas Cowboys quarterback pointed out Payton's knack for understanding his players and placing them in an advantageous position with his playcalling, as Romo said, "Sean has done that for a long time."

While some have doubts about Payton's future with the Broncos, criticizing his style of offense, Romo has predicted otherwise, saying that Payton will "come in and fit this offense to [Wilson]." In light of Romo's analysis, it is evident that despite the skepticism surrounding Payton's coaching style, he should be able to tailor an offense to fit the strengths of Wilson's skill set, bringing him back to life.

In the face of doubt and skepticism, it is important to recognize the transformative power of coaching, especially that of Super Bowl Champion, Sean Payton. While Wilson's recent struggles have been significant, the prospect of revival to his previous glory remains within reach. The stage is set for Sean Payton to work his magic once again and lead Russ's redemption.



Payton hopes to light a spark in the Broncos offense, reviving Russel Wilson.



Embracing Innovation and Inclusivity: Including E-Sports in the Olympics

ETHAN QI

Since the Games' revival in the late 19th century, the Winter and Summer Olympics have united people from across the globe to watch extraordinary displays of athleticism. While the original Olympics held in Athens nearly 3,000 years ago highlighted competitors' athletic passion and grit in events such as chariot racing and pankration, the Games are constantly evolving to embrace modern sports. One such advancement is E-Sports. While many condemn the grouping of E-Sports with traditional athletic competition, adding it to the Olympics represents a necessary evolution to the Games, aligning with the ever-changing landscape of sports and reflecting the widespread global popularity and competitive nature of electronic gaming.

The Olympics have continuously evolved into new mediums. In fact, the Winter Olympics didn't begin until nearly 30 years after the introduction of the modern Games. What makes E-Sports unique and particularly compelling for the Olympics is its accessibility. Unlike traditional athletic competitions, E-Sports minimizes the impact of physical limitations, allowing

individuals with disabilities or those who face challenges in strenuous activities to compete; while the Paralympic Games already account for athletes with disabilities, E-Sports would bridge the gap for anyone who is still unable to participate. Additionally, the appeal of E-Sports extends to younger audiences as nearly 20 percent of 13-39 year olds watch them, and the total E-Sports audience is projected to reach 577 million by 2024. Moreover, E-Sports can be played anywhere at any time, granted that there is electricity and an internet connection. E-Sports are not confined by either the winter or summer seasons and are largely unaffected by global crises such as pandemics or disasters. The inclusion of E-Sports in the Olympics would provide an inclusive and versatile platform capable of adapting to various circumstances.

Critics may argue against recognizing E-Sports as a sport due to its perceived lack of physical exertion or the alleged promotion of violence in video games; however, these arguments are largely flawed. The International Olympic Committee already acknowledges games like chess as a sport despite its minimal physical exertion compared to E-Sports. Further, defining a sport solely based on physical exertion



The first major E-Sports tournament was held in 1972, nearly a century after the modern Olympics began.

is quite arbitrary, as sports require a balance of both precision and skill. Archery, for instance, emphasizes precision over physical exertion, much like E-Sports. Additionally, the notion that video games universally promote violence is an over-exaggeration, and if we're being honest, is just an excuse for parents to get their kids off the screens; Rocket League, for example, is literally just soccer played with cars. Moreover, studies have shown that there's a negligible correlation between video games and violence. Condemning video games for supposedly pro-

moting violence seems to ignore the fact that plenty of current Olympic sports which are already violent, or dangerous by nature. In boxing, competitors actually sustain injuries, while in video games, real people are not getting hurt. Dismissing E-Sports based on these concerns seems unjustified and ignores the changing landscape of sports in the modern era.

Ultimately, the inclusion of E-Sports in the Olympics is a necessary advancement to the Games. The accessibility of E-Sports and its adaptability to various conditions make it an ide-

al candidate for the Olympics. Disputes against its inclusion based on physical exertion or the alleged promotion of violence fail to consider the existing inclusion of non-physically demanding and violent sports in the Olympics, and dismissing E-Sports based on these concerns overlooks the broader scope of sports. By recognizing E-Sports, the Olympics can embrace innovation, diversity, and the spirit of competition in the modern world.

Champions League Semi-Finals First Leg Recap

ALEX LEE

After a set of thrilling and surprising UEFA Champions League (UCL) semi-final games, all four teams still have their eyes set on a trip to the final in Istanbul. However, some teams will have a harder time achieving this after the first round of games. Let's look at both semi-final games and evaluate each team's chances of advancing to the final.

Inter Milan vs. AC Milan.

Going into the first leg, Inter was definitely in better form, and that showed early on as AC Milan fell two goals behind in just 11 minutes. AC Milan was unable to recover from this shocking start, as it struggled to create concrete chances. A notable contributing factor to this was the absence of AC Milan's star attacker, Rafael Leão. AC Mi-

lan played three games without him this season, losing all three. Luckily for AC, Leão is expected to return for the second leg. Inter stayed resolute defensively, holding on to maintain a two-goal lead going into the return fixture, in which AC Milan will need to score at least two goals if they want to keep their chances of going to the final alive.

Manchester City vs. Real Madrid.

Despite Real Madrid taking the home advantage, Manchester City still went into the first leg of this matchup as favorites. Both teams showed why this was the case in the first half, quickly asserting control of the ball. Despite an early flurry of attacks from City, it was Madrid who scored first through a powerful effort from Vinicius Jr. This setback did not stop Manchester City's dominance as they continued to pressure

into the second half. It took until the 67th minute for City's midfielder Kevin De Bruyne to fire a low rising shot past Madrid's Thibaut Courtois. City gradually took their

foot of the gas, creating an opening for Madrid to get back in the game. The match still finished 1-1, with the return fixture set to take place at the Etihad Stadium, where

Manchester City will be in the driver's seat to secure qualification to the finals.



Edin Dzeko celebrates after sending his team into an early 1-0 lead against AC Milan in the first leg of the Champions League semi-final.



Reliving The Careers of Andy Murray and Juan Martin Del Potro

BRANDON HORNE

Picture this: it's 2016, and the Nitto ATP Finals have just concluded, with Andy Murray being crowned as the 2016 year-end world No. 1. It was safe to assume that he was at the top of his game. After all, he had just won the Olympic Gold medal in Rio, along with eight other titles that same year, including Wimbledon. However, what if I told you that he would only win two more titles in the next seven years? Not only that, having last been ranked in the top ten in late 2017, he is currently ranked 42nd – far from capable of competing at the top level. Surprising, isn't it? Well, it's the unfortunate truth. Due to a myriad of physical challenges, including two major hip injuries, he missed almost two full years of his prime. These injuries have taken a toll on his career, leaving him struggling to reclaim his former glory.

Now, let's go all the way back to 2009. Roger Federer is dominating the tennis world, with Rafael Nadal being the only one capable of challenging his reign at the top. We find ourselves at the U.S. Open, an event where Federer had won the previous five titles in a row. No one expected anything different this time around as Federer breezed through the field, reaching his sixth consecutive final. However, waiting for him in the finals was a young Argentinian with a formidable forehand and immense power. Juan Martin del Potro, a rising star, managed to defeat the world No. 1 in a thrilling five-set

match, showing the world his true potential. But what happened next? Would it surprise you to learn that Del Potro never won another Grand Slam title? That he never reached the coveted No. 1 ranking? Unfortunately, that's precisely what happened to the beloved Argentinian. Injuries, particularly to his wrist, wreaked havoc on his once-promising career, turning it into a series of "what-ifs."

So, what would have happened if neither had gotten injured? Would they be in the GOAT conversation? How many Grand Slams did they miss out on? Today, I'll be discussing the tragic careers of Andy Murray and Juan Martin del Potro, and how injuries caused their careers to be drastically shortened. Since attempting to predict every individual event would be impossible, the focus will primarily be on major events.

Let's review Del Potro's career in order to provide clarity. After winning his first Grand Slam at the 2009 U.S. Open, Del Potro achieved a top five ranking and consistently performed well in subsequent tournaments. However, his momentum was halted at the 2009 Nitto ATP Finals when he faced Nikolay Davydenko and lost in straight sets. Despite this defeat, Del Potro entered the 2010 season with high hopes. Unfortunately, a second-match injury dashed his expectations, leading to a decline in his form. Consequently, he had to take a nine-month break to recover from his injury. Assuming he had

remained healthy, it is reasonable to believe that Del Potro could have achieved significant accomplishments. With his recent victories over Rafael Nadal and the absence of notable players like Lleyton Hewitt and Stan Wawrinka, the 2010 Indian Wells tournament appeared favorable for Del Potro. Considering these factors, it is likely that he would have won his first Master's 1000 title at the 2010 Indian Wells tournament.

A few years later, after recovering from his initial major injury, Del Potro regained his top five form and had a successful 2014 season, winning 51 matches and losing only 16. However, he faced another severe wrist injury, causing him to miss a significant portion of both the 2014 and 2015 seasons. Without these injuries, it is plausible to speculate that Del Potro could have won the 2014 Australian Open and the 2015 BNP Paribas Masters (Paris Masters). These tournaments had relatively weak competition, as Stan Wawrinka had won the 2014 Australian Open and Novak Djokovic had triumphed at the 2015 Paris Masters. Del Potro had a positive 4-3 career record against Wawrinka, with three of his wins occurring just before the 2014 Australian Open. Considering this head-to-head record, Del Potro would have had a great chance of winning his second Grand Slam had he remained injury-free. Additionally, with the absence of Rafael Nadal at the 2015 Paris Masters, the tournament field would have been less challenging for Del Potro. Although



Juan Del Potro after winning the 2018 BNP Paribas Open.

Del Potro had a comparatively poor overall record of 4-16 against eventual champion Novak Djokovic, he had previously defeated Djokovic indoors. Therefore, it is quite possible that Del Potro could have emerged victorious at the 2015 Paris Masters.

If Del Potro had avoided his injuries and remained active, it is reasonable to believe that he could have added another Grand Slam title and two more Masters 1000 titles to his career achievements. It is unfortunate how Del Potro's career unfolded, as many fans miss his powerful flat

forehand. There is a glimmer of hope that we might see him one last time at the 2023 U.S. Open, as he recently hinted at the possibility of a farewell return to the court – he wrote on Instagram that he would return at the U.S. Open if Argentina won the World Cup, which they did. While it would be difficult for Del Potro to become a close contender for the GOAT title, it is doubtless that his accomplishments would be far greater had he not been hurt.

Now, let's turn our attention to one of the most prominent British tennis players of the Open Era, Andy Murray. By 2016, Murray had already claimed three Grand Slam titles and attained the prestigious world No. 1 ranking. However, injuries to his hip in 2017 caused him to miss most of the 2017 to 2018 seasons. In contrast to Del Potro, I firmly believe that if Murray had remained healthy, he would still be a contender for Grand Slam titles today. Murray's play style is characterized by its completeness, with a strong emphasis on consistency and exceptional movement. These qualities provide a solid foundation for sustained success, in stark contrast to Del Potro's aggressive baseline play, which often resulted in fluctuations in his performance. Furthermore, unlike Del Potro, Murray was unable to return to the same level of play following



Murray celebrates finishing 2016 with 24 straight victories as World No. 1.



How Has DeMeco Ryans Handled His First Offseason As Texans Head Coach?



JOHN MORAN

DeMeco Ryans is at home with the Houston Texans, and now has his first season and most of his first offseason under his belt. How has he done in his first ride on the NFL rollercoaster of trades, waivers, and draft picks? What has he done to improve the NFL's newest and worst franchise? What steps has he taken in the right direction? What needs did he address?

The problem with this rebuild of the Texans is that the needs that have to be addressed are endless. They only have one player who I would consistently trust on a good team, and that's Laremy Tunsil. I would feel comfortable calling Tunsil the best left tackle in football (besides maybe Trent Williams), seeing how he played over 1,050 snaps in the season and only allowed a single sack. But outside of Tunsil, there isn't a single star in that lineup.

The Texans have problems at every position. Their offensive line is poor (opposing pass rush got QB pressure on 22.6% of snaps, 11th worst in the league). Their defensive line can't get pressure (only got 39 sacks, 20th in the league). They had one good receiver in Brandin Cook, and their quarterback room was headlined by Davis

Mills, of all people. Truthfully, the lineup DeMeco Ryans was handed was abysmal. But he's taken the best steps possible to fill out the more meaningful positions on the football field. We'll start analyzing Ryans' offseason with his action on the trade market.

First, Ryans addressed the need for some young talent by acquiring a couple draft picks through trading Brandin Cooks to the Dallas Cowboys. Specifically, the Texans traded Cooks to the Dallas Cowboys for a 2023 fifth round draft pick and a 2024 sixth round pick. Cooks had a Pro Football Focus grade of 72.3 over the course of the season, which is certainly an acceptable, if not excellent, number for a starter who was subjected to such poor quarterback play. Cooks was one of the few bright spots in a very dark lineup, but I think this trade makes sense. Cooks isn't the youngest or most explosive guy anymore, and this lineup needs a full makeover, so trading one good player for two potentially solid pieces makes sense for this long term rebuild.

Ryans also addressed needs on the offensive line by obtaining star guard Shaq Moore. Ryans traded two picks (unspecified) for the former Buccaneers star. Moore's stats were stellar last season, playing

an incredible 1500 snaps (the most of all guards) and only allowing one sack through it all. Moore will shore up this weak line, especially if he runs some run blocking with Tunsil on the same side. Seeing these two guys moving downfield together will be a pleasure to watch.

That's the two trades the Texans made. Now, let's examine their actions in free agency. The two major signings the Texans made were the signings of running back Devin Singletary and tight end Dalton Schultz. These two offensive weapons should hopefully add some more consistency to a pretty stagnant attacking group.

Singletary had a PFF grade of 75.9, with 819 rushing yards and an average of 4.6 yards per carry. The current starting Texans running back, Dameon Pierce, averaged 4.3 yards per attempt. These two will make a nice pair in the backfield. Dalton Schultz had a PFF grade of 67.8. Not great, but not awful. He was 7th in the league for tight end receptions, and averaged 10.1 yards per reception, which is pretty respectable. Overall, these two signings will be good workhorse type of guys on offense. They won't break off explosive plays very often, but they'll be better able to march down the field than the Texans previously were able

to. Running back wasn't a huge positional need, since Pierce is serviceable, but it makes sense. Taking a tight end was smart, though, and absolutely was a positional need, as their previous TE was Teagan Quitoriano, who had a PFF grade as 49.1 and 113 yards on the season.

Now, for the part you come to see: the draft. The Houston Texans had one of the wildest drafts we've seen in a while. Firstly, the Texans addressed their greatest need of all at quarterback by taking Ohio State star CJ Stroud with the 2nd pick of the draft. This was the pick that they needed to make, and they got a true NFL-prepped star in Stroud. He had an incredible season and finished as a 2022 Heisman Trophy finalist. He had 3,688 yards in 2022 and an incredible 4,435 yards in 2021. Physically, he's 6'3" and 215 lbs, which is more than enough to be a quarterback in the big league. Stroud is the best quarterback in this draft regarding timing, anticipation, and precision, which are the qualities the Texans staff were looking for in their QB. If the scheme he's in gets a couple of guys open, he will absolutely put the ball on the money. There are a few problems with Stroud, though. First is his allegedly poor score on the S2 cognition test, and the second is

the immense drop in talent between his weapons at Ohio State and the terrible weapons he'll be throwing to for Houston. However, the Texans have faith in him, and I do too. I think this is an excellent pick.

Next, the Texans addressed their front seven by trading up to take edge rusher Will Anderson Jr. with the 3rd pick of the draft. They gave up the 12th pick of the 2023 Draft, the 33rd pick of the 2023 Draft, and a 1st and 3rd in the 2024 Draft. I've already written my own scouting report on Anderson Jr. in another article (Bears With The #1 Pick: What Will They Do? for The GOAT), but I'll recap here. Anderson is a ball knowledge god. He can decipher opponent's plays pre-snap like no other because his knowledge of opponent playbooks is so incredible. This pre-snap information makes him able to attack the most important points on the field, which is why he was one of the best run defenders in college football this last season. He gets into the backfield and blows things up like nobody else, and the 3rd pick is absolutely worth it for him. However, the Texans gave up a huge package to get this guy. He isn't a true blue-chip pro-

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Looking Back at the First Round of the NHL Playoffs

MARIO CALVO



The Florida Panthers Celebrate After OT Win Against the Boston Bruins.

The NHL Playoffs are underway, and the first round is complete. From massive upsets to broken curses, the NHL playoffs have proven themselves to be eventful through their first round. In this article, we will take a look at each series, team, and result.

Toronto Maple Leafs vs. Tampa Bay Lightning (TOR Wins 4-2)

On one side was a perennial powerhouse of a team in the Tampa Bay Lightning. The likes of Andrei Vasilevsky, Nikita Kucherov, and Brayden Point led Tampa Bay to a 98-point season. On the other hand, a regular season powerhouse of a team in the Toronto Maple Leafs. The likes of Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner, John Tavares, and Morgan Rielly led Toronto to a 111-point season and yet another playoff berth. However, Toronto has suffered from a troubled history of first-round exits. The million-dollar question: can Toronto FINALLY make it past the first round? The answer was a resounding YES! Both teams exchanged lopsided victories in Games 1 and 2, followed by two Toronto overtime victories, a win in Game 5 by Tampa, and a John Tavares Game 6 overtime winner to break the curse. Maple Leaf fans, congratulations.

New Jersey Devils vs. New York Rangers (NJ Wins 4-3)

An entertaining matchup indeed for the Battle of the Hudson River. New York's 107-point season powered by Chris Kreider, Patrick Kane, Jacob Trouda, and Barclay Goodrow led the Rangers to 3rd place in the Metropolitan Division. On the other side of the river, New Jersey's 112-point season helped clinch the first playoff berth for the Devils since 2018 and their second 50-win season in franchise history. With the likes of Nico Hischler, Jack Hughes, and Ondrej Palat, New Jersey took this series the full 7 games. Unfortunately, two big wins early for the Rangers proved to be all that the Rangers had in the tank. New Jersey would take the next 4 of 5 games to win the series overall, including a Game 3 overtime win.

Edmonton Oilers vs. Los Angeles Kings (EDM Wins 4-2)

Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl, and a whole host of expectations brought Edmonton as far as the team has come in the Playoffs. Their adversary: a Los Angeles Kings team hoping to keep on winning after trading away franchise icons Dustin Brown and Jonathan Quick. The results? Some overtime thrillers, but also some statement wins on the part of the Oilers to bring them to the next round.

Dallas Stars vs. Minnesota Wild (DAL Wins 4-2)

A 2OT thriller would set the tone for most of the series. These two teams fought tooth and nail through 6 games. However, Minnesota ran out of gas by Game 4, as Dallas secured two lopsided wins to secure their ticket to the next round.

Boston Bruins vs. Florida Panthers (FLA Wins 4-3)

A true battle of David vs. Goliath. In one corner, the Florida Panthers. In a season where Florida barely made the playoffs as the second wild-card team in the Eastern Conference with 92 points, many expected little of the Panthers. The team had issues at goaltending, and overall, the team was simply nothing compared to the Bruins. The Bruins, on the other hand, had accolades galore. The Bruins were coming off a 135-point season, the best season in the history of the NHL, and a 3-1 series lead going into Game 5 on their home ice. However, in the playoffs, anything can happen. Florida won two games in overtime and capitalized on Boston's mistakes throughout the series to eventually win Game 7 in overtime in front of the Bruins faithful, breaking the hearts of many fans.

Carolina Hurricanes vs. New York Islanders (CAR Wins 4-2)

This series was something of an early test for Carolina. In a battle between Sebastian Aho and Sebastian Aho, Carolina had the better Sebastian Aho. A 113-point hurricane of ice proved too much for the Islanders to handle in a 7-game series. A team that struggled on offense and primarily relied on a stout defense was never going to match up well against the leaders of the Metropolitan Division. Despite setting the NHL record for the fastest four goals in the playoffs in Game 3 at home, the Islanders made too many errors on power plays and could not keep up against a high-powered Carolina offense. Ilya Sorokin did extend the series in Game 5, but a late overtime goal by Paul Stasny left the Islanders packing for home by Game 6.

Colorado Avalanche vs. Seattle Kraken (SEA Wins 4-3)

The defending Stanley Cup champions need no introduction. On the other hand, the second-year Seattle Kraken hoped to make a name for themselves as Seattle's first-ever Stanley Cup playoff team. This series though, went back and forth, quite literally, through every single game. However, by game 7, Seattle pulled off the ultimate victory with two goals by Oliver Bjorkstrand to seal a major upset against the defending Cup champions and the first playoff series win in the franchise's history.

Las Vegas Golden Knights vs. Winnipeg Jets (VGK Wins 4-1)

Las Vegas, hoping to rekindle the fire of their expansion Stanley Cup Finals run, went up against the upstart Winnipeg Jets, with their small but mighty fanbase. With a 111-point season crowning them champions of the Pacific Division, Las Vegas did quick work of the Jets following a Game 1 loss. A statement win in Game 2 and a double-overtime thriller in Game 3 were all the Knights needed to bring momentum back on their side and punch their ticket to the next round.



Ranking the Top 10 F1 Drivers on the Paddock for the 2023 Season

BRANDON HORNE

We are now three races deep into the 2023 F1 season, and Red Bull has won every time. Their car is simply better than every other team, and, coupled with having two-time reigning World Champion Max Verstappen on their side, it's looking like their dominance will continue. That's not to say that there aren't teams capable of challenging them; Mercedes is known for making dramatic mid-season improvements and showed it with their first podium of the season in Australia. Aston Martin has also made great improvements, as 43 year old Fernando Alonso has placed third in every race this year with young teammate Lance Stroll not far behind after finishing top six in two of his last three races. Williams has been a surprise this year with a decently fast car, which has enabled driver Alex Albon to be competitive in points. With all this in mind, let's jump in and take a look at every driver in the paddock this year.

Max Verstappen

No surprise to anyone, Verstappen takes the first spot in my rankings. Coming off back-to-back championships with Red Bull, Verstappen has had an extremely strong start to the season after winning the race in Bahrain, coming second in Saudi Arabia, and winning again in Australia. Red Bull is far ahead of the pack in overall performance, with its most impressive performance being Checo Perez's climb from last place all the way to fifth overall in Albert Park. Verstappen uses pure driving skill to take advantage of his car's superior performance, as evidenced by two wins in three races. He is looking dominant, and will certainly continue to perform throughout the course of the season. I expect him to win a third World Drivers Championship in a row this year.

Sergio (Checo) Perez

Coming in second is Verstappen's teammate, Sergio Perez. Perez has finally gotten his well-deserved chance to compete in the best car, and he has rewarded his team with a win, a second place, and a comeback from last place to fifth in Australia. His driving complements Verstappen's performance well, and he has

shown that he is more than capable of being a strong number two driver for Red Bull this year. He has been in the sport for over a decade now and has gained a wealth of experience that he is putting to good use. He is also a consistent point scorer, which is crucial in the Constructors' Championship.

Fernando Alonso

Fernando Alonso's performance in F1 has been nothing short of impressive. Despite his age at 43 years old, he has shown no signs of slowing down and has been consistently finishing on the podium this season. Alonso's experience and skill are invaluable to the team, providing them with a much-needed boost in performance. His impressive speed in the Aston Martin has been a highlight of the season so far, and he is proving to be a strong contender for podium finishes throughout the season. Alonso's ability to bring the most out of his car and his strategic racecraft make him a formidable opponent for his rivals. As the season progresses, it will be interesting to see how Alonso continues to perform and compete against the younger generation of drivers.

Lewis Hamilton

Lewis Hamilton, the seven-time World Drivers Champion, takes the fourth spot in my rankings. He has been in a fierce battle with Verstappen for the past few years, and it looks like he will have to pull out all the stops to beat him this year. Hamilton has had a slow start to the season, finishing fifth in both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia before finally getting his first podium in Australia with a second place finish. However, Hamilton is known for making dramatic comebacks, and he has the experience and the skill to make it happen. As I mentioned earlier, Mercedes often makes significant midseason upgrades to its car, which may enable Hamilton to compete with Verstappen and Perez.

George Russel

Russel, who moved to Mercedes from Williams a few seasons ago, has shown promise in the first few races. He scored points in Bahrain, finishing seventh behind Red Bull, Ferrari, and his teammate Lewis Hamilton. He finished fourth in Saudi Arabia and retired in Australia due to a techni-



Lewis Hamilton after winning his seventh world title.

cal issue. Russell is a young and talented driver who has shown his potential in his previous team. With the resources and support from Mercedes, he can certainly challenge for podium finishes and even race wins this season.

Lance Stroll

Stroll has been putting in solid performances this season, finishing sixth in Bahrain, retiring in Saudi Arabia, and placing fourth in Australia. He has been consistently finishing in the points and contributing to Aston Martin's performance this season. Stroll has shown that he has the potential to challenge for podium finishes, but he needs to find that extra edge to consistently finish higher up the grid. Nevertheless, he is a valuable asset to his team and a driver to watch out for as the season progresses.

Carlos Sainz

Sainz has had a steady start to the season, finishing fourth in Bahrain, sixth in Saudi Arabia, and 12th in Australia - due to a questionable penalty. He has been consistently finishing in the points, contributing to Ferrari's performance this season. Sainz has shown that he has the potential to challenge for podium finishes, but he needs to push just a little more to consistently finish higher up. With his experience and skill, he can certainly help Ferrari improve their performance

and challenge for the Constructors' Championship.

Lando Norris

Norris has had a poor start to the season, finishing 17th in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia due to car problems, and finishing sixth in Australia. However, he has shown remarkable talent, and has been unlucky with the performance from his McLaren, which has been extremely underwhelming this year. Norris is a young and talented driver who can certainly challenge for podium finishes and even race wins this season.

Charles Leclerc

Leclerc has had a disappointing start to the season, retiring in Bahrain, placing seventh in Saudi Arabia, and retiring due to a shunt in Australia. However, he has shown great speed and skill, and has been unlucky with incidents that were not entirely his fault. Leclerc has the potential to challenge for podium finishes and even race wins, especially with the Ferrari car that he has at his disposal. As the season progresses, he can certainly improve his per-

formance and challenge the top teams.

Alex Albon

Despite having only scored one total point this year at Bahrain, Albon was poised to finish sixth in Australia before an unlucky shunt ended his race prematurely. Albon has demonstrated his ability in the past. With Red Bull he was consistently in the points, and now he just needs to establish a level of consistency to compete at the higher levels of F1. His Williams car has surprised many this season and, if he can stay clean, he should perform well this year.

All in all, the 2023 F1 season is shaping up to be a very exciting one. Red Bull Racing are dominating the field at the moment, but there are teams capable of challenging them. Max Verstappen is looking dominant, and he is the clear favorite to win the World Drivers Championship this year. However, there are other talented drivers in the paddock who could give him a run for his money. As the season progresses, it will be interesting to see who comes out on



Max Verstappen after winning the Japanese Grand Prix.

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DeMeco Ryans' First Offseason As Head Coach

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cess, without crazy bend or other athletic talents, so trading a first round pick and two early draft picks to get him is a little bit much. I think Anderson will flourish under Ryans' coaching and will be a great player for years to come, but it's too much to give up for a player of his caliber.

Their next pick came in round two, which they used on Penn State center Juice Scruggs. The 6'3" 315 lb prospect will do a lot to help reinforce this

offensive line even more through his quick feet and firm pass protection. Now, with his young talent and two established stars in Tunsil and Moore, this offensive line looks pretty formidable.

Finally, in round three, the Texans addressed their need at wide receiver by taking Tank Dell, a rather small slot receiver from the University of Houston. This homegrown talent measured in at only 5'8" and 165 lbs at the NFL Combine, and those numbers aren't the most confidence inducing. However, he ran a blistering 4.49 second 40-

yard dash and also has a lot of quick twitchiness that excites the Texans. His top-end speed paired with his quick cuts could make him interesting, but his sides keeps me from going all in on the Tank Dell train. He very well could be a plus starter, but injuries will play a major role in his career.

The rest of the draft was less notable, with another edge rusher being taken in Dylan Horton, a linebacker in Henry To'oTo'o, another center in Jarret Patterson, another receiver in Xavier Hutchinson, and a safety in Brandon Hill. All of these

picks are fine backup and special teamers, with a couple of potential starters in To'oTo'o and Horton.

Overall, I would call DeMeco Ryans' first offseason as head coach in Houston a general success. He addressed the need for a quarterback, took an exciting defensive powerhouse, picked up solid players in free agency, and created one half of a formidable offensive line. There are still glaring needs in this lineup, specifically with the front seven (not including edge rushers, of which they have a few), the receiver core, and the secondary, but a

team can only be expected to do so much in one offseason, and with the resources they had at hand, the Texans did a good job in picking up good players in the positions they needed first. They have put some excitement into the long-suffering fans of the team, and have started an upward trajectory that Ryans will continue into the coming years.

Reliving Careers: Murray and Del Potro

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

his hip surgeries. This leads me to believe that Murray missed out on achieving even greater heights in his career if he had avoided those setbacks. What did he miss out on exactly?

I believe that if Murray had remained injury-free, he had the potential to win at least three more Grand Slam titles, as well as 5 more Masters. While he may not have excelled on clay, Murray's performance on grass and hard courts was exceptional.

Notably, he had an impressive record against Rafael Nadal, even defeating him multiple times on clay during Nadal's peak. Additionally, Murray's career head-to-head against Roger Federer is close to 50 percent, and he achieved victories over Federer on multiple occasions, including during Federer's prime. Although his record against Novak Djokovic may not be as favorable, Murray still managed to defeat him multiple times in significant tournaments. These factors indicate that Murray was a close fourth contender alongside the "Big

Three." I am not suggesting that he would surpass any of the three players, but rather that he would be part of the conversation for the GOAT, making it a "Big Four" discussion instead of the traditional Big Three. All in all, it's sad how Murray's career turned out, as he missed out on a lot. All things considered, it is indeed disheartening to see how Murray's career unfolded, as he missed out on many opportunities and potential achievements due to his injuries.

In conclusion, the careers of Andy Murray and Juan Martin del Potro were

marred by unfortunate injuries, preventing both of them from reaching their full potential in the world of tennis. Both players had shown immense talent and achieved significant milestones before their setbacks. Del Potro's powerful game and expectations for Grand Slam success were cut short by wrist injuries, while Murray's well-rounded athleticism and consistent performance were overshadowed by a debilitating hip injury. If not for these injuries, Del Potro could have added more Grand Slam and Masters titles to his name, while

Murray had the potential to claim additional Grand Slam victories and establish himself as part of the "Big Four" in the GOAT conversation. It is a testament to their abilities and resilience that they were able to achieve what they did despite the setbacks they faced. However, it remains a somber reality that injuries deprived these two remarkable players from further success in their careers.

Jayson Tatum's Record Breaking 51 Points Help the Celtics Advance to the Eastern Conference Finals

BEN SHIN

On May 14, Jayson Tatum led the Celtics to a game seven victory over the 76ers. Tatum led the way with 51, scoring almost half of the team's points. Tatum also brought in 13 rebounds and had five assists. Game seven was close up until the beginning of the third quarter, where the Celtics took off, outscoring the 76ers 33-10. Tatum was a major contributor to this amazing quarter, scoring 17 of the 33 points. The 76ers were unable to guard Tatum, and he was able to pass the ball when he was double teamed. His presence wreaked havoc throughout the 76ers' defense. The Celtics

defense was able to suffocate the 76ers, and especially the regular season MVP (Most Valuable Player), Joel Embid. Tatum played a huge role in the effective defense. The team limited Joel Embid to just 15 points and eight rebounds. They also stopped James Harden from having a good night, allowing him only nine points and seven assists.

The previous all time scorer in game seven was Stephen Curry, who scored 50 points against the Sacramento Kings in the first round of the playoffs. It's crazy to think that Jayson Tatum was able to break the record by one point just a couple weeks later. Next, Tatum and the Celtics take on the Miami Heat in the Eastern Conference Finals.



Jayson Tatum after a record-breaking 50 points in Game 7 against the Philadelphia 76ers.

The same matchup as the 2020 Eastern Conference Finals, where the Heat defeated the Celtics in six games. Can Tatum's dominant

performance in game seven carry over to the Eastern Conference Finals, and bring the Celtics back to another NBA Finals?

Editor's Note: This article was written prior to the conclusion of the Celtics-Heat series.