

## Conor McGregor Drops Serious Hint at UFC Comeback

JEFFREY LIM

Conor Anthony McGregor, famously known as “The Notorious,” has once again sent shockwaves through the world with his recent announcement of returning to the world of mixed martial arts. McGregor,

a former lightweight and featherweight champion, has consistently captured the hearts of fans worldwide with his charismatic persona, fearless taunts, extraordinary knockout abilities, and unparalleled showmanship. When McGregor declared his retirement in the summer of 2020, it left the fighting world in a state

of disbelief. It seemed like the sport had lost one of its brightest stars. However, retirement didn’t mean McGregor was taking a back seat. On the contrary, he continued to work tirelessly, maintaining his rigorous workout and training routines. The Irish martial artist’s commitment to his craft remained as strong as

ever.

Rumors had been circulating for weeks, suggesting that The Notorious might be considering a comeback. These speculations gained credibility when the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) confirmed that McGregor had re-entered the drug testing pool for professional fighters. For McGregor, returning from retirement was not a novelty; he had done it before. What made this return unique was that it followed a period during which he had openly expressed a loss of interest in the sport. However, the temporary loss of interest did not deter McGregor for long. His passion for fighting and his competitive spirit have evidently been rekindled. Observers have noted that he looks as physically fit and mentally focused as ever, setting the stage for a highly anticipated homecoming season in the world of mixed martial arts.

McGregor’s return signifies more than just the resurgence of one of the sport’s most prominent figures. It highlights the

enduring appeal of MMA, a sport that continues to captivate both casual fans and dedicated enthusiasts. McGregor’s charisma, both in and out of the octagon, has played a significant role in popularizing the sport and drawing a global audience. Fans eagerly await McGregor’s next fight, not only to see if he can recapture his past glory but also to witness the spectacle, entertainment, and excitement that he brings to the world of mixed martial arts. McGregor’s return reminds us that in the ever-evolving landscape of professional sports, retirements are rarely permanent, and the allure of competition can reignite even in those who have previously walked away. Although the excitement and the anticipation for the Notorious await us, all we can do is sit and wait, waiting for another chapter of the Irish Fighter to open.



## Ballon d’Or 2023: Erling Haaland or Lionel Messi, Who Will Clinch the Coveted Award?

HAOYU ZHANG

It is near that time of the year, October 30, a day to remember for Soccer fans across the globe—the much anticipated Ballon d’Or ceremony. With the 2023 nominees introduced on September 26, this year’s race is stacked with historically great seasons and talents. However, most analysts have reached the consensus that the two favorites are Manchester City’s Erling Haaland and Inter Miami’s Lionel Messi. But, who exactly is more deserving of the coveted award?

2023 is a year to remember for Haaland and City fans, as he achieved historical records and simply had overall great team success. Individually, Haaland surpassed Alan Shearer and Andy Coles’s 34-goal record, setting a new Premier League record of 36 goals in a season. Furthermore, across the entire 2022-2023 campaign, Haaland had an extremely impressive near 1-to-1 goal-to-appearance ratio, including a total of four hat tricks. From a team perspective, it was a near-flawless season, with Man City winning the treble, only to lose out on the EFL Cup and Community Shield. On the other hand, Haaland’s biggest counter-argument is his lack of quality in the World Cup and decisive matches. Not only did

he not score in the Champions League (UCL) Finals, but he also only touched the ball a measly 21 times, least among all 22 starters. This is not even mentioning how Norway failed to qualify for the 2022 World Cup. With that said, a treble and a new Premier League record is no short of an amazing season, but now let us have a look at Lionel Messi.

La Pulga, Alien, the Messiah, and the little boy from Rosario are among the many names Lionel Messi has been called. But none have fit him better than the GOAT: Greatest of All Time, solidified by his masterclass performance leading Argentina to their first-ever World Cup Trophy since 1986. Though there may be some bias due to his incredible homecoming story, it is without a doubt that Messi is still among the best players in the world despite having transferred to Inter Miami.

At PSG, Messi consistently had a higher performance grade than his two teammates and Ballon d’Or finalists Mbappe and Neymar. To support this, throughout the 2022-23 campaign, Messi had an astonishing 65 goals/assists at 36 years of age, surpassing even Haaland’s 61. Messi also matched Haaland’s 1-to-1 goal-to-appearance ratio by scoring 11 goals in 11 games played for Inter Miami, though it is in the Major League Soccer (MLS). Nonetheless, Messi’s

cream of the crop is still his World Cup performance, as some of his achievements include four man of the matches, being joint top scorer and assister, as well as being the World Cup Finals most valuable player, scoring a brace. From a team standpoint, Messi won Ligue 1 with PSG, and with Inter Miami, Messi led them to a blistering nine-game win streak, along the way defeating Nashville FC to claim the League Open Cup. Keep in mind, that Inter Miami was a bottom-two team in the Eastern Conference before Messi’s arrival. All things considered, now let’s compare and contrast, to determine who is the rightful re-

ipient of the Ballon d’Or.

To compare Haaland and Messi, let’s first look at the stats. Among the major categories, Haaland leads in goals, but Messi clears in assists, chances, performance grades, and overall consistency. This is a knock at Haaland’s poor performance in the UCL finals, so in this category, Messi takes the lead. From a team standpoint, even with how well Inter Miami has performed, it is still incomparable to Man City’s treble, so this one easily goes to Haaland. Lastly, on the international stage, Messi completed his promise to give Argentina a World Cup, whereas Haaland’s Norway failed even to qualify. Quite

literally stating the obvious, this one goes to Messi. To sum all of that up, Messi clears Haaland in international competitions, whereas Haaland does the same to Messi in domestic once, but ultimately, Messi triumphs slightly in the stats category. Although it’s a very close race, and there are plenty of arguments in favor of Haaland, it all comes down to Haaland’s lack of success in big moments, whereas Messi thrived. Individually, Messi was simply the better player, hence why Messi is my pick for the 2023 Ballon d’Or, further concluding his GOAT career with his eighth Ballon d’Or.



Lionel Messi lifts the World Cup Trophy with Argentina after defeating France in the final.





## Jannik Sinner Defeats Daniil Medvedev to Win Beijing Open

ALEX DALRYMPLE

In October 2023, 22-year-old Jannik Sinner emerged victorious out of two mentally strenuous matches to win the China Open. This success is mainly due to his consistent groundstrokes and ability to persevere during rallies that last for minutes on end. Defeating both Carlos Alcaraz (20 years old) in the semifinals and Daniil Medvedev (27 years old) in the finals, it has become clear to viewers that a new generation of tennis legends has begun to stake their claim for the title of No. 1 player in the world.

Approaching the semi-finals in Beijing, it was predicted across the world that the young and up-coming Alcaraz would trounce Sinner. However, this was proved wrong on October 3 when the Italian player emerged victorious with a score of 7-6, 6-1. Sinner's consistent serves and mental fortitude eventually earned him the win. Within this nerve-wracking game, there were a multitude of high-pressure points to which Alcaraz succumbed. Sinner was able to

win five out of eight break-points, while the Spanish player only obtained two out of nine. One of his most successful shots was after a long rally of backhands, Sinner would drive the ball down the line into the back corner. After a first set full of points consisting of up to dozens of exchanges, the Italian pulled ahead and won the tiebreaker 7-4. After this loss, Alcaraz was unable to find the mental strength within himself to bounce back. With this surge of confidence, Sinner was ready to face Medvedev in the finals in his quest to win the Beijing Open.

Similarly, to his match against Alcaraz, Sinner pulled off the win by pushing Medvedev mentally. As the game went on, Sinner limited Medvedev's opportunities to gain control over points. This was far from the first time these two players met. Sinner knew far too well what losing to his Russian opponent felt like as he had been previously defeated 6 times already. Since then, Sinner has immensely improved both his mental and physical game, prompting the media to recognize how evenly matched the two players are. Howev-



Jannik Sinner and Daniil Medvedev pose with their trophies after the Men's final.

er, what allowed the Italian to succeed was superior net play and mental resilience during game-altering points. He won the finals 7-6 7-6, both tiebreaks ending in 7-2. During the trophy ceremony, Sinner elaborated on his journey to victory saying, "We have had some very tough battles, especially this year. Thanks for making me a much better player. I have been training a lot to beat you." Despite the

bigger goal of winning the tournament at stake, Sinner considered finally beating his rival as victory enough.

By winning these two enthralling matches, Sinner has staked his name as a serious competitor for the younger generation. After beating the second (Alcaraz) and third seed (Medvedev), there seems to be no one other than Novak Djokovic standing in the way of achieving his ultimate goal

of being the highest-seeded player in the world. It has become apparent that Sinner's relentless mental game will serve him well against any up-and-coming player of his generation. Paired with his multitude of technical strengths, it is certain that a great number of achievements are to follow this incredible win for Sinner.

## Who is the GOAT of Baseball?

SEBASTIÁN VERMUT

You know the greats. Babe Ruth. Mike Trout. Barry Bonds. Some of them stole 40 bases while hitting 40 home runs, some of them hit more than 60 home runs in a season, and some of them had a sub 2 ERA. In the one hundred plus years of major league baseball, there have been many greats. It seems like an impossible task to choose the best.

Joe Posnanski, author of *The Baseball 100*, argued that Willie Mays is the best. ESPN argues that the Great Bambino, Babe Ruth, is the greatest; Jomboy Baseball argues it's Shohei Ohtani. For my rankings, I will use a combination of WAR (wins above replacement), overall OPS+ (a stat that averages OPS, or on-base plus slugging percentages, into a standardized score where 100 is average), and great feats (40-40 season, 60+ home runs, 20 wins in a season). I will be excluding players like Roger Clemens, Barry Bonds, or

Mark McGuire because I think that any feat you have to go to court for after does not count as a feat. I started by pulling up a list of the all-time WAR leaders (it should be noted that pitcher WAR is controversial so pitchers will be separate).

We can see that the top few players according to WAR are Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, Ty Cobb, and Hank Aaron. Each of them has WARs of around 150+. This means that they had to have averaged 10+ WAR for 15 years. For reference, Ronald Acuna Jr., who hit 40 home runs and stole 70 bases, had a WAR of 8.1 this year. I would like to add Nolan Ryan to that list because of the sheer dominance he held over batters for 28 seasons. Of these players, Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs, Willie Mays had more than 3,200 hits and 660 home runs, and Ty Cobb had more than 4,000 hits and almost 900 stolen bases. Hank Aaron hit 755 home runs, had more than 3,700 hits, and holds a record 6,856 total bases. Nolan Ryan struck out 5,714 batters in his 28-season

career (this is around a thousand more strikeouts than second-place Randy Johnson) and tossed 7 no-hitters. He also holds the single-season strikeout record at an incredible 383. He had by far the longest prime which spanned almost his entire career. Ruth had an OPS+ of 206 (meaning for his entire career he was twice as productive as the rest of the league). Mays held an OPS+ of 155 while Cobb rocked a 168. Aaron had an OPS+ of 155 as well. Ryan held an ERA+ (a stat similar to OPS+ in which it standardized ERA) of 112 with one season with a whopping 195 ERA+.

Considering these different categories, it can be easy to go with Babe Ruth or Ty Cobb, although I feel like baseball back then was so much different than what it is today. Pitchers threw slower, and the spitball was still prominent. Willie Mays is arguably the greatest all-around player, as he had stellar defense as well as offense, but Aaron clearly stands out as the greatest offensive player. He



Nolan Ryan delivers a pitch to Hank Aaron during a Braves-Mets game in 1968.

hit 755 home runs, a record that stood until Barry Bonds concluded his juiced-up career and hit an incredible 3,700 hits. There are just 4 players in the 3000-hit 700-homerun club, and Aaron clearly stands out. For this reason, I would say Hank Aaron is the GOAT of baseball. It is worth noting that Nolan Ryan is easily the greatest pitcher of all time. He basically invented the concept of a power pitcher. His records and feats stand alone; he is the greatest pitcher

of all time. Time will tell if Ohtani has enough resilience to injury to have the career he is hyped up to have. The conclusions of Aaron Judge and Mike Trout's careers could also influence the list. While I do not expect you to entirely agree with my position, raw stats, and achievements easily point to Hank Aaron being on top. He is the GOAT.





## The Quest to Maintain Superstar Status: Will LeBron Finally Crumble?

TEO CHOI

At age 38, there has been much speculation regarding LeBron James' expected performances in this upcoming season. However, it can be guaranteed that being the oldest person in the NBA will not stop James from putting up the superstar numbers he has been doing for the past 20 seasons. Having aged like fine wine, season 21 should be a breeze.

Born to a 16 year old single mother, LeBron's life has not always been smooth sailing. With an absent father, it was his basketball coach who would take him under his wing as he pursued both football and basketball. With a strong support system behind him, James was able to excel and gain national recognition, in both sports. Eventually opting for basketball, James was drafted as the #1 pick in the 2003 NBA draft. Despite hardships such as having to miss school or constantly having to move from place to place, he has consistently shown grit and a strong work ethic. Even with the crushing expectations brought upon him as an 18-year-old

rookie, he was able to live up to the hype consistently and has solidified himself on the "Basketball Mt. Rushmore", even debatably being the greatest ever to do it.

First, we can look at the statistics part of the equation. Throughout his 20 NBA seasons, LeBron James has averaged a staggering 27.2 ppg (points per game), 7.5 rpg (rebounds per game), 7.3 apg (assists per game), 1.5 spg (steals per game), and 0.8 bpg (blocks per game). By being able to excel at multiple different things, LeBron can make a profound impact on all aspects of the game. In fact, he is the all-time leader in points scored, fourth in all-time assists, and ninth in steals as a forward. The easiest way to speculate the statistics he will be able to put up this upcoming season is by looking at last season's stats. Last season, LeBron averaged a whopping 28.9 ppg, 8.3 rpg, 6.8 apg, 0.9 spg, 0.6 bpg. One could argue that he was chasing the coveted scoring record, but that does not discredit the amazing impact he had in the games. For a larger sample size, we can look at his Lakers tenure. In five years, he averaged 27.4 ppg, 8.1 rpg, 8.0 apg, 1.2 spg,



LeBron James poses after beating Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's all-time scored points record.

and 0.7 bpg, enough to push him to all-star captain selections all five years. All these stats become evidence of LeBron's incredible stats and their immediate success, including the past few years. In fact, compared to his stats two years ago, his last season's stats increased in every single category except for ppg and defensive metrics.

Second, we can look at the team put around him this season. It can be said

that this year's team is far superior to most of his past teams, even the roster when he won the championship with the Lakers in 2020. With great trade acquisitions over the trade deadline last season, the Lakers were able to make a late playoff run to the Western Conference Finals, where they would get swept by the Nuggets. Players such as Rui Hachimura, D'Angelo Russell, Jarred Vanderbilt, Malik Beasley, and Mo Bamba. This

offseason, the Lakers organization made great moves. Despite losing key players such as Dennis Schoder or Lonnie Walker IV, they were able to add great additions such as Gabe Vincent (3yr \$33 Million), Christian Wood (2yr \$5.7 Million), Taurean Prince (1yr \$4.5 Million), Jaxson Hayes (2yr \$4.6 Million), and Cam Reddish (2yr

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## The LA Rams Passing Attack: Will Kupp, Nacua, and Stafford Be Unstoppable?

JOHN MORAN

The Los Angeles Rams were assumed by many people to be one of the worst teams in the league coming into the 2023 NFL season. However, a little more than a third of the way into the season, the Sean McVay led squad is sitting at 3-3, a very acceptable record for a team that, after their Super Bowl victory two

seasons ago, was predicted to fall apart quickly. A lack of draft capital and an older core group of players meant that they were in a prime position for a regression. Last season certainly displayed this regression with a 5-12 season after their 12-5 performance the season prior. The downward tumble was to continue, or so sports media said.

But the Rams aren't counting themselves out

yet. Led by veteran quarterback Matthew Stafford, the Rams are the executors of one of the most productive passing attacks in the NFL. The passing offense of the Rams has yielded 1,677 yards from Stafford's arm six games into the season for an average of 279.5 yards a game. That total yardage number is good enough for the 3rd most productive quarterback in the league. But why has

an aging Stafford been able to be so successful? What factors contribute to the passing offense?

The biggest one this season has clearly been Stafford himself. His arm has been on fire. He's been rifling the ball into tight windows and reading the field with accuracy and speed, enabling him to use his incredible arm talent to place the ball where it needs to go. Stafford has a history of being a standout quarterback, as anyone who has been watching football for the past decade will know. In seasons where he's been the uninjured starter for the whole season, he's never thrown for less than 4,000 yards. That's consistency.

But Stafford isn't the only reason for the passing success of the Rams. Rookie receivers Puka Nacua and Tutu Atwell have been lighting up scoreboards in Sean McVay's genius offensive scheme. Nacua has 598 yards through the first six games of the season, averaging almost 100 yards a game. His ability to find holes in zone coverage

and settle into them, as well as his size and strength against man coverage, make him an exceptionally easy target to throw to. Atwell's speed makes him a strong deep ball threat, and his shiftiness makes him a dangerous underneath receiver.

And of course, there's perennial superstar Cooper Kupp, creator of one of, if not the greatest, wide receiver seasons of all time. He was injured (as he often is) for the first four games of the season, but for the past two weeks, he has been averaging 133 yards a game with an average yards per catch of 17.7.

The combination of Kupp, Nacua, and Atwell has been and will be a problem for defenses across the league, especially with McVay's unpredictable and usually brilliant offensive mind. I'm excited to tune into Rams games to see the ball fly through the air for the remainder of the season.



A veteran star (Cooper Kupp) and a rookie star (Puka Nacua) lighting up the field for the LA Rams.





## Anticipating the 2023 Head of the Charles: Predictions and Showdown on the Charles River

GUETTY MOITA

The largest regatta in the world, taking place since 1965, happens here in Massachusetts on the Charles River. The regatta occurs over three days and brings over 225,000 people to the greater Boston area, to both race and observe the competition. The style of racing that is performed at the Head of the Charles race is called head racing. Across various races, boats are set out by bow number and then are timed by the time that they complete the race. This is a style of racing that is common often in the fall, whereas sprints are common in the spring.

This Head of the Charles is one to watch, as the addition of a monetary prize for the Men's and Women's Championship sculls, has led this to be a much more competitive weekend of races.

The regatta begins Friday, October 20, and opens with Masters races. Masters races are races that mostly involve post-collegiate rowers, who are often middle-aged or older. The only races occurring on that day are the masters and

grandmasters singles and doubles. Former collegiate athletes tend to dominate masters' races, so keep an eye out for alumni.

The bulk of the racing continues on Saturday, October 21, opening with clubs' singles races. The first of the eight-oared shell races begins that morning as well. The first of the majorly watched races is the Men's alumni race. University of Washington alumni seem to be a heavy contender to win this race; they have achieved first place in it for the last two years, and they are seeded first. Ex Nemo, or the Harvard University Alumni boat, can surely be a force to be reckoned with, as they got second in 2022 and are seeded second in this year's head of the Charles.

For the Men's Club Eights Race, it will be a tossup between Harvard University and Brown University. These two teams have been going back and forth for the last couple of years, and it will be interesting to see who will come out on top for 2023. Harvard is seeded first after last year's win, and Brown second, but the only way to know who will come out on top is to see



Crowds gather to watch rowers compete during 2018's regatta.

how the race is rowed.

On the women's side, University of Washington alumni are still seeded to come up on top and have won the previous year. Friends of Brown Women's Crew (Brown University Alumnae) may be able to sneak out with second place, due to the previous year beating out their seed, and showing that they are a force to be reckoned with.

For the Women's Club Eight, Drexel University was surprisingly strong the pre-

vious year, with Radcliffe Women (Harvard University Women's team) seeded second. This race could go either way with perhaps even Yale University winning, as they got third place in 2022.

The Men's Youth Eight will be a strong battle for whoever wins, as the top six crews of Greenwich, St. Joseph's Prep, RowAmerica Rye, Saugatuck, New Trier, and Marin have been in fierce competition since youth nationals. Greenwich has placed first for the past

few years, but with these clubs, nothing is ever certain.

In the Women's Youth Eight, RowAmerica Rye and Greenwich seem to be the ones duking it out for the win. Other teams such as Saugatuck and Marin may be able to shake down the champions and secure the wins themselves, but we will have to wait and see how the race turns out!

## Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift: The NFL's Current Love Story

XAVIER MORAN

The Kansas City Chiefs have been dominating this season, leading the American Football Conference West with a current five-game win streak. With success in both of the major stars, Patrick Mahomes, and Travis Kelce, the Chiefs are on a great start to the season. While KC has been dominating their games, a certain pop star has been dominating our TVs. Taylor Swift has had an average of nine appearances per game talking to celebrities, in addition to Travis Kelce's mom. Since July, Travis Kelce started dating the most popular singer in the world, and she happens to appear at every game he plays.

Fans of Taylor Swift are mostly looking forward to what comes out of this relationship. If it goes well and they stay together for a while, the NFL will give her a Super Bowl halftime show and continue to show a solid two minutes of Swift sitting in a booth. According to "Hubspot," Travis Kelce

is unintentionally helping the NFL get closer to Taylor, allowing future deals to be made. If the relationship ends, more like when the relationship ends, we will be getting a new album about breakups, love, and football.

But the new album isn't the only good thing coming out of this celebrity matchup. The NFL has recently revealed that there was a 175 percent ticket sale increase for KC Chief games whenever Taylor Swift was said to show up. On September 24, Taylor Swift helped make the KC Chiefs vs. New York Jets game become the second highest viewed football game of the season. Taylor Swift's appearances have also been pulling in other celebrities to the Chiefs' games. Celebrities who joined Swift in the booths include Ryan Reynolds, Hugh Jackman, Sophie Turner, and Blake Lively.

Also, Fanatics, the sports gear and marketing company, already struck a deal with the KC Chiefs and Taylor Swift to start selling Jerseys with Travis Kelce's number, and the name "Swift"

on the back. If you tune into this week's Chiefs game, you will see this jersey dominating the stands. But make sure to look into the likeliness of a Taylor Swift appearance because now, before every game, fans are calculating the chance Swift will be in town.

The NFL can't get enough of Taylor Swift. The partnership mutually benefits the NFL and Swift, as Taylor Swift gets in the headlines more and the NFL can increase

ticket prices. Adding on, football fans and Taylor Swift fans don't share similar demographics, and with Swift being at the game, the KC Chiefs can see a lot more money coming in from teenage girls to older Swifties. Taylor Swift fans are especially happy about this relatively new relationship between Swift and Kelce - mainly because of their deep hatred for her last celebrity boyfriend, Matty Healy, the lead singer of The 1975.

While Swift has refused to perform in the Super Bowl twice already, there are many years left in her career to perform. Madonna performed in a Super Bowl halftime show when she was 53, so I think we will have plenty of chances to see her and maybe Travis Kelce at a future Super Bowl. As long as their relationship goes well, there is still a possibility the NFL will see Swift perform.



Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift caught holding hands and leaving together after exiting the SNL.





## Jude Bellingham Scores Ten Goals in His First Ten Games for Real Madrid

ALEX LEE

This summer, Jude Bellingham transferred from Borussia Dortmund to Real Madrid for an astonishing fee of 103 million pounds. Despite only being 20 years old, Bellingham has already established himself as one of the world's top midfielders, captaining his Dortmund side at 19 years old and impressing in the World Cup for England. So, when he made the move to Real Madrid, expectations were sky high. In his first ten games, Bellingham has risen to the occasion, exceeding expectations by scoring ten goals and providing three assists. With these goals, he equaled Cristiano Ronaldo's start at Real Madrid, highlighting Bellingham's unique quality and foreshadowing a bright future for him at the club.

Jude Bellingham started his goal tally in his debut, finding the net against Athletic Bilbao in a 2-0 win. In the post-match interview, Bellingham talked about his scoring mentality, saying "If you shoot, you have a chance to score." His phi-



Jude Bellingham celebrates after scoring against Osasuna.

losophy is to take the shot when he sees an opening and not wait for the perfect moment, as it is unlikely that an ideal chance will come. This mindset proved to serve him well over the start of his Real Madrid career, starting the next nine games in all competitions and scoring the same over that period.

Bellingham capped off his scoring run with a brace in the tenth game of the season. With goals on either side of halftime, Bellingham

guided his team to a 4-0 win against Osasuna, giving them a two point lead over Girona FC at the top of the league table. Real Madrid now sits comfortably in first place in La Liga, largely thanks to Bellingham's extraordinary transition in the team. He has cemented his place in Madrid's starting XI, and if he keeps this form up for his entire six-year contract, he will find himself among Madrid's long list of legends.

The people who brought this issue together:

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Kevin Niu

MANAGING EDITORS

Daniel Seong

Amy Oku

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Ben Shin

SECTION EDITORS

Charles Vest

Claire Cheng

SECTION HEADS

Annabel Curry

Anthony Yang

John Moran

CREATIVE WRITERS

Rishi Rane

Michael Mechegia

SENIOR WRITER

Zach Godsey

Alex Lee

Harry Murphy

Brandon Horne

## The NBA's Newest Superteam is Better Than You Think

BEN DEGANI

Damian Lillard and Giannis Antetokounmpo are individually regarded as elite scorers in the NBA and, without a doubt, top 20 players currently. However, there's one more major commonality between the two: neither has ever played with any major star talent. Damian Lillard has been in the league for 11 seasons,

and the last and only time he has played with an All-Star was Lamarcus Aldridge back in 2013-15. But finally, on September 27th, that changed when, in a three-way deal between the Bucks, Blazers, and Suns, the Bucks acquired All-Star and MVP caliber player Damian Lillard. The Suns got Jusuf Nurkic, Grayson Allen, and a couple more guys. But that isn't all too bad. The Suns already have a backcourt made of some

of the best players in the NBA in Devin Booker, Kevin Durant, and Bradley Beal. Last but not least, the Blazers ended up with Deandre Ayton, a player the team traded not long after receiving (Jrue Holiday), and a seventh grader (2029 first round pick). But all of that aside, how good is this win for the Bucks, and more specifically, how good can this new duo be?

This isn't the first time

we've seen a pairing of All-Star talent, and many have tried and failed to create an unstoppable super team: Russ and Harden; Kyrie, KD, and Harden; Kawhi and PG. They never quite live up to the grand expectations given to them, but history shows us that this new duo in Milwaukee is bound to do something great.

Box plus minus is a metric used to determine how positive or negatively impactful a player was on a game due to many factors. There have only been six duos in the history of the NBA that were as good individually as Giannis and Dame are in terms of box plus minus. Out of those six duos, four of them went on to win the NBA championship that season. Last season, Dame and Giannis averaged 32-5-7 and 31-12-6, respectively, both on over 60% true shooting percentage. That is a stat line that only Luka Doncic, James Harden, and Michael Jordan have ever achieved. However, all of this gets swept under the radar because Lillard has spent his career in the shadow of Steph Curry, arguably the greatest point guard in NBA history. These are 2 of the most prolific

scorers in NBA history, and the last time we saw a pairing so dominant was never. There has never been an NBA duo that has had both players average 30 ppg and then played together the following season. Not only that, but their games perfectly complement each other like nothing seen before. A top five interior player gets combined with a top five perimeter shooter, a lethal combination. There is not a single team in the league at the moment that can defensively cover this force. This is something that has always held back most attempted super teams, and time and time again, we see that if you match the right players, it makes all the difference. Both LeBron and Wade and Kobe and Shaq, two of the most dominant duos in history, match that description.

Obviously, this is partially speculation but all the stats and accolades beg the question: does this duo have what it takes to win the title? Or are we getting ahead of ourselves like we have done countless times before?



Milwaukee's big 3: Giannis Antetokounmpo, Damian Lillard and Khris Middleton.





## Roger Federer and His Journey to the Top of the Tennis World



Roger Federer's first, tenth, and twentieth Grand Slam.

NICOLAAS KRAMER

No one's tennis journey is linear. Even one of the greats, Roger Federer, struggled to keep cool during his teenage years of tennis. As mentioned by an ESPN article, "He'd frequently smash his rackets, scream at the sun, and berate himself and others as things failed to plan." He took his anger out on material things and could clearly not control his emotions, a critical factor in becoming a successful tennis player. Later, he started working on his self-control, becoming the gentleman people know him as today. His first breakthrough was when he won the Junior

Wimbledon in 1998. This tournament helped him grow confidence and propelled his professional tennis journey.

In an interview, Federer said as a child "a grass court was always a dream." He always wanted to play on grass courts because, in Switzerland, there were predominantly sand and clay courts. Interestingly, most of his successes were in Wimbledon, where he won 8 of his 20 grand slam titles. In 2001, with effort and dedication, he ended his idol Pete Sampras' 31-match win in the fourth round of Wimbledon. In 2002, Federer became the first Swiss to reach the top 10 and later won the men's singles Wimbledon tournament. In

future years, he won many more grand slams, winning the Australian Open, Wimbledon, and the U.S. Open many times. From 2004 all the way to 2008, he had to defend his titles by playing many other great players like Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, who competed with him for every title. Some people call them the "Big Three" because they shared the spotlight for many years, dominating the tennis competition.

In 2009, Federer won his only French Open title, easily beating Robin Söderling 6-1, 7-6, 6-4, who beat the king of clay Nadal in the round before. However, in 2013, he struggled with a back injury and could not add to his list of grand slams

until 2017, when he won the Australian Open. He was 35 years old when he won the tournament, becoming the oldest player to win the Australian Open in history. He won it again in 2018 and, after that, started his downfall.

He was injured many times, which led to his retirement. Federer announced that he will retire from competitive tennis after suffering multiple knee surgeries in recent years. The news of his retirement was shocking and pierced through the hearts of millions of devoted fans and supporters who had followed his remarkable journey over the years. The weight of sadness hung on everybody's shoulders. For countless years, Federer

had not merely entertained but also inspired, leaving an indelible mark on the world. From the very beginning of his career, he had demonstrated a mastery that few could rival, becoming a true luminary in his field. His graciousness during defeat and victory has enabled people to see the value of defeat and that no journey is a straight line.

His talent and dedication became a source of inspiration for countless young tennis players. He proved that with hard work and unwavering commitment, greatness could be achieved. He is a living testament to the power of perseverance, talent, and the ability to captivate the world with one's craft.

## Claypool's Arrival: Miami Dolphins' Bold Move to Bolster Their Offense

ZACH GODSEY

The Miami Dolphins have traded for Chase Claypool, the second-round pick out of Notre Dame in 2020. The embattled wide receiver had a promising start in the league during his rookie season, with 62 catches for 873 yards and 9 touchdowns over 16 games in 2020, establishing himself as a budding star for the Pittsburgh Steelers. However, his production would take a nosedive after being traded to the Chicago Bears in November 2022. During this brief stint with the Bears, he recorded just 14 catches for 140 yards and 0 touchdowns over 7 games. It was clear that Claypool struggled to find his place in the

Bears' organization, as he stated in a post-game interview that he didn't think the Bears were putting him in a position to succeed.

Just one week after placing wide receivers River Cracraft and Erik Ezukanma on injured reserve and the non-football injured list, respectively, the Miami Dolphins traded away a sixth and seventh-round pick in the 2025 NFL draft in exchange for Claypool. Although the Dolphins boast formidable wide receiver talent, with stellar offensive weapons in Tyreek Hill and Jaelyn Waddle, it was an opportunity that Dolphins head coach Mike McDaniels couldn't turn down. In a later interview with ESPN, McDaniels stated that the trade was made out of "a commitment

to making your team as good as it can be." Furthermore, Claypool's 6'4, 240 lb frame will bring a physical presence to the Miami offense, complementing the smaller, faster re-

ceivers already in Miami. With quarterback Tua Tagoviloa healthy this year, there is optimism that Claypool may flourish within the Dolphins' offensive scheme. This trade has

undoubtedly set the stage for an intriguing chapter in Claypool's career and the Miami Dolphins' 2023 season.



Chase Claypool will bring his versatile skillset to the Miami Dolphins.





## Is Jrue Holiday the Missing Piece for the Boston Celtics?

AARON PORTELANCE

Marcus Smart played both an important role as a leader and defensively, and perhaps, most importantly, he lived and died for the Celtics franchise. This is why the Celtics lost a substantial member when they traded Marcus Smart on June 21, 2023. After the trade, the Celtics were left with no preferable point

guard. Sure, they could run with Derrick White, but he lacks the locker room leadership role, experience, and defensive hustle that they lost with Smart.

Seeing how the Celtics do not have an advantageous point guard within their team, they needed to look for other possible options. To replace the gap left by Smart, they need a hard worker on defense, a veteran leader, and preferably not a

liability on offense. There is no better player to fit this mold in the league than Jrue Holiday.

In Holiday's introductory press conference on October 4, 2023, it was hard not to be excited as he seemed to have everything the Celtics needed. Holiday says that he will be a perfect fit for the spirit and work ethic that the city of Boston is known for. He said in his introductory press conference, "[Celtics Fans]

love people that work hard and put their heart into it and that's just the type of person that I am. They care more about hard work on defense and getting loose balls and stuff like that over maybe windmill dunks and things of that nature, but again that's the type of guy I am. I'm ten toes to the ground and I'm going to push and grind as hard as I can."

According to Celtics owner, Steve Pagliuca, Paul Pierce, former Celtic and Hall of Famer, has never seen a better practice than Holiday's first practice with the Celtics, "There was just an electricity in the gym today, when you get such great players together playing at a high level; and Paul Pierce turned to us and said he's never seen an NBA practice like this his whole entire career that they went that hard that fast for that long."

It appears that Holiday is the perfect piece to the puzzle. He fits the culture of the city and is able to create a spark with his teammates. In addition to being a great leader and mentor for younger players, Holiday

is a two-time All-Star, five-time All-Defensive, three-time Teammate of the Year, and NBA Champion. However, it all comes at a price. In order to obtain Holiday, the Celtics lost Malcolm Brogdon and Robert Williams and two future first round picks. The loss of Brogdon isn't much, but the loss of Williams certainly is. The Celtics' top three big men are now Kristaps Porzingis, Al Horford, and Luke Kornet. This leaves the Celtics very back-court heavy for the upcoming season. This is all not even mentioning how the Celtics lost two first rounders and are now paying 32 million in luxury tax totals, which could be detrimental to their future.

Holiday is quite possibly the best fit you could imagine for the Celtics right now, but was it worth the price he came with? Yes! This is a new league. Long gone are the days of well rounded teams within a reasonable range of the salary cap. Sometimes, you just need to assemble a Big Three in addition to a talented point guard to pave the way to a Cham-



Steve Pagliuca, Wyc Grousbeck, Jrue Holiday, and Brad Stevens (left to right) at Holiday's introductory press conference.

## Living Vicariously: Bryan Shelton's Story

ISAAC TIOMKIN

The English summer sun was lukewarm, yet the air was still thick and hot. It was July 1989, and the entire tennis world now revolved around one spot. The grass was cut perfectly, just as it had been for the past century. Class and prestige emanated from every crevice in the court. A 22-year-old Bryan Shelton stood upon a pristine grass court in Wimbledon. He had turned pro just a few months prior and now stood at the grandest stage in the world; across from him was Boris Becker, the youngest Wimbledon champion ever. People crowded the stands, eager to watch Becker dominate the young American. Unfortunately for Shelton, the crowd got exactly what they wanted. After two and a half hours and three sets, Becker left with a place in the next round, and Shelton left with a ticket back to the USA.

Bryan Shelton continued to have an admirable career, falling just short of the tennis player's ultimate dream: the top ten. Although for many this could be where they cut ties with the sport, Bryan's passion denied him that release. He began his second career as a tennis coach in 1999, just over a year after retiring from professional tennis. He coached the Georgia Tech women's team and, in 2007, even mentored them to a national championship. As time went on, Bryan turned his focus from his own career to the future of the Shelton name: his son, Ben Shelton. From the beginning of his son's tennis journey, Bryan knew that Ben was different. A kid normally needs to be pushed to achieve success, but Ben himself was a furnace, roaring with motivation and competitive spirit. In 2022, Bryan told The New York Times that Ben has always been "just a different animal than I was." In fact, Bryan

frequently had to control his son's endless bounds of energy and talent.

Ben Shelton's rise as a junior was unique to someone as athletically capable as him. Unlike many "tennis babies" of the world, he did not experience intense pressure to succeed. In fact, he only started taking tennis somewhat seriously in seventh grade, after he quit football. Unlike many prodigies, Ben never went overseas to compete as a junior, abstaining from any junior grand slams that tend to rocket younger players into the universe of stardom. Despite his lack of international tennis renown, he was still a phenomenal player and earned a spot on the roster at the University of Florida tennis team, where his father transferred to as a coach. Under the tutelage of Bryan, the team won the NCAA National Championship, and that was when the world began to see who this boy was becoming.



Bryan Shelton playing at the 1994 Wimbledon Championships.

Bryan realized his vision of "The American Tennis Player" through his son. Bryan was able to set Ben on the path that he believed was best, but Ben is the one who sprints to the finish line, always pushing himself further. As of January 2023, Bryan became Ben's full time coach on the ATP tour, highlighting his dedication to his son.

The gauntlet has been lifted off of Bryan's shoulders and placed upon the eager Ben's. It is now his turn to carry the Shelton name.





## Why The 49ers Are Going To Win The Super Bowl

BRANDON HORNE

The San Francisco 49ers are going to win the Super Bowl. It may sound far-fetched, but it's the truth. Why, you ask? Well, the 49ers have the best roster in the NFL, and when paired with one of the most talented offensive minds in the history of the league in Kyle Shanahan, their talent has been on full display this season. As of October 14th, the 49ers are a 5-0; one of two remaining undefeated teams thus far. Quarterback Brock Purdy has proved the doubters wrong, recovering from his elbow injury to lead the league in QBR this season. Purdy was, like Tom Brady, passed on by every team, and was taken with the last pick in the 2022 NFL Draft. Also like Brady, he got lucky as the 49ers needed a quarterback after both Trey Lance and Jimmy Garoppolo were injured early in the season. So far, in the regular season, Purdy is 10-0 in games in which he has started, which is unprecedented for a rookie quarterback. In addition, the roster is absolutely stacked, with Pro Bowl level talents at nearly every single position on the field.

On the offensive side of the ball, no team compares to the 49ers. Throughout five games, the team ranks 2nd in total points scored. Running back Christian McCaffrey leads the league in rushing yards as well as total touchdowns. He has been an incredible addition to the Niners, unlocking the full potential of their offense. In addition, the 49ers have two

top-20 wide receivers, Brandon Aiyuk and Deebo Samuel. Both are versatile offensive weapons, combining for 764 total all-purpose yards, as well as four touchdowns. Aiyuk has really blossomed this year and is on track to have a second consecutive season with 1000+ receiving yards. Based on statistics, they are a top five WR duo this season. Paired with the excellent RB/WR game, the Niners have George Kittle. Widely recognized as the best blocking tight end in the game currently, he is yet another offensive weapon. His run-blocking talent is paramount to the 49ers' success, so good to the point that they often struggle to get the ball to him through the air. His most recent game was a highlight, as he scored a career-high three touchdowns. Furthermore, the 49ers also have the best fullback in the NFL. The fullback position may be dying, but Kyle Juszczyk remains the top dog as he is adept at both run and pass blocking, as well as the occasional designed run/pass play. There are other names on the roster as well, such as left tackle Trent Williams, who remains the best in the game, in addition to playmakers such as Jordan Mason, who led the league in rushing yards per attempt in 2022 and versatile return man Ray-Ray McCloud. Combined with all of the excellent offensive talent, the 49ers have an incredible quarterback at the helm, Brock Purdy. His poise and calm demeanor have led the team to success, leading him to be named one of their captains for this season. All in all, the 49ers have



Nick Bosa celebrates after a sack; he led the NFL in sacks this past season.

an offensive roster for the ages, which I believe will lead to a Super Bowl victory.

On the defensive side of the ball, the 49ers reign supreme. They currently lead the league in opponent points, holding teams to an average of 13.6 points per game. Although defensive coordinator DeMeco Ryans departed for the Houston Texans, the Niners' defense remains dominant. With stars such as Nick Bosa, Javon Hargrave, and Arik Armstead on the defensive line, the 49ers already have 13 sacks and are poised for another excellent season of quarterback harassment. Bosa won the NFL Defensive Player of the Year award in 2022 while leading the league in sacks, and Hargrave had 11 total sacks last

year. In the middle of the field, the 49ers have surely the best middle linebacker duo in the league, with Fred Warner and Dre Greenlaw. Warner has established himself as the best middle linebacker in the league at the moment and was a first team All-Pro in 2022. Greenlaw is the perfect compliment to Warner, often talked about as the Robin to Warner's Batman, and will surely make a Pro Bowl at some point in the near future. In addition, the 49ers have a 2022 Pro Bowl safety in Talanoa Hufanga, who currently leads the team with 2 interceptions. In addition, the 49ers have a strong secondary, with Charvarius Ward, Deommodore Lenoir, and Tashaun Gipson Sr. With all of these weapons

on defense, the 49ers are holding opponents to the lowest points per game and the second lowest yards per game.

In summary, the 49ers possess a roster for the ages, with weapons galore on offense and defense. With an excellent offensive coach in Kyle Shanahan, and with a healthy quarterback in Brock Purdy, there's no limits to what the 49ers can achieve in the coming season. There are a couple major question marks: mainly whether or not the Niners can stay healthy, and if they can beat the Eagles in Week 13. If they can answer these questions, I believe the 49ers are a lock to win this year's Super Bowl.

## Will LeBron James Continue to Impress at a Superstar Level?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

4.6 Million) through the free agent market, draft Jalen Hood-Schfino (17th pick) and Maxwell Lewis (40th pick), and sign non-guaranteed contracts such as Colin Castleton, Alex Fudge, and D'Moi Hodge. In fact, the Lakers got so much better that according to sports network Hoops Hype, the Lakers now have the 4th highest power ranking. What does this mean for LeBron? It means less need for minutes and more laid-back basketball. Last year, LeBron logged on 35.5 minutes per game, much more than a 38-year-old should be playing. However, with this new team, one can expect LeBron to average a little

bit fewer points, but more assists and rebounds, and more defensive stats like steals and blocks.

Third, we can look at the off-the-court aspect of the equation. This is regarding the work ethic, the Mamba Mentality aspect, and the work he puts into his body and craft. According to some independent sources, LeBron James spends an average annual sum of \$1.5 million on his body. This includes the trainers, home gyms, chefs, massage therapists, and, of course, the super cool ice chambers he goes in. The effort he puts into his craft is also unreplaceable. In the news conference ahead of training camp, Darvin Ham, the Lakers' head coach said in an interview "He [LeBron James] does a great job taking care of himself." As a 38-year-

old, health is of the utmost importance, and being able to take care of himself cannot be discredited. In that same interview, Rob Pelinka, the Lakers' General Manager and Vice President of Basketball Operations, said "It's staggering for a player who has 20 years under the hood already and is preparing for 21 like he's a rookie," and "There has been nothing but an increase in seeing that [Putting work in] here. To me, it's let's be about it, let's not talk about it. He's definitely been about it this offseason." In the facilities, behind all the paparazzi and media, Ham and Pelinka can see the arduous efforts LeBron undertakes. In an interview with ESPN, a newcomer for the Lakers Christian Wood stated "First person I see is LeBron James. Already in a full sweat ... He already

beat me to it." Christian Wood, who, as a newcomer, wanted to impress and prove his worth, went early in the morning to practice. However, it was, of course, LeBron, being the diligent person he is, already putting his shots up. As such, his work ethic, on and off the court can be credited for his amazing performance on the hardwood.

However, there are some uncertainties that may challenge this equation. There is the possibility of injury. So far, we have discussed that skill wise, there should not be a problem with him replicating the stats from last year. But injuries could be the Achilles heel. Last season, LeBron had a torn foot tendon that sidelined him for 27 games. He also missed 26 and 27 games the two seasons before that, respec-

tively. Hopefully, this season brings good news, and the new additions should help him ease off a little.

Finally, it would only be right to predict LeBron's stats for this upcoming season. Because of his help in fire power, I would expect a decrease in points but an increase in assists. Rebounds should stay the same and the defensive metrics may dwindle a tiny bit. Overall, I would assume a statline of 24-26 ppg, 7-8 rpg, 7-9 apg, and around a steal and 0.75 bpg. Obviously, this all depends on injuries and strategies put forward by the Lakers, but I speculate this would be the ballpark of his stats. These stats will not only maintain LeBron's status as a superstar but will solidify himself as a top ten player in the league at 38 years old and at season 21.





## Do The Tottenham Spurs Have a Chance at Winning the Premier League?



Spurs players celebrating their second goal versus Manchester United on matchday two.

NAREK HAMBARDZUMYAN

At the end of the 2022-23 season, Spurs finished in 8th place in the Premier League after a campaign full of chaos and losses, as Antonio Conte got sacked and Harry Kane left after 14 years at the club. The future seemed bleak for Spurs as their star striker left the club, as well as key players like Lucas Moura.

And yet, here we are. Going into the second international break of the season, Spurs sit top of the Premier League, ahead of the likes of Pep Guardiola's treble-winning Manchester City and Mikel Arteta's Arsenal, all while being undefeated, picking up 20 points out of 24. Spurs' new head coach, Ange Postecoglou, has inspired the team and brought a new team spirit. One question sticks out: Can the Spurs keep their consistency and potentially win the title?

### A Trophyless History

The last time Spurs won the English title was in 1961, which was 62 years ago. The last time Spurs won any trophy was in 2008 when they won the League Cup. That was 15 years ago. The last time Spurs were close to winning

the Premier League was in the 2015/16 season when they were in a two-horse race to the title. With whom you may ask? Leicester City, who are now in the EFL Championship.

It is safe to say, Spurs haven't been a 'winning' team in about a decade and a half. They have lost numerous cup finals, including the FA Cup, EFL Cup, and the Champions League. A trophy has been seemingly avoiding them for the longest time, but this season could be the change.

### Positive Signs This Season

There are many factors suggesting that a title challenge is a very realistic possibility, with one of the most prominent being that they don't have any European football to distract them, in addition to already being knocked out of the EFL Cup. That 8th-place finish in the Premier League last season could have been a blessing in disguise, as fewer games means more recovery time for players, leading to better performances. Furthermore, Heung-Min Son and James Maddison have both picked up the Player of the Month award for September and August respectively, and Postecoglou won two Manager

of the Month awards in a row. The last manager to win two awards in the same season was Jurgen Klopp in 2019, and that was in a full season.

Spurs have also played Arsenal (2-2 D), Liverpool (2-1 W), and Manchester United (2-0 W). On the flip side of that, they have also played all three of the newly promoted teams, which seems to discredit their incredible start to the season.

Looking into more advanced stats, Spurs have had the most shots this season (153), third-most tackles (160), third-most passes (4,597), third-highest average possession (61.4%), the highest average rating for all players (7.35/10), and the second-highest goal-differential in the league behind Manchester City and Newcastle who have +11, and tied with Arsenal who has +10.

In addition to this, it looks like Postecoglou is the fix to all of Spurs' problems. He has changed their style of play, their mindset, and certainly the team spirit. Many Spurs fans would have wanted a high-profile name such as Julien Naglesmann to manage the club, but Postecoglou seems to be the perfect fit.

However, we have seen this before. This wasn't 20 years ago, 10

years, not even 3 years ago. Just last season, Spurs were having a similar start to the season at this campaign. They had the best start to an English League season since 1963. Kane was flying high with 8 goals in 10 games, as after matchday 10, Spurs were 3rd on 20 points behind Arsenal and Manchester City. Of course, they failed to keep this consistency, as they eventually finished in 8th place, which has been a trend for Spurs in recent years. This season, they have had an even better start, but does that mean they can keep the consistency going?

### Consistency

Consistency has seemed to be the main problem for Spurs for many years, as they have been so close so many times, and always failed to achieve something. Sometimes Spurs can do the unthinkable, like the comeback against Ajax in the Champions League Semi-Final, 2019, and sometimes they can do stuff like losing the Premier League title to Leicester City in 2016 or getting knocked out of the FA Cup semi-final by Portsmouth in 2010, who would later get relegated in the Premier League with 19 points. This has led to a term

being used to describe when Spurs do something in a matter of unpredictability, that being 'Spursy'.

It is almost like we see this trend happening over and over again, season after season, with seemingly no way of Spurs getting a real shot at any good title. Last season's post-match interview with Antonio Conte after a 3-3 draw with Southampton, seemed to perfectly sum up this point. "The problem is we have shown we are not a team. We are 11 players. I see selfish players. It is the same every season, no matter who the manager is. They're used to it here. Don't play for something important. They don't want to play under pressure. They don't want to play under stress. Tottenham's story is this." This led to him getting the sack, but what he said here seems to be a pattern in Spurs' history. There seems to be hope with Postecoglou being the new manager and bringing a new perspective to the team, but can a new manager simply make this big of a difference?

It can, as it has been shown many times. For example, Claudio Ranieri joined a releg-





## Who Are The Biggest Championship Contenders for the 2023-2024 NBA season?

HARRY MURPHY

Per usual, the NBA off-season delivered with blockbuster trades and free agent signings sure to shake up the list of contenders for next season. The question is, who are the NBA's biggest championship contenders going into next season?

It would be criminal not to start this list with the reigning champion, the Denver Nuggets. They retained their championship squad in the off-season. They did lose valuable role player Bruce Brown, but they would

never have been able to compete with the Indiana Pacers' salary availability. Expect the Nuggets to post once again one of the best offenses of all time spearheaded by the blooming all-time great that is Nikola Jokic.

The Miami Heat have consistently been phenomenal playoff performers since 2020, and I see no reason for that to change next season. While the Heat did not manage a Bradley Beal or Damian Lillard trade that many expected, they retained their finalist roster from last season. If Tyler Herro stays healthy for the playoffs this year, the Heat's biggest hole

- three point shooting - would be solved. Their gritty, defensive, and fundamental playstyle may again take them far, and maybe finally to the Larry O'Brien trophy.

The Phoenix Suns flared out of the second round of the NBA playoffs last season to the eventual champion Denver Nuggets in a competitive six games. After trading for scoring machine Bradley Beal this offseason, the Suns will have arguably the most dangerous trio of wing scorers ever. They upgraded from Deandre Ayton with Jusuf Nurkic; both players are strong offensive players, but Nurkic is superior on

defense. Outside of those four players the roster consists of Josh Okogie, Grayson Allen, Yuta Watanabe, and some fringe NBA players. A playoff series against the Suns will no doubt be a mainly offensive contest. If Devin Booker, Kevin Durant, and Bradley Beal can stay healthy and play tremendous minutes in the playoffs, the Suns are a team to look out for.

The 2021 Champion Milwaukee Bucks had an embarrassing outing the last playoffs, losing to the eighth seeded Heat in the first round. To be fair, Giannis Antetokounmpo was injured for a few games, and Khris Middleton missed the whole series. This offseason, they made their biggest trade acquisition in franchise history when they got Damian Lillard from the Portland Trail Blazers. Lillard is one of the most dangerous shooters of all time from anywhere up to 35 feet from the basket. A pick-and-roll action with Lillard and Giannis projects to be the most dangerous play in the NBA next season and is unguardable in theory. The loss of Jrue Holiday is overstated as he has been on the decline and did not fulfill the Bucks offensive point guard duties to a Championship standard. Perimeter defense is unimportant when you have two First Team All-Defense towers in the paint: Brook Lopez and Giannis.

The Boston Celtics

have been the most consistent team in the NBA, and have been in the conference finals five of the last seven seasons. They had a very active off-season in the trade market, and seem to be all in on the Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown duo. First, they traded for star Kristaps Porzingis. Porzingis has the ability to be an all-NBA player in any given season, and the only thing that holds him back is health concerns. They also traded for Jrue Holiday, who will make up for the loss of Marcus Smart nicely. Though he is a marginal downgrade defensively, he makes up for that loss with his shooting ability. Derrick White is the best ball handler on the roster, and the best player to take the keys as the point guard. Starting him would either push Holiday out of the starting lineup or Porzingis to center, both unideal scenarios.

Those five teams are my picks for the most likely champions next season, but I don't doubt that other teams have boom potential. LeBron and Anthony Davis, surrounded by many boom or bust players, can win under the right conditions. Luke Dončić and Kyrie Irving may click and make it work under Jason Kidd. The elderly Clippers may find a fountain of youth and - if they stay healthy - become top contenders.



Denver Nuggets stars Jamal Murray and Nikola Jokic posing with the Larry O'Brien Trophy and Bill Russell Finals MVP trophy after winning the 2023 NBA Championship.

## Can The Spurs Win the Premier League?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

tion-fighting Leicester City and won the Premier the same season he joined. Klopp and Guardiola joined their respective Premier teams and created a dynasty of trophies and success. Jose Mourinho dominated the Premier with Chelsea, who have struggled without him. A good manager can make a huge difference, but it is too early to see if Postecoglou is that manager who can change everything for Spurs.

### Other Title Contending Teams

Manchester City has been incredibly consis-

tent for the past decade or so, and many people think Manchester City can still win the title, even without key players like Kevin De Bruyne and Joao Cancelo. If anything, this season looks like the season Manchester City won't win the title, as they have lost their last two games coming into the international break. One to another title contender in Arsenal, but another to a potentially relegation-battling team in Wolves. Erling Haaland is their main man and has had a great start to the season, bagging 8 goals in 8 matches. It certainly looks like no one can stop him, but after having 0.00 expected goals against their 1-0 loss against Arsenal, it seems like he could be

slowing down and not the same player he was last season.

Arsenal is the other main contender for the title, and they have a star-studded squad full of young talent who just missed out on the title last season. They are also the only undefeated in the Premier alongside Spurs and are on the same number of points and goal differential as Spurs, but behind on goals scored. They drew 2-2 against Spurs on matchday six and have arguably had a more difficult stretch of games in comparison to Spurs.

### Final Verdict

So, will Spurs win the league? If I had a million dollars, I would

rather bet on Red Star Belgrade winning the Champions League.

Spurs do not have the ability and don't have the consistency to win a league. Sure, they have had a great season, but I think there is a much higher possibility of Arsenal or Manchester City winning the title. They have had great starts to seasons like last year, but it was shown plain and obvious that Spurs can not keep up with the consistency needed to win the league, something that Manchester City and Arsenal possess.

I would say they would finish in the top four, and quite frankly it would be embarrassing if they don't, but they simply can't do it in the first season of getting

a new manager, losing their star player, and having a complete rebuild of the entire team. Give them a couple of seasons or two, and I am sure they can have an incredible chance of winning, but it is simply not the season for them. However, always keep in mind that anything can happen, and this isn't a 100% guarantee. I am sure no one could have predicted Leicester winning the Premier, but they did.

To sum it all up in the words of Giorgio Chiellini, "It is the history of the Tottenham".





## A Review of MLB Postseason Games

ANDY DU

### Wild Card Round:

Minnesota Twins vs. Toronto Blue Jays

The AL Central Champions Minnesota Twins (87-75) took two decisive wins over the Toronto Blue Jays in the three game wild card series, winning both games by the scores of 3-1 and 2-0 in games one and two respectively. The Twins, led by merciless pitching from their starters Pablo Lopez and Sonny Gray, as well as their closer Jhoan Duran, were able to keep an explosive Blue Jay offense to just one run in two games, which ended up propelling them to a series victory and onto the next round.

Texas Rangers vs. Tampa Bay Rays

The Texas Rangers, champion of the AL West with 90 wins in the regular season, swept the Tampa Bay Rays with two big wins in the wild card round. After shutting out the Rays 4-0 in game one with a stellar outing from starter Jordan Montgomery, Texas brought home seven runs in game two with outstanding offensive performances from superstar Corey Seager and cleanup hitter Adolis Garcia. Texas' deep starting rotation and depth down their lineup convincingly propelled them into the 2nd round and will make them a tough out in the 2023 MLB Playoffs.

Arizona Diamondbacks vs. Milwaukee Brewers

Led by rookie sensation Corbin Carroll, the Arizona Diamondbacks swept the Brewers in two close games by the scores of 6-3 and 5-2 in games one and two respectively; this was despite being a team that hasn't been to the postseason for the past six seasons. Carroll led the Arizona offense, going 4-7 as the lead-off hitter in the series, while the timely pitching from starter Zac Gallen helped hold a talented

Milwaukee roster from scoring lots of runs.

Miami Marlins vs. Philadelphia Phillies

Who would've thought that the Marlins would be playing October baseball? The team that finished second to last in their division last season with just 69 wins found themselves starting at their first Postseason Game in ages; but matched up against what could quite possibly be the 2023 MLB Champions in the Philadelphia Phillies. The Phillies held the Marlins to just two runs across two games with unbelievable pitching performances from Zach Wheeler and Aaron Nola, while the offense tore apart the Miami pitching staff as Trea Turner went 4-7 in the series. All the while, Bryce Harper showcased his superstar capabilities that got him named MVP in both the 2015 and 2021 MLB seasons.

### ALDS:

Houston Astros vs. Minnesota Twins

The 2nd seeded Astros played their first series in the ALDS and decisively swept the Twins in a seven game series. After holding the Minnesota Twins to just nine runs in four games while scoring 24 themselves, it was clear that Houston's powerful offense led by superstars Yordan Alvarez, Alex Bregman, and Jose Altuve was too much to handle for the Twins' pitching staff. Astros ace Justin Verlander and standout starter Christian Javier both dominated on the mound and helped the Astros move onto the ALCS.

Texas Rangers vs. Baltimore Orioles

It's been a long time since we have seen playoff baseball in the Camden Yards, home of the Baltimore Orioles. After an outstanding season filled with 101 wins and an AL East Division Champion, the Orioles got sent home without a win by the Texas Rangers



Bryce Harper stares down Orlando Arcia of the Atlanta Braves after hitting a home run amidst off-field drama.

after giving up 21 total runs in just three games. The Baltimore pitching staff, which had been solid throughout the entire regular season, crumpled at the hands of Texas hitters who hit five home runs in the series. Texas, a team that has yet to lose in the playoffs, moves onto the ALCS round with loads of momentum.

### NLDS

Arizona Diamondbacks vs. Los Angeles Dodgers

Traditionally known as a team that makes the playoffs every year and wins lots of games, the Dodgers didn't really meet the standard of playoff success this season. Though they were the second seed in the NL, the Arizona Diamondbacks stunned Hollywood by putting up 19 total runs in the series and sweeping one of the largest team payrolls in the league in just three games. Corbin Carroll again proved too much to handle as his explosive rookie season continued. Despite the Dodgers offense being led by the big-name superstars of Mookie Betts, Freddie Freeman, and Max Muncy, the team had no answer

to the Diamondback's dominance.

Philadelphia Phillies vs. Atlanta Braves

A series marred with ejections and off-field drama, the Philadelphia Phillies beat the Atlanta Braves three games to one in the NLCS with offensive breakouts. Bryce Harper hit just under .500 with 3 home runs in the four games of the series, while Trea Turner and Nick Castellanos both used their powerful bats to drive in a total of 20 runs for the Phillies. There was a seriously talented offensive team in Atlanta, but they just couldn't quite get runs across the board when it mattered most.

### ALCS

Houston Astros vs. Texas Rangers

Losing the first two home games of the series, the Astros find themselves in a big hole as they look to seize a must-win game three, or else things may spiral out of control. After getting shut out by Jordan Montgomery in game one, the Astros lost a tough game two 5-4 after another

outstanding pitching performance by Texas starter Nathan Eovaldi. Alvarez and Altuve have cooled off from their stellar offensive outputs we saw in the ALDS, and the biggest question is, can the Astros regain their offensive spark that has helped them win throughout the 2023 regular season and important October playoff games in the past?

### NLCS

Arizona Diamondbacks vs. Philadelphia Phillies

Both the Diamondbacks and Phillies have lost just one game in the entire 2023 Postseason, with Arizona's first loss coming in game one of the NLCS. Philadelphia's superstars in Harper, Schwarber, and Castellanos raked as they led one of the hottest offenses in postseason history to a 5-3 win behind the phenomenal performance of Zach Wheeler on the mound. It is too early to count the Diamondbacks out, but it is clear that they must find an answer to this red hot Phillies offense or they will travel back to Arizona down 2-0 in the series and in danger of going down 3-0.





## Yet Another James Harden Trade Saga — The Philadelphia 76ers



James Harden wearing the number 1 on the Philadelphia 76ers.

ZACHARY YUAN

Most NBA fans would agree that James Harden is one of the most controversial figures in the league. Harden, a ten-time NBA All-Star and seven-time All-NBA player, is widely regarded as one of the league's greatest scorers, and he has proved his skill time and time again on the court. Drafted in the 2009 NBA Draft to the Oklahoma City Thunders (OKC) as the third overall pick, Harden instantly made an impact on the court, winning NBA sixth-man of the year and guiding OKC to the NBA finals in the 2011-2012 season.

### Houston Rockets

However, Harden is most well-remembered during his era at the Houston Rockets. Harden was traded to Houston in 2012, where Daryl Morey, then Houston's general manager, believed he had the tools of a future superstar. Harden won the 2017 to 2018 Most Valuable Player award, while the Rockets became perennial contenders, never missing the playoffs during his first eight seasons with the team. However, things went south after the 2018 season, as Harden was not happy with the Rockets's leadership and team. Harden requested the Rockets to sign Russell Westbrook, and after threatening to leave if the front office didn't do so, the Rockets

fulfilled his request. But both Harden and Westbrook failed to perform together on the court, and after one single season, both players wanted to leave. But instead of focusing on improving his game with the Rockets, Harden was determined to force his way to the Brooklyn Nets. He refused to show up to the Rockets's training camp back in 2021, and, instead, attended parties and did not perform as expected on the court. Harden even told reporters the Rockets were "just not good enough." Finally, the Rockets had enough, and the next day, Harden was traded to the Nets to form a superteam with Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant.

### Brooklyn Nets

Harden's tenure at the Nets was underwhelming. Both Durant and Harden were plagued by on and off injuries, and even when they were healthy, Harden did not look like himself. The trio ended up playing just 16 games together across two seasons. And just like that, 13 months after his trade from the Rockets, Harden was pressing for another trade. He resisted making a formal request out of fear of public backlash for asking out once again, sources told ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski, but he wanted a trade to the Philadelphia 76ers to reunite with Morey, their current President. Harden missed his final few games from an injury, and on deadline day, he was

traded to the 76ers, with Ben Simmons coming the other way.

### Philadelphia 76ers

Harden started off strong, forming a partnership with Joel Embiid and dropping numbers that somewhat resembled his time in Houston. He even declined a large contract and took a pay cut to enable the 76ers the salary cap flexibility to sign more role players like PJ Tucker. According to Wojnarowski, Harden told Morey that he wanted to do his part to fortify the team's roster and give it a chance to compete for a championship. However, in his second season as a 76er, Harden's numbers declined. After suffering another disappointing early exit from the NBA playoffs, and with Morey and the Sixer's front office refusing to give him a new lucrative contract, Harden wanted a trade again. However, this time was different. No one wanted him.

### 76ers Trade Request

Harden requested his trade back in late June, and over the course of the four months, Harden has already used most of his moves. In August, Harden publicly called Morey a "liar" and suggested he would not fulfill his contract with the 76ers as long as Morey remained President. The league fined Harden 100,000 dollars for that. Footage was shown of Harden displaying a 'Daryl Morey is a liar' sign in a bar where

he partied. Harden did not even show up to the 76ers media day, pre-season training, and pre-season games. And in the first pre-season game, young guard Tyrese Maxey balled out, cooking players, as if showing that there is no need for Harden. So, if no teams want Harden, where is he going to go?

### Los Angeles Clippers

This week, new reports have shown that the Los Angeles Clippers are in fact interested in Harden. However, the Clippers already have stars Kawhi Leonard and Paul George, so why would they still want Harden? Apparently, the Clippers are in desperate need of a ball handler to general the court. Moreover, Kawhi and George have suffered multiple injuries throughout the season, and adding Harden would mean one more star to help the team out in case the others are injured.

But why hasn't this trade happened yet? This is because the 76ers front office is not satisfied with what the Clippers are offering for him. The 76ers want Robert Covington, Terance Mann, and Marcus Morris for James Harden. This trio of floor-spacing forwards would be perfect for the 76ers, giving them multiple accurate shooting options, but why hasn't this deal gone through yet? Reports have said that Daryl Morey is in fact the one "holding up" a deal. Apparently, the Clippers consider Terrance Mann

untouchable and are unwilling to trade him. Yet Morey is unwilling to settle for any other deal. So, what does this mean for Harden?

### What now?

In a turn of attitude, Harden has been seen practicing and even praised new 76ers Head Coach Nick Nurse. It seems like the plan is for Harden to suit up, even if he isn't happy with the current situation, play well during the regular season, and hopefully get clubs interested before the playoffs. In fact, Harden is said to be desperate to win a ring, after failing to do so for his entire career.

We've seen this saga over and over again. Harden's first few seasons at his new club are plagued by injuries, bad luck, or simply bad basketball, and ends with an early exit at the playoffs. Once Harden realizes that there's a slim chance of winning a ring with his team, and if the front office refuses to pay him more, he tries to force a trade by refusing to turn up to training and speaking out to the media. And this time, the 76ers front office knows they have a decision to make: keep Harden or trade for something less than his worth? At the end of the day, whatever this whole transfer saga plays into, it will greatly affect how Harden goes down in the history books, and also the 76ers's place in the Eastern Conference.





## Week 6 Quarterback Power Rankings

LUKE WILLIAMSON &  
ADRIAN WERNER

### 1. Tua Tagovailoa (Dolphins)

Leading the league in both yards and touchdowns, Tua is playing the best football of his career and is on pace for an MVP-level season.

### 2. Josh Allen (Bills)

Boasting the second-highest QB rating in the league and leading a 5-1 Bills team, Josh Allen continues to use his size, athleticism, and arm talent to win games.

### 3. Kirk Cousins (Vikings)

Cousins is tied for first in touchdowns, second in yards, and only has 4 interceptions. He has been an elite passer and deserves a podium spot.

### 4. Patrick Mahomes (Chiefs)

Placing just outside the podium, Mahomes has a respectable 11 touchdowns to 5 interceptions. To his credit, he's the reigning MVP and Superbowl MVP, and has the Chiefs rolling at 5-1.

### 5. Lamar Jackson (Ravens)

With the rushing yards (327) and touchdowns (4) of an elite running back, as well as a strong passing game, Lamar Jackson is the biggest duel threat in the league.

### 6. Jared Goff (Lions)

Jared Goff has helped to transform the Lions from a garbage fire team into a 5-1 powerhouse. His 350-yard 2 touchdown game on Sunday only adds to the success.

### 7. Brock Purdy (49ers)

Purdy has been doing everything right with 10 touchdowns to 1 interception and leads one of the most dominant teams in the NFL. Constantly on the move up, this week will be a chance for Purdy to prove himself without some elite talent in Christian McCaffrey and Deebo Samuel.

### 8. Justin Herbert (Chargers)

While Monday night was not Herbert's greatest showing, he still

has a 102 QB rating and a strong touchdown-to-interception ratio (9:2).

### 9. C.J. Stroud (Texans)

CJ Stroud threw the first pick of his NFL career on Sunday capping off one of the greatest rookie starts ever. Sitting at fourth in yards, Stroud looks to move up the list and lead the Texans to a strong comeback season.

### 10. Jalen Hurts (Eagles)

Jalen Hurts's seven interceptions keep him on the fringe of the top 10, but he has still been a strong passer as well as a formidable rushing threat.

### 11. Dak Prescott (Cowboys)

After a hot start with the Cowboys, Dak has settled into a solid Dallas offense. With a fresh win over the Chargers on Sunday and the third spot in the NFC, he has been doing his job and winning games.

### 12. Joe Burrow (Bengals)

Despite a slow start, Joe Burrow is looking much better and won an important game on Sunday putting his Bengals up to 3-3. As long as Burrow can stay consistent, he will certainly move up the list in future weeks.

### 13. Russell Wilson (Broncos)

The 1-5 Broncos continue to struggle both on offense and defense. However, Russell Wilson may not be the source of blame with 12 touchdowns 4 interceptions, and 1,300 yards.

### 14. Trevor Lawrence (Jaguars)

Both Trevor Lawrence and the Jaguars have been inconsistent, but Lawrence played well the past few weeks and is tenth in passing yards. This week, the tough Saints defense will be a chance for him to prove himself.

### 15. Matthew Stafford (Rams)

Stafford leads a dynamic Rams offense and is third in total passing yards with 1,677. He has been a strong system quarterback and will find success with the return of Cooper Kupp.



Tua Tagovailoa celebrates a touchdown against the Philadelphia Eagles.

### 16. Geno Smith (Seahawks)

Geno Smith and the Seahawks sit at 3-2, and while they came off their bye week looking weaker than usual, Geno Smith is still posting reasonable numbers and has a reasonable 5:3 TD to INT ratio.

### 17. Zach Wilson (Jets)

There is reason to hope for Jets fans; Zach Wilson has made noticeable strides and looks better every week. After an impressive win to end the Eagles's undefeated streak, Wilson's potential is visible and becoming more consistent.

### 18. Baker Mayfield (Buccaneers)

Despite an underwhelming 6 points scored on Sunday by the Buccaneers, Mayfield has done well and holds a TD-to-INT ratio of 7:3.

### 19. Josh Dobbs (Cardinals)

Josh Dobbs has done a valiant job leading the once-hopeless Cardinals through close games, with one win over the 4-2 Cowboys.

### 20. Jordan Love (Packers)

There is clear potential in Green Bay's young quarterback after some very strong early season games. However, he seems to be slowing down and still has a lot to prove.

### 21. Sam Howell (Commanders)

Howell is difficult to

assess in his first year as a starter. While he has had flashes of greatness and is ninth in passing yards, he has also struggled against subpar secondaries such as the Bears and Cardinals.

### 22. Gardner Minshew (Colts)

After another unfortunate injury to Anthony Richardson, it looks like Minshew will lead the Colts in week 7. Minshew has been alright in the minimal time he has played this season, but with his first full game on the horizon, he is a difficult QB to trust.

### 23. Deshaun Watson (Browns)

Watson has had trouble getting the ball out with only 102 pass attempts (lower than Colts backup Gardner Minshew) but has still managed a 3-2 record against some formidable teams.

### 24. Derek Carr (Saints)

Carr has adjusted well to his new team, but is getting older and has shown the same inconsistency he did in Las Vegas.

### 25. Jimmy Garoppolo (Raiders)

Jimmy G directs a struggling Raiders offense and has more interceptions (8) than touchdowns (7).

### 26. Justin Fields (Bears)

Fields has looked much better over the last few games but only managed to post one touchdown on Sunday, and it is un-

clear if he will even play in week 7.

### 27. Desmond Ridder (Falcons)

Ridder has looked mediocre at best and will likely not be the Falcons starter by the end of the season.

### 28. Bryce Young (Panthers)

Young may have been taken first overall in last year's draft, but he has not played up to par and has yet to win a game.

### 29. Mac Jones (Patriots)

Mac Jones has been playing some atrocious football as of late and was not able to score a single point in week 5.

### 30. Ryan Tannehill (Titans)

On top of a very weak showing against the Ravens in London this week, Tannehill also appears to be out with an injury.

### 31. Kenny Pickett (Steelers)

While much of the blame is certainly on offensive coordinator Matt Canada, the Steelers's offense has been floundering, and Pickett is part of the problem.

### 32. Daniel Jones (Giants)

With a mere 2 touchdowns to his 6 interceptions, Daniel Jones has looked horrible and has not lived up to the 160 million dollar contract he signed in the offseason.





## Chinese National Swim Team Dominates at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China



The Chinese quartet combined for the 2nd fastest 400-medley relay performance in history.

JAY WEI

During these past few weeks, swimmers worldwide watched some of the fastest athletes compete at the 2023 Asian Games. The 19th quadrennial Asian Games were held in Hangzhou, China from September 23rd to October 8th. For many athletes, the Asian Games is considered to be the highest level of competition aside from the Olympic games. Swimmers train extensively in the hope of earning medals for their home country. The swimming events began on the 24th and concluded on the 29th. Team China, rallying up a total of 58 medals including 28 gold medals, outperformed the rest of the meet and presented one of the strongest and fastest teams in the world. Korea and Japan followed China to earn second and third in the Asian Games, only to earn less than half as many medals each. It was also the first time in history that Korea beat Japan in the medal table.

The Asian Games were highlighted by the blazing races of multiple Chinese athletes. Team China is often a country excluded from the discussion of world-class swimmers. Their most decorated athlete, Sun Yang, dominated mid-distance to long-distance events in the 2010s, winning a total of 6 medals at the Olympics including 3 gold medals. He also holds the current world record in the 1500m free-

style (14:31.02) which remains unbroken since it was set at the London Olympics. However, Sun Yang faced doping charges and was given an 8-year ban from swimming. For that reason, China remained out of the conversation in many competitions. Occasionally, names like backstroker Xu Jiayu were mentioned, yet China's performance at meets was overshadowed by the performances of Caleb Dressel, Ryan Murphy, Adam Peaty, and others. The recent performances of athletes like Qin Haiyang, Wang Shun, Zhang Yufei, and others have gained the attention of swimmers around the world and shone a new light on the future of swimming for China.

### Qin Haiyang

After returning from the 2023 World Championships in Fukuoka with three world titles and a world record, Qin Haiyang's performance at the Asian Games did not disappoint. Qin completed the treble in the breaststroke events again while breaking all three of the meet records for his events. He was just seven hundredths off his Asian record, with a slightly slower back half (31.07). Qin also decided to compete in the 200 IM (1:57.41), where he won the silver medal for China behind teammate Wang Shun.

### Wang Shun

200 IM Olympic

gold-medalist Wang Shun also swam a lifetime best, breaking his own Asian record as he posted the top time this year in the 200 IM (1:54.62), ahead of superstar Leon Marchand's time at World Championships (1:54.82). Wang Shun also became the third fastest performer in history, behind the legendary Michael Phelps and Ryan Lochte. Despite rumors of Wang peaking at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, Wang proved that he remained to be one of the fastest swimmers in the world. "I said [before the Games] I'll let the flag rise at my hometown and I did it." Wang said, "For me, breaking my own Asian Record is more precious than the gold itself. Age is just a number. To all those people who said, I'm done, are you done now?"

### Pan Zhanle

In the 100 Freestyle, Chinese teammate Pan Zhanle blasted a 46.97, putting him at the fifth fastest swim in history for this event. Pan Zhanle broke through earlier this year at the Chinese National Championships as an 18-year-old, going 47.22 and breaking the Asian record. Despite setting the fastest time of anyone this year, Pan was still "disappointed" that he couldn't break the world record set by David Popovic in 2022 (46.86). "I felt my performance was average. I was aiming to break the World Record before the race. It's a bit disappointing that I missed

it by only 0.1." He said in a post-race interview, "I will continue to strive towards the goal of breaking the World Record in the future." Outside of the 50 Free, Pan Zhanle also swam his best time in the 50 Free (21.92), winning a bronze medal for China. Going sub-22 for the first time, he has become the first swimmer in history to go sub-22 50 Free, sub-47 100 Free, and sub-1:45 200 Free.

### Zhang Yufei

On the women's side, Olympic gold medalist and world champion Zhang Yufei won 4 gold medals in individual events, continuing her dominance in butterfly and sprint-free events. She broke the meet record in the 100 Fly (55.82) and was just two-tenths off her own Asian record. In a CCTV interview, Zhang Yufei stated, "I hope that I get better race after race, year after year, and do better at the Paris Olympics than how I performed at the Tokyo Olympics." She also mentioned that her preparation for the Paris Olympics will mainly be focused on improving her 200 fly which she won at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

### Relay

Posting the second fastest time in history behind the 2021 USA relay with Caleb Dressel, the men's 400 Medley Relay was also a standout of the meet for Team China (Xu Jiayu: 52.05, Qin Haiyang:

57.63, Wang Changhao: 50.68, Pan Zhanle: 46.65, 3:27.01) as they shattered the Asian record. The same relay went 3:29.00 during the World Championships, winning a bronze medal for China. However, the Chinese relay could be a threat to the Americans, who have remained Olympic Champions in this event throughout history. The Mixed 400 Medley Relay was also a standout, as Xu Jiayu, Qin Haiyang, Zhang Yufei, and Yang Junxuan broke the Asian record by going 3:37.73. Xu Jiayu (51.91) split one of his fastest performances, going sub-51, while Qin Haiyang (57.20) delivered another blazing breaststroke leg. The relay narrowly missed the world record set by Great Britain at the Tokyo Olympics (3:37.58).

### MVP Awards

The MVP awards went to Zhang Yufei and Qin Haiyang for their stellar performances at the Asian Games. In an interview, Zhang told the press, "This award is a new milestone for me and will make me work harder for the Paris Olympics next summer." Qin, similarly, said that he will "aim for new highs in Paris next year," and expressed his aspiration to break Adam Peaty's legendary 100-meter Breaststroke world record.





## Offseason Trades and Summer League Standouts

MATEO CUETO-POTTS

As the official NBA season starts up again, we can finally get to see our favorite players suit up and play in the preseason. We can also see what team's starting lineups will look like heading into the start of the regular season. We will finally see new signings and all the speculation will be proven wrong or right.

Some preseason games have become spectacles to watch, such as the Brooklyn Nets playing the Los Angeles Lakers in the Las Vegas pre-season stadium. Although the Lakers had a substantial 15 point lead going into halftime, Cam Thomas and Ben Simmons' heroic

efforts led them to make a big comeback. In other news, the Cleveland Cavaliers vs. the Atlanta Hawks game turned out to be a thriller, ending in a victory for the Hawks by one point. The game was close all throughout, but a late foul led to the game winning free throw by Trent Forrest.

Like in any game though, there was a bit of controversy. After the free throw was made, Cleveland's standout center, Evan Mobley, inbounded the ball to new pickup Max Strus and seemed to get fouled. The Cavaliers' bench erupted in response to a horrible no call on the basket. Another close game was between the Detroit Pistons vs. Oklahoma City Thunder, end-

ing in a three point lead for the Pistons. Historic draft bust James Wiseman had a double double in 23 minutes, dropping 20 points and 10 rebounds. Along with these pre-season thrillers, we got to see everyone's favorite rookie, Victor Wembenyama, silence all of the critics. In his first game against the Oklahoma City Thunder, he put in a valiant performance, dropping 20 points, 5 rebounds, and 5 assists in only 19 minutes. We must not forget that Oklahoma also has a 7 foot player on their team, who goes by the name of Chet Holmgren. Chet had a performance on par with Wembenyama, going back and forth trying to make sure that they were seen as the better pros-

pect. Chet finished the game with 21 points, 9 rebounds, and 1 assist all within the span of 16 minutes. Oklahoma won by one point, with a last second block by Oliver Sarr denying any hopes of a Spurs buzzer-beater. Wembenyama's second game against the reigning Eastern Conference Champions, the Miami Heat, was where he really shined. While the box score might appear the same (23 points, 4 rebounds, 4 assists), Wembenyama's technical excellence and finishing made it seem as if he was a veteran player. For example, his euro step dunk had the Miami defense in shambles. He led his team to a blowout victory over the Miami Heat (120-104.)

Meanwhile, Boston Celtic's new pickup, Kristaps Porzingis has been showing major upsides and could have amazing production on the offensive end for Boston. In his first game against Philadelphia within 23 minutes he already had 17 points, 5 rebounds, and 1 assist. He seemed to have fit in great with the other cast members of Boston's roster. Jrue Holiday had a lackluster start to his Boston career, with 6 points, 5 rebounds, and 1 assist. With his main attraction being defense, it is hard to see what he is really worth in the pre-season, due to the absence of defense. In his next game, he put up a slightly better performance, dropping 11 points with 2 rebounds

and 2 assists with better efficiency from the field.

On the other side of the country, the Los Angeles Lakers displayed their new signings of Gabe Vincent and Christian Wood both with mixed reviews. Recent news revealed Christian Wood's ties to Laker Coach Darvin Ham. They had ties from Milwaukee all the way back to a summer camp in 2015, where the coach had scouted. Wood had a poor performance on all aspects of the ball in his debut with only 5 points, 1 block, 1 turnover, and 4 rebounds on abysmal efficiency. His performance against the Milwaukee Bucks might've been even worse. He had 3 points on 1-6 from the field and two turnovers and had a plus-minus of -16. In other light, Gabe Vincent had a better, yet still underwhelming performance. However, he displayed his undeniable playmaking talents with 5 assists and his inability to score with only 6 points in 19 minutes. Although he continued to put up similar numbers, he has fulfilled an important role within the Lakers' depth.

Throughout the off-season, we have seen some rookies and journeymen alike display great acts of heroism to help their team get the win. As insignificant as the pre-season might seem to most people, it is a great way to see a preview of your favorite team.



Victor Wembenyama crusading through the Miami Heat defense for the poster dunk.

## Top Ten NFL Teams After Week 6

ADAM EFFENDI

### Honorable Mentions: Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Seattle Seahawks

The Bucs have had unprecedented success with Baker Mayfield. They have multiple 1,000 yard receivers in Chris Godwin and Mike Evans. Despite this, they aren't higher on the rankings because their defense has been average and they got held to only six points against the Lions.

The Seahawks have been a good team lately. They have one of the best wide receiver cores, and Geno Smith has lately been better than Russel Wilson has. But however good Smith is, they only manage to beat horrible teams like the Giants and Panthers. Despite these

wins, they got crushed by the Rams and lost a close game to the Bengals, so they didn't quite make the top ten.

### 10. Cleveland Browns (3-2):

The Browns are primarily on this list because of the win they eked out against the 49ers with an XFL quarterback. The 49ers were heavily injured, but the Browns defense had held Christain Mccaffrey to only 52 scrimmage yards. Before the game, they got destroyed by the Ravens, and have only won against the lowly Bengals and Titans. They also got blown out 28-3 by the Ravens in Week 4 which is why they are only tenth place.

### 9. Baltimore Ravens (4-2)

In ninth, we have the AFC North leader in the Baltimore Ravens. The Ravens have outplayed all of their opponents (except the Titans and Texans somehow). Their rookie wide receiver Zay Flowers has looked more and more like a viable WR1, but for the past three years, they have had a flood of injuries that derailed their season. Their losses have come up against beatable teams such as the Colts and Steelers. However their biggest enemy is not a team, but an inability to perform in clutch moments. In both of their losses, they have had multiple turnovers on downs in their last drives which is why, unless they can capitalize on their final drives, I don't see them making it past the divisional round in the playoffs.

### 8. Jacksonville Jaguars (4-2)

The Jaguars have been an interesting team. On one hand, they beat the Bills by five, and they already demolished the Colts twice, but they also got absolutely destroyed by the Texans by 20 points at home. But, I would say it is understandable why they lost because they have a record of 5-19 against the Texans since 2010. Their defense has been lights out in the past two weeks, but their offense has underperformed lately, which is why I am putting them at eight.

### 7. Dallas Cowboys (4-2)

The Cowboys have been the hardest team to rank because one week they are blowing out

both New York teams and the next, they are getting blown out 42-10 by the 49ers, an actual team. They have also lost one of their top corners in Trevonn Diggs. To put into perspective how vital Diggs is to this defense, Diggs has allowed a passer rating of 4.6 in the two games he has played. The maximum passer rating is 158.3. But sadly they have barely any good pass catchers. Besides CeedDee Lamb, the next best receiver is an aging Brandin Cooks and Michael Gallup. If the Cowboys can get better receivers and beat actual teams, I think they can get past the wild card.

### 6. Buffalo Bills (4-2)

The Bills have a ten-

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## NFL Top Ten Teams

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

dency to play down to their competition. They absolutely ravaged the Dolphins, but then lost to the Aaron Rodgers-less Jets. They lost two veteran defensive backs in Matt Milano and Tre'Davious White. They would've lost to the Giants if the referees knew what holding was. But they have an easy schedule for the next five games which is why I think they are the best 4-2 team in the NFL.

### 5. Kansas City Chiefs (5-1)

Despite only having one loss to the Lions, the Chiefs have had mostly one score games to bad teams. Patrick Mahomes even got outplayed by Zach Wilson in Week 4. Travis Kelce, the man who's dating Taylor Swift, is succumbing to more and more injuries due to his age of 34. And due to the absence of Travis Kelce and Tyreek Hill, Mahomes has no wide receiver help. If the Chiefs can get some receiver help, I think they can make the Superbowl. But with the receivers they have right now, they will barely make it to the AFC championship.

### 4. Detroit Lions (5-1)

The 2023 Lions have

been one of the biggest overachievers in NFL history. They were expected to be good, but they have blown out every team since Week 3. Their rookie tight end, Sam LaPorta, has been the third best receiver on the team with over 300 yards. They played games against solid defenses such as the Falcons, Buccaneers, and Chiefs. But their one downfall is their personnel decisions. They lost the best running back duo in the NFL, and then wasted a first round pick on an underutilized running back who has five yards per rush. If they also manage to utilize the deep threat in Jameson Williams more their offense could become the best in the league. This team has high potential to make the Superbowl, but I think they are still outclassed by these last three teams.

### 3. Philadelphia Eagles (5-1)

The Eagles recently suffered their first loss 20-24 to the Jets. The Eagles have outgained the Jets, but they also lost a fumble, and Jalen Hurts got intercepted three times. I think last week was just a fluke, and the Eagles should've won that game. Lately, the Eagles also underplayed by almost losing in overtime to the Commanders. I think the prob-



Brock Purdy celebrates a touchdown against the Cleveland Browns.

lem is most likely Jalen Hurts as he has thrown as many touchdowns as interceptions. But the best part of the Eagles is their defense. Their defense, while being bad in the passing game, is exceptional against the run. And, there are lots of young studs in the line including the front runner to defensive rookie of the year Jalen Carter.

### 2. Miami Dolphins (5-1)

The Dolphins are the exact opposite of the Eagles; they have one of the worst defenses, which the Bills exploited, but that doesn't matter when they have the fastest offense in the league. They have the best wide

receiver duo in Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle, and they put up 70 points on the Broncos without Waddle. Tyreek Hill is on pace for more than 2400 yards, which would shatter the record if it happened. Tua Tagovailoa is leading the NFL in yards, touchdowns, and yards per attempt. But as good as this offense is sadly below average, leaving one team to take over the top spot.

### 1. San Francisco 49ers (5-1)

The Niners currently have the most complete roster, with a solid quarterback, an amazing defense, and amazing weapons. Brock Purdy has only lost one game in the reg-

ular season, and that was when most of his weapons were injured and played badly. Throughout this season, the offense has only given up three turnovers and has the number two scoring offense and the number one scoring defense. However, there might be some concerns about their defense because they gave up 334 yards to an XFL quarterback. But the loss was primarily an offensive issue because of the Browns stout defense. The Niners are currently the best team in the league because when healthy, they have one of the best defensive units and one of the best offensive units.

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