



Sports

Men’s Basketball: Newcomers for a new era

by Danny Barletta
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It’s a new era for UConn basketball. The program is rejoining the Big East Conference after seven years in the American, a move that the team hopes will turn the page to a brighter future filled with NCAA Tournament runs like fans became accustomed to in the Jim Calhoun era. The team even introduced a new uniform design over the weekend to reinforce this new era.

But changing the uniforms and the aesthetic of the team can only get you so far. It’s the players who make the difference, and the Huskies have some new players who can absolutely help get this program back on top.

Don’t get me wrong, there’s a lot of talented returning players on the team, including potential All-American James Bouknight and sharpshooter Tyler Polley. But it’s the four newcomers who are really going to give this team an extra edge. They include freshmen Andre Jackson, Javonte Brown and Adama Sanogo, and junior transfer Tyrese Martin.

Martin is the most established player of this group, having played 63 games over the past two seasons at Rhode Island. As a sophomore, the 6-foot-6 wing started all 30 games for the Rams and averaged 12.8 points and 7.0 rebounds per game. After receiving a waiver that will allow him to play right away at UConn, he will look to make a big impact and will likely begin the season playing big minutes.

“I feel like the experience is there and what to expect going into college basketball,” Martin said last Friday on a Zoom call.



In this file photo, the Huskies suffered a 79-75 overtime defeat at the hands of the Tulsa Golden Hurricane at the XL Center. James Bouknight, middle, is set to be a core part of the team this season. PHOTO BY KEVIN LINDSTROM, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

“But now, here being at UConn, it’s a higher level obviously, so I have to do things differently. The expectations are greater and higher from the coaching staff’s standpoint. So I feel like now it’s just all about doing what I have to do on the court and off the court to make sure I excel and to help the team be successful.”

Martin originally committed to play for coach Dan Hurley at URI, but Hurley ended up leaving to come to UConn before Martin’s freshman year. Now the two are reunited, and Martin is really looking forward to finally playing for Hurley.

“Definitely the passion and energy and excitement he brings every day to his players and to practice, and even off the court ... that’s very important,” Martin said. “I feel like he does a great job of that and that really feeds off to the players.”

Martin said he had a great experience at URI, but he decided to transfer because UConn gave him an opportunity unlike any other school to develop his game and prepare him for the next level.

Jackson is another 6-foot-6 wing who will likely play a big role for the Huskies this season. After having surgery to fix up his meniscus a few months ago, he said he’s feeling really good now and is ready to make an impact.

“I feel like the adjustment [to college] has been going pretty good,” Jackson said on a Zoom call. “I feel like it’s taught me how to get into a routine and really take basketball as a job. Being around coach Hurley and the other coaches really is inspiring, seeing their passion for the game and seeing everybody on the campus is so dialed into

the game. It helps you focus.”

Jackson said he is learning a lot from the older players on the team so far. Particularly, he said Bouknight and RJ Cole have been great mentors to him. Jackson has a similar skillset to Bouknight, and many people, including Jackson himself, believe he can have a similar impact that Bouknight had on the team last year as a freshman.

“I definitely feel like I can make a big impact as a freshman,” Jackson said. “[Bouknight’s] scoring average was like 20 points or something like that. I’m not sure how many points I’m gonna be scoring, but I know I’m gonna make an impact whether that’s on defense, whether that’s rebounding. Whatever I need to do.”

As for Brown and Sanogo, they are joining a solid frontcourt, where they will look to

provide depth and versatility. Sanogo knows he and Brown are going to have to earn their minutes with so many options.

“We have a lot of big guys, but I think we gotta keep listening to our coaches and do what they want us to do,” Sanogo said on the Zoom call. “I think we’re gonna do good.”

At 6-foot-9, 245 pounds, Sanogo has an imposing frame for a freshman and could potentially hold down the paint in a smaller lineup. However, he said he still has to work on his defense and his jump shot.

For Brown, he believes it’s his size and youth that make him stand out from the pack.

“I think I bring my length because we don’t really have a true 7-footer on the frontcourt,” Brown said on Friday’s Zoom call. “I bring in length and I bring youth because I’m a young player. I got into college at 17.”

At 7 feet tall, Brown is the tallest player listed on the Huskies’ roster, but he said he needs to develop his strength and his understanding of different schemes. If he develops the way he has the potential to, he is the center of the future.

A native of Toronto, Brown wasn’t sure if he was going to be able to get on campus with the Canadian border shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But he was able to get here, and he — like all the newcomers — is very excited to get started with full practices this week in preparation for the late November start.

“It’s been something I’ve been waiting on a long while,” Brown said. “So hearing that [the season] is coming earlier than expected is definitely an excitement for me.”

MLB: Astros vs. Rays ALCS Game 1

by Ben Berg
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The American League Championship Series between the Houston Astros and Tampa Bay Rays began on Sunday, Oct. 11 and the Rays struck first. In a tightly contested game, the Rays used their brilliant pitching staff to hold the Astros to only one run in a 2-1 Game 1 victory.

Rays ace Blake Snell got off to a shaky start, allowing a solo home run to Jose Altuve in the first inning. From there, he battled through five innings to keep the game close. Randy Arozarena of the Rays matched Altuve with a solo home run of his own off of Houston starter Framber Valdez to tie the game at 1-1 in the fourth inning. Then in the fifth, Mike Zunino brought home the eventual winning run off an RBI double. Tampa Bay’s bullpen held on to the 2-1 lead and relieved the Game 1 victory.

Right now no one can hit the Rays. They’ve gone up against two juggernaut offenses in a row in the Yankees and Astros and held them to one run each in the past two games. They currently lead the postseason

in strikeouts by a massive margin with 81. Meanwhile, rookie Arozarena continues to add to his legend. After a Game 1 homer, “the Cuban Mookie Betts” is now hitting .419 in the playoffs with four home runs in nine games. Watch out for Tampa Bay.

If the Astros want to prove to the world that they’re actually good enough to win a World Series, they’ll have to hit their way through the postseason. They

lost Gerrit Cole in free agency, they lost Justin Verlander to injury and now they might be down Zack Greinke as well. That’s three ace-caliber pitchers out of the Houston rotation since a year ago when they won the AL. The bats will have to step up. Luckily for them, the Astros lead the playoffs with 73 hits and a team batting average of .282. This team can still mash.

Game 2 was played Monday, Oct. 12 at 4:00 p.m. Eastern. Charlie Morton made the start for the Rays against Lance McCullers Jr. of the Astros.

SHRINERS HOSPITALS FOR CHILDREN OPEN RECAP

by Matthew Garry
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Matthew Wolff continued his strong play at the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open this weekend, but it wasn’t enough to outlast Martin Laird, who was able to capture his first win on Tour in over seven years. He defeated Austin Cook and Wolff on the second playoff hole to win the famed tournament at TPC Summerlin.

This weekend saw a lot of low-scoring golf as Laird was able to survive the final day after shooting only 68. He was able to get his round back on track with an eagle on the par-5 ninth hole, which he eagled three out of the four days of the tournament. His playoff opponents both shot five-under 66 on a hot day in Las Vegas, which made the course play even easier and allowed for low scores across the board.

Laird came into the final hole with a one-shot lead, but a costly bogey on the 18th forced him into a playoff with Wolff and Cook. He nearly lost it on the first playoff hole but sank a clutch putt for par to extend the playoff to the second hole. He was able to birdie the next one after sticking it close on the par-3 17th to win the tournament. Laird’s first win of the season moved him up into the top 100 in the FedEx Cup standings while Wolff, who took second, moved up to second in the FedEx Cup standings. Bryson DeChambeau, the current FedEx Cup leader, finished eighth in the tournament to maintain his top ranking.

The Tour stays in Las Vegas for next week’s CJ Cup at Shadow Creek, where Justin Thomas is the defending champion. Wolff will be back in action along with other big names like Thomas, Dustin Johnson, Xander Schauffele, Rory McIlroy and Jon Rahm, setting up this weekend for some must-watch PGA Tour golf.

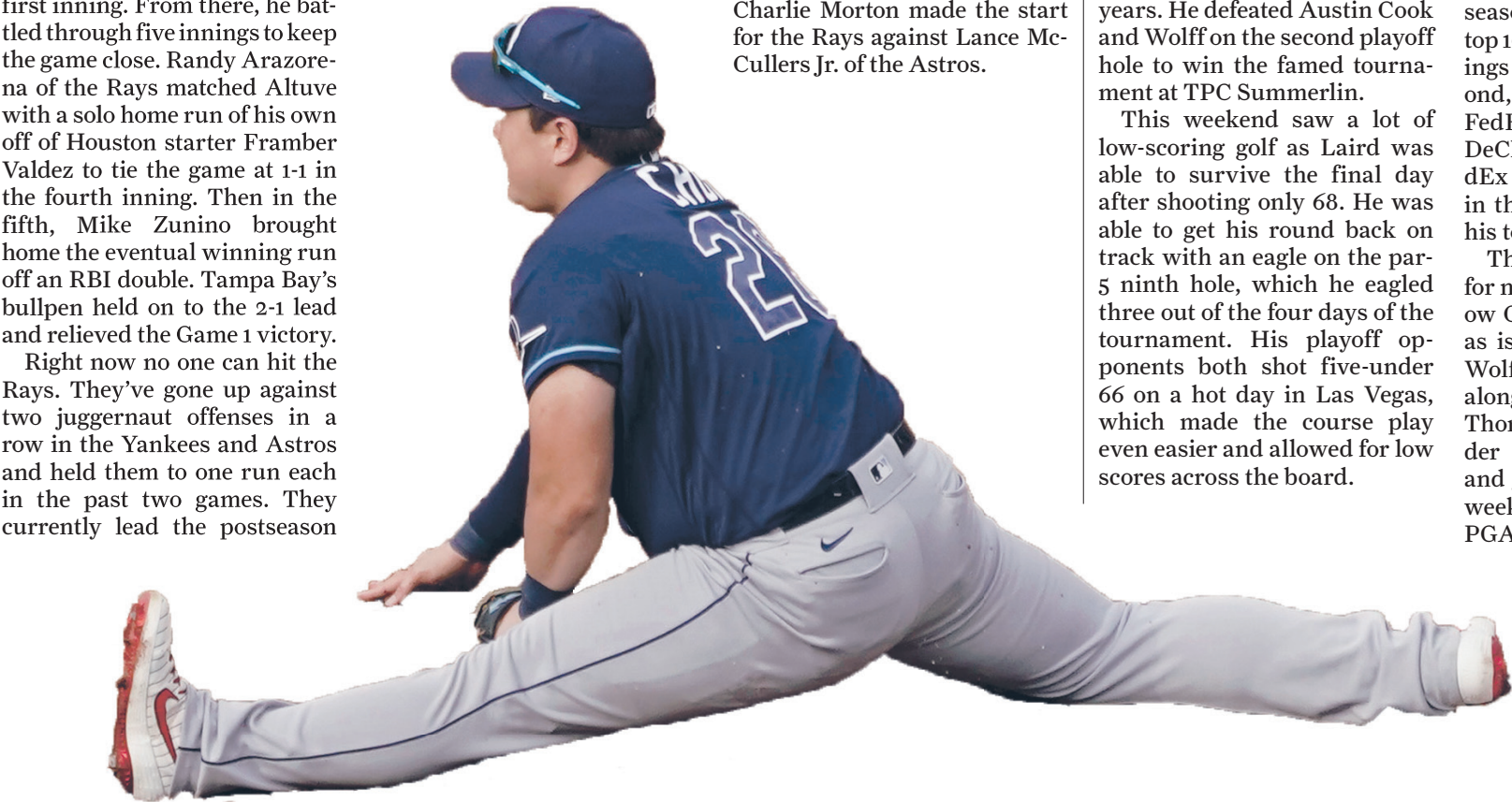


Photo via AP

WHAT TO KEEP AN EYE ON

Games we’re watching this week

Teams we’re paying attention to

Athletes we’re paying attention to

Ji-Man Choi

INSTAGRAM OF THE DAY

@uconn
Fall just hits different here
@miltonlevin #UConnViews

TWEETS OF THE DAY

Lu
@NYJPapi
As much as I hate the idea, the #Jets should trade @LeVeonBell. He’s one of the most talented RBs in the NFL, but is not being used right. Gase has had an issue with him since day 1. And as bad as this team has been, Bell’s been nothing but a class act and deserves better.

Liked by @LeVeonBell

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NBA Finals takeaways

by Karthik Iyer
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The Los Angeles Lakers just won their 17th NBA championship after taking care of business against the Miami Heat in six games, tying the Boston Celtics for the most titles of any franchise in the league. LeBron James, the Finals MVP of the bubble, had his impressive repertoire on display, finishing with 28 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists in the deciding 106-93 victory in Game 6. The Lakers showed dominance on the biggest stage, poise in the biggest moments and a player who, in his 17th season, is still the biggest name in basketball.

As usual with my recaps, I have a couple of takeaways from the series as a whole because I haven't covered each game directly.

First, I have the utmost respect for the president of basketball operations Pat Riley, Head Coach Erik Spoelstra and, of course, the players who did not back down from this challenge. The Miami Heat overcame obstacle after obstacle when nobody, including myself, thought they could even reach the finals. This postseason was the coming-out party for budding stars in Tyler Herro and Bam Adebayo, the rise of a shooting extraordinaire in Duncan Robinson and a superstar in Jimmy Butler. Yes, I said it. Jimmy Butler, the guy who was considered locker room cancer on the Minnesota Timberwolves and chastised by the league after leaving the Philadelphia 76ers, is a superstar in the National Basketball Association. He is the only guy ever to outscore LeBron in points, rebounds and assists all in the same game. On a brutal 43 minutes per night in the finals, Butler was tasked to defend LeBron on several occasions while still being the focal point on offense. Between his leadership and two incredible triple-double efforts in the finals on 40 and 35 points respectively, he deserves our respect. This Heat team overcame injuries to key players and defied all odds to reach the finals when the league thought they were going

through a rebuild. This Pat Riley-led squad is going to be a force in seasons to come.

Second, can we agree LeBron James is the second greatest player of all time? This pains me to say because Kobe Bryant is my favorite player ever, but I don't think it's deniable anymore. When it's all said and done, I think LeBron will have the greatest career all-time statistically because of his incredible longevity. This guy's prime has been longer than other stars' entire careers. This level of consistent greatness is going to be missed when the King retires. I don't want to hear anything about LeBron having an easy road to a championship this year. The Lakers were given 40% odds to win the title. Analysts like Charles Barkley called for the Portland Trailblazers to sweep the Lakers, then the small ball Houston Rockets were supposed to pose a threat and then it was upstart Nuggets. But in every matchup, LeBron dismantled these doubtful narratives. I'm saying this for his haters in the Youtube comments and his haters on sports media platforms. Like he said in the postgame, show him the respect he's clearly earned.

Last, I want to thank Adam Silver for the amazing leadership he showed during these pressing times. He proactively shut down the NBA three weeks before the Center of Disease Control mask mandate, organized 6,500 people to work in the bubble, managed countless logistic and human resources, took a stand in support of Black Lives Matter and even had a part in the production of Jordan's Last Dance documentary to keep fans entertained during the NBA season hiatus. These ac-

complishments are only the tip of the iceberg for what he's done for the sport of basketball and vast communities of people worldwide. He has exemplified what it means to be a leader and is a good example for everyone. The guy has been class personified when all eyes have been on him, ever since the Daryl Morey tweeting about China fiasco. Silver has become someone that millions have been able to count on and I think that under his leadership, the NBA has an incredibly bright future.

Photo via AP



Margot's homer, catch highlight Rays' 4-2 win over Astros

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Back in the ballpark where he started his big league career, Manuel Margot of the Tampa Bay Rays had a breakout game in the AL Championship Series with a three-run home run and a spectacular catch while tumbling over a wall in right field.

Asked which was bigger in the 4-2 victory against the Houston Astros, Margot said through a translator: "Definitely the home run. The home run didn't hurt."

The home run was huge, for sure, because it helped the Rays get halfway to the World Series with a 2-0 lead in the best-of-7 series.

But they'll be talking about the catch for a long time.

With two outs in the second and runners on second and third, Margot tracked George Springer's long foul ball to right field while shielding his face from the sun. He caught it as he tumbled over a padded railing atop a wall and landed on a walkway near the seats down the line at Petco Park.

Margot popped up, smiled and held up his glove with the ball in it after a 102-foot sprint.

Margot was shaken up a little but stayed in the game.

"Approaching it you don't really realize how high it is but it gets a little lower once you go over the wall, so once I actually started to flip and realized it was a little bit further of a drop, that's when I got a little scared," Margot said.

Margot played with the San Diego Padres from late in the 2016 season until being traded to Tampa Bay in the offseason. He played one game in right field in 2016 and the rest of his time in San Diego was spent in center.



Tampa Bay Rays right fielder Manuel Margot falls over a right field wall after catching a foul ball by Houston Astros center fielder George Springer during the second inning in Game 2 of a baseball American League Championship Series, Monday, Oct. 12, 2020, in San Diego. PHOTO BY GREGORY BULL/AP

"To have the ability to know where you're at, and kind of be able to say, 'Forget it, I know I'm going to hit something but I'm going in,' and still hang on to the ball, was really, really impressive," manager Kevin Cash said.

His teammates raved about the catch.

"He sold out," winner Charlie Morton said. "Those guys are all in for each other and they put their bodies on the line. They've been doing that all year. That play was unbelievable."

Shortstop Willy Adames said Margot "was going with determination. He was going to do whatever it took to make that catch. It was an unbelievable play that he made on the right field line, putting himself in a dangerous place. I'm just happy for him, after that homer. It was amazing. I hope he continues to help the team win like that."

Margot homered to straight-away center field on an 0-1 pitch from McCullers with two outs

in the first. It followed the first of two errors by second baseman José Altuve on a grounder to shallow right field by Ji-Man Choi. Altuve's throw hit the ground before going in and out of first baseman Yuli Gurriel's glove.

The play originally was ruled an error on Gurriel, but the official scorer later charged the error to Altuve. When Gurriel returned to the dugout, he slammed his glove onto the bench.

Margot's big plays made a winner of 36-year-old Morton, who helped Houston win the 2017 World Series, and spoiled an otherwise fine effort by McCullers, who lost despite striking out 11 in seven innings. Three of the four runs off him were unearned.

Margot had a rough regular season. He was placed on the COVID-19 injured list in August as a precaution after he traveled to the Dominican Republic following the death of his father

due to the virus.

"He's been put through the ringer along with other family members, but we've turned him into our family," Cash said. "Everybody is really, really supportive of him and just so happy for what he's accomplished."

Morton improved to 4-0 with a 0.90 ERA in the last two postseasons.

Tampa Bay held on through a tense ninth, when Nick Anderson twice loaded the bases. One run scored when Springer hit a one-hopper to second baseman Brandon Lowe, who stepped on the base and started a double play. After walking Altuve and Michael Brantley on four pitches each, Anderson got Alex Bregman to fly out on the first pitch to center fielder Kevin Kiermaier, a step in front of the warning track.

Game 3 is Tuesday night, when the Rays will send Ryan Yarbrough against Houston's José Urquidy. Because this is

a neutral site, the Rays, the top seed in the AL, were the home team in the first two games and Houston will bat last in Games 3 and 4, and Game 5, if necessary.

Teams with 2-0 leads have won 72 of 85 best-of-7 series.

"It's not business as usual. Tomorrow is a must-win situation for us," said Carlos Correa, who homered for the Astros. "You don't want to be down 0-3 in a series with a great team like the Rays."

Said manager Dusty Baker: "It's very frustrating, because all you hear it exit speed, and we had a ton of exit speed today."

McCullers retired 14 straight, nine by strikeout, before Mike Zunino hit a 454-foot homer into the back bullpen beyond the fence in left-center for a 4-1 lead in the seventh. It was his third this postseason.

Houston's Carlos Correa homered to nearly the same spot off Pete Fairbanks with one out in the sixth, his fifth of the postseason.

The Astros are in the ALCS for the fourth straight year and are trying to get to the World Series for the third time in that span. The Rays have been to one Fall Classic. They lost to Philadelphia in 2008.

Morton, who signed with Tampa Bay before the 2019 season, allowed five hits in five shutout innings. He struck out five and walked one.

McCullers allowed four hits and four runs, one earned, and walked none.

"I feel like we've been playing good baseball. We just haven't got those hits. There were a lot of hard-hit balls today right at people," Correa said. "Their defense is winning ballgames for them right now."

Throwback Photo of the Day | Point-God



In this file photo, the Huskies suffer a 79-75 overtime defeat at the hands of the Tulsa Golden Hurricane at the XL Center. UConn failed to capitalize on many scoring opportunities, but pulled through in key moments during the game. Star guard Christian Vital missed all eight of his three point attempts, but also pushed UConn into overtime by making three free throws in a row with three seconds left in the half. PHOTO BY KEVIN LINDSTROM, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Hey Dave: What’s next for Hartford Athletic?

by David Sandoval
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It was heartbreaking to see the 1-0 defeat Hartford Athletic suffered on Saturday night, but not everything is gloomy for the Connecticut team.

I know I’m going to sound like a broken record, but I seriously cannot get over how much this team has progressed. Created in 2018 with its inaugural season the year after, Hartford’s first year in the USL Championship was debatably acceptable. Eight wins, not too bad; but 21 defeats? When Hartford brought in Jimmy Nielsen, fans had high hopes, as he had a strong leadership mentality and experience in the league’s playoffs for three out of four of his years with Oklahoma City Energy FC. Unfortunately, Nielsen wasn’t able to produce strong enough results, and he and the club had a mutual agreement for his departure after the inaugural season.

Fast-forward to the following year, and Head Coach Radhi Jaïdi has done absolute wonders; not only for the players and the club, but for the fans as well. Instilling a Premier League-esque philosophy from his time as coach of Southampton’s U-23, the fact that Hartford Athletic is a two-year old

club and he managed to take them to the playoffs is astonishing, and I must say a good portion of the credit has to go to the head coach.

With that aside (again), I want to focus on Saturday’s match: what went wrong, and how Hartford can use their defeat to bounce back next season. In all honesty, I thought that Hartford’s performance was fairly decent, as they had really great chances to be in the lead but couldn’t execute their plays. However, they seemed nervous for a good portion of the match which, in my opinion, led to their defeat. Why do I say this, you might ask? Because I’ve seen this happen before, but with Peru in their return to the 2018 World Cup after 36 years. Like Hartford, Peru could’ve been a strong team in the group stage, but seemed so nervous and cautious not to mess anything up that they would end up choking their shots and ultimately not qualify for the next round.



It also didn’t help that the referee was questionable, especially in the second half. One of the most controversial moments that didn’t go Hartford’s way was in the 92nd minute, a minute before Saint Louis scored, when there was an apparent handball on Saint Louis’ defender Tobi Adewole. Even though the referee saw what happened with

his own eyes, he let the play go on; and fans, including myself, were livid. All in all, Saint Louis had a great performance, especially their goalkeeper Kyle Morton. Even though this is their last year in the league, as they cannot financially support themselves for another season, I hope nothing but the best for them in their playoff run.

Now, where can Hartford go from here? Well, it’s a bit difficult to say as some key figures in the club will be leaving as their loan deals come to a close. Tyreke Johnson was the first to go as he was recalled by Southampton a couple of days before the quarterfinals, and goalkeeper Parfait Mandanda was next after leaving a heartwarming message for fans across social media following the defeat.

My main concern is the departure of Radhi Jaïdi as his 12-month loan will be up next month. There’s just something about his mentality that drove Hartford to where they got this season, and

for him to leave on a high note in the club’s early history will be disappointing. Unfortunately, that’s how loan deals are. After his successful stint with the Connecticut club, I don’t think Southampton will be keen on letting him stay, as they would probably want him to produce similar results across the pond. But hey, anything’s possible in the beautiful game.

As for the rest of the players, I think the majority will stay. They’ve done absolute wonders for the club and, in return, received major appreciation from the club and the fans. The two players I’ll be most excited for next season are Markus Naglestad and Alfonso Vazquez, should they stay. Despite coming to the club about a third of the way through the season, Naglestad had made quite an impact on the field. As for Vazquez, his professional career is only beginning at 18 years old. Even though he’s made a handful of appearances, even scoring in one of them, the Connecticut native carries significant potential for the attack, which will add greater depth to the team. Even if Radhi Jaïdi doesn’t return for another season, he at least left an impact and a strong winning mentality on the club that can see Hartford return to the playoffs if they play their cards right.

Tennis: Champions crowned in Paris

by Nick Hellinghausen
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After two weeks of phenomenal tennis, the 2020 French Open singles champions were crowned. Iga Swiatek and Rafael Nadal continued their dominance with flawless performances in the finals. They both completed their French Open title runs without dropping a set.

Swiatek showed no signs of nerves competing in her first Grand Slam final. She stormed out to a 3-0 lead in the first set over this year’s Australian Open champion, Sofia Kenin. Kenin was able to settle down after the opening few minutes and leveled the set at three games all. Swiatek and Kenin exchanged spectacular shots in the final few games of the opening set, but in the end, Swiatek took the set 6-4.

Kenin had a promising start to the second set, breaking Swiatek’s serve. The Polish teen did not let that bother her though, as she immediately broke back. Swiatek displayed excellent court coverage and repeatedly struck winners from all areas of the court. Whatever Kenin threw at Swiatek, she had an answer for it. Swiatek was able to fire 12 winners past Kenin in the second set and create sensational angles to keep the fourth seed off balance. In just over a half-hour, Swiatek took the sec-



Spain’s Rafael Nadal holds the trophy, right, as he celebrates winning the final match of the French Open tennis tournament against Serbia’s Novak Djokovic, left, in three sets, 6-0, 6-2, 7-5, at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris, France, Sunday, Oct. 11, 2020. PHOTO BY MICHEL EULER/AP

ond set 6-1 and won the coveted French Open title.

Swiatek was filled with emotion after winning her first-ever Grand Slam title. She waved to the crowd with a huge smile on her face and rushed to the stands to embrace her family and friends.

“It’s just overwhelming for me, it’s crazy. Two years ago, I was a junior Grand Slam and right now I’m here. It feels like such a short time,” Swiatek told Marion Bartoli in an on-court interview following the match.

Swiatek became the first Polish player to ever lift a Grand Slam singles title. She will rise from No. 54 to No. 17 in the rankings.

For the men’s singles title, Nadal and Novak Djokovic squared off for the 56th time in their careers. Heading into the final, Djokovic had the slight overall head to head edge with a 29-26 record over Nadal, but the Spaniard had the 17-7 edge on clay courts. Djokovic was aiming for his 18th Grand Slam title, but he was going to have to

pull off one of the most difficult feats in all of sports to get there: defeating Nadal at the French Open. Entering the final, Nadal had a 99-2 record at the French Open, only losing to Djokovic in 2015 and Robin Soderling in 2009.

Nadal started the match firing from all cylinders. He was placing his serves perfectly and delivering aggressive returns. Djokovic meanwhile struggled mightily with his serve, only putting up a first serve percentage of 42% in the opening set.

The first set featured excellent scrambling and shot making from both players, but it was Nadal who came out on top in every important point. Nadal only committed two unforced errors while taking the opening set 6-0.

Nadal continued to put Djokovic under immense pressure in the second set. Nadal jumped out to an early lead in set two and never looked back. He consistently turned defense into offense and left Djokovic wondering what he could possibly do to get back into the match. Nadal cruised to a two sets to none lead, taking the second set 6-2 without facing a break point.

The third set saw a rise in Djokovic’s game and a slight dip in Nadal’s level of play. Djokovic began to dictate more of the points and Nadal started to throw a few more unforced errors. Although Djokovic was able to play better in the third set, he was no match for Nadal that afternoon. Nadal was able to hold comfortably in the majority of his service games and took the third set 7-5, making him a French Open champion for the 13th time in his career.

Rafael Nadal’s victory saw him tie Roger Federer’s record of having the most Grand Slam singles titles in the men’s game at 20. Nadal’s impeccable run once again displayed to the world that he is the King of Clay.

Joe Morgan, driving force of Big Red Machine, dies at 77

CINCINNATI (AP) — At 5-foot-7, he was the smallest cog in the Big Red Machine. And to his star-powered teammates, Joe Morgan was a driving force, too.

Morgan, the Hall of Fame second baseman who became the spark-plug of dominant Cincinnati teams in the mid-1970s and the prototype for baseball's artificial turfer era, has died. He was 77.

He died at his home Sunday in Danville, California, family spokesman James Davis said in statement Monday. Morgan was suffering from a nerve condition, a form of polyneuropathy.

"Joe Morgan was quite simply the best baseball player I played against or saw," Reds Hall of Fame catcher Johnny Bench texted to The Associated Press.

Morgan's death marked the latest among major league greats this year: Whitey Ford, Bob Gibson, Lou Brock, Tom Seaver and Al Kaline.

"All champions. This hurts the most," Bench said.

Morgan was a two-time NL Most Valuable Player, a 10-time All-Star and won five Gold Gloves. A dynamo known for flapping his left elbow at the plate, Little Joe could hit a home run, steal a base and disrupt any game with his daring.

Most of all, he completed Cincinnati's two-time World Series championship team, boosting a club featuring the likes of Pete Rose, Tony Perez and Bench to back-to-back titles.

"Joe would always amaze me," Rose told the AP. "He was by far the most intelligent player I've ever been around. He rubbed off on all of us. A big part of the Big Red Machine."

Morgan's tiebreaking single with two outs in the ninth inning of Game 7 in 1975 gave the Reds the crown in a classic matchup with Boston, and he spurred a four-game sweep of the Yankees the next season.

Morgan was the league's MVP both years. And his Hall of Fame teammates and manager readily acknowledged he was the one that got it all started.

Often regarded as the greatest second baseman in history, he was an easy first-ballot pick for Cooperstown.

"He was just a good major league player when it didn't mean anything," former Reds and Tigers skipper Sparky Anderson once said. "But when it meant something, he was a Hall of Famer."

In a 22-year career through 1984, Morgan scored 1,650 runs, stole 689 bases, hit 268 homers and batted .271. But those stats hardly reflected the force created on the field by the lefty-swinging No. 8.

Confident and cocky, he also



In this Saturday, Sept. 7, 2013, file photo, Hall of Fame second baseman Joe Morgan poses with his statue that was unveiled at Great American Ball Park, in Cincinnati. A family spokesman says he died at his home Sunday, Oct. 11, 2020, in Danville, California. PHOTO BY DAVID KOHL/AP

was copied. His habit of flapping his back elbow as a way to keep it high when hitting was imitated by many a Little Leaguer in Cincinnati and beyond.

Health issues had slowed down Morgan in recent years. Knee surgery forced him to use a cane when he went onto the field at Great American Ball Park before the 2015 All-Star Game and he later needed a bone marrow transplant for an illness.

In his prime, Morgan helped to revolutionize the game with his quickness and many talents, especially once he hit the turf at Riverfront Stadium. His statue outside Great American Ball Park portrays him in motion, naturally.

"Packed unusual power into his extraordinarily quick 150-lb. fireplug frame," he was praised on his Hall of Fame plaque.

There were moments of silence held at Petco Park in San Diego before the Tampa Bay Rays and Houston Astros played Monday in Game 2 of the AL Championship Series and at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas, before the Los Angeles Dodgers and Atlanta Braves met in the NL Championship Series opener.

"He meant a lot to us, a lot to me, a lot to baseball, a lot to African Americans around the country. A lot to players that were considered undersized," said Astros manager Dusty Baker, a longtime friend and

National League rival. "He was the one of the first examples of speed and power for a guy they said was too small to play."

Morgan got his start with Houston in 1963, when the team was called the .45s and still played on grass. Once he became a full-time player in 1965 when the club became the Astros and moved into the Astrodome, he began to provide a glimpse of what speedy, multi-skilled players could do on the new kind of turf.

The Reds had already built a formidable team, but they came up short in 1970, losing to Baltimore in the World Series. Cincinnati made a shocking trade for Morgan after the 1971 season, giving up slugger Lee May and All-Star second baseman Tommy Helms in an eight-player swap.

Morgan turned out to be exactly what the Reds needed to take the next step.

"Joe made us better, and we made him better," Rose said. "We put him in the spotlight. It was a perfect fit"

Rose was the dashing singles hitter, on his way to becoming the game's career hits leader. Bench supplied the power. Perez was the clutch hitter. And Morgan did a bit of everything, slashing hits and stealing bases whenever needed.

Skilled at drawing walks, and helped by a small strike zone, Morgan led the NL in on-base percent-

age in four of his first five years with the Reds, and finished with a career mark of .392.

"That's when the game went to more speed," Rose once said. "There were guys who did more, but Joe stole bases when everyone at the park knew he would. He didn't waste steals. He made them count. Joe probably could have stolen more. Lots of guys just steal to run up the numbers, and then they can't when it counts to win the game. Joe made them count."

Morgan scored a major league-leading 122 runs in his first season with the Reds and they reached the 1972 World Series, where they lost in seven games to Oakland.

Morgan hit .327 with 17 homers, 94 RBIs and 67 stolen bases in 1975, then followed with a .320 average, 27 homers, 111 RBIs and 60 steals the next year. He was only the fifth second baseman in the NL to drive in more than 100 runs and also led the league in both on-base percentage and slugging percentage in 1976.

The next year, he led off the All-Star Game at Yankee Stadium with a home run against future Hall of Famer Jim Palmer.

"Small in stature like his idol Nellie Fox, Joe played every game at the highest level. Maybe proving to himself and everyone else that he belong. Did he ever!" Bench said.

A series of injuries in the late 1970s diminished Morgan's pro-

duction — the years of throwing his body around on the turf had taken a toll. The Reds decided to dismantle the Big Red Machine, prompting Morgan to also leave.

He spent the 1980 season with Houston, helping the Astros to a NL West title. He played two years with San Francisco — hitting a home run on the final day of the 1982 season against the rival Dodgers to knock the defending champions out of the playoffs — and later was reunited with Rose and Perez in Philadelphia.

Morgan hit two home runs in the 1983 World Series as the Phillies lost in five games to Baltimore, and tripled in his final at-bat.

Morgan finished as a career .182 hitter in 50 postseason games. He played in 11 different series and batted over .273 in just one of them, a stat that surprises many considering his big-game reputation.

Raised in Oakland, Morgan returned to the Bay Area and played the 1984 season for the Athletics before retiring.

Morgan set the NL record for games played at second, ranked among the career leaders in walks and was an All-Star in every one of his years with the Reds.

After his playing career, he spent years as an announcer for the Reds, Giants and A's, along with ESPN, NBC, ABC and CBS. He was analyst for ESPN's Sunday night telecasts from 1990-2010 and won two Sports Emmy Awards as an Event Analyst — ESPN's first two wins in the category, in 1998 and 2005.

Morgan also was board vice chairman of baseball's Hall of Fame and on the board of the Baseball Assistance Team.

Morgan was inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame in 1990. The Reds also inducted him into their Hall of Fame and retired his number.

"He did it all, and he did it all the time," said Bench, the first member of the Big Red Machine to enter the Hall.

"Great father and outstanding businessman. He was a friend to so many and respected by all," he said.

Morgan recognized his place on one of baseball's all-time greatest teams.

"Bench probably had the most raw baseball ability of any of us," Morgan said before his Hall of Fame induction. "Pete obviously had the most determination to make himself the player he was. Perez was the unsung hero. I guess I was just a guy who could do a lot of things."

He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Theresa; twin daughters Kelly and Ashley; and daughters Lisa and Angela from his first marriage to Gloria Morgan.

Funeral details were not yet set.

Vegas signs Alex Pietrangelo to \$61.6M, seven-year contract

AP — Alex Pietrangelo is Vegas bound, and the Golden Knights are shuffling the deck to fit him in.

Pietrangelo signed a \$61.6 million, seven-year deal with Vegas on Monday that carries an \$8.8 million annual salary cap hit through 2027. It's the fifth-biggest cap hit for a defenseman in the NHL.

Adding the top free agent available gives Vegas another big-money talent, but the team needed to make another move to shed salary just to add him. Before registering Pietrangelo's contract, the Golden Knights traded defenseman Nate Schmidt to the Vancouver Canucks for a 2022 third-round pick, clearing his \$5.95 million cap hit off the books.

After already sending center Paul Stastny to Winnipeg, the team likely needs to make another move, such as trading goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury, to be cap compliant when next season starts.

But Pietrangelo, who finished fourth in Norris Trophy voting and is one of the best right-shooting defensemen in the league, makes Vegas better.

The 30-year-old leaves the St. Louis Blues after serving as captain of their 2019 Stanley Cup championship team. Pietrangelo is coming off scoring a career-high 16 goals despite the season being cut short at 70 games.

Pietrangelo has 109 goals and 341 assists for 450 points in 758 regular-season NHL games. He



In this Oct. 2, 2019, file photo, St. Louis Blues captain Alex Pietrangelo lifts the Stanley Cup during a ceremony honoring the Blues championship victory before the start of an NHL hockey game against the Washington Capitals in St. Louis. The past few weeks have seen several recent Stanley Cup winners get rid of members of their championship core. PHOTO BY JEFF ROBERSON/AP

had a postseason-best 16 assists and averaged almost 26 minutes of ice time during the Blues' Cup run.

"He has been a stalwart player for us, for this team for a number of years," Blues general manager Doug Armstrong said Friday night. "A huge part of a championship-caliber team. He's going to go down so far as one of the best Blues ever."

St. Louis moved on from Pietrangelo, a homegrown prospect who was the No. 4 pick in the 2008 draft, before he did. The

Blues signed former Boston Bruins defenseman Torey Krug to a \$45.5 million, seven-year contract Friday, essentially ruling them out of keeping Pietrangelo after more than a year's worth of negotiations couldn't amount to an agreement.

"We couldn't find something that made everyone comfortable," Armstrong said. "It's not the first time, it won't be the last time this happens in the NHL. You just wish it didn't happen because of the respect and the desire we had to keep Alex here."

Pietrangelo becomes the last of the top-tier free agents to find a landing spot, after Taylor Hall signed an \$8 million, one-year deal with the Buffalo Sabres on Monday. Krug was the other, and winger Mike Hoffman is the top player left on the market after a 29-goal, 59-point season with the Florida Panthers.

Hall took the opposite approach of Pietrangelo and Krug with the cap staying flat amid pandemic-ravaged revenues.

"We knew it was going to be a unique marketplace coming

into free agency," Hall said Tuesday. "Once free agency started, I think we were made aware pretty quickly at how much things had changed and how COVID had affected a lot of different things. So, it kind of changed our decision-making from there."

Pietrangelo had wanted to stay with St. Louis, but the signing of Krug altered his decision-making. The Toronto area native flew to Las Vegas on Saturday to meet with the Golden Knights, a visit that paved the way for this contract.