

SPORTS BRIEFS

Mixed feelings around hockey about holding NHL draft early

The NFL's successful virtual draft and uncertainty surrounding the resumption of hockey this season have raised the possibility of an NHL draft held before the Stanley Cup Final.

After postponing its draft scheduled for June 26-27 in light of the coronavirus pandemic, the NHL is considering having it earlier in June with the season in an indefinite suspension. There are mixed feelings among executives about the idea, ranging from frustration to begrudging acceptance.

"We're just going to try to prepare as though it's going to happen," Toronto Maple Leafs general manager Kyle Dubas said. "It's not going to be normal regardless of what it is, so we're fine with whatever is decided."

Unlike the NFL, which held its draft as usual in the middle of its off-season, the NHL would face several wrinkles going forward with a draft held before the season is complete: Teams would not be able to trade players, there would be a lack of clarity over next year's salary cap and the draft order could be determined before all games are played.

It would put hockey back in the spotlight for a couple of days. It would also create plenty of headaches for those involved. "I have not talked to one GM who likes it, and I talk to almost all of them," agent Allan Walsh said Thursday.

A week after the league sent a memo to teams outlining its proposal, Deputy NHL Commissioner Bill Daly on Friday said a decision has not made on the timing of the draft. GMs have asked for a month's notice before holding a draft.

Love says being at practice facility felt 'weird, uplifting'

Cleveland Cavaliers forward Kevin Love said being at his team's reopened practice facility felt "weird" on Friday.

The Cavs became one



Canada's Alexis Lafreniere is seen during practice at the World Junior Hockey Championships on Jan. in Ostrava, Czech Republic. Lafreniere is widely expected to be the top pick in the NHL draft. RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS VIA AP

of the first NBA teams to reopen their practice facilities for voluntary individual workouts on the first day the league allowed it. The workouts can be held if the team's state had its shelter-at-home guidelines loosened and protocol is carefully followed.

Love was screened when he arrived at the Cleveland Clinic Courts in Independence, Ohio before entering at a designated side entrance. The 31-year-old five time All-Star was asked questions regarding any sick symptoms and his temperature was taken to make sure he didn't have a fever. Only four players were allowed at a time - to follow social distancing practices - and once in the facility, players had their own half courts to work out with an assistant coach who was wearing a mask and gloves to pass and rebound.

"I feel like anybody who needs an escape or in everyday life is looking for any type of normalcy back doing something they love," Love told ESPN. "For me, I played 25-ish years of organized basketball and this is the longest I've ever gone without touching (a basketball) And it's something I really, really enjoy doing."

"So for me, it definitely

was a big dopamine hit, and it just felt great to get in there and sweat outside of doing my workouts at home or getting on a treadmill. Going out there and having some sense of normalcy and getting on the court and actually shooting was pretty uplifting."

At the practice facility, precautions were in place in every sight. Each player was 12 feet apart and each basket also had a corresponding table stocked with disinfectants. Only practice courts and weight rooms were open.

Iditarod disqualifies 4-time champ after positive meth test

Four-time Iditarod champion Lance Mackey has been disqualified from this year's race due to a positive test for the drug methamphetamine.

Mackey had finished 21st in the 2020 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, but Alaska Public Media reports a message sent to sponsors on Thursday revealed the positive test came from a sample collected along the trail in White Mountain.

In a statement, Mackey said he planned to seek treatment.

"I'm tired of lying to myself, friends, family, and fans, who have all supported me, rooted for

me, or been inspired by me. I apologize to all of you," he said. "The truth is that I need professional help with my latest life challenge. I am in the process of making arrangements to go to a treatment center where I can get the professional help and real change I need."

Mackey has been open in the past about substance abuse issues involving cocaine and alcohol.

The Iditarod instituted drug testing for sled dogs in 1994 and has tested mushers during the race since 2010.

Saints cut 3-year starter, 3-time Pro Bowl guard Warford

NEW ORLEANS - The New Orleans Saints have cut three-time Pro Bowl right guard Larry Warford, whose three-year run as a starter was cast into doubt by the club's selection of interior lineman Cesar Ruiz in the first round of the NFL draft.

Warford, whose termination was announced Friday by general manager Mickey Loomis, started all 44 games in which he played for New Orleans since signing a four-year, \$34 million contract in 2017.

The 6-foot-3, 317-pound Warford also was

named to the Pro Bowl for a third straight season in 2019, when he started 15 games.

But the drafting of Ruiz 24th overall was one of several developments in the past year that made Warford expendable in New Orleans.

In 2019, the Saints used their top overall draft choice in the second round to take Texas A&M center Erik McCoy. Then in March, the Saints signed left guard Andrus Peat to a five-year, \$57.5 million extension. And when the Saints drafted Ruiz two weeks ago, coach Sean Payton asserted, "We weren't drafting someone that high to come in and be a backup. ... He was one of the better interior linemen I've seen in a while."

Payton went on to praise both McCoy and Ruiz for their ability to play either center or guard. McCoy started at center as a rookie.

Hamilton gets empty feeling thinking about F1 without fans

PARIS - Driving around Formula One tracks without fans

cheering at Silverstone and Monza would literally feel "very empty" for world champion Lewis Hamilton.

The first 10 races this season have been postponed or canceled amid the coronavirus pandemic, with the iconic Monaco Grand Prix scrapped for the first time in 66 years.

F1 remains hopeful that the season can start in early July with a doubleheader at the Austrian Grand Prix, and that 15 to 18 of the 22 scheduled races can yet be completed.

But all of them would be held without any spectators until it is safe.

"It's going to be very empty," Hamilton said on Saturday, evoking the subdued atmosphere of pre-season testing in Spain.

"For us it's going to be like a test day, probably even worse than a test day in a sense," the Mercedes driver said. "On a test day there's not a huge amount of people in Barcelona, but there are still some."

- Wire reports

Jean M. Esser

Jean M Esser passed away May 2, 2020 in Mt. Angel, Oregon at the age of 79. Jean was born August 17, 1940 in Silverton, Oregon to Hubert and Marie (Sprauer) Esser.



Jean grew up on a farm outside of Silverton with five siblings. After graduating from High School at Mt. Angel Academy in 1957, she attended Merritt Davis Business College in Salem, OR. Jean worked for several years for the Dean of Music at Willamette University and then moved to the Portland area and worked until her retirement at Lewis and Clark College as the student account manager.

Jean loved to travel and enjoyed camping and fishing - especially with her brothers. She also liked gardening, crossword puzzles and jigsaw puzzles.

Jean was preceded in death by her parents and her brother Carl Esser and sister-in-law Virginia. She is survived by her brother Paul Esser (Linda) of Aloha, sisters Dolores Esser of Milwaukie, Linda Gerlits (David) and Donna Bates both of Silverton and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be at a later date.

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