SPORTS

U.S. women's hockey players 'taking in the win'

By STEPHEN WHYNO Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Twenty years after a cereal box changed her life, Meghan Duggan is pictured on one.

When the United States won the gold medal in 1998 at the first Olympics with women's hockey, an 11-year-old Duggan met Gretchen Ulion and got the forward to autograph her Wheaties box and still has it in her parents' house and a copy of their photo together with sister Katelyn on her phone. After winning gold at the Pyeongchang Games, the 30-year-old captain is featured on her own cereal box as the attention flows for the latest U.S. women's hockey champions.

"We're just taking in the win," Duggan said at the NHL Stadium Series game at Navy between the Washington Capitals and Toronto Maple Leafs. "We were out in L.A. on 'Ellen' and coming and being a part of all these big NHL games and things like that, we've got some stuff coming up in New York City next week, which will be really fun."

Appearing on the "Today"

show and Ellen DeGeneres' show and being feted at Los Angeles Kings and Tampa Bay Lightning games and then outdoors at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium is an impressive victory tour. The next step is for Duggan, shootout hero Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson and their teammates to extend the traditional 15 minutes of fame and sustain the kind of long-lasting stardom that soccer player Mia Hamm. basketball player Lisa Leslie and other previous U.S. Olympic gold medal and World Cup winners were able to generate.

A cereal box is a nice start, and Duggan and several teammates have endorsement deals with Dunkin' Donuts with more opportunities on the horizon.

"Some of us that are out of college can capitalize on the opportunities," Monique Lamoureux-Morando said. "Hopefully exposure for one of us is exposure for all of us and it helps grow the game. If someone gets an amazing opportunity that a lot of people are a part of and get to see, then it benefits all of us." Agent Brant Feldman,

who represents Duggan



Meghan Duggan, of the gold medal winning US women's Olympic hockey team, listens to a question from the media before an outdoor NHL hockey game between the Washington Capitals and the Toronto Maple Leafs, Saturday, March 3, in Annapolis, Md.

and the Lamoureux twins, is trying to get his clients mainstream attention beyond hockey. Hilary Knight was the only player not at the outdoor game, but she had a great reason: She appeared on "Saturday Night Live" in exactly the kind of mainstream spot that could make the gold medalists true household names.

Around hockey, they're very well-known, taking photos with Navy Midshipmen and youth players and drawing chants of "U-S-A! U-S-A!" from tailgating fans in the parking lot Saturday before the NHL Stadium Series game. Capitals defenseman John Carlson said he and his teammates were watching closely during the Olympics.

"It was cool to see the fans' reaction to them," Carlson said. "They've been, especially the women's team has been doing a lot of stuff media-wise throughout the country but also in DC the past couple of days. So to see the rise they got out of a lot of fans and all that kind of stuff throughout the area was really cool."

U.S. players earned headlines in a non-Olympic year when they threatened to boycott the world championships on home ice and came to an agreement on a better contract with USA Hockey. The deal allows players to make up to \$129,000 in Olympic years when combined with contributions from the U.S. Olympic Committee — the kind of living wage previous generations of players couldn't earn.

"It's a great step for our sport," Lamoureux-Davidson said. "That's going to help support our team. ... Sponsorships, if those come, that's great and that's supplemental income, but what we were able to create with USA Hockey is the biggest step."

The next step for players could include speaking engagements along with some more endorsement deals. But they hope for a bigger change: one professional women's league in North America instead of the competing Canadian Women's Hockey League and National Women's Hockey League.

"They currently don't work together," Lamoureux-Morando said. "It's two completely different entities. So I think moving forward, there needs to be some sort of collaboration, whether they merge or start working together. There needs to move forward in that direction."

It appears that's a cause that players want to use their platform to promote. They'd also like to spur further growth of women's hockey across the U.S. like Ulion and the 1998 team did.

"That team, those girls, lit the fire in my heart to want to compete for my country and to want to play on this team," Duggan said. "Fast-forward 20 years to have the opportunity to really inspire the next generation or to have little girls see that photo or see that Kellogg's cereal box or see what our team did and want to dream big, it fills my heart. It's why I am who I am and why I'm here today is because of those girls, and we definitely want to have that impact on the next generation."

Rockets top Thunder for 16th straight win

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Chris Paul scored 25 points and the Houston Rockets beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 122-112 on Tuesday night for their 16th straight win.

James Harden had 23 points and 11 assists, and Trevor Ariza added 15 points for the Rockets, who are on the second-longest win streak in franchise history.

Russell Westbrook scored 32 points and Carmelo Anthony added 23 for Oklahoma City, which is in a logjam of teams trying to fight their way into third place in the West.

Oklahoma City had beaten several of the league's top teams this season. The Thunder have two



wins over Golden State, a victory over Toronto and a win over Cleveland this season. The Rockets avoided that fate by going 17 of 33 on 3-pointers and 29 of 34 on free throws.

The Rockets led 54-45 at halftime as Harden posted 13 points, seven assists and five rebounds. Anthony had 19 points for the Thunder and Westbrook had 14, but All-Star Paul George went 1 for 7 from the field before the break. The Thunder closed the gap to three in the opening minutes of the third quarter, but the Rockets dominated the rest of the way and led 87-74 at the end of the period. Houston made 7 of 10 3-pointers in the quarter.

Houston extended its lead to 19 midway through the fourth quarter. TIP-INS

Rockets: Improved to 33-1 when Harden, Paul and Clint Capela all play in the same game

Thunder: Anthony passed Jerry West to move into 20th in NBA history in scoring.

UP NEXT

Rockets: Play at the Milwaukee Bucks on Wednesday.

Thunder: Host the Phoenix Suns on Thursday.

CRISTOBAL: Spring game set for Apr. 21 at Autzen Stadium

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there's a lot of hope, a lot of new players, some guys that have developed and it's their time," Cristobal said. "You certainly have an opportunity to set your goals for your team, to improve, to elevate the standards."

Both Herbert and Dye are atop the spring depth chart, as is running back Tony Brooks-James and safety Ugo Amadi.

Center Jake Hansen and safety Nick Pickett are injured but are expected to return before the end of the spring. Linebacker Sampson Niu is out for the entire session.

The focus, Cristobal said, will be on fundamentals aiming to reduce penalties and turnovers. Consistency is another point of emphasis.

"You can never be good enough at technique, you can never have enough polish on your craft," Cristobal said.

The Ducks will practice on April 7 at Franklin High School in Portland. The annual spring game is set for April 21 at Autzen Stadium.

Overall, the Ducks want to "establish a culture of excellence."

"We want to develop an intolerance for anything or anyone that does not uphold the standards of our culture," he said. "It's important to our guys to make being a Duck a very important, a very difficult club to be a member of, because of the sacrifices that we make and how hard we work."



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