

# Megan Rapinoe looks toward NWSL season, World Cup

By ANNE M. PETERSON  
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Just a bit of fine tuning and Megan Rapinoe should be ready for the World Cup.

The outspoken 33-year-old winger with her shock of blond hair is not new to this process. She's been to the last two World Cups, including the 2015 tournament in Canada that the United States won.

While she's physically fit at this point, Rapinoe said she isn't as "sharp" as she'd like to be — yet. The game's premier event is being held this time around in France, starting in June.

Rapinoe and the national team just wrapped up the SheBelieves Cup, a round-robin tournament with England, Brazil and Japan. The results weren't ideal for the Americans. After draws with England and Japan, the United States downed Brazil 1-0 to finish second.

"Just getting kind of back into rhythm," she said. "I haven't really played a lot of games like this in a few months. Toward the end of last year, I was able to take time off and get my body right. But now I'm just continuing to get sharp and be more consistent."

Rapinoe sat out of the team's first exhibition of the

year, against France, because of a slight hamstring injury. But she's played ever since and scored in the 2-2 draw with England in the second SheBelieves match.

The United States has 10 total games on its pre-World Cup schedule this year, with the next coming on April 4 in Commerce City, Colorado, against Australia. The team, ranked No. 1 in the world, will begin the defense of its World Cup title on June 11 in Reims against Thailand.

Part of Rapinoe's pre-tournament preparation will include time spent with her club team, the Seattle Reign. The National Women's Soccer League team started pre-season workouts this past week and opens the season on April 14 at the Houston Dash.

Rapinoe, who won an NCAA title with the Portland Pilots, made her debut with the senior national team in 2006. She played in all six U.S. games at the 2011 World Cup in Germany, memorably picking up a microphone after a goal and singing Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A."

At the 2012 London Olympics, she scored directly from a corner kick in the semifinals against Canada. She is the only player — male or female — to have such a goal in Olympic competition.



In this March 7, 2018, file photo, United States midfielder Megan Rapinoe (15) dribbles the ball in front of England midfielder Keira Walsh (22) during the first half of a SheBelieves Cup women's soccer match in Orlando, Fla.

AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack, File

Considered one of the top players in the world, Rapinoe was key to the team's ultimate success at the 2015 World Cup.

"She's a player that you just have to have on the pitch, in terms of set pieces, in terms of game-changing moments," U.S. coach Jill Ellis said.

Rapinoe is also one of the team's most personable players and she's unafraid to speak her mind. She's been

particularly vocal about equitable pay and treatment of female athletes.

In the run-up to this year's World Cup, she has pushed FIFA to use video review, or VAR, in the women's event after it was used for the men's World Cup in Russia last year. Soccer's international governing body is expected to make a final decision on the matter next week.

She has also spoken out about the disparity in prize

money between World Cups — France, the winner in Russia, was awarded \$38 million, while the winner of the women's tournament in France will take home less than a quarter of that, just \$4 million.

She was one of five U.S. women's national team players who joined in a 2016 complaint filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission over unequal pay.

In 2017, Rapinoe drew attention when she knelt during the national anthem before an NWSL game. She said it was an act of solidarity with Colin Kaepernick, the former San Francisco 49ers quarterback who knelt during the anthem to call attention to racial inequality.

After she also knelt before two national team matches, the U.S. Soccer Federation adopted a new rule that says players must stand for anthems. She said she'd abide by it.

For now, Rapinoe's focus has turned to the Reign. The NWSL, entering its seventh season, is considered among the strongest domestic pro leagues in the world. Normally the club season is grueling, but in a World Cup year the players who are going to France are managed closely by their federations.

As a vet, Rapinoe also knows where she needs to be come June.

"It's just knowing yourself as a player. I have a pretty good understanding of what I need. I feel I have a good relationship with my club as well and just being honest and open in exactly what I need," she said. "The national team's a priority and me personally, I'm the priority for myself, making sure that I'm in the best place to perform the best I can at the World Cup."



AP Photo/Gary Landers, File  
Denver Broncos quarterback Case Keenum looks to pass in the first half of an NFL football game against the Cincinnati Bengals on Dec. 2, 2018, in Cincinnati.

## AP source: Broncos trading Keenum to Redskins

By ARNIE STAPLETON  
AP Pro Football Writer

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Case Keenum is on the move again. The Denver Broncos have agreed to trade the veteran quarterback to the Washington Redskins, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Thursday.

The teams will also swap 2020 draft picks, with Denver receiving a sixth-rounder and Washington a seventh-rounder,

said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal cannot be announced until next week.

Keenum's contract will be reworked with the Broncos and Redskins each picking up half of the \$7 million he was guaranteed in 2019.

The Broncos decided to move on from Keenum last month when they agreed to acquire Super Bowl-winning veteran Joe Flacco from the Baltimore Ravens. Like the Keenum trade, the Flacco trade cannot become

official until the start of the league year on March 13.

For the second consecutive offseason, the Redskins opted to trade for a quarterback. Keenum enters the equation to try to replace 2018 addition Alex Smith, who broke his right tibia and fibula in November and is expected to miss the entire 2019 season.

Keenum will likely compete with longtime Redskins backup Colt McCoy to be their Week 1 starter. The 31-year-old joins his fifth NFL team

after stints with the Texans, Rams, Vikings and Broncos.

A year ago, Keenum was coming off a career year in Minnesota, where he went 11-3 and led the Vikings to the NFC championship game. That made him a hot commodity in free agency, second only to Kirk Cousins among available quarterbacks.

After the Vikings signed Cousins, Keenum signed a two-year, \$36 million deal with Denver that included \$25 million in guarantees.

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