

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP 2019 PREVIEW



AP Photo/Christophe Ena
United States' Kelley O Hara, left, and Sweden's Fridolina Rolfo fight for the ball during the Group F soccer match Thursday.

World's top teams enter knockout stage on a roll

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

ROUND OF 16



United States
(3-0)



Spain
(1-1-1)

Monday, 9 a.m., at Stade Auguste-Delaune, Reims, France
TV: FOX

GOLDEN BOOT

American **Alex Morgan** and Australian **Sam Kerr** both have five goals to lead the field.

Morgan matched a U.S. record by scoring five goals in the team's big win over Thailand.

Kerr got four in Australia's final group match, a 4-1 victory over Jamaica. It was the most goals for an Australian — male or female — in a World Cup game, and the final goal ensured the Matildas finished second in their group to avoid France in the round of 16.

against Chile. Ellis made seven lineup changes to keep her team fresh and Carli Lloyd — the hat trick hero of the World Cup final four years ago in Canada — scored a pair of goals.

Facing their toughest challenge of the group in ninth-ranked Sweden, the United States pounced early with Lindsey Horan's goal within the first three minutes and emerged with a 2-0 victory on Thursday night.

While it may be tempting to look ahead to the quarterfinals and a possible clash with France, the defending champion U.S. has thrived at the Women's World Cup by keeping its focus on the present.

The Americans will face Spain in the round of 16 on Monday in Reims as the tournament enters the win-or-go-home phase. Games begin Saturday with Germany facing Nigeria in Grenoble followed by Norway's match against Australia.

The U.S. had emphatic wins in the group stage, routing Thailand 13-0 in the opener before more clinical victories over Chile and Sweden. The team had three shutouts while also collecting a World Cup group-stage record 18 goals.

Coach Jill Ellis said the three-time World Cup champions accomplished their early-round goals.

"When you come out of the group stage, a lot of what we talk about is mentality and being healthy," she said. "I think they're in a really good place."

The United States has performed largely as expected in France, though the team faced criticism after the game against Thailand for celebrating every goal. The Americans set World Cup records for most goals and margin of victory in the game.

The team toned it down

Portland selects Nassir Little with 25th pick

By ERIK GARCÍA GUNDERSEN
Associated Press



AP Photo/ Julio Cortez
NBA Commissioner Adam Silver, left, poses for photographs with North Carolina's Nassir Little after the Portland Trail Blazers selected him with the 25th pick overall.

TUALATIN — The Portland Trail Blazers selected North Carolina forward Nassir Little with the 25th pick in the NBA draft on Thursday night.

Little prides himself on carving his own path and while he was admittedly anxious after falling out of the lottery, the moniker of Trail Blazer fits for a player who refused to play on the Nike AAU circuit and chose to go to boarding schools away from his family for his final two years of high school.

"I've always done things a little bit differently," Little said. "I didn't play on the Nike circuit. That was big. Boarding schools. I always carved my own path and paved my own way."

By having teams pass on him with the first 24 picks of the draft, it was reminiscent of his path to the NBA.

"I mean, somebody told me the only way I could be successful in my life was if I was a top player on the Nike circuit," Little said on

a conference call Thursday. "But I wanted to show people I could be a top player no matter where I played at."

In Little, the Blazers added wing depth to their team with the 6-foot-7 wing. Little was one of the final players left in the Green Room, but he eventually found his way to a playoff team. Little believes he was fortunate, after the anxiety of not going in the lottery passed.

"Man I think it's a blessing in disguise," Little said.

"Slipping down to 25 initially I was kind of confused. But when I looked at the roster and remember how they played in the playoffs, I thought it was a great fit for me."

Little was also surprised that the Blazers targeted him, as he never came to Portland for a workout nor did he interview with the team at the NBA combine.

"I was expecting to go in the lottery," Little said. "I was surprised the Blazers drafted me because I didn't really have a lot of conver-

WHOA, CANADA!

Six Canadians were drafted Thursday, setting the record for a country other than the U.S.

A week after the Toronto Raptors won the nation's first NBA championship, Canadians RJ Barrett, Nickeil Alexander-Walker, Brandon Clarke, Mfondu Kabengele, Ignas Brazdeikis and Marial Shayok were drafted.

France had five players selected in 2016.

sations with them. I didn't work out with them. I didn't know they had much interest in me. I didn't work out with them even at the combine. I'm just happy they saw something in me that I didn't see."

Little averaged 9.8 points and 4.6 rebounds in his lone season at North Carolina. He also took home the MVP trophy at the 2018 McDonald's All-American Game. He excited to team up with second-year Blazers guard Anfernee Simons, who also is from Orlando, Florida.

Miami stops Bol Bol's slide, trades him to Denver

NEW YORK (AP) — Bol Bol started the night high-fiving children as he walked across the stage as part of the festivities, being introduced with Zion Williamson, Ja Morant, RJ Barrett and others expecting to hear their names called early in the NBA draft.

The other players were long gone by the time Bol heard his name called.

It was an uncomfortably long wait for the 7-foot-2 Oregon freshman as NBA Commissioner Adam Silver rattled off the names of Bol's peers and the green room emptied out. The first round had come to an end and Bol — who was pro-

jected as a possible lottery pick — was still undrafted.

The agony ended when Miami ended picked him with the 44th overall pick.

Not that Bol is heading to South Beach. Nope, the Heat traded his draft rights to the Denver Nuggets in exchange for a future second-round pick and financial considerations.

Bol averaged 21 points, 9.6 rebounds and 2.7 blocks while shooting 56% from the field and 52% from 3-point range with a rangy game and an unusual skill-set, though there were concerns after he played just nine college games due to a foot injury.



AP Photo/Julio Cortez
Oregon's Bol Bol before the NBA draft Thursday.

"I just want to prove everyone wrong and just come out and be the best player I can be," Bol said on ESPN's draft broadcast.

The wait was a big fall for the son of late NBA player Manute Bol.

He found himself sitting in the green room as the last player there as the draft moved into the second round.

While it probably wasn't how Bol envisioned being drafted, his selection drew loud cheers from the fans who stuck around to watch the second round. They seemed to be happy for him that the awkwardness was ending.

The reaction prompted Bol to say: "It feels pretty good. I didn't know I had that many fans until right now."

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