

Hartford Courant

# SPORTS

COURANT.COM/SPORTS

## WHEN SPORTS CAME BACK

Keeping an eye on the world of sports during the pandemic:



MIKE EHRMANN/GETTY-AFP

## Butler keeps Heat alive in NBA Finals

Jimmy Butler was slumped over a video board behind the baseline in the final seconds, exhausted, gasping for air.

He gave it all. The Heat needed nothing less.

The NBA Finals — and the Heat's title chances — are not over, not after Butler and the Heat pulled off a virtuoso performance in Game 5 on Friday night in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Butler, above, had 35 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists, and the Heat held on for a 111-108 win to cut the Lakers' lead in the title series to 3-2.

"That's Jimmy Butler," Heat center Bam Adebayo said. "That's our max player and that's who we go to in these moments."

With good reason. He didn't let them down, not even on a night where LeBron James — seeking a fourth title and the player with the best closeout-game record in NBA history — was masterful.

James had 40 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers. But on the possession that decided everything Friday night, the Heat forced the ball out of James' hands by basically sending three defenders at him as he drove down the right side of the lane, the Heat up by one, the Lakers only needing one basket for a title.

He found Danny Green alone atop the key; Green's shot was well short and the Heat closed it out with a pair of free throws.

"It was a little bit of luck that Danny Green missed that shot at the top of the key," Butler said.

Game 6 is Sunday night. "We got a hell of a look to win the game, to win the series," James said. "It didn't go down."

Duncan Robinson had 26 points for the Heat, which used seven players. Kendrick Nunn had 14 points, Bam Adebayo 13, Tyler Herro 12 and Jae Crowder 11. The seventh player, Andre Iguodala, didn't score.

Anthony Davis — playing through a bruised heel — scored 28 points, and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope had 16 for the Lakers.

— Associated Press

### THE QUOTE

**"It was really eye-opening and just the fact of we really don't know, so we have to treat everyone as if they have the virus, unfortunately."**

— QB Ryan Tannehill as the Titans returned to practice for the first time since their win over the Vikings in Week 3.

## UCONN BASKETBALL

# Martin went from good to better



Mike Anthony

Tyrese Martin left a good situation for a better one.

His decision to transfer from Rhode Island to UConn wasn't about absolutely needing change.

It wasn't about finding happiness because he did have that across the state border in Kingston. It wasn't about feeling stuck, literally or figuratively, in a bad place.

The grass isn't always greener on the other side, but the lights can be brighter, the exposure greater, the competition more advanced, the opportunities more plentiful. That's why Martin traded Keaney Blue for National Flag Blue — because he

### Inside

Huskies will boast beefed up front court with Brown and Sanoga. **E8**

turned a two-year opportunity into one with a higher ceiling, and he knew it was wise to act on new options.

"It's a higher level," Martin said Friday.

That's really it, boiled down.

Players with the highest of aspirations need, and deserve,

the ability to reassess their place on a platform they may have outgrown.

"My experience at Rhode Island was great," Martin said. "Honestly, I just felt like, with me personally and the situation I was in, the fastest way for me to be the player I need to be and help my family out as soon as possible, get to that next level, I

**Turn to Anthony, Page 8**

## HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS



First referee Paul Marioni officiates a volleyball match at Avon High School on Oct. 8. **BRAD HERRIGAN/THE HARTFORD COURANT**

# Officially in short supply

## The number of referees at start of the season was low and now worse due to the pandemic

By Lori Riley  
Hartford Courant

Heather Kursman normally loses four or five volleyball officials before every high school season, due to retirement, job

changes or other life changes.

This year was different.

"I lost the biggest percentage of officials this year — at least 40%," she said. "Like 25-26 officials."

Kursman, of East Hampton, is the scheduler for the Connecticut

Board of Volleyball Officials north division, which serves the central part of the state ranging from Meriden to Enfield to Windham. She's been involved in volleyball officiating for 35 years.

"The fact we're indoors makes a huge difference, compared to soccer or field hockey, which is outside," she said. "COVID has definitely been an issue for [the retention of] volleyball officials."

Recruiting and retaining high school sports officials is always

difficult, even in the best of times. The average age of officials nationally is 53 and those officials are aging and it's hard to find replacements, due to a variety of reasons, including fan behavior and jobs that don't allow people time off earlier in the afternoon to officiate.

In 2017, the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference conducted a survey of 54 officials' boards around the state. Of the

**Turn to Officials, Page 2**

## SAINT LOUIS 1, HARTFORD 0

# Athletic's season ends in stoppage time

Saint Louis FC scores late goal to advance

By Shawn McFarland  
Hartford Courant

HARTFORD — Hartford Athletic's winning formula is difficult to define.

There was a certain combination of veteran experience, youthful hunger, intrinsic motivation and scattered luck here and there that propelled Athletic into the playoffs. Hartford goalkeeper

Mike Novotny seemed to sum it up best in the week leading up to the franchise's first ever post-season game: *things just went our way this year.*

Things *did* go Hartford's way often. Teams don't host post-season games if they don't.

But whatever concoction of factors that helped Hartford succeed in 2020 ran out of juice in the final minutes of Saturday's first-round playoff game against Saint Louis FC.

**Turn to Soccer, Page 2**



Hartford Athletic midfielder Gabriel Torres dribbles the ball past a Saint Louis FC defender. **SHAWN MCFARLAND / HARTFORD COURANT**

## Safety Tip of the Day

The glass and metal surrounding your fireplace will reach extreme temperatures during operation and remain hot for a period of time after your product has been shut off. Always supervise and keep children a safe distance away to prevent accidental contact with the glass.

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SPORTS

TV/RADIO

**AUTO RACING**  
**8:05 a.m.:** Formula 1 Racing  
Aramco Eifel Grand Prix.  
(Live) ESPN2  
**2:30 p.m.:** NASCAR Cup  
Series Bank of America  
ROVAL 400. (Live) 30  
**9 p.m.:** DTM. (Same-day  
Tape) CBS  
**BASEBALL**  
**7 p.m.: ALCS, Game 1:**  
Houston Astros at Tampa  
Bay Rays. (Live) TBS  
**BASKETBALL**  
**7:30 p.m.:** 2020 NBA Finals  
Los Angeles Lakers vs Miami  
Heat. (Live) 8  
**4 a.m.:** 2020 NBA Finals  
Los Angeles Lakers vs Miami  
Heat. (Same-day Tape)  
ESPN  
**BICYCLING**  
**11:30 a.m.:** Paris - Tours  
2020. (Same-day Tape)  
NBCSP  
**EQUESTRIAN**  
**12:30 p.m.:** Belmont Park  
Live. (Live) MSG  
**1 p.m.:** Americas Day at the  
Races. (Live) FS1  
**4 p.m.:** Americas Day at the  
Races. (Live) FS1  
**FOOTBALL**  
**7 a.m.:** Texas vs Oklahoma.  
(Taped) FS1  
**1 p.m.:** Buffalo Bills at  
Tennessee Titans. (Live) 3  
**1 p.m.:** Philadelphia Eagles at  
Pittsburgh Steelers. (Live) 61  
**4:25 p.m.:** New York Giants  
at Dallas Cowboys, 4:25  
p.m.(Live) 3  
**8:20 p.m.:** Minnesota  
Vikings at Seattle Seahawks.  
(Live) 30  
**12 a.m.:** Florida at Texas  
A&M. (Taped) ESPN  
**1:30 a.m.:** Kansas State at  
TCU. (Taped) FS1  
**GOLF**  
**6 a.m.:** BMW PGA  
Championship, Final Round.  
(Live) GOLF  
**10 a.m.:** 2020 KPMG  
Womens PGA Championship  
Final Round. (Live) GOLF  
**12 p.m.:** 2020 KPMG  
Womens PGA Championship  
Final Round. (Live) 30  
**2 p.m.:** SAS Championship,  
Final Round. (Live) GOLF  
**5 p.m.:** Shriners Hospitals for  
Children Open, Final Round.  
(Live) GOLF  
**MOTORCYCLE RACING**  
**11 a.m.: Motoamerica**  
**Superbike:** Indianapolis  
Motor Speedway, Day 2 Part  
1. (Live) FS1  
**3 p.m.: Motoamerica**  
**Superbike:** Indianapolis  
Motor Speedway, Day 2 Part  
2. (Live) FS1  
**6:30 p.m.: MotoGP Racing**  
**France, MotoGP:** Race.  
(Same-day Tape) NBCSP  
**11 p.m.:** FIM Motocross  
MXGP. (Same-day Tape)  
CBSSN  
**12 a.m.:** FIM Motocross  
MX2. (Same-day Tape)  
CBSSN  
**SOCCER**  
**7:30 a.m.:** Super League  
Brighton & Hove Albion vs  
Arsenal. (Live) NBCSP  
**9:30 a.m.:** Super League  
Chelsea vs Manchester City.  
(Live) NBCSP  
**1 p.m.:** Womens College }  
South Carolina at Vanderbilt.  
(Live) ESPN  
**2:30 p.m.:** UEFA Nations  
League Soccer France vs  
Portugal. (Live) ESPN  
**3 p.m.:** Womens College }  
Arkansas at Alabama. (Live)  
ESPN  
**4 p.m.:** MLS Soccer New  
England Revolution at New  
York City FC. (Live) YES  
**4:30 p.m.:** MLS Soccer New  
England Revolution at New  
York City FC. (Live) NBCSB2  
**7 p.m.:** MLS Soccer Seattle  
Sounders FC at Los Angeles  
FC. (Live) ESPN  
**8 p.m.:** Mexico Primera  
Division Soccer Santos  
Laguna vs Tijuana. (Live) FS1  
**TENNIS**  
**6 a.m.:** 2020 Roland-  
Garros Tennis Womens  
Doubles Championship.  
(Live) TENNIS  
**9 a.m.:** 2020 Roland-Garros  
Tennis Mens Final. (Live) 30  
**2 p.m.:** 2020 Roland-  
Garros Tennis Mens Singles  
Championship. (Taped)  
TENNIS  
**5 p.m.:** Womens College }  
Teams TBA. (Taped) ESPN  
**7 p.m.:** Teams TBA. (Taped)  
ESPN

UP NEXT

**Patriots:** Broncos, Monday,  
5 p.m.  
**Giants:** at Cowboys, Sunday,  
4:25 p.m.  
**Jets:** Cardinals, Sunday, 1  
p.m.



Rafael Nadal celebrates winning the semifinal match of the French Open against Argentina's Diego Schwartzman in three sets on Friday. **CHRISTOPHE ENA/AP**

FRENCH OPEN

‘It’s his house’: Nadal vs. Djokovic in final

By Associated Press

Go all the way back to June 8, 2006, when Rafael Nadal moved on at the French Open after his 19-year-old, 63rd-ranked opponent in the quarterfinals quit because of a bad back while trailing two sets to none.

That opponent’s assessment of Nadal after facing him for the first time as pros: “He’s the best on this surface, but he’s not unbeatable. That’s for sure.”

Hmmmm.

That foe? Novak Djokovic. Fast-forward to the final at Roland Garros on Sunday, when No. 1 Djokovic and No. 2 Nadal will stand across from each other once again at Court Philippe Chatrier, only this time in October after the tournament was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

It will be their 56th tour-level meeting — more than any other pair of men in the Open era, which dates to 1968.

And let’s not forget the big picture: This match carries significant weight in the Grand Slam standings that so many fans, and the players themselves, keep tabs on.

Roger Federer, who is 39 and missed most of this

season after having two knee operations, owns the men’s record of 20 major championships. Nadal, who is 34, is next among men with 19; Djokovic, 33, stands third with 17.

After Sunday, either Nadal will pull even with Federer for the first time since they were tied with zero apiece, or Djokovic will gain on the leading duo and the totals will read 20-19-18.

For now, this is how each has filled his trophy cabinet:

■ Djokovic: 8 at the Australian Open, 5 at Wimbledon, 3 at the U.S. Open, 1 at the French Open; ■ Nadal: 12 at the French Open, 4 at the U.S. Open, 2 at Wimbledon, 1 at the Australian Open; ■ Federer: 8 at Wimbledon, 6 at the Australian Open, 5 at the U.S. Open, 1 at the French Open.

All three are greats of the game, regardless of where the numbers end up, of course.

Still, as much as Nadal wouldn’t engage in a discussion about his chance to catch Federer after beating Diego Schwartzman 6-3, 6-3, 7-6 (0) in the semifinals Friday, he did acknowledge that “it’s good for tennis” if others talk about it.

Rest assured, they will.

NHL

Several Stanley Cup winners breaking up championship core

By Associated Press

While Braden Holtby saw his split with the Washington Capitals coming, Patric Hornqvist, Corey Crawford and Alex Pietrangelo weren’t so lucky.

Hornqvist was “blind-sided” the Pittsburgh Penguins wanted to trade him. Crawford was “devastated” the Chicago Blackhawks were going in another direction. And Pietrangelo was caught off guard when the St. Louis Blues signed another big-money defenseman, moving on from him before he was ready to close the door on staying.

The past several weeks have featured several recent Stanley Cup winners breaking up their championship core by saying goodbye to a key player with his name on the trophy. It’s a bittersweet reality in the NHL because of the salary cap, and the departing players are left with at least one Cup ring and the irreplaceable memories of winning — plus the hope they can do it all again with a new team.

“We accomplished what we wanted to do there: We won a championship, and I think that’s something you can never take away,” Holtby said after leaving Washington to sign with the Vancouver Canucks. “It was very important to me to find a team that has that same chance and that same structure of an organization and team that can win because that’s what you play for, and I think that’s the opportunity that we have in Vancouver that is very exciting to me.”

The young Canucks look ready to win now, and Holtby gives them another veteran with experience



Alex Pietrangelo lifts the Stanley Cup during a ceremony honoring the Blues in 2019. **JEFF ROBERSON | AP**

from deep playoff runs after they made it to the second round over the summer.

New Jersey is further away from being a legitimate contender, but Crawford sees plenty of similarities between the Devils and the Blackhawks of more than a decade ago that went on to capture the Cup three times. Instead of Jonathan Toews, Patrick Kane, Duncan Keith and Brent Seabrook, the Devils have Nico Hischier, Jack Hughes, Pavel Zacha and Jesper Bratt in their early 20s and able to grow up together.

“Things change pretty quick in the NHL,” Crawford said after signing with the Devils, who finished last in the Metropolitan Division, have one playoff appearance eight years and no series victories over that time. Chicago made the playoffs once in six years before winning it all in 2010.

“The Hawks did it. They had a young group too, and they got good pretty fast. It’s a group that can defi-

nately do the same thing.”

That’s what Hornqvist is betting on after waiving his no-trade clause to join the Florida Panthers. The agitating, go-to-the-net winger helped Pittsburgh win the Cup in 2016 and 2017. He didn’t take it too kindly when the Penguins told him they wanted to trade him, so now he’s even more motivated to help the Panthers get the job done.

“The last six years of my hockey career has always been great in Pittsburgh,” Hornqvist said. “All my family life is in Pittsburgh. I like the city, I like the fans, but when they decide they didn’t want me, it was an easy choice to go down to Florida and try to win the Cup there.”

Former Penguins teammate Matt Murray will try to do the same after getting traded and signing a \$25 million, four-year contract with the Ottawa Senators. Pittsburgh had already committed to Tristan Jarry as its goalie of the present and near future, so Murray gets a fresh start with a long-term rebuilding project in Ottawa.

The Boston Bruins know that all too well. They lost Krug because they weren’t willing to offer as many years as the Blues and others, and they’ve turned their attention to their longtime captain, Zdeno Chara, who raised the Cup in 2011 and is a free agent.

Chara is 43 now in the twilight of his career, though he’d like to play another season. Bruins GM Don Sweeney called Chara an “iconic” player — and the 6-foot-9 defenseman’s departure would be the biggest crack yet to the core that won the Cup nine years ago.

Officials

from Page 1

boards that responded, 22 said their membership was decreasing and 21 reported that it was the same.

Now, worries about the spread of coronavirus have exacerbated the problem, especially considering the age of many officials.

Chris Burns of North Haven, who has been a swim official for 35 years, was working at a Cheshire-Amity virtual swim meet Oct. 1 at the Cheshire pool. He is the president of the Southern Connecticut Conference Swim Officials board.

“There are some people, who, for one reason or another, said, ‘I can’t come back,’ ” said Burns, who is 73. “My wife is an asthmatic. I have to be careful about where I go.

“There are a number of officials throughout the state that said, ‘It’s time to retire.’ ”

Volleyball, swimming and soccer appear to be the fall sports most impacted. But since the number of games has been reduced and there has been an influx of college officials with time on their hands, the schedulers have managed to get officials to games, for the most part.

“So far, knock on wood, we’re good,” said Donna Vavrinec, the chairperson of the state field hockey board of officials.

Field hockey is one sport that hasn’t lost a lot. Vavrinec estimated that out of 83 officials, five decided not to officiate this fall.

Volleyball and soccer had higher numbers. The Fairfield County volleyball board had 21 of its 58 officials opt out this season.

“It wasn’t only the older officials,” said Marie Lavin, the assigning coordinator for Fairfield County. “It was some younger offi-

cials, too.

“We’re making it work. The schedules aren’t nearly what they used to be.”

Bob O’Dea, the president of the Connecticut Soccer Officials Association who works out of the Hartford board, said his board, which normally has 140-150 officials, has lost about 20 due to COVID concerns and about 10 through regular attrition.

“It’s impacted things,” said O’Dea, who has been an official for 45 years. “Everybody is pretty much working every day.

“Our assigner is John O’Dell. He’s a magician. He makes things happen. We have moved games to a different day or different time of the day. We’ve had to because of the demand.”

The officials don’t just cover varsity high school games. There are junior varsity and freshman games. There are schools not affiliated with the CIAC which have games and need officials.

And they have to be flexible. Schools have shut down due to outbreaks; games have been postponed or canceled.

But for many officials, like the coaches and athletes, officiating is a labor of love.

Jane DaDalt, 70, of Stafford, had worked at three volleyball games as of Tuesday and had two more games Wednesday and Thursday.

“It’s gone very smoothly,” she said. “The teams have been very thoughtful.”

She said she didn’t have second thoughts about returning.

“In Connecticut, we’re in a good spot,” she said. “I’ve been doing it for 30 years. I lost the spring season. I lost my summer league. I’m so glad to be back. I just couldn’t wait. I couldn’t wait.”

Lori Riley can be reached at lriley@courant.com.



Dillon Stadium’s capacity was expanded to 40 percent for Saturday’s Hartford Athletic playoff game. **SHAWN MCFARLAND / HARTFORD COURANT**

Soccer

from Page 1

In the 93rd minute of a scoreless contest at Dillon Stadium, Saint Louis FC’s Jaquin Rivas recovered a loose ball just outside of Hartford’s box, dodged a few defenders and kicked a ball past a diving Parfait Mandanda and into the net to end Athletic’s season, and send Saint Louis to the second round.

“It was one of those unfortunate situations we find ourselves in sometimes where the ball doesn’t bounce our way,” said captain Danny Barrera. “Sure enough, it was a gut punch in the 90th minute.”

Hartford, which won Group F of the USL’s Eastern Conference, finished its season with a record of 11-3-3. Saint Louis will play Louisville in the second round. The game was played in front of a crowd of 2,194 fans. As Connecticut moved to phase three of its reopening this week, Dillon Stadium was allowed to increase its capacity from 25 percent to 40 percent for Saturday’s game.

It was the culmination of a turnaround season for Hartford, which finished second-to-last in the Eastern Conference last season. Athletic won just eight of its 35 games, and started its season with eight consecutive losses.

Saturday’s loss stings. But Hartford managed to achieved heights in year two that looked impossible in year one.

“It was super special for us,” Barrera said. “Last year was disappointing for us. To bounce back and be a real top team ... credit to the guys.”

Hartford had a number of

first-half chances. It outshot Saint Louis 8-4, with six of those coming from inside the box. Saint Louis keeper Kyle Morton made four first-half saves, including two in the first 13 minutes to knock away direct, hard-hit shots from Ever Guzman and Gabi Torres.

In total, Hartford had five corner kicks to Saint Louis’ two, but couldn’t convert on any.

“A little bit of unlucky and a lack of concentration in front of the goal,” Barrera said. “Credit to [Saint Louis]. They came here, they did alright. I think we were the better team, but that’s the way it is.”

Hartford took an unconventional path to hosting its first playoff game. With new head coach Radhi Jaidi in from Southampton FC’s U-23 team, the USL season was slated to begin in March, but was forced to pause alongside other professional leagues in the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It wasn’t until July — four months after the team’s expected start date — that Athletic began playing. It then won 11 of its 16 regular-season games to clinch a playoff spot, and won its regular-season finale against New York Red Bull II to win Group F and host a playoff game.

“We worked every day to get to the playoffs,” said Hartford Athletic chairman and CEO Bruce Mandell. “Every moment, every thought, was to get here. We just planned with what we could ... the focus was, ‘We’re going to play, we’re going to win, we’re going to go to the playoffs.’ ”

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