

Hopefully fall athletes can have some normalcy

Remember the state of prep sports a year ago?

Virtual swim meets and dual cross-country meets were a thing. The usual team-building activities that are always a highlight for the athletes weren't happening. State tournaments seemed highly unlikely. Heck, the football and



KEVIN DUDLEY
The Free Press

volleyball seasons were going to be played in the spring. What is usually the most exciting time of the year for many prep athletes was anything but normal, and with that, some of the joy was lost. Things still aren't normal. COVID-19 cases are on

the rise, and there's still a fear that the season could be interrupted or even ruined by that invisible opponent that just doesn't seem to quit. However, things are in a much better place than they were 12 months ago, and because of that, at least a degree of normalcy has returned. State tournaments are set to return for all sports,

which is a massive deal for everyone involved. The section tournaments last fall were certainly dramatic, but they just weren't the same, and some teams ended up not even getting to finish or compete in those because of the pandemic. Talking to coaches and athletes in recent weeks, the importance of having a state tournament as a goal

comes up a lot. When you put in as much work as they do, it's very important to have an opportunity to prove yourself against the best in your sport. While state tournaments are the ultimate goal for some, many more won't be able to make it that far. For these athletes, the social aspect of the experience may be just as important as the actual

competition. Not everyone feels comfortable in large groups at this point, but it seems pasta dinners, team sleepovers and hanging out after practice are making a comeback. The relationships formed through participating in team sports can be way more important than

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BRIEFS

MSU women's hockey announces captains

MANKATO — Minnesota State women's hockey coach John Harrington has announced senior defenseman Anna Wilgren will be the team captain this season. Senior forwards Brittyn Fleming and Claire Butorac and senior defenseman Jessica Kondas were named the alternate captains. Wilgren will be the Mavericks' captain for the second season. She has 11 goals and 30 assists in 88 games, which ranks third among Minnesota State defensemen. Minnesota State's season begins Sept. 24-25 when the Mavericks play Merrimack at North Andover, Maryland.

Waseca tennis sweeps Faribault

WASECA — Sarah Robbins rallied for a 4-6, 6-2, 10-7 victory at No. 2 singles, helping Waseca defeat Faribault 7-0 in a nonconference girls tennis match Wednesday. CeCe Huttemier, Nicola DeJager and Takya Schoenrock each won a singles match in straight sets. The No. 1 doubles team of Jaidence Medina and Miranda Breck won 2-6, 7-6 (4), 10-6. Addie Pfeifer and Mia Kanewischer won at No. 2 doubles, while Sarah Haley and Addie Bomsta were winners at No. 3 doubles. Waseca (1-3) plays at Albert Lea on Tuesday.

The Free Press

Ronaldo breaks scoring record

Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty but still broke the men's international scoring record before adding a second goal as Portugal beat visiting Ireland 2-1 in World Cup qualifying on Wednesday. Ronaldo grabbed his 110th goal in the 89th minute to move ahead of former Iran striker Ali Daei. Six minutes into stoppage time, Ronaldo made it 111 in 180 games to break Irish hearts after defender John Egan gave his nation the lead in the 45th. But Ronaldo, who has returned to join Manchester United, is still 76 goals behind the game's most prolific international scorer. Christine Sinclair, who is 38 years old, scored her 187th goal for Canada last month at the Tokyo Olympics.

The Associated Press

SHARK WEEK

MSU's defensive rebuild begins with opener



File photo

Minnesota State cornerback Ty'Shonan Brooks (4) is one of four starters returning on the defense.

Only four starters return from '19 championship game

By Chad Courrier
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During the 20 months since he last played football, Ty'Shonan Brooks graduated with a degree in communications and started an apparel company with a friend. But now, he's ready to get down to business: Minnesota State opens the season on Thursday night against Northern State to end the longest offseason ever. "I'm feeling excitement that (the opener) is finally here," Brooks said. "Who would have ever thought after the national championship game (in 2019) that we wouldn't play another game for this long? I'm just ready to put everything out there on the field." The nearly 20-month-break ends at 6 p.m. Thursday at Blakeslee Stadium. There will be plenty of veterans in the Minnesota State lineup, but there will also be new names and faces, especially on the defense, where only four starters are back. But every season, the roster faces a rebuild, and the defense, nicknamed the Sharks, still flourishes. "(Defensive coordinator Jim

Glogowski) deserves a lot of credit," Minnesota State coach Todd Hoffner said. "He's going to get them in the right places, and then it's up to the players to make the plays." In the last three seasons, while the Mavericks' offense was racking up yards and points to set several program records, the defense was ranked somewhere in the top 20 in Division II. In 2019, the Mavericks ranked seventh in total defense, allowing just 268.1 yards per game, which included only 69.1 yards per game rushing. Minnesota State gave up only 15.1 points per game, which was sixth best in Division II. The Mavericks ranked 18th in total defense in 2018 and ninth in 2016, with a run defense that was always inside the top 11. "Our defense works as a team," said Brooks, a senior cornerback who will also begin the season as the primary punt returner. "We don't care who makes the tackle or who gets the pick. You just have to do your job and trust your teammates will do their jobs." Hoffner said that the defensive players also comprise many of the special-teams units. In a game that

might feature 200 snaps, the defensive players might be out there for 120, meaning that depth is critical. "You have to keep those guys fresh," he said. "They need to be ready for Play 1 and make as many plays as they need to win a football game." Brooks said that despite so few returning players on the defense, the chemistry has been good. Many of the transfers were here early in the summer, and the inexperienced backups have been waiting nearly two seasons to get a chance. "It feels like everyone is buying in," Brooks said. "It's up to the leaders to get everyone to trust each other and trust the coaches. We might be from a lot of different schools, but if we all buy in, we can go a long ways." Both Hoffner and Brooks said there is some uncertainty heading into the opener. Every season is different, but this one has created more intrigue with the long layoff and the roster turnover. "We have standards, and that's to win a national championship. That hasn't changed," Brooks said. "There will be some butterflies (on

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Ohio State, Gophers ready

By Dave Campbell
The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Ohio State has a new quarterback this fall, just like several other national title contenders. For the fourth-ranked Buckeyes, this turnover — from NFL first-round draft pick Justin Fields to C.J. Stroud — could be as unobvious as anywhere in the country. Stroud has yet to attempt a college pass, a scenario the program has not experienced since 1952. His teammates, however, saw all they needed to see over the last month in practice from the 6-foot-3, 215-pound second-year freshman. "We're just very excited for us to have him as our quarterback right now," left tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere said. "He's taken that job in full stride." With a quality, experienced Big Ten opponent waiting in Minnesota for Thursday night's opener, not to mention 11th-ranked Oregon due for a visit on Sept. 11, Ohio State has no room to ease into the schedule. Coach Ryan Day recognized that by ramping up the intensity of preseason camp, a grind toughened further on some days by driving rain or sweltering heat. "There are certain guys that rise to the cream of the crop and come through in those big moments and kind of inspire the team to keep pushing forward even in hard moments," Petit-Frere said. "C.J. did that almost every single time." Stroud, a consensus five-star recruit out of Southern California, wasn't the starter until his junior year at Rancho Cucamonga High School. He appeared in three games last season of late-game relief for Fields, who was the 11th pick this spring by the Chicago Bears after a stellar two-year stay with the Buckeyes. Alabama, Clemson, Notre

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Walk-in orthopedic care.

Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato provides orthopedic and sports medicine walk-in care for fractures, breaks, sprains and dislocations. This same day care is a faster, more cost-effective alternative, compared to the emergency room, and is a great option for patients with orthopedic injuries or conditions that require immediate medical treatment, but are not life-threatening.

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
mayoclinichealthsystem.org



SCORECARD

TV Today				
Schedule subject to change and/or blackouts				
Thursday, September 2				
AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL				
4:30 a.m. (Friday)				
FS2 — AFL: Greater Western Sydney at Geelong, Semifinal				
AUTO RACING				
4:25 a.m. (Friday)				
ESPN2 — Formula 1: Practice 1, Circuit Zandvoort, North Holland, Netherlands				
COLLEGE FOOTBALL				
5:30 p.m.				
BTN — Temple at Rutgers				
6 p.m.				
ESPN — Boise St. at UCF				
6:30 p.m.				
ESPN — East Carolina vs. Appalachian St., Charlotte, N.C.				
7 p.m.				
FOX — Ohio St. at Minnesota				
GOLF				
6:30 a.m.				
GOLF — PGA Tour: The Italian Open, First Round, Marco Simone GC, Rome				
9 a.m.				
GOLF — Korn Ferry Tour: The Korn Ferry Tour Championship, First Round, Victoria National Golf Club, Newburgh, Ind.				
Noon				
GOLF — PGA Tour: The TOUR Championship, First Round, East Lake Golf Course, Atlanta				
HORSE RACING				
Noon				
FS2 — NYRA: Saratoga Live				
MLB BASEBALL				
Noon				
MLBN — Oakland at Detroit				
6 p.m.				
MLBN — Boston at Tampa Bay OR Miami at NY Mets				
9 p.m.				
MLBN — Atlanta at Colorado OR Cleveland at Kansas City (Games Joined in Progress)				
PARALYMPICS				
2 a.m.				
NBCSN — 2020 Tokyo Paralympics: Swimming; Track & Field; Wheelchair Basketball; Road Cycling, Tokyo				
7 p.m.				
NBCSN — 2020 Tokyo Paralympics: Track & Field; Road Cycling; Wheelchair Tennis; Canoeing, Tokyo				
2 a.m. (Friday)				
NBCSN — 2020 Tokyo Paralympics: Goalball (Final); Swimming; Track & Field; Wheelchair Basketball, Tokyo				
RUGBY				
4:30 a.m.				
FS2 — NRL: Sydney at Canberra				
SOCCER (MEN'S)				
9 p.m.				
CBSSN — FIFA World Cup Qualifying: El Salvador vs. U.S., San Salvador, El Salvador				
SWIMMING				
1 p.m.				
CBSSN — ISL: Match 3, Naples, Italy				
TENNIS				
11 a.m.				
ESPN — ATP/WTA: The U.S. Open, Second Round, Flushing, N.Y.				
5 p.m.				
ESPN2 — ATP/WTA: The U.S. Open, Second Round, Flushing, N.Y.				
6 p.m.				
ESPN2 — ATP/WTA: The U.S. Open, Second Round, Flushing, N.Y.				

WNBA				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Connecticut	21	6	.778	—
Chicago	14	13	.519	7
New York	11	17	.393	10½
Washington	10	16	.385	10½
Atlanta	6	19	.240	14
Indiana	6	19	.240	14

WESTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Las Vegas	19	7	.731	—
x-Seattle	18	10	.643	2
Minnesota	16	9	.640	2½
x-Phoenix	16	10	.615	3
Dallas	11	15	.423	8
Los Angeles	10	17	.370	9½

x-clinched playoff spot				
Thursdays Games				
Atlanta at Dallas, 7 p.m.				
Los Angeles at Minnesota, 7 p.m.				
Chicago at Las Vegas, 9 p.m.				
New York at Seattle, 9 p.m.				

NFL				
AMERICAN CONFERENCE				
East				
	W	L	T	Pct
Buffalo	0	0	0	.000
Miami	0	0	0	.000
N.Y. Jets	0	0	0	.000
New England	0	0	0	.000

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Indianapolis	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Jacksonville	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Tennessee	0	0	0	.000	0	0

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Cincinnati	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Pittsburgh	0	0	0	.000	0	0

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Denver	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Kansas City	0	0	0	.000	0	0
L.A. Chargers	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Las Vegas	0	0	0	.000	0	0

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Dallas	0	0	0	.000	0	0
N.Y. Giants	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Phila.	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Washington	0	0	0	.000	0	0

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Atlanta	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Carolina	0	0	0	.000	0	0
New Orleans	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Tampa Bay	0	0	0	.000	0	0

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Chicago	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Detroit	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Green Bay	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Minnesota	0	0	0	.000	0	0

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Arizona	0	0	0	.000	0	0
L.A. Rams	0	0	0	.000	0	0
San Francisco	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Seattle	0	0	0	.000	0	0

Thursday, Sept. 9				
Dallas at Tampa Bay, 7:20 p.m.				
Sunday, Sept. 12				
Arizona at Tennessee, noon				
Jacksonville at Houston, noon				
L.A. Chargers at Washington, noon				
Minnesota at Cincinnati, noon				
N.Y. Jets at Carolina, noon				
Phila. at Atlanta, noon				
Pittsburgh at Buffalo, noon				
San Francisco at Detroit, noon				
Seattle at Indianapolis, noon				
Cleveland at Kansas City, 3:25 p.m.				
Denver at N.Y. Giants, 3:25 p.m.				
Green Bay at New Orleans, 3:25 p.m.				
Chicago at L.A. Rams, 7:20 p.m.				
Monday, Sept. 13				
Baltimore at Las Vegas, 7:15 p.m.				

MLS				
Eastern Conference				
	W	L	T	Pts
New England	15	4	4	49
Orlando City	9	4	8	35
Nashville	8	2	11	35
New York City FC	10	6	4	34
Philadelphia	8	6	8	32
CF Montréal	8	7	7	31
D.C. United	9	10	3	30
Columbus	7	9	6	27
Atlanta	6	7	9	27
Chicago	6	11	5	23
Inter Miami CF	6	9	5	23
New York	6	10	4	22
Cincinnati	3	9	8	17
Toronto FC	3	13	6	15

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Seattle	12	4	6	42	35	19
Sporting Kansas City	11	4	7	40	37	22
Colorado	11	4	5	38	30	20
LA Galaxy	11	8	3	36	35	35
Minnesota United	8	6	7	31	24	24
Portland	8	10	3	27	29	39
Real Salt Lake	7	8	8	27	31	27
Vancouver	6	7	8	26	27	31
San Jose	6	7	8	26	24	29
FC Dallas	6	9	7	25	23	33
Los Angeles FC	6	9	6	24	28	31
Austin FC	5	12	4	19	20	29
Houston	3	9	10	19	24	34

NOTE: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday, September 3				
New York City FC at Nashville, 6:30 p.m.				
New England at Philadelphia, 6:30 p.m.				
Portland at Houston, 7 p.m.				
Sporting Kansas City at Las Angeles FC, 9 p.m.				

Transactions

BASEBALL				
Major League Baseball				
American League				
BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Recalled RHP Dusten Knight and LHP Alexander Wells from Norfolk (Triple-A East).				
BOSTON RED SOX — Placed SS Xander Bogaerts and INF/OF Yairo Munoz on the COVID-19 IL. Selected the contracts of INF Jack Lopez and RHP John Schreiber from Worcester (Triple-A East) and agreed to terms on major league contracts. Reinstated RHP Ryan Brasier from the 60-day IL. Reinstated INF/OF Danny Santana from the 10-day IL.				
CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Placed SS Tim Anderson on the 10-day IL, retroactive to August 29. Recalled RHP Matt Foster and INF/OF Gavin Sheets from Charlotte (Triple-A East). Reinstated OF Billy Hamilton from the 10-day IL. Designated INF/OF Jake Lamb for assignment. Selected the contract of INF Romy Gonzalez from Charlotte and agreed to terms on a major league contract.				

Stephens overpowers Gauff at Open

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Three years ago, a reporter asked Sloane Stephens to point out a younger tennis player most fans might not have heard of yet, someone she thought could become a household name some day. Stephens paused to ponder, but not for long, before responding: Coco Gauff, then 14.

Stephens had first met Gauff several years earlier and clearly knew what she was talking about. The world would quickly discover Gauff, too.

The pair of friends met in an official match for the first time Wednesday night at the U.S. Open, and it was Stephens, the 2017

champion now ranked 66th, who pulled away for a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Gauff, now 17 and seeded 21st.

Afterward, the pair met at the net for a warm hug, before Stephens praised the player — and person — Gauff has become.

“I love Coco. I think everyone knows I love Coco. At the end of the match, I said, ‘I love you.’ She’s such a great player and I feel so lucky to have seen her grow up and play since she was 8,” Stephens told the Arthur Ashe Stadium crowd.

“I know,” Stephens added, “there’s going to be great things ahead for her.”

With the Ashe roof shut during a heavy downpour — a tornado warning was

in effect in the region — the thump-thump-thump of the rain created a bass beat that drowned out the usual sounds of a tennis match. It was so loud Stephens could barely hear the questions during her on-court interview.

Only one other court at Flushing Meadows can be covered during bad weather, but even that was an issue Wednesday evening, because wind helped push rain through the space between the concourse and the retractable cover at Louis Armstrong Stadium.

So the match between two-time major finalist Kevin Anderson and Diego Schwartzman was delayed for nearly a half-hour at 5-all in the first set while

workers used air blowers to dry the playing surface.

Scheduled for later in Armstrong was three-time Slam champ Angelique Kerber against Anhelina Kalinina, with the winner taking on Stephens. And last in Ashe was French Open runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas against Adrian Mannarino, looking to join other men who moved on such as No. 2 Daniil Medvedev and No. 5 Andrey Rublev.

The conditions didn’t matter at all to defending champion Naomi Osaka, who advanced earlier in the day when her second-round opponent, Olga Danilovic, pulled out because of what she said was a viral illness — but not COVID-19.

Cubs spoil Ryan’s debut with Twins

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Frank Schwindel hit a three-run homer and a pair of Chicago Cubs pitchers combined on a two-hitter in a 3-0 victory over the Minnesota Twins on Wednesday night.

Justin Steele (3-2) won for the first time since joining the Cubs’ rotation on Aug. 10. The rookie left-hander gave up one hit, walked three and struck out three over five innings, lowering his ERA to 3.48.

Adbert