

Daily

Sports

COLETTE’S COMMENTARY: TEAM USA RALLIES PAST FRANCE TO CLAIM FIFTH STRAIGHT WORLD CUP TITLE

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Team USA’s path to a fifth consecutive FIBA Women’s Basketball World Cup title was anything but easy. On Sunday, Sept. 13, the United States faced France in the championship game in Berlin, Germany and found themselves trailing by 14 points in the second quarter. But what initially looked like a potential upset quickly turned into another display of U.S. dominance, as Team USA stormed back to defeat France 97-79 and claim its 12th World Cup title.

France started their debut in the World Cup Final on a dominant 21-2 run, looking like they were going to run away with the lead. They entered the second quarter with a 31-17 lead, powered by Gabby Williams and Dominique Malonga. Williams fueled the early lead by putting up 16 points and 3 steals in the first half. Her dominant performance, along with her performance throughout the tournament, led to her being named the 2026 FIBA World Cup Best Defensive Player. Malonga was also a powerhouse for France, ending the game with a team-high 21 points.

In the second quarter, the U.S. slowly began to chip away at the deficit, narrowing the lead by halftime. What had been a 14-point French advantage was down to two by the



Team France players meet on the court. The team ended up earning silver in the FIBA Women’s Basketball World Cup, falling short to Team USA.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @EQUIPEDEFRANCEBASKET ON INSTAGRAM

break, giving the Americans a chance to reset. Caitlin Clark was a key factor in shifting the momentum in favor of the U.S., hitting a crucial buzzer-beating three-pointer to close the first half and bring the Americans within two.

Halftime gave the U.S. time to regroup and take

control in the third quarter, opening with a dominant 11-2 run to erase its deficit. The team’s momentum was further fueled by back-to-back three-pointers by Kahleah Cooper and Jackie Young. The U.S. also tightened up their defense, successfully shutting down Williams, forcing turnovers and limit-

ing France’s outside shooting. The quarter ended with Clark answering a France three-pointer with a jumper, giving the U.S. to a 73-57 16-point lead heading into the fourth quarter.

The comeback was largely led by veteran team members, including Breanna Stewart. Stewart proved to be

a leading force for the team, finishing with 22 points and 9 rebounds and earning tournament MVP honors. Stewart also became a four-time World Cup champion with the win. Napheesa Collier also played a key veteran role, providing an impressive defensive presence. The roles of Collier and Stewart once again demonstrated the reach of the UConn women’s basketball program beyond Storrs.

With the 97-79 victory, the U.S. secured its fifth consecutive FIBA Women’s Basketball World Cup title and 12th overall. Despite facing its largest deficit of the tournament in the championship game, the team responded with the same resilience that has made them practically untouchable on the international stage. France’s early lead showed that the U.S. would not simply cruise to another title, but by the final buzzer, the Americans had once again proved their ability to respond when challenged and finish the tournament as world champions.

With the World Cup now behind them, many of the players from both the U.S. and French teams will return to the WNBA for the remainder of the season. After competing against each other on the international stage, they will reunite with their WNBA teammates and, in some cases, face each other again as the league heads into postseason.

THE PUCK DROP: BILLET FAMILIES IN THE NHL

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Behind the success of every rookie in the NHL is something that you don’t necessarily see on the ice.

It’s the support system they have off the ice, in the form of a billet family.

While billet families are more popular in junior hockey, they have them in the professional leagues. They host rookies and sometimes second-year players, providing them housing, meals and a family-like environment as they adjust to playing in the league.

However, billet families in the NHL look a little different compared to the juniors. They’re veteran NHLers who open their homes up to their rookie teammates.

Plenty of former NHL’s have hosted players, from the Pittsburgh Penguin’s legend Mario Lemieux, who hosted Sydney Crosby, to Taylor Hall and Luke Gazdic, who hosted Connor McDavid during his rookie campaign.

“You’re such a young kid. You’re coming into the NHL and you don’t know anybody,” McDavid said in a 2025 article from TSN. “The guys you’re trying to become friends with are fathers and husbands.”

McDavid emphasized in the article that as a rookie you need someone to catch you up to speed.

“You need guys to take you under their wing and show you the ropes, understand where to be, when to be there, how to be there,” McDavid said in the TSN article.

Most recently, the Islander’s star-studded rookie Matthew Schaefer lived with Matt Martin, a long with his wife Sydney Esiason and their two daughters.

Schaefer, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2025 NHL draft, immediately made an impact as soon as he stepped on the ice for the Islanders.

The defenseman racked up 23 goals and 36 assists in his rookie season, winning him the Calder Trophy: the award for the best first-year player in the NHL.

Along with his hero-



ics on the ice, fans can see them off the ice as well.

From time to time, Esiason will post videos of Schaefer and her daughters, saying he’s almost like an older brother figure to them.

“From the moment he kind of stepped in our house and met our family, before it was ever decided he was going to live with us, you just feel the type of kid he is, the type of energy he has,” Martin said in an article from Yahoo! Sports. “Kind of gravitated towards our kids and our kids gravitated towards him. It’s a really special thing for my kids.”

After living with them for the 2025-26 season, Schaefer plans on running it back with the Martin’s for his sophomore campaign.

“I mean, I kept my stuff there and then I’m like, I’m coming back. I guess they can’t say no. I think they want me out probably sooner, but you know what? I’m like, ‘Hey, I’m planting my seed here and I’m staying here.’” Schaefer said in an article from

Yahoo! Sports.

Along with Schaefer, rookie Gavin McKenna, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2026 draft, will be living with his Maple Leaf’s teammate, John Tavares.

McKenna, who has only lived with the Tavares’ for a few weeks, has already made an impression on the family.

“He’s great with them,” Tavares said in an article from NHL.com regarding McKenna’s relationship with his kids. “As a parent, I can’t say enough about how much I appreciate how amazing he is interacting with them. He’s fit in seamlessly with our family.”

With these stories and shared experiences between veterans and rookies, it goes to show you that success is often achieved from the encouragement of those you’re surrounded by.

“What I’ve tried to tell him, and Auston [Matthews] has done the same thing, is that people are going to love you and are excited to have you and believe in you,” Tavares said in the article from NHL.com.



FILE LOGO/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Connor McDavid walks through the tunnel to the rink. McDavid remembers his rookie days when he was looking for guidance.

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