

Colette’s Commentary: A new era for Team USA with familiar faces for UConn

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Team USA entered the FIBA Women’s Basketball World Cup looking for its fifth consecutive title. However, just before the start of the tournament, it was announced that star players A’ja Wilson and Kelsey Plum would not participate due to health reasons, forcing the national team to regroup and find a new identity. The tournament runs from Sept. 4 through Sept. 13 in Berlin, Germany, during a scheduled two-week break in the WNBA season.

Team USA has already put on a strong performance, proving it can step up and compete at a dominant level. Despite the absence of key players, both seasoned veterans and first-time World Cup players have stepped into larger roles and shown that Team USA’s depth remains a force to be reckoned with. The team kicked off the tournament with a dominant 94-61 win against China, powered by dominance in defense and speed in transition to overcome China’s size advantage. The team struggled in the second game against Italy and narrowly secured the 55-52 win. Both countries struggled offensively, but Team USA was able to power through and get the win in the end. The team bounced back in the next game with a



Paige Bueckers walks through the tunnel onto the court. The Dallas Wings guard is made her first appearance with the national team at the 2026 FIBA Women’s Basketball World Cup.
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formidable 41-point win against Czechia. The game captured an offensive bounce-back for the team and showed the strength of young reserves. The tournament marks a new era for women’s basketball, with multiple players making their debut on the national team. These players are Caitlin Clark, Paige Bueckers, Angel Reese, Aliyah Boston and Rhyne Howard. Additionally, Kiki Iriafen and Sonia Citron were added to the roster to replace Wilson and Plum.

The players are not the only ones making their debut; Kara Lawson, head coach for Duke women’s basketball, is making her debut as head coach of the national team. For fans of the University of Connecticut, however, the World Cup has provided another storyline to follow with three former Huskies wearing red, white and blue in Berlin. The three former Huskies offer a snapshot of the program’s evolution, each contributing a unique role to the roster. Bueckers has



Angel Reese and Aliyah Boston celebrate on the court at the 2026 FIBA Women’s Basketball World Cup. These players were essential to the success of the game.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @USABASKETBALL ON INSTAGRAM

made a significant impact on her World Cup debut. She has not only contributed offensively but is proving to be dominant on defense, leading Team USA in blocks per game at 1.3 and averaging 1.3 steals. Breanna Stewart is taking on a veteran role, competing with Team USA at the World Cup for fourth time. Stewart has already been through multiple generations of Team USA and is now being relied on to set the standard for the team. With Wilson’s absence on the frontcourt, Stewart’s

responsibility is further emphasized. She has already won three World Cups and could match Sue Bird’s record of four with a win in this tournament. Napheesa Collier is also taking on a veteran role. Collier is the type of versatility the team needs, especially without Wilson and Plum, exceling in multiple areas. Team USA has already shown to be a dominant force, but its uneven performance against Italy showed the road to

another World Cup title may be less straightforward than in previous years. For UConn fans, the rest of the tournament will offer an opportunity to watch three generations of Huskies chase another championship, something Huskies are no strangers to, each playing a different role on a team attempting to remain at the top of the international game. The next test for Team USA will be Sept.10 in the Quarterfinals against Hungary.

Moneyball Weekly: The Post-Skubal Tigers

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The Detroit Tigers have found themselves in major headlines at this time of year each of the last three seasons. In 2024, it was because they made an impossible comeback to make the playoffs. In 2025, it was because they blew a historic division lead and almost missed it entirely.

The common theme of all three years has been lefty ace Tarik Skubal. In 2026, those headlines were about him being sent away at the trade deadline.

Until just over a month ago, Skubal had spent his entire career in the Motor City, from being drafted in the ninth round back in 2018 to winning back-to-back American League Cy Youngs each of the last two seasons.

With major team struggles heading into the August 3 trade deadline, the Tigers opted to move Skubal and righty Casey Mize, who are both pending unrestricted free agents. The team now looks to the future to find stability without its former anchor.

The rotation should look similar to what it does now next year, with three arms effectively locked into spots and Reese Olson likely to earn one barring injury setback. The fifth spot will either go to Keider Montero, who’s performed in his time as a starter this season, or River Ryan, who should be ready to make the jump to the majors next year after coming to Detroit in the Skubal deal. Though Ryan’s standard numbers in AAA haven’t been ideal this year, an underlying xFIP of 3.43 bodes well for his future performance.

Every rotation needs its ace, something Detroit will have to find post-Skubal.



Tarik Skubal waves to the crowd. This was his last game as a Tiger before he plays for the Dodgers.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @TARIKSKUBAL ON INSTAGRAM.

Aces can come out of nowhere, with Skubal being the prime example of this, but as of now it’s unclear who that may be. Troy Melton’s sub-2.50 ERA bodes well for him to man that spot in the near future, but an xFIP of 4.16 may raise eyebrows about sustainability. Bullpens are volatile year-to-year, but Detroit does have the rumblings of a great pen brewing. Tyler Holton, Drew Sommers and Jacob Waguespack highlight a group rich with promise for middle relief and setup roles. The closer role is still a void for now, though the general turnover of the position makes it possible somebody internal could step up. If Detroit isn’t comfortable with that,

Yankees’ David Bednar will be a hot commodity to try to poach. Where the pitching has depth, the bats do not and the holes will likely have to be filled externally. Max Clark, Dillon Dingler and rookie of the year favorite Kevin McGonigle have solidified long-term roles as the team’s core, along with the already-established Riley Greene. Colt Keith and Kerry Carpenter are both likely to stick around as platoons, and Spencer Torkelson’s power and 2025 season should keep him rostered for at least one more year. With no immediate in-house options, along with a surplus of salary available after trading Mize and Skubal, the Tigers will likely have to pivot towards

free agency to fill their hitting vacancies, with one infielder and one outfielder needed. Chicago Cubs’ corner outfielder Ian Happ jumps out as a quality option, as though the switch hitter is having a down year analytically, his surface numbers remain acceptable and his history supports it being a fluke year. Another alternative could be Taylor Ward, though his struggles since joining the Seattle Mariners could steer Detroit away. Top prospect Zyhir Hope, the other main piece of the Skubal return, has a solid chance to crack the Tigers roster at some point in 2027, though that will likely be later in the year. As a result, Detroit could look for the outfield solu-

tion to be a one-year one. The infield boils down to two ideal options, both being second basemen. Luis Arraez could bring a consistently high batting average to the team, though his quality fielding this year is an anomaly compared to the rest of his career. The competition will also be steep, making it far from guaranteed that Detroit could land him. The other choice is the New York Yankees’ Jazz Chisholm Jr. Though Chisholm is having the worst year of his career, he still shows flashes of excellence and holds major potential to bounce back. There is risk that he does not return to his 2025 form, but his performance this year will lower his contract ask and make the number

more manageable should that occur. It never seemed like the Tigers were that serious about giving Skubal the money and term he was asking for, and the result of him going to the Dodgers will likely be brought up in collective bargaining agreement discussions when the deal expires in a few months. From the Tigers’ standpoint, they haven’t been destroyed by the loss of their two best arms. In-house pitching solutions will allow Detroit to focus the money freed by the trades on adding to a lineup that has had glaring issues for multiple years now. The pivot back to the playoffs after losing Skubal could be far quicker than it may seem.