

NINA MOINI: Coming up in just over an hour is the next World Cup match. Belgium plays Egypt in Seattle. And Minnesota's not hosting any matches this summer. But there are plenty of places around the Twin Cities where fans are gathering to be part of this moment. We have a list of those locations at mprnews.org for you, including free watch parties at Peavey Plaza downtown. Hans Graf was there with his family, his wife and baby yesterday, rooting for Germany.

HANS GRAF: My family has supported Germany ever since I was little. I remember watching all the World Cups since 2002. And now that we have our daughter, we wanted to bring her to her first game.

NINA MOINI: Her first World Cup.

HANS GRAF: First World Cup, make it a big event.

NINA MOINI: Germany beat Curacao 7 to 1. It was an incredibly busy weekend for sports. The NBA and NHL had their 2026 championships. The Twins have a series win. And the Lynx had fans on the edge of their seats with a close loss to the Aces.

Joining me to talk about all this are sports contributors Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Hey, guys, happy Monday.

BOTH: Happy Monday.

NINA MOINI: Just getting everyone caught up on the World Cup. It's so long. It's a long process. So it's kind of just getting kicked off.

But Wally, the New York Knicks won their first championship in more than 50 years-- amazing. And in hockey, Carolina won their first Stanley Cup in 20 years. What's on your mind after these big wins?

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Well, that hockey and basketball are over probably for about five minutes, actually. Because before you know it, they're talking about the draft and training camp. And they'll be starting all over again in another couple of months.

No, a couple of series that went to the teams that I kind of thought were going to win it-- Carolina had to finish things off last night. As you mentioned, they win 3 to 0. They win their second Stanley Cup in team history.

You mentioned it, 20 years ago. So it was 2006 when they won their first. They beat Las Vegas last night. They win the series, 4 games to 2.

If you're looking for a Minnesota tie, Mike Riley, a member of the Hurricanes, he was a Golden Gopher--

NINA MOINI: There you go.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: --one time. And then, in basketball, the NBA, the Knicks closed out the Spurs on Saturday to win their first title, as you mentioned again, since 1973. Jalen Brunson had 45 points. He was terrific in the postseason.

And of course, the big tie to Minnesota there would be the big guy, Karl-Anthony Towns. He only had 2 points in that Game 5 victory. But he had 10 rebounds, 3 steals. And he has been a huge part of their success getting to where they got to.

I mean, he was tasked with trying to stop and/or slow down Victor Wembanyama. And I think that they succeeded. They won a title. New York's going crazy. They'll have the ticker tape parade and so on and so forth-- so good for the Knicks, good for KAT, not so good for Minnesota.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. And KAT seems like he really appreciates, though, his time here in Minnesota. And he's still close with some teammates. Let's talk about some of these Minnesota teams.

The Lynx lost this weekend. And the Twins won 2 out of 3 games, kind of a reversal of what we've been seeing for a long time now, Eric.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, you're absolutely right. But I'm still going to start with the Lynx, because they have a better record than the Twins. And they're at home tonight. So if you don't have anything to do, you can go there or to the high school baseball Championship Game between Champlin Park and Rosemount at Target Field.

But as far as basketball, goes Portland Fire-- they're 7 and 8-- at the Minnesota Lynx tonight-- 10 and 3, the Lynx record on the season. This is a WNBA Commissioner's Cup game. They'll tip it off at 7:00 PM at Target Center. And the Lynx are tied with Las Vegas on top of the WNBA standings.

And Minnesota has won 5 straight games at home. But as you said, the Aces knocked off the Lynx Saturday night in Vegas, 100 to 97. A'ja Wilson, she's their superstar. A'ja scored 24 points and had 10 rebounds. So it was a double double.

Meanwhile, the Expansion Fire are literally a hot ticket in Oregon. The Fire broke WNBA records by drawing a sold-out crowd of 19,335 for their home opener earlier this season. Portland has surpassed 15,000 season ticket deposits just after the team's brand revival. And by comparison, the Lynx averaged about 9,000 or 10,000 fans per game.

And they usually have a tarp in the upper deck. So capacity, they shrink it at Target Center. So they are thirsting for WNBA action out there in the Pacific Northwest. And it's the second time Portland's had a franchise. They did have the original Portland Fire back in 2000. They only played two seasons-- so Fire and Lynx tonight at Target Center.

As far as the Twins go, they'll be playing in a state that feels like you're on fire. That's Texas. But the good news is the Rangers have a retractable roof venue. They will seal the roof shut. It'll be indoor baseball.

Mike Paredes on the mound for Minnesota, MacKenzie Gore for the Rangers. This will be just the second Major League start for Paredes. The Twins, even though they're 6.5 games behind the Chicago White Sox and Cleveland in the AL Central, did take 2 of 3 over the weekend from the St. Louis Cardinals in Minneapolis. And St. Louis has the third best record in the National League.

So winning this series is a definite positive for Minnesota. We'll see if it's a springboard to getting hot. And then Byron Buxton, 22 taters on the season.

NINA MOINI: Taters!

ERIC NELSON: Third most home runs in Major League Baseball. Yes, I had to duck him taters.

NINA MOINI: [LAUGHING]

All right, taters as in home runs, right?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah.

NINA MOINI: I had to remind myself. So, Wally, you've got some arena news. What's this I'm reading here about Williams Arena is getting a name change over at the U of M?

WALLY It is. I guess, this coming Friday, they will officially become The Barn. Now, we've always kind of known it as The
LANGFELLOW: Barn. It's been its nickname because of the way it looks, its shape and so on.

And you can't blame them for taking the money. They're going to get about \$17 million over the next 10 years for a sponsorship from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. So they're already getting their money's worth. It's here on MPR.

But it's been called Williams Arena since 1950. Originally, it was called the Minnesota Field House, named after Henry Williams in 1950. He coached football at the U from 1900 to 1921 and put up a record of 136 wins and 33 losses and 11 ties.

That's an unbelievable record. He won over 100 games more than he lost in his 22 years. But here's the interesting part. This is what I wanted to bring this up. University of Minnesota announces that they make no mention of Henry Williams in their announcement about the Blue Cross Blue Shield, and the changing of the name to The Barn.

So I thought that they kind of slighted Henry in that way. But it is what it is. They're going to take their \$17 million.

One other note-- I wanted to get a slip of baseball [INAUDIBLE]. Eric mentioned Target Field is the home to the Champlin Park and Rosemont Class 4A Championship Game tonight in baseball.

There are three other games. One is already done. Madelia won the Class A title this morning. They beat Red Lake County 11 to 1 in 6 innings. There are two more games this afternoon. And then the night game is Rosemont and Champlin Park. And Eric and I will be doing that one on the radio.

NINA MOINI: Awesome. Awesome.

WALLY Yeah.

LANGFELLOW:

NINA MOINI: Well, guys, I'm so sorry to hear about the loss of beloved sports journalist, Larry Fitzgerald, Sr, who died this month at the age of 71. I understand his funeral was this weekend, Eric. And I understand you were there.

Again, I'm so sorry for your loss. I know you worked alongside one another. And he was a really big part of Minnesota sports history. Can you tell us a little bit about Larry, if you'd like?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, absolutely, Nina. It was an uplifting yet somber day Saturday. Hundreds of us celebrated the life of Larry Fitzgerald. We paid our respects in Minneapolis.

And this guy was a Twin Cities legend. I did a lot of radio with Larry over the years, took a lot of road trips with him. And he really was a giant in so many ways, a fantastic father to Larry, Jr, the Hall of Fame wide receiver from Minneapolis, Marcus, another fabulous kid, and his daughter, [? Kee. ?]

And he was a great husband to his late-wife, Carol, and his current wife, Sharri, just unbelievable, salt of the Earth people. It was a tight-knit family fueled by love and respect. And I can tell you-- and Wally would agree with this.

As a broadcaster and a columnist, Larry was a pressbox fixture in the Twin Cities. No one went to more games, Vikings, Twins, Timberwolves, Wild, Gophers. He showed up at countless major events. He would have been there in San Antonio when the Knicks knocked off the Spurs the other night if he were around.

And he went to-- get this, Nina-- 45 straight Super Bowls.

NINA MOINI: Wow.

ERIC NELSON: There's only been 60. And I was telling a friend of mine the other day, we think of AI as Artificial Intelligence. Larry, to me, was the original AI, except it stood for Authentic Individual. He had some charm, and he was unique.

And I do want to finish with this note. He was a huge Chicago White Sox fan. He grew up in the Windy City. I follow the LA Dodgers. I'm from SoCal. We would always butt heads about our respective teams.

Two years ago, the White Sox were historically bad. We threw a lot of verbal barbs at him. But this past weekend in Chicago, in the same time frame, we said goodbye to Larry, his first-place White Sox knocked off my back-to-back champion Dodgers, 2 out of 3--

NINA MOINI: Oh, there you go.

ERIC NELSON: --on the South side. And if Larry were here today, he would put his finger in my chest and say, I told you so. The White Sox are back. And I'm happy for that.

NINA MOINI: [LAUGHING]

All right, Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson, thank you both so much. And thank you, all, for joining us. Have a great rest of your afternoon.

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