

NINA MOINI: Well, it's Monday, which means we've got more sports for you. Contributors Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson are joining me, as they do each week to break down the biggest sports news in Minnesota and sometimes beyond. Hey, guys. Happy Monday.

WALLY Happy 6th of July.

LANGFELLOW:

NINA MOINI: Happy 6th of July. Hope you both had a great weekend. Wally, the World Cup-- lots going on here. The US plays Belgium tonight in the round of 16. Will Star, Folarin Balogun.

WALLY Very good.

LANGFELLOW:

NINA MOINI: Folarin Balogun will be on the field? I've been wondering.

WALLY Well, you and just about everybody else. As of right now, 12:49 Central Time, yes, he will be on the field tonight
LANGFELLOW: for the United States. That may or may not change between now and 7 PM tonight when the game kicks off in Seattle. As you mentioned, the US takes on Belgium. Balogun famously was red-carded in their last game against Bosnia last week, which means you get thrown out of the game you're playing plus one more, and that's the rule. It's in black and white.

But apparently President Trump made a call to the FIFA president, the head of the soccer association that runs the World Cup and said, hey, can anything be done? And the president is right to have said-- and he was right that-- I thought it was a bad call. I thought the US was getting the short end of the stick. Now, that's just one person's opinion. Well, it's a lot of people's opinion, but it probably should have been a call that was left alone.

So what they've done is they have now said that his suspension will still occur, but they're going to put it out over a year's time. So he's not necessarily going to have to serve it right now, which means he can play tonight. So that's the big controversy. If they win tonight, they move on to the quarterfinals, which is as deep as they've been since the 2002 team made it to the quarterfinals. We'll see if they can do it.

This is a team that they lost badly to in an exhibition game a couple of months ago. This Belgium team is very good, so we'll see how it turns out tonight. But yes, as of right now, Folarin Balogun will play tonight. And he was very good against Bosnia. And he's a key member of the team, no question about it. But I think perhaps we have now turned into the bad guys in the world of soccer in this rule being changed midstream.

NINA MOINI: OK. So let's talk about the Twins. They won their series against the Yankees in New York for the first time in a while, Eric, right? What happened?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. I'll tell you what, Nina. Typically, the Yankees are kryptonite for the Twins, but not this past weekend. Minnesota got the victory yesterday, 6 to 1. Joe Ryan, their pitcher, put on a Broadway-like performance in New York City, giving up just three hits. He threw seven scoreless innings, and the Twins won a series at Yankee Stadium for the first time since 2014. Start spreading the news.

And how about this? Over the July 4th weekend, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty-- the Twins put on their own fireworks show on July 4th and 5th, outscoring the Yankees 17 to 5 in the final two games of the series. Now, New York is not playing very well. The Yankees have lost 9 of 10. They don't have their superstar, Aaron Judge. He's out with an injury. But nonetheless, the Twins are thrilled to leave New York City with a series win.

There was a caveat, though. Byron Buxton left the game with a hip injury after being thrown out trying to steal second base in the first inning. Hopefully this is not going to linger. And some other good news for the Twins. Once again, Minnesota will have two players in the All-Star game next week in Philadelphia. That's a week from tomorrow.

Buxton goes again. This will be his third trip to the All-Star game. And Ryan, who will make his second appearance as an All-Star. Twins back in action tomorrow night at Target Field against Cleveland. Joey Cantillo for the Guardians-- he's 7 and 3. Taj Bradley for the Twins-- he's 7 and 3. Key series, Nina. Twins are three games behind the second place Guardians and four back of the first place Chicago White Sox, and very much in the wild card hunt in the American League.

NINA MOINI: All right. Great update. Thanks. So the Lynx lost to New York this weekend. What's next for them, Wally?

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Well, they play tonight. They've got Connecticut tonight at Target Center. And it's significant, insofar as head coach Cheryl Reeve, if the Lynx were to win, will pick up win number 380. That would mean she would become the winningest regular season coach in WNBA history. And again, that's tonight at 7:00.

They did not get that win, number 380. As you mentioned on Friday night, they lost to the Liberty 99-86. Breanna Stewart went off for New York. She had 36 points for New York. And oh, by the way-- the New York Liberty, that's the team that the Lynx lost to in the WNBA finals back in 2024. The Lynx are now 15 and 5 on the season, still with a WNBA best record. But again, tonight-- big match-up for them to beat Connecticut and give Cheryl Reeve that honor of being the winningest coach in WNBA history.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, we recently had some great coverage on Cheryl Reeve, too. Our own Anika Besst went down to interview the coach down in Tennessee, so people can check that out at [mprnews.org](https://www.mprnews.org). *The Athletic* is reporting that the Timberwolves are trying to bring on LeBron James. I don't know. Even I read that, and I was like, could that happen? I don't know. What do you think, Eric?

ERIC NELSON: Well, there is a chance because right now, LeBron James is a superstar without a team. He's a free agent. He told the LA Lakers recently, I'm not coming back. So could he come to Minnesota? Well, DraftKings has put out some odds.

The most likely landing spot for LeBron, the King, is Cleveland. He played there twice, and he's from Akron, Ohio, so that makes sense. Second one would be Golden State, that's up the coast from Los Angeles in San Francisco. Then Miami-- he's also played for the Heat. Philadelphia is on the list. Denver, Washington, New York is seventh. Minnesota's eighth on the DraftKings odds list to get LeBron James.

Now, Timberwolves nation is certainly hoping that the team can lure LeBron to the Twin Cities. And you can make a case for this, Nina. First of all, he's the NBA's all-time leading scorer. He's played in 22 All-Star games. He's a four-time NBA champion. But what he would do to Minnesota is bring some cachet and gravitas to the team. And he would be a voice in the room.

I think he could be a compass for these young Timberwolves stars, like Anthony Edwards and the newcomer, LaMelo Ball. And he could be the power forward Minnesota is trying to get. They've got to find someone to play that position in the coming season. So it's a huge wish, but you never know. And I would expect LeBron's decision comes any day now. If he's smart, he will wait until after this Belgium-US soccer match and maybe make the decision tomorrow or Wednesday so he can get maximum amount of attention from the media and all the stuff that comes with signing with a new team.

NINA MOINI: And Eric, who would the Wolves get maybe if they couldn't get LeBron or if they didn't get LeBron?

ERIC NELSON: Well, they'll go out and-- it's a good question. They'll go out and scour the free agent list. They may just have to insert somebody from the current roster. The odds of LeBron coming here are probably not very good. But from the fit of, hey, I'll come in, I'll play significant minutes, and I can help a young team chase that championship-- I think you can build a case for LeBron coming to Minnesota. But it's a huge wish, as I said.

NINA MOINI: By some miracle, we got about a minute left, guys. So I gotta know, where are you guys watching the World Cup tonight? Eric?

ERIC NELSON: I'm actually in the Los Angeles area.

NINA MOINI: You always are. Wow.

ERIC NELSON: I am, yeah.

NINA MOINI: Jet setting.

ERIC NELSON: I was watching last night. They lost. But the Mexico team losing to England out here in SoCal was devastating. I was at a Dodgers game, and there were more fans with Mexico jerseys than Shohei Ohtani jerseys. So I'll find a spot to watch it out here. It's going to be festive. And of course, they've hosted some World Cup matches in Inglewood, which is right next to Los Angeles.

NINA MOINI: Wally, how about you? I don't know if you can compete with that, but I wonder where you'll be.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: I can't. But I did go to Peavey Plaza last week, which is where the Minnesota United were hosting everybody downtown, right across from Brit's Pub. Yeah, I went to the soccer crowd last week. I might go there again tonight. That's a distinct possibility.

We'll see. But yeah, it's fun. And it got a huge screen, and they're giving away tickets to Minnesota United games. So yeah, a lot of good things happening in downtown Minneapolis. If I had my druthers, it works out, I'll be at Peavey Plaza.

NINA MOINI: All right, you guys-- always appreciate you. Have a great Monday and a great rest of your week.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. You too, Nina.

NINA MOINI: That's sports contributors Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson.