

NINA MOINI: If there is a World-Cup-shaped hole in your heart this week, you might turn your attention to Minnesota's professional soccer team. This week, the Loons are headed to Kansas City, which is also getting back to the regular MLS season after hosting some World Cup games. Joining me now to talk about this and much more are sports contributors, Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Hey, guys, happy Monday.

WALLY Happy Monday.

LANGFELLOW:

ERIC NELSON: Same to you, Nina.

NINA MOINI: Well, we just talked about the World Cup some. What's it like for these teams, though, do you think, Eric, to be coming back from a long World Cup break?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, that's going to be real interesting to monitor, Nina. You mentioned, Minnesota United will play Sporting KC on Wednesday night in Kansas. The Loons right now are eighth place in the Western Conference of Major League Soccer with 22 points. SKC is in 15th place. That would be bottom of the heap with just 11 points.

The question is, for Minnesota United, is too much rest going to equal too much rust? Minn U's last match that counted was a 1, 1 draw against Real Salt Lake on May 23 in St. Paul.

NINA MOINI: Wow.

ERIC NELSON: So we're going to find out just how long it's going to take these elite athletes to get back into MLS match shape. Now, I should point out, the Loons have been practicing and scrimmaging at the National Sports Center, their headquarters, in Blaine. Minnesota. United has had tune-up matches against Colorado, Real Salt Lake the Chicago Fire.

Meanwhile, Sporting KC actually played last Thursday and lost to St. Louis City FC 3 to 2 in that I-70 Missouri rivalry. Two Loons participated in the 2026 World Cup. Defender, Michael Boxall, was part of the New Zealand team. And midfielder, Carlos Harvey, was with Panama. Sporting KC had just one player. That was Mo Abualnadi, who played for the Jordan national team.

If you're wondering, when can you see the Loons in St. Paul again, that'll be Saturday. It'll be Vancouver at Minnesota United. And the Whitecaps are on top of Major League Soccer's Western Conference with 32 points, tied with San Jose. And they had three players in the World Cup. And as your guest just pointed out, I think Major League Soccer, hoping for a huge World Cup bounce and is optimistic that the sport's popularity will now continue to grow in North America, including the Twin Cities.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, I'm sure they will get a big bump in just interest and excitement. Wally, I love to talk to you about the Twins, as you know. I know you are watching their journey closely. They had a rough loss to the Cubs yesterday in Chicago, I understand. What happened?

WALLY Oh, boy. Well, what didn't happen is they didn't score much. They lost 10 to 1.

LANGFELLOW:

NINA MOINI: [LAUGHING]

WALLY What did happen is that Zeb Matthews, their starting pitcher, got bombed, gave up 8 runs in 3 innings. So that's
LANGFELLOW: not good. And their starting pitching is looking shaky as they try to go down the stretch here, a combination of injuries and young guys just not coming through at this juncture. It looks like this is going to be a rough go for the Twins.

Now, that's not to say they can't win baseball games. And it's not to say that they're out of it by any stretch. Because as we've talked about time and time again, they're in the American League Central, which is a very mediocre division, with Chicago up on the Twins by 4 games. Cleveland is just a game out behind Chicago. So they are only a couple games behind Cleveland.

And they play Cleveland starting tonight. They got four with Cleveland in Cleveland tonight. Now, yesterday's game, one of the big snafus was a Luke Keaschall misplay out in center field. A base hit turned into a triple or three bases for the Cubs and went downhill from there.

So there's good news here. If you were watching that and saying, oh, where's Byron Buxton? When's he going to come off the injured list? Well, I have the answer for you. He's off the injured list.

He will play tonight, supposedly. Because he has been activated. Of course, 25 home runs-- he is their All-Star center fielder who did not play in the All-Star Game because of the hip injury. So the good news is Byron Buxton is back.

The bad news is they kind of had a rough weekend, losing two out of three to the Cubs. We'll see. This could be pivotal for the Twins. If they can win three out of four, maybe sweep Cleveland, at minimum get a split here, I think that they'll hopefully stay in it for the long haul, and they won't trade away all their assets before the trade deadline. But if they are to go down the tubes here against Cleveland, if they lose three out of four, if they lose all four of them, be prepared for what we saw last year when they cleaned house and made a lot of trades before the trade deadline, which is at the end of the month.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, well, I guess, if you still have some hope, I know there is definitely some hope to have, Wally.

WALLY Yes. There is hope.

LANGFELLOW:

NINA MOINI: Let's talk about the Lynx. It's Pacific Northwest week, it seems, for the Lynx. They beat Portland this weekend. And now they're going on to Seattle. What are you going to be watching for there, Wally?

WALLY Well, they're on a four-game winning streak right now. As you mentioned, they beat Portland 101, 93. I'm still
LANGFELLOW: watching and waiting for the return of Napheesa Collier. I think what they're going to do is they're going to wait until after the All-Star Game, which is this coming Saturday.

The All-Star Game is in Chicago on Saturday. And I think that they're just going to wait. They've got the best record in the WNBA right now. They're at 20 and 6.

NINA MOINI: Nice.

WALLY As I mentioned, they won 101, 93 over Portland on Saturday. Kayla McBride had a big game, 24 points on
LANGFELLOW: Saturday, Olivia Miles, the rookie, 14 points, 10 assists. Natasha Howard had 16 points and 7 rebounds. So they're able to spread the wealth.

And they've got other players, like Nia Coffey, that have been big contributors, as well. I just think that they feel like they're in such a good position that they don't need to rush her back. And obviously, we were talking about June for her coming back.

Now we're late July. I think we can honestly call it late July. She still isn't back.

But I have a feeling that they're going to wait till after the All-Star Game, which is in Chicago this weekend. And of course, the Lynx will be well represented, including Cheryl Reeve, who will be the head coach of one of the two teams. And she'll be coaching Caitlin Clark, oh, by the way. That's the part of the club that she has been assigned to for the weekend.

NINA MOINI: Nice, a lot of big names. OK, Eric, so last week, there was a huge youth soccer tournament that took place there in Blaine. This week, some of the world's best golfers are headed there. Could you set the stage for us for this year's 3M Open?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, it is 3M Open week in TPC Twin Cities in Blaine. This will be the eighth 3M Open. And Scottie Scheffler, the top-ranked player on the globe, is the marquee golfer in this annual PGA tournament event. Scheffler finished tied for fourth place at the Open Championship in Southport, England, which took place over the weekend. That's one of golf's four majors.

And getting Scheffler to play in Minnesota is a coup. It is a monumental achievement. Because only four other golfers ranked number one have ever played in the North Star State. So even if you're on the fringe of, hey, I kind of like golf, go out and check out Scottie Scheffler this week in Blaine.

He's won four major championships, the Masters twice, the PGA Championship and the 2025 Open Championship. He got a gold medal at the 2024 Paris Olympics. And you can say that Scheffler has clearly won the golf lottery. He has made \$210 million in his career. Only Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy--

NINA MOINI: Wow.

ERIC NELSON: --are the other golfers to be in the \$100-million-plus club for earnings. By the way, the purse out at the 3M Open is \$8.8 million. The winner gets \$1.584 million.

NINA MOINI: OK.

ERIC NELSON: Tuesday's Golf For All Day Kids Event, Randall McDaniel, John Randle, Wally Szczerbiak will be out there--

NINA MOINI: Wow. All right.

ERIC NELSON: --ex-athletes. Wednesday, the Pro-Am, Larry Fitzgerald, Jr, Adam Thielen, Kevin O'Connell, Matt Boldy scheduled to play. And Thursday, round one begins in Blaine.

NINA MOINI: All right. Thanks so much, guys-- sports contributors, Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson.