

THE SPORTIER

The Conclusion of the Astros Scandal

After a lengthy investigation, the Astros cheating scandal dating back to the 2017 Postseason has concluded. This whole investigation began with former Astros pitcher Mike Fiers, who played with the Astros during the 2017 season, leaking information publicly that the Astros used technology to cheat their way to a World Series title. This led to a league-wide investigation conducted by the Astros and MLB. After an investigation conducted this past winter, the Astros were found to have been using specialized cameras from center field at their home park, and those cameras relayed a feed in which they were able to see the opposing catcher's signs. They quickly decoded the signs, and that allowed them to know which pitch was coming every time. They relayed this information to the batter by, oddly enough, banging on trash cans to signal whether the upcoming pitch was an off-speed pitch or a fastball. Additionally, though not confirmed, many people speculate that the Astros also implemented the use of electronic buzzers, embedded in the jerseys of players, as a more efficient way of knowing the pitches. For a little bit of background information, sign stealing is actually part of the game of baseball and is done by many clubs. It can often be encouraged, as it is part of the strategy of the game. This does not include using specialized technology that the other team does not have access to, though. The Astros implemented the use of external devices to devise this intricate master plan, which eventually was exposed. Recently, what foreseeably will be the final penalties of this scandal were handed out. Firstly, for the Astros, manager at the time AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow were both suspended for a year, then subsequently fired. The Astros were deprived of their first and second-round picks in both the 2020 and 2021 seasons, along with a hefty \$5 million fine. Additionally, the man who was believed to have been the main leader behind this operation, at-the-time Astros bench coach Alex Cora, "mutually-parted ways" with the Boston Red Sox, for whom he had managed for since the 2018 season. Cora also may have taken part in cheating during the Red Sox's 2018 World Series run. Finally, Carlos Beltrán, who was a player on the Astros at this time, was the only player mentioned in Commissioner Robert Manfred's report on this incident. He had assisted in improving the cheating system, according to the report. Beltrán, who was hired to manage the New York Mets this past November, recently parted ways with the team, without even managing a single game. Conclusively, the actions that the Astros made created significant effects for multiple organizations, not just the Astros themselves. The commissioner took large measures to punish the Astros, but will it be enough to scare away other teams from doing the same?



Zion's Debut

At last, high school and college phenomenon Zion Williamson made his NBA debut on Wednesday. Williamson, the first overall pick in the 2019 NBA Draft, had famously injured his knee last year while playing at Duke, as his foot burst through the Sid of his shoe. In the preseason NBA Summer League games, Zion reinjured his knee, this time, he needed surgery to repair a torn meniscus. He was expected to return within 6-8 weeks, but a long rehab schedule pushed him back to just this past week. Though people believed that Zion was too big to be an efficient NBA athlete, he surprised everyone with his debut against the San Antonio Spurs. Though Zion's team, the New Orleans Pelicans, eventually lost, Zion had an incredible performance. Playing a restricted 18 minutes total, Williamson recorded a remarkable 22 points, 17 of those coming in the fourth quarter. Though Zion is a large kid, he was also able to knock down 4 three-pointers, showcasing an unknown skill of his. Through his first two games, after recording 15 points against the Denver Nuggets, Zion is the first player in NBA history to attempt 20 shots in his first two games and make 75% of them. This shows just how efficient a player Zion Williamson is, and it should lead to a promising future in the NBA.



Fun Fact

With the Super Bowl 54 matchup set between the Kansas City Chiefs and San Francisco 49ers, here is what happened last time each team reached the Super Bowl:

Chiefs: The Chiefs first and only Super Bowl appearance before next week's game was Super Bowl IV (4), which took place on January 11, 1970. The Chiefs defeated the Minnesota Vikings in this Super Bowl, 23-7. Back during this time, there was no AFC and NFC. Instead, there were two leagues, the AFL and the NFL, and the champions of each league would compete in the Super Bowl. The Chiefs won the AFL, and eventually, the Super Bowl.

49ers: The last Super Bowl appearance for the 49ers was much more recent than the Chiefs' previous appearance. On February 3, 2013, the 49ers faced the Baltimore Ravens in Super Bowl XLVII (47). In this high scoring game, the Ravens eventually came away with the win, 34-31. Brothers Jim (49ers) and John (Ravens) Harbaugh coached against each other, which has never happened before or since this game.



Sources

[ESPN](#)

[MLB/Astros Report](#)

[The Athletic](#)

[The Guardian](#)

[Pro Football Reference](#)