

THE SPORTIER

Inside the Bubble

It has been just over one week since the NBA made its return inside of its closed-off bubble at Disney World in Orlando. Going into the bubble, everybody knew that the season could end unpredictably, but some plots that have developed during the past handful of games are very interesting. Probably the biggest storyline that has developed in the bubble is the excellence of Devin Booker, and his ability to carry the Phoenix Suns. The Suns, along with four other teams that were not yet in the playoffs from the Western Conference, sat 6 games behind the 8th seeded Memphis Grizzlies, and 2 games back of being eligible for a play-in game against the 8th seed should they reach the 9th seed. Now, the Suns are only 2 games back from the Grizzlies, only needing to surpass the Portland Trail Blazers to have a play-in game against Memphis. The surprise story has come through a combination of poor play from the Grizzlies, who have a record of 1-4 in the bubble, and the undefeated, 5-0 Suns, led by guard Devin Booker and his 29.4 points per game in Orlando. Though it seemed that including the Suns in the bubble was unnecessary, they have created a great position for themselves to succeed. Another storyline is the surprisingly poor play by the Western Conference's number one seed, the Los Angeles Lakers. Though the Lakers, headed by MVP finalist LeBron James and superstar center Anthony Davis, have the third toughest schedule in the bubble, they have underperformed nonetheless. Though LeBron is averaging above 20 points per game in the 6 games that have been played for the team, the Lakers' 2-4 record reflects the streaky performances of Anthony Davis and the team's lack of motivation after clinching the number one seed in the West. James believes that playing in an empty gym, which he has not done since before joining the popular St. Vincent-St. Mary high school basketball team in 1999, can be uncomfortable, with him saying that, "It's very dark, extremely dark. You can literally hear a feather hit the ground." The Lakers' struggles would likely be erased with a handful of playoff wins, though the few regular season games may influence their play down the road.

As you can see, the bubble is making basketball more unpredictable. Teams can go on streaks and find their way into the playoffs, or teams can slump and fall down the wrong path. Either way, there is very little time for teams to make a large impact, so every game counts.

MLB COVID Update

With the MLB's COVID-19 situation worsening, with more and more players testing positive, here are some updated numbers for you to know:

- In the newest round of testing, 13 more new cases came back positive.
- Since June 27, when testing began, more than 111 players have tested positive for the virus.
- In addition to the 24 postponed games, the Cardinals' upcoming series against the Pittsburgh Pirates has been outright cancelled due to more players testing positive on the St. Louis side.

The MLB's situation is worsening by the day. The system which holds players being responsible for themselves, as there is no bubble like the NBA, has proven to be very unreliable, and may just be the downfall of the 2020 MLB season.



Colorado Rockies outfielder Charlie Blackmon wearing a face covering

Sources:

[ESPN](#), [Arizona Sports](#), [CBS Sports](#), [ESPN](#), [USA Today](#), [Bleacher Report](#), [CBS Sports](#), [MLB Trade Rumors](#)