

The Sportier: Year Review 2020

By: Kiran Pathy



Recap the most influential moments
in sports of this past year!

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The Mahomes Show: Chiefs Win Super Bowl

From The Sportier Edition 75: “The first team to score 21 points of offense in the fourth quarter of a Super Bowl, the Chiefs lit a spark that was continually seen throughout the playoffs. With a 3.9% chance to win their first Super Bowl in 50 years, Kansas City needed a miracle to save them as they were down 20-10, facing a 3rd and 15 with 7 minutes remaining in the 4th quarter. With the odds seemingly stacked against them, the Chiefs were able to convert on this third down...with 29 yards to spare. A 44-yard blast down the field launched out of the cannon of Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes to receiver Tyreek Hill set the offense back in motion.”

Down 10 in the 4th quarter, the Chiefs used their explosive offense to regain a lead, a comeback led by Patrick Mahomes and his cannon arm that threw to 2 35+ yard passes in the 4th quarter. The Chiefs defense, which was the less lethal of the two sides of the football for Kansas City, was able to hold San Francisco to zero 4th quarter points enroute to their first Super Bowl victory in 50 years.



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Astros Face Consequences

From The Sportier Edition 73: “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.”

Even though individual players from the 2017 Astros squad were not punished by MLB, Commissioner Robert Manfred handed out punishments to others in the organization. The team as a whole lost their first and second round picks in both the 2020 and 2021 First-Year Player Drafts, while also receiving a hefty \$5 million fine (\$5 million is the largest fine a club can pay). Astros General Manager Jeff Luhnow, who was thought to have condoned the sign stealing, was banned from working during the entirety of the 2020 MLB season, and is currently out of a job. AJ Hinch, the manager of the Astros at the time who was also believed to have contributed to the sign stealing, was also suspended for the 2020 season, though he was just recently hired to manage the Detroit Tigers for the 2021 season. The only player that was mentioned in the commissioner’s report, Carlos Beltrán, was said to have been trying to improve sign stealing mechanisms. Beltrán, who had just been hired two months before the report to manage the New York Mets, was soon fired after the statement was published.

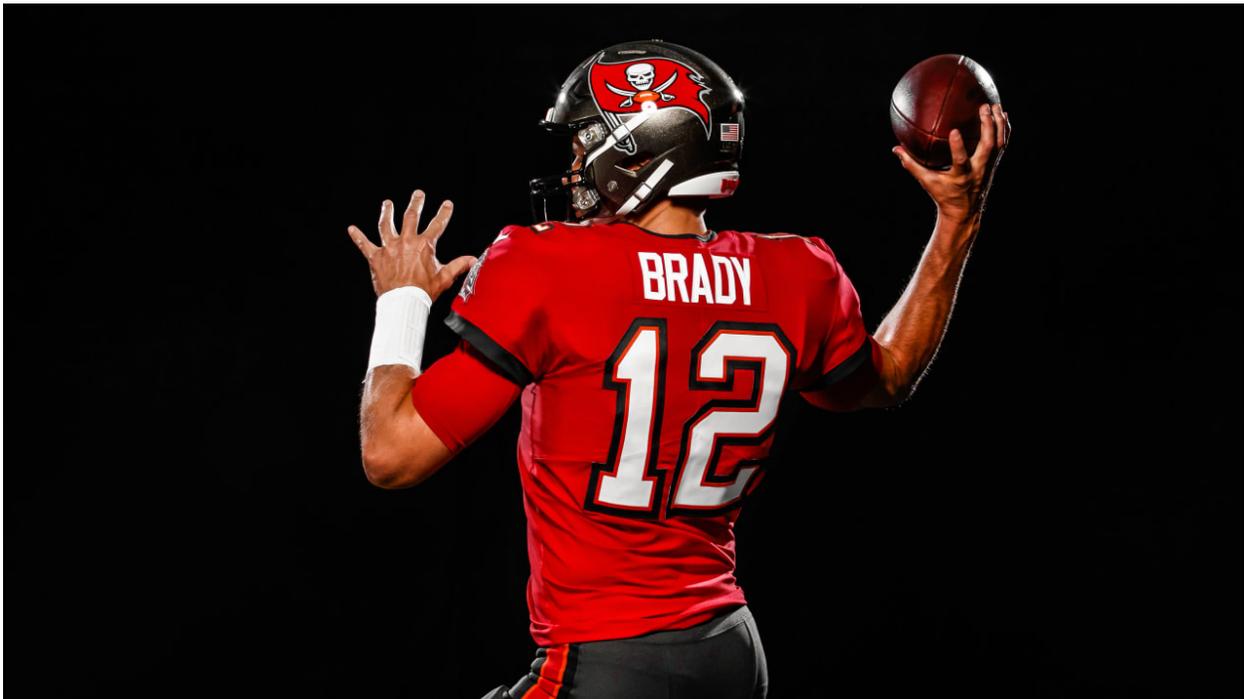


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Brady Departs from New England on a Sour Note

From The Sportier Edition 71: “Though it appeared to be a tough matchup and an almost sure win for the Patriots, the Titans pulled off the win last weekend, stunning the Patriots, and making what could be Tom Brady’s final pass in New England a pick-six.”

Following the Wild Card round of the 2019 Playoffs, the New England Patriots lost the greatest player in their franchise history. After a 20-13 loss to the underdog Titans, it was evident that Brady was leaving New England due to his depleted offensive weapons and the declining defensive unit of New England. On March 20, Brady inked a two year deal with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers that will likely bring him to the end of his NFL career, or very close to it. Brady looks to complete a Super Bowl run with Tampa Bay this season, while the Patriots may have to undergo a rebuild after their replacement quarterback, Cam Newton, and his supporting cast have clearly not been the answer.



3

Names Change as Protest Press On

From The Sportier Edition 96: “As we are in the midst of major social change in the United States and around the world, on July 3rd, the formerly Washington Redskins commenced the review of their controversial name, one which has been seen as offensive to the Native American community. This past Monday, the team officially removed its name, one that had been with the franchise since 1933 during their days in Boston. Many suspect that the decision comes on the heels of numerous sponsors of the team pushing to remove the potentially racist imagery to instead portray a more welcoming public image during the current social uprising in the country.”

On July 13, the formerly Washington Redskins removed their name, and replaced it with the name “Football Team” for the time being. The Washington Football Team was pressured into their name change, not only by indigenous tribes and activists, but by the “cultural awakening” that was happening as a result of the Black Lives Matter protests. The Black Lives Matter movement had other affects on sports as well. Players from all leagues protested police brutality, causing multiple cancellations across several leagues. The NBA, the league that did the most in terms of this movement, had the phrase “Black Lives Matter” painted on their basketball courts in the NBA Bubble, and also allowed players to display social justice messages on their jerseys. The NFL made small gestures to allow players to have messages on the back of their helmet, while MLB and the NHL made minor changes to accommodate for the movement. Finally, the Cleveland Indians, who removed their Chief Wahoo logo from their jerseys and caps prior to the 2014 season, have announced that they will also be changing their “Indians” name at the end of the 2021 season. This was due to similar reasons that the Washington Football Team faced, from many years of pressure from Native American tribes and the protests occurring across the country. One potential candidate for a new name would be the Spiders, which was the name of Cleveland’s baseball team until 1899.



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The Countless Athletes Who Passed Away in 2020

The year 2020 was one of the most unfortunate ones in recent history. 2020 took a turn for the worse early on when NBA legend Kobe Bryant and daughter Gianna Bryant were among 9 of the people that perished in a helicopter crash that occurred in Calabasas, California. On January 26, Kobe was flying with his daughter and her teammates, along with their parents, to a basketball practice at his Mamba Academy facility. Even though it was reported that flying conditions were not ideal, as there was fog that made it difficult to see, the flight was given approval to fly. The death of Kobe, among the others on the flight, sparked a global shock that resulted in a variety of ways of mourning, whether it be through murals, visiting Staples center, or supporting words and donations to the Kobe's wife, Vanessa Bryant, and their 3 remaining daughters.

Kobe's death was a tragedy, but his was only one of the countless influential athletes who passed this year. Here are just a few of the people from sports who passed away this year:

Don Shula (NFL Coach)
Bob Gibson (MLB Pitcher)
Tom Seaver (MLB Pitcher)
Diego Maradona (Soccer Legend)
Joe Morgan (MLB 2nd Baseman)
Whitey Ford (MLB Pitcher)
Al Kaline (MLB Outfielder)
Lou Brock (MLB Outfielder)
Eddie Sutton (College Basketball Coach)
Wes Unseld (NBA Player)
Jerry Sloan (NBA Player/Coach)
Phil Niekro (MLB Pitcher)



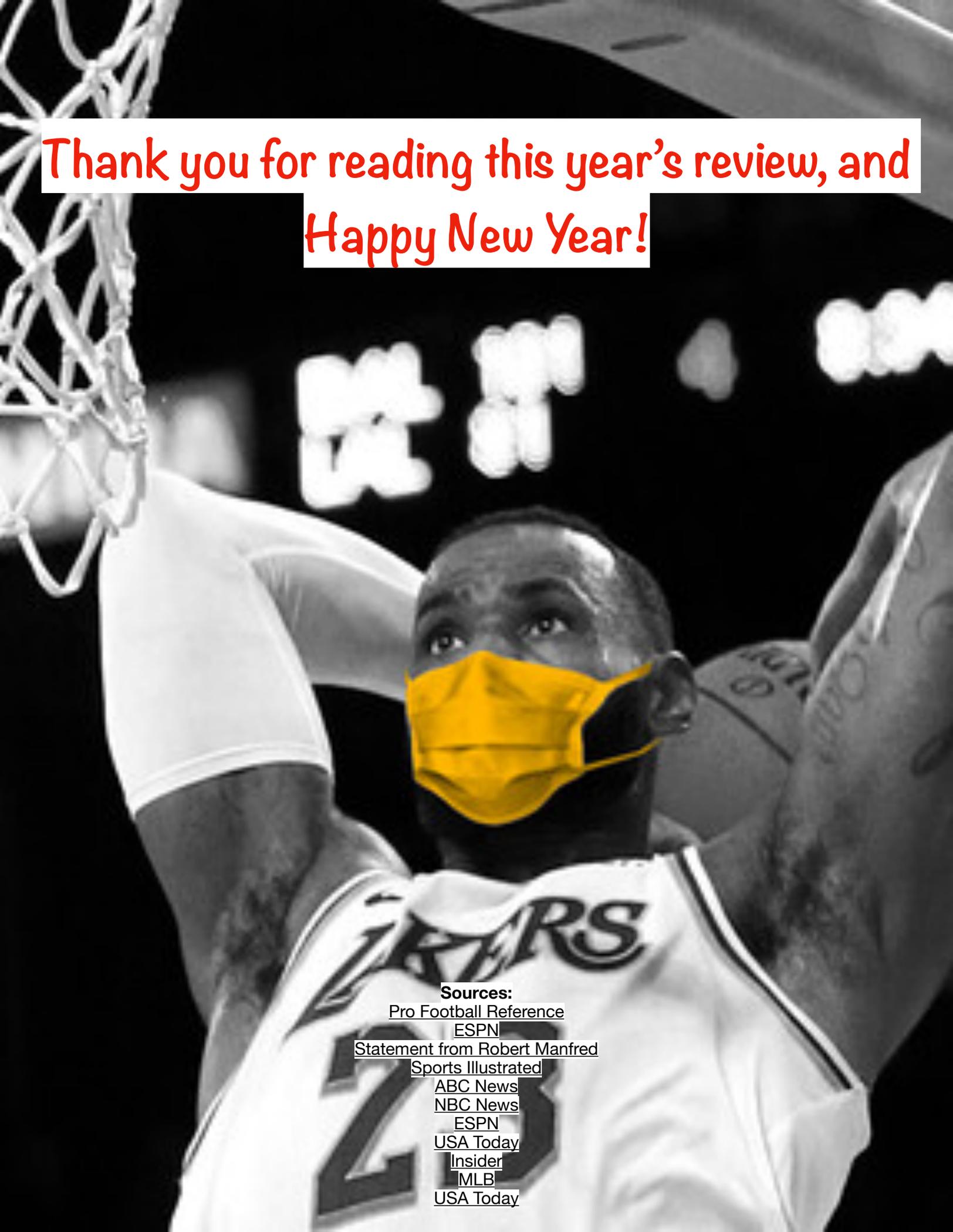


Shutdown and Reboot

From The Sportier Edition 78: “The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 (better known as Coronavirus) has caused a state of panic everywhere. All across the globe, we can see loads of legal action and additional precautionary measures that are being put into effect to make sure people stay safe. One of the largest industries affected by this crisis: sports.”

The year of 2020 in general was defined by one thing: the COVID-19 pandemic. This terrible virus terrorized every country, and has taken well over one million lives, while also halting most of our everyday activity. Included in these activities were sports. From very early on in the pandemic, sports leagues that were scheduled to play in the Spring and Summer (most notably the NBA, MLB, and the NHL) all postponed their seasons until they could put more effort into creating protocols to deal with this disease. The NCAA March Madness Tournament was cancelled for the first time since it was started in 1939. Additionally, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics were postponed until 2021 after much deliberation from the Olympic Committee and the city of Tokyo. In July, we finally received positive news about professional sports. MLB, whose Players Union and owners had intense conversations that almost led to a cancelled season, agreed to a 60 game regular season. The league, which was bracing for multiple billions of dollars in losses mainly due to no ticket revenue, had many disputes over how its players would be payed though a shortened season. With MLB continuing, the NBA was also preparing to start up its playoffs, which had been postponed due to COVID-19 in March, in a bubble at Disney World in Orlando. The NBA had a much more fluid process of dealing with its transition, as they did not have as many contract disputes because they were already almost at the end of their season. The NBA's return in particular was extremely impressive considering how many protocols and regulations it took to house the hundreds of players and staff in one location, not to mention the zero positive tests that came as a result of the bubble. As a result of all of the delays that were seen in sports, a sports equinox of sorts occurred for the first time ever, where the NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL all played games on the same day. Even though leagues lost money, played fewer games, and allowed minimal amounts of fans to view games in person, the insane turnaround that was seen within sports was inspiring to say the least, and brought a sense of normalcy to world that was much needed in a time of struggle.





Thank you for reading this year's review, and
Happy New Year!

Sources:

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