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SHAPOVALOV HEADING TOWARDS TOP OF TENNIS WORLD

Denis Shapovalov isn't No. 1 in the world of professional tennis — not yet, anyway — but he's certainly the best 19-year-old in the world.

The Ontario teen is on the verge of becoming a tennis superstar. And there's no reason to think that one day, he could ascend to the ranking of No. 1 in the world.

Top-ranked Rafael Nadal is 32, an age when most players start thinking about retirement. Roger Federer, the current No. 2, is 36 years old and cannot physically continue to be the best in the world. Shapovalov, coached by his mother, who runs a tennis academy in a suburb of Toronto, is still four or five years away from his prime, and when he hits that top level at age 24 or 25, many of the current stars will be finished.

It's not as if Shapovalov is a slam-dunk guarantee to reach the top of the world rankings. Germany's Alexander Zverev is only 21 and ranked third. Dominic Thiem of Austria is ranked eighth in the world and is only 24. Hyeon Chung, 22, is 19th in the world. So five or six years from now, the quartet of Shapovalov, Zverev, Thiem and Chung will probably be the dominant players. No. 1 could be up for grabs.

After some recent mild success at the Italian and French Opens, Shapovalov surpassed Milos Raonic as the top-ranked Canadian, moving up to No. 25 in the world while Raonic, who holds the record as Canada's highest-ranked professional (he made it as high as No. 3 in 2016), has dropped to No. 28. Shapovalov's recent move into the top 30 marked the first time anyone under the age of 20 had held such a lofty position.

Playing as a seeded player in a Grand Slam event for the first time at the French Open at Roland Garros, Shapovalov played his usual gambling, hard-hitting style and won his first two matches before losing to Germany's Maximilian Marterer in the round of 64.

The process continues, however. Never comfortable on clay surfaces, Shapovalov said he told his handlers to schedule as many European clay-court events as possible this year because he needed more experience on clay. One day, he hopes, it will pay off with a Grand Slam title in Paris.

Next up is Wimbledon, in July, where Shapovalov, Canadian fans hope, will take a few more baby steps towards being the best player in the world.

- **Brad Rock** of the Deseret (Utah) News: "Gloucester Rugby says anyone with a tattoo of its outdated logo can get inked with the new one, compliments of the club. The bad news: Getting drunk enough to do it a second time is entirely up to the fan."
- Comedy writer **Brad Dickson**, on Twitter, on states now able to legalize sports gambling: "Don't count on it in Nebraska, where the legislature is scheduled to vote on a bill requiring zoo animals to wear pants."
- Comedy writer **Jim Barach**: "**Bartolo Colon** has turned 45, the oldest player in the majors. He is so old he has teammates using bats that come from trees that were younger than him."
- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**: "The CDC has ranked Green Bay, Wis., the drunkest city in the U.S. How do you think **Brett Favre** retired so many times? He would get drunk, retire, and then forget about it the next day."
- **TC in BC**: "I kneel down in front of my TV before every NFL game praying that my team will cover the point spread."
- Barach again: "**Johnny Manziel** will start the season with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats on the bench. That's already resulted in his new nickname of "**Johnny Splinters**."
- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "The U.S. Supreme Court legalized sports gambling across all states. This just in from **Pete Rose**: It wasn't cheating; I was ahead of my time."
- Another one from Currie: "**Amar'e Stoudemire**, 35, and two years retired from the NBA, said he is getting in shape for a big league comeback. Sounds like he's already on a dream team."
- Kaseberg again: "Yale beat Duke to win the NCAA title for lacrosse. It was a hard-fought game. At one point, a fight broke about between the players' butlers and chauffeurs."
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "With Brewers infielder **Travis Shaw** lighting up Pirates pitcher **Ivan Nova** to the tune of a .786 batting average, eight RBI and three homers in just 17 career at-bats, does that make him the Bossa Nova?"
- ESPN's **Rick Reilly**, via Twitter, on **LeBron James'** one-man show for the Cavaliers: "No man has done this much work with no help since **Noah**."
- **Steve Simmons** of Postmedia, feeling his world getting turned upside down: "I covered boxing in Toronto last week and am going to Las Vegas today for the Stanley Cup."
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