

NO DEBATE NEEDED: McDAVID IS NHL'S BEST

Let's get this over with quickly. There is no need for a 'debate' about the best player in the National Hockey League.

It's Connor McDavid, far and away the best player in the game.

Anyone trying to spark a 'debate' that Auston Matthews of Toronto should be in the 'best' discussion is either: a.) unstable; b.) slightly delusional; c.) a budding comedian; or d.) a die-hard, intransigent Leafs' fan.

Both are great players. Matthews is off to a sensational start with the Leafs, accumulating 16 points in his team's first seven games before being blanked in Games 8 and 9.

McDavid, meanwhile, racked up 11 points in his team's first six games, scoring or assisting on 11 of Edmonton's first 13 goals. Speed, of course, is at the root of his excellence. He is the fastest skater in the NHL and while he may some near peers in the speed category, no NHLer can control the puck at full speed as he's able to do. Defencemen are regularly left flailing away as McDavid wheels around them and helpless goaltenders know a red light is imminent when they see him speeding toward them on a breakaway.

In his first three seasons, McDavid has two scoring titles, an MVP crown and two first all-star team awards. He might have three scoring championships had he not missed three months of his rookie season with a shoulder injury.

Toronto fans, meanwhile, are going gaga over Matthews, who was on pace for more than 100 goals after scoring 10 in Toronto's first eight games. They are being egged on by the national broadcast media in the Centre of the Universe, who with straight faces tout Matthews as McDavid's equal — or, gad! — his superior. The Matthews hype machine has been roaring at full blast since Game 1.

Hockey people know better, and western Canadian fans who see McDavid on a regular basis know better, too.

"Connor McDavid has put up back to back 100-point seasons," Mark Scheifele, the Winnipeg centre, told the Globe and Mail. "He has done a lot that Matthews hasn't. Auston is a star and is going to get better, but he is not at McDavid's level yet."

Matthews may win a Stanley Cup before his Oilers' rival, because he has a far better supporting cast. But the best individual player? That mythical trophy goes to McDavid, with no debate.

- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "I drove in St. John's, Newfoundland, last week on a highway named after local skip **Brad Gushue**. It was great: no matter how many mistakes I made, it was someone else's fault."
- Headline in the New York Post, after the Giants fell to 1-5 with a loss to Philadelphia: "From Bad to Hearsé."
- **Randy Turner** of the Winnipeg Free Press, on Twitter: "Watching **Connor McDavid** play for the Oilers is like if **Jimi Hendrix** played lead guitar for The Monkees."
- **Norman Chad** of the Washington Post: "Rockets' **Carmelo Anthony** says reserve role is 'challenging mentally.' He is also challenged mentally by defence, passing the ball, team play and winning."
- Humour guy **Brad Dickson** on Twitter: "Starting tomorrow marijuana is legal in Canada. In a possibly related story, 87 per cent of all NBA players have requested a trade to the Toronto Raptors."
- Comedy writer **Jim Barach**: "**Eli Manning** is pushing a video game that teaches kids finance. The first lesson is to avoid poverty by not sitting around playing video games all day."

- Another one from Barach: “The Raiders have been fined \$20,000 for violating the league's injury reporting policy. Which is the NFL's way of adding insult to injury.”
- **RJ Currie** again: “The Nashville Predators, knocked out in Round 2 of the 2018 playoffs, raised three banners commemorating last season. I think one of them was for participation.”
- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**: The Chargers' move to Los Angeles ranks up there in bad decisions with **Col. Custer** saying, ‘How many warriors can some idiot named **Sitting Bull** have anyway?’
- Headline in the onion.com: “**Manny Machado** Denies Playing Dirty After Late Slide Into Pitcher’s Mound.”
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: “Florida Atlantic football coach **Lane Kiffin** has offered a scholarship to **Matt Leinart**’s son Cole — a 5-foot-7, 11-year-old sixth-grader. The NCAA is already looking into that shiny new bicycle he’s suddenly riding to school.”
- **Janice Hough** of leftcoastsportsbabe.com, on more bets being placed in Las Vegas on the Lakers to win the NBA title than on any other team: “If anyone wondered how they got the money to build all those big hotels.”
- Ex-sluggler **Prince Fielder**, to reporters, when asked how Milwaukee manager **Craig Counsell** helped him when they were Brewers teammates: “There was one time I was thinking about bunting. He told me if I bunted he would punch me in the face.”
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