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UW MEN'S HOCKEY

Analysts buying in on Wolverines' riches

Their record seven first-round picks are experienced

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There are some particulars that intrigue Big Ten hockey analysts as the conference schedule opens Thursday with the University of Wisconsin playing at No. 2 Mich-

expectations. The next-level tal-



Badgers vs. No. 2 Michigan

When, where: 6 p.m. Thursday and 6:30 p.m. Friday, Ann Arbor, Mich.

TV: Big Ten Network (Thursday).

ent across the league has elevated the game. The greatest perceived

But no discussion about the league gets very far without a progress as a central storyline.

Michigan is the first college hockey team to have seven firstround NHL draft picks on its roster. Four of them were among the first five selections earlier this year.

Similar riches have produced varied results in the past. The Badgers know it well. They rolled An influx of transfers has shifted shortcoming for the defending out a lineup two years ago with role. champion Badgers hasn't been three first-round NHL draft picks

come one.

mention of the NCAA record in thud. There have been successes lyst for Thursday's Badgers-Wol- North Dakota made it to the Frozen Four in 2006 with a team that included six first-round picks - but it's no guarantee.

Three Big Ten Network hockey analysts offered insight this week into what has their attention at and Michigan had a prominent

"You've seen all the conjecture

addressed in non-conference play. and a player who was soon to be- about, 'Can you win with that many first-rounders?" said Fred That season ended with a Pletsch, who'll be the color anaverines game on BTN.

What the Wolverines have that other teams with multiple firstround picks didn't, Pletsch said, is experience. No. 1 pick Owen Power, No. 2 Matty Beniers, No. 5 Kent Johnson and No. 29 Brendan the start of the 84-game chase for Brisson are sophomores. Johnny the regular-season championship Beecher, chosen 30th in 2019 but out with an injury at the start of

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BUCKS



JEFFREY PHELPS, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Timberwolves guard D'Angelo Russell reacts to a call during the second half Wednesday night at Fiserv Forum. He scored a team-high 29 points.

Lopez, Holiday again scratched due to injury

JIM HOEHN **Associated Press**

MILWAUKEE gelo Russell scored 29 points, Karl-Anthony Towns and Anthony Edwards each added 25, and the Minnesota TimberMilwaukee Bucks 113-108 on of those times," Antetokounmpo Wednesday night at Fiserv Fo-

40 points and 16 rebounds for point guard Irue Holiday and center Brook Lopez.

"We've got to figure it out, because obviously there's going to with two free throws. be times that we're going to play wolves held off the delpleted without them and this was one

said. "But we cannot use that as an excuse. We've got to do a bet-Giannis Antetokounmpo had ter job of rebounding the ball."

The Bucks, who trailed 94-79 the Bucks, who were without entering the final period, pulled within 110-108 on Antetokounmpo's layup with 9.4 seconds remaining. Edwards answered

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Key: Three players score 25 or more points for Minnesota.

Next: 7 p.m. Saturday, vs. San Antonio, Fiserv Forum, BSW.

UW VOLLEYBALL

Smrek stands tall in sweep

Freshman helps to settle clash for first place in Big Ten

DENNIS PUNZEL For the State Journal

Anna Smrek couldn't have picked a better time to come up with the best match of her young

Smrek, a 6-foot-9 freshman had a career-high 12 kills to lead the University of Wisconsin volleyball team to a 26-24, 25-19, 25-23 sweep of host Nebraska in a battle for first place in the Big Ten Conference at the Devaney Sports Center on Wednesday night in Lincoln.

Grad student Dana Rettke added 11 kills as the No. 3 Badgers (18-1, 10-1 Big Ten) outbattled the No. 6 Cornhuskers (16-4, 10-1) to extend their winning streak over Nebraska to six.

In addition to Smrek's impact on offense as she hit .647 with just one error in 17 swings, she also had a presence on defense with four blocks and helping

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No. 3 Badgers 3, No. 6 Nebraska O

Key: Huskers are held to .148 hitting percentage.

Next: 11 a.m. Sunday, at Purdue, ESPNU.

PACKERS | GAME 8

Impressive record, but just how good are they?

7e should have a pretty good idea of where the Green Bay Packers stand in the NFL

pecking order by

into the 2021

season. That's

plenty of data as

sample sizes go. And yet it's not



enough to get a true read on a team that could be overrated or underrated depending on the vantage point or, as the case may be, level of cynicism in the eves of the beholder.

Here's what we know for now, seven games sure: At 6-1, the Packers are tied for the second-best record in the NFC and have a 21/2game lead in their division.

> Here's what we can confidently say: The NFC is top-heavy, with a significant

> > Please see POLZIN, Page B4

Numbers go up with Adams down

players involved when star receiver sits out

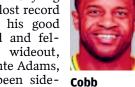
Rodgers gets more

JASON WILDE For the State Journal

GREEN BAY - There was a had been sidechance Randall Cobb hadn't heard.

After all, the Green Bay Packers veteran wide receiver wasn't with the team the past two years, spending one season with the

maybe the news of the Packers' logic-defying won-lost record when his good friend and fellow wideout. Davante Adams, lined by injuries,



hadn't made it down to him in "Yeah, yeah, we've heard.

We've heard," Cobb said with a smile as the Packers prepared Dallas Cowboys and the other for – unfortunately for them – with the Houston Texans. So another game without Adams,



vs. Cardinals

When, where: 7:20 p.m. Thursday, Glendale, Ariz.

Packers

TV: Ch. 47, NFLN.

who won't play in Thursday's

NFC showdown with the undefeated Arizona Cardinals after

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