

SPORTS

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WINTER OLYMPICS: Women's Hockey



Associated Press

Brianna Decker, of the United States' women's hockey team, walks to the ice for a practice session at the 2022 Winter Olympics on Feb. 2 in Beijing.

Down but not out

Dousman native Decker continues as coach, mentor after sidelined by injury

By John Wawrow
AP Hockey Writer

BEIJING (AP) — With the interview over, Brianna Decker nestled her immobilized left leg on the seat of her scooter, gripped the handlebars and sped out of the room under the pushpower of her right foot.

The three-time United States women's hockey Olympian surely couldn't have envisioned zipping

around Wukesong Sports Centre on four wheels as opposed to two skates.

Decker's Beijing Games ended shortly after they began, 9:28 into the American team's preliminary round-opening 5-2 win over Finland, when her left leg gave out upon being tripped from behind by Ronja Savolainen. The force of the trip combined with the fall

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PREP SKIING

They feel the need ... the need for ski

There's no need for a passport to see some winter sports action

By Michael Grennell
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It was a chilly night on Wednesday as the Winter Olympics continued to run full steam ahead. A small crowd gathered at the bottom of a snow-covered hill, watching and cheering for each skier making their way down the course. A low murmur from the crowd, punctuated by cheers at the end of a run and the amplified voice of the announcer reading off times were the only noises that could be heard. All eyes remained focused on the slope, watching as the dots that came flying down the hill grew larger and larger and began to take on the shape of a person.

At the same time in Beijing, the top winter athletes in the world were waking up and getting ready for their next day of competition.

For this scene that played out on Wednesday night was not part of the Winter Olympics. Instead it played out at The Rock Sports Complex in Franklin, where some



Michael Grennell/Freeman Staff

Brookfield East junior Aiden Koops races toward the finish line on Wednesday night at The Rock.

of the top prep skiers in Waukesha and Ozaukee counties faced off in their final meet of the season.

But just because there were no Olympic gold medals being handed out to the winners of each event, doesn't mean that the Beijing Games weren't on the minds of those racing.

"The Winter Olympics have been really cool," said Cedarburg junior Berit Henderson, who finished in 12th place in

the girls varsity race with a total time of 56.4 seconds. "It's nice watching the slalom and (giant slalom) races there, and then being able to do it the next night which is super cool."

Henderson was not alone in voicing those sentiments.

"It's really inspirational to watch them go down like the super slalom, see how fast they go and then you get to come here and do it kind of just like them, and it's a lot of

fun," said Brookfield East junior Aiden Koops, who ended the night in 17th place in the boys varsity race with a time of 56.5 seconds.

But even when the Olympics are not going on, there's still plenty of prep skiing going on in the area every year. On Wednesday night it was Oconomowoc, Cedarburg, Brookfield East and Catholic Memorial facing off

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PACKERS

M-V-(re)P(eat): Rodgers earns top honors again

Reischel writes about the elite company Packers' QB is now in

Jim Brown. Joe Montana. Brett Favre. Peyton Manning.

Those were the only players in NFL history to win back-to-back MVP awards before Thursday. That's when Green Bay Packers' quarterback Aaron Rodgers joined that elite group and won his second straight MVP award.

In the process, Rodgers captured the fourth MVP award of his career, which trails only Manning (five). Rodgers received 39 of the 50 first place votes, while Tampa Bay quarterback Tom Brady had 10 votes.

Rodgers threw for 37 touchdowns and just four interceptions, an impressive TD-to-INT ratio of 9.25-to-1. He also posted an NFL-best 111.9 passer rating, threw for 4,115 yards and led the Packers to a 13-4 record and the NFC's No. 1 seed.

"I'm playing with the best quarterback to play the game," Packers wide receiver Davante Adams said late in the year.

Green Bay running back Aaron Jones said he believed Rodgers deserved MVP No. 4.

"I definitely do," Jones said. "(He's) playing at the same high level as he was last year, leading this team to wins and he looks good doing it, too."

Brady was considered the top challenger to Rodgers for the award.

Brady led the league with 5,316 passing yards and 43 touchdown passes. Brady's passing yardage total was the third-most in league history, he completed 67.5% of his passes and had a passer rating of 102.1.

"I think if he doesn't get it, it's a travesty," Tampa Bay coach Bruce Arians said of Brady last month. "Most completions ever, 5,000 yards, touchdowns, the whole nine yards. To me, it's not even a close race."

Fortunately for Rodgers, the MVP voting is strictly a regular season award. That's because Rodgers had another subpar postseason performance.

Rodgers didn't throw a touchdown pass when Green Bay lost to visiting San Francisco, 13-10, in the NFC divisional playoffs. Rodgers is now just 7-9 in the postseason since leading the Packers to a Super Bowl title 11 years ago.

Favre is the only player in the NFL history to win three straight MVP awards, doing so from 1995-97. Manning went back-to-back at two points in his career (2003-04 and 2008-09), while Brown (1957-58) and Montana (1989-90) also won consecutive



ROB REISCHEL

awards.

Rodgers was tied with Tom Brady (2007, 2010, 2017), Favre (1995-97), Brown (1957, 1958, 1965) and Johnny Unitas (1959, 1964, 1967) with three MVPs, but moved into sole possession of second place behind just Manning.

Rodgers' future with the Packers remains a mystery. He's entering the final year of his contract and has said anything from retirement to playing in Green Bay to playing elsewhere is on the table.

If Rodgers returns for the 2022 season, he'll have a chance to catch Manning for most MVPs ever and Favre as the only player with three straight MVPs.

"We're hopeful he'll be back next year, obviously," Packers coach Matt LaFleur said on Jan. 24. "This guy has done so much for such a long period of time for this organization, for this city, for this team. And so, I want to be respectful of his process. Whatever he needs to go through to make the best decision for himself, and certainly we would love for him to be a Packer and be a Packer to the day he decides to retire."



Associated Press

Aaron Rodgers of the Green Bay Packers receives the AP Most Valuable Player of the Year Award at the NFL Honors show on Thursday in Inglewood, Calif.

NFL

Watt named NFL's Defensive Player of the Year

Former Pewaukee standout tied NFL record with 22 1/2 sacks

By Ray Fittipaldo
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

One year after losing out on NFL defensive player of the year honors in a close vote, Steelers linebacker T.J. Watt won the award Thursday night at the NFL honors in a landslide.

Watt received 42 first-place votes, beating out Cowboys linebacker Micah Parsons (five first-place votes) and Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald (three first-place votes). Donald had won the award in three of the previous four years and bested Watt 27-20 in first-place votes last year.

Watt is the seventh Steelers defender to win the award and the first since Troy Polamalu in 2010. Joe Green (twice), Mel Blount, Jack Lambert, Rod Woodson and James Harrison also

won for the Steelers.

"It's huge," Watt said of joining those all-time Steelers greats. "That's why I was so honored to be drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers. Talk about the legacy and the amount of legends that have walked through those walls. If those guys played in that system and were so successful and won awards like this, why can't we do it too? Why can't I do it? Seeing those guys play in Pittsburgh let me know it's possible."

J.J. Watt, a three-time NFL defensive player of the year, presented T.J. with the award. T.J. was in high school the first time J.J. won the award in 2012 and dreamed of someday winning it.

"To be able to be recognized as the best defensive

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Associated Press

Pittsburgh Steelers outside linebacker T.J. Watt during the second half of an NFL wildcard game against the Kansas City Chiefs on Jan. 16 in Kansas City, Mo.

PACKERS

Wait over: Butler inducted into Hall of Fame

Reischel celebrates the career of the 28th Packer to be enshrined in Canton



ROB REISCHEL

As a child, LeRoy Butler didn't dream about the NFL. He just hoped to walk, live a normal life and be like the other kids.

Turns out, Butler was nothing like the other kids.

Butler was the ultimate overachiever, someone who defeated every challenge ever placed in front of him. His fire, passion and zeal helped him become one of the greatest Green Bay Packers of all-time and arguably the NFL's top safety of the 1990s.

And Thursday night, Butler finally got his due.

Butler was one of five players named to the Pro Football Hall of Fame Class of 2022. Butler was joined by San Francisco defensive lineman Bryant Young,

Jacksonville offensive tackle Tony Boselli, New England defensive lineman Richard Seymour and New Orleans linebacker Sam Mills.

The Packers now have 28 individuals in the Hall of Fame, trailing only Chicago (30). Butler joined Brett Favre and Reggie White as members of Green Bay's great 1990s teams that have now been inducted to the Hall.

"Getting in would mean so much," Butler said in an interview last month. "To be recognized with the all-time greats and to be put into a class with some of those guys, it's hard to find the words to describe just how much that would mean."

Butler was the first player in NFL history to record 20 interceptions and 20 sacks in a career. He was also the last member of the NFL's 1990s All-Decade Team that had yet to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

During a remarkable 12-year career, Butler posted 38 interceptions and 20 1/2 sacks in 181 regular-season games. He also made four All-Pro teams and was named to four Pro Bowls in that time.

"The guy could do everything," former Packers general manager Ron Wolf said of Butler. "He could cover, he could tackle, he could get after quarterbacks and he had good hands."

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