

THURSDAY
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SPORTS

PREP BASKETBALL RECORDBREAKERS: West Bend East girls basketball

The unstoppable Cadence Xiong

Suns senior guard capped off career by breaking school's 39-year-old all-time scoring mark

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WEST BEND — The season came to a close earlier than the West Bend East girls basketball team hoped it would on Saturday, as the Suns fell to Cedarburg in a regional semifinal playoff game.

Now the players and coaches will start making early preparations for next season as they hope to make an even deeper playoff run. And while there are many uncertainties as to what is in store for the Suns next season, there is one thing that seems to be a pretty safe guarantee:

It could be a while before another player takes to the court in the West Bend gym that can live up to the legacy that has been left behind by senior Cadence Xiong.

The senior guard accomplished a pair of her goals this season — reaching the 1,000 point milestone and breaking the school's nearly 40-year-old career scoring record.

"It feels great to break the scoring record, especially since it hasn't been broken in almost 40 years," Xiong said. "Growing up, playing basketball, as a freshman a goal of mine was obviously to hit 1,000 points, but to also break the record, you know it's a great feeling to have accomplished both of those goals."

The new scoring queen at West Bend East was crowned on Feb. 14, when Xiong scored 21 points to help lead her squad to a 71-62 victory over North Shore Conference foe Whitefish Bay. At the sound of the final buzzer that night, Xiong had amassed a total of 1,181 points — surpassing the previous mark



Daily News file photo

See **XIONG**, PAGE 3B West Bend East's Cadence Xiong shoots a layup in front of West Bend West's Mia Sallinen during a girls basketball regional game in West Bend on Feb. 21.

Deja vu all over again in Green Bay

Reischel looks at similarities between Rodgers and Love

The parallels are eerie, uncanny, almost spooky.

Aaron Rodgers sat for three years behind Brett Favre before taking over as the Green Bay Packers' starting quarterback on Sept. 8, 2008. Rodgers, who had been the 24th pick in the NFL Draft, was 24 years old, nine months and six days at the time.

During his first three years behind Favre, Rodgers played in seven games. He completed 35 of 59 passes for 329 yards with one touchdown and one interception. His passer rating was 73.3, but the Packers believed he was ready to be a starter — and even a star. They were right.

Fast forward 15 years to Jordan Love, the man who many expect to be Green Bay's starting quarterback in 2023.

Love was taken with the 26th overall pick in 2020 draft, two spots lower than Rodgers was picked 15 years earlier.

Love has sat the last three seasons behind Rodgers, and played in 10 games, starting one. Love has completed 50 of his 83 passes for 606 yards with three touchdowns and three interceptions. His passer rating is 79.7.

The NFL will kick off its 2023 season on Sept. 7. At that time, Love would be 24 years, 10 months and 5 days.

The Packers and Rodgers will decide shortly whether their four-time MVP quarterback will return to Green Bay in 2023. If Rodgers either retires or is traded, Love will take the reigns — and he'll be at exactly the same point in his career that Rodgers was back in 2008.

Green Bay hit a grand slam when it passed the torch from Favre to Rodgers in 2008. Today, the Packers are cautiously optimistic the same thing can happen



ROB REISCHEL

if they transition from Rodgers to Love.

"Well, he needs to play," Packers general manager Brian Gutekunst said of Love on Tuesday. "I think I've spoken about that before. He definitely needs to play. I think that's the next step in his progression. I think he's ready for that."

"Not every quarterback comes into this league ready to go out there and play. I think he needed a little time, but over the last year and a half or so, we've seen that's the next step in his progression. He needs to go out and play."

Memories are short, so many people forget it wasn't smooth sailing when Rodgers first took over in 2008.

Green Bay was coming off a 13-3 season and a trip to the NFC Championship Game in 2007. The only changes in the starting lineup were Rodgers for Favre at quarterback and Mike Montgomery for Corey Williams at defensive end.

Green Bay took a major step backwards, though, and finished 6-10 in 2008. Rodgers was solid that year, throwing 28 touchdowns, 13 interceptions and finishing with a 93.8 passer rating. But Rodgers struggled mightily at crunch time, and the result was Green Bay went 0-7 in games decided by four points, or less.

"I think the one thing you see in this league, very rarely are guys shot out of a cannon, winning wise," Gutekunst said. "There's some great play. There's instances. You see flashes but I think it takes most of these quarterbacks a little



Associated Press

Green Bay Packers' Aaron Rodgers and Jordan Love run a drill at the team's practice field on July 27, 2022, in Green Bay.

time to learn how to win."

When the Packers started the 2009 season 4-4 — and were routed by Favre's Minnesota team at Lambeau Field — Rodgers fell to 10-14 as a starter. And as Green Bay readied to play Dallas on Nov. 15, 2009, fans paraded around Lambeau Field passing out buttons that read, "Fire Ted" and "Fire Mike."

Ted and Mike, of course, were then general manager Ted Thompson and coach Mike McCarthy.

"I can tell you that '09 was a tense season for everybody, especially coming off of '08 the way we played,"

Rodgers said in the book, 'Leaders of the Pack.' "That was a pretty tense year. We all kind of felt like we were playing for our jobs."

Rodgers and the Packers beat Dallas that night and finished the year winning seven of eight overall. The following season, the Packers won the 45th Super Bowl.

The point is it took Rodgers about 25 starts to figure things out. When he did, though, Rodgers took the league by storm setting countless records and winning four MVPs.

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BUCKS 139, MAGIC 117

Bucks can't be stopped, win 16th straight

Milwaukee drains season-high 26 3-pointers in win over Magic

By Steve Megargee
AP Sports Writer

MILWAUKEE — Giannis Antetokounmpo wants to make sure the Milwaukee Bucks shouldn't rely too much on the 3-point shot.

But for one night, the Bucks showed how dangerous they could be from long range as they extended the longest winning streak in the NBA this season.

Antetokounmpo scored 31 points and the NBA-leading Bucks hit a season-high 26 3-pointers in a 139-117 win over the Orlando Magic on Wednesday night for their 16th straight victory.

"It's part of our game, but it's not our only game," Antetokounmpo said. "We cannot fall in love and rely on our 3-point shot. When it goes in, it's a bonus. It's a plus."

It went in early and often against Orlando. The Bucks went 26 of 56 from 3-point range. Grayson Allen, AJ Green, Joe Ingles and Brook Lopez each sank four 3-pointers. Antetokounmpo and Pat Connaughton added three each.

"I didn't even realize we hit that many 3's," said Lopez, who scored 18 points and shot 4 of 5 from beyond the arc. "I knew we hit a lot, but that's a lot of 3s."

Milwaukee's win

streak is the longest in the NBA since the Phoenix Suns won 18 in a row early last season. The Bucks' run is their longest since winning 18 straight in the 2019-20 season.

The Bucks' franchise record for consecutive wins came in their 1970-71 championship season, when they claimed 20 straight.

"That's a team that's rolling right now," Magic coach Jamahl Mosley said. "They're playing at a high level."

Milwaukee hasn't lost since Jan. 21, when it fell 114-102 at Cleveland. The Bucks haven't lost a game in which Antetokounmpo played since Jan. 6 against Charlotte.

The Bucks also have won their last 13 matchups with the Magic.

Orlando had snapped the Boston Celtics' nine-game winning streak on Jan. 23 and ended the Philadelphia 76ers' seven-game streak on Jan. 30, but the Magic couldn't stop the Bucks.

Antetokounmpo shot 10 of 14 overall, 3 of 4 from 3-point range and 8 of 10 from the line. The two-time MVP also had seven rebounds and six assists.

Jrue Holiday had 23 points and nine assists for the Bucks. Brook Lopez scored 18 and Ingles 16.

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Xiong

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set by Linda Reichl, who finished her prep career in 1984 with 1,176 points.

"It felt amazing to have everyone there to support me," Xiong said of the record-breaking moment. "My friends, my family, my teammates, the refs and especially the opposing team, the coaches and the players stopping the game to help (recognize the moment)."

Xiong would go on to score 42 points over the team's final three games of the season, to finish her career total at 1,223 points.

For East coach John Heinberg, it comes as little surprise to him that Xiong was able to etch her name in the annals of Suns history. Because whenever East was down this year, he knew he could count on her.

"Cadence is a dedicated worker. She's very disciplined in her game. She's really stepped up this year," Heinberg said. "We've dealt with our share of injuries, we were tight in numbers, and we basically had to count on her to kind of carry the scoring punch here until we kind of got healthy."

"She took that role on phenomenally. Just thinking about who she is, her ability to hunt for her shot, knock things down when the opportunity came, I was just very impressed the way she's played the second half of the season. And that's really come together in terms of her scoring this year."

"She's obviously having her best year scoring as a high school player, and the accolades are coming with it



Daily News file photo

Sun's Cadence Xiong hits one of her 3-point shots against Grafton during a North Shore Conference matchup earlier this season.

in terms of the 1,000-point mark and then setting the all-time leading scorer mark here for West Bend East."

It's been a steady growth for Xiong over her four-year career with East. After averaging 10.1 points per game as a freshman, she was scoring nearly twice that much this season as she averaged 17.0 points per game. Xiong finished her freshman campaign with 233 points, and followed that up her sophomore year with 235 points. And then after breaking the 300-point mark her junior year with 314 points that season, she surpassed 400 points this year and finished with 441 — the fifth-highest

total in the North Shore Conference.

One of the biggest contributing factors to that increase has been her evolution into becoming a key threat from beyond the arc for the Suns. Her career-high 66 3-pointers this season — which also ranked her fifth in the conference — were nearly double the amount she made as a junior, while her .367 shooting percentage from long-range was well above her previous career-best.

But Xiong said that the biggest key to her success at East has been the mental aspect of the game.

"Definitely just staying

positive throughout it all, and having the confidence to play the game, and know how to play with my teammates and coaches," she said.

Now with the season over, it's all about wrapping up her senior year of high school before heading off to college where she'll continue her playing career not too far from home.

"I committed to UW-Whitewater, so I'm excited to see how that will help me in the future," she said. "And I'm excited to play with the girls and the team there, because I know their atmosphere and how they play — it's really fun."



Daily News file photo

West Bend East's Cadence Xiong puts up a shot against Port Washington in a North Shore Conference matchup earlier this season.

Reischel

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The Packers know it would be crazy to expect that level of productivity from Love. But there's belief within the organization that Love can eventually grow into a top-10 quarterback — and now is the time to rip off the Rodgers Band-Aid and find out.

"Jordan Love is ready. He will be that guy," Packers running back Aaron Jones told FOX Sports earlier this month. "I got a lot of trust in Jordan."

Packers rookie wide receiver Christian Watson agreed with Jones.

"I think he's definitely ready," Watson said of Love. "I've gotten a lot of reps with him through OTAs, through camp and even during practice through the season. It's just going to come down to whenever his opportunity is ...

but I think he's ready for it."

Love was outstanding during a loss at eventual NFC champion Philadelphia in November after substiting for an injured Rodgers (ribs). Love was thrust into action in the fourth quarter and went 6-of-9 for 113 yards and had a quarterback rating of 146.8. He led the Packers to 10 points on his two drives.

That performance was remarkably similar to a 2007 game in Dallas when Rodgers replaced an injured Favre. That night, Rodgers completed 18-of-26 passes for 201 yards and nearly led Green Bay to a come-from-behind win in a matchup of 10-1 teams.

"I'm not trying to be glib, but I've liked him all along," Ted Thompson, the man who drafted Rodgers, said that night. "I think he's a young man that's confident, that's smart, that is physically talented, that believes he can play, and has understood and accepted the role that he's in, even though he still wants to play."

All of those same things hold true with Love today.

Love showed tremendous growth a year ago when he played in four games. Love finished the year 14-of-21 for 195 yards, one TD, no interceptions and a quarterback rating of 112.2.

"I think he was thinking less and playing more," Gutekunst said of Love. "Certainly, he didn't get a lot of opportunity during the season to go out there and perform. When he did, we thought he executed very well. But I know just watching him through practice, not only in the offseason last year, training camp, but into the season how he approached the weeks, there was just a different level of intensity week in and week out than there had been prior."

Love's development has been similar to the growth Rodgers made during his three seasons as a reserve. After posting a combined passer rating of 43.88 in 2005-06, Rodgers had a 106.0 passer

rating in 2007.

Love also has the physical characteristics that have the Packers salivating.

Love has unique arm talent, an ability to throw from several angles, a nifty touch on deep balls and extremely large hands (10 1/2"). Love has prototypical size (6-foot-4, 219), a world of confidence and terrific scrambling ability.

Love had to improve his accuracy and decision making, though.

During Love's final year at Utah State, he threw 17 interceptions and had three picks returned for touchdowns. Love seemed to lack anticipation during his final college season and was slow in his reads.

Rodgers, of course, had to alter his throwing motion — one in which he initially brought the ball up to his earhole, then had a short, compact delivery that affected his strength on deeper passes.

When Mike McCarthy was hired in 2006, he gradually lowered

Rodgers' delivery. Suddenly, Rodgers' throwing motion was far more natural and effortless.

It's just one more likeness between Rodgers and Love. The Packers would be giddy if the similarities extended onto the field — perhaps as early as 2023.

"From the time (Love) has come in until now, he's just continued to work, work, work," Jones said of Love. "You could see the confidence starting to come out even more and more."

"He got some time to play in games this past season, and you can tell he made that jump and he's confident out there and he's capable and he can do it at a high level. So I feel like he'll definitely be that guy when A-Rod's gone."

That time could finally be at hand.

And the Packers are hoping the parallels between Rodgers and Love will continue.



Associated Press

Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo drives against Orlando Magic's Franz Wagner during the second half of Wednesday's game in Milwaukee.

Bucks

From Page 1B

"We've talked a lot about the depth of our shooting, the quality of our shooting," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "It felt like a lot of them caught a hot streak tonight."

Orlando's Cole Anthony scored a season-high 28 points. Markelle Fultz added 21, Wendell Carter Jr. 19 and Franz Wagner 18. Carter also had 10 rebounds.

TIP-INS

Magic: Jonathan Isaac (strained right hamstring/adductor) missed a third straight game. ... Orlando went 6 of 12 on 3-point attempts in the first half, but was 3 of 21 from beyond the arc the rest of the game. ... Paolo Banchero shot just 4 of 13 overall. Banchero finished with nine points, seven rebounds and five

assists.

Bucks: The Bucks requested waivers on Sandro Mamukelashvili before the game. The 6-foot-10 forward had appeared in a combined 65 games for the Bucks over the last two seasons after they selected him out of Seton Hall in the second round of the 2021 draft. ... The Bucks rested Khris Middleton on the second night of a back-to-back as they monitor the right knee that caused him to miss 19 straight games earlier this season. ... Wesley Matthews missed a fourth straight game with a strained right calf.

UP NEXT

Magic: At Charlotte on Friday to close a three-game trip. The Magic are 2-1 against the Hornets this season.

Bucks: Host the Philadelphia 76ers on Saturday. The Bucks have split two matchups this season, both at Philadelphia. The Bucks won 90-88 on Oct. 20 and lost 110-102 on Nov. 18.

RODGERS WATCH 2023

Decision will come 'soon enough'

Rodgers discusses future on podcast Wednesday

GREEN BAY (AP) — Aaron Rodgers says he will make a decision on his future "soon enough" as the four-time MVP quarterback ponders whether to play next season and if his future remains with the Green Bay Packers.

Rodgers, 39, discussed his future while speaking on an episode of the "Aubrey Marcus Podcast" that was released Wednesday morning. He spent much of the 1 1/2-hour conversation describing his recent isolation retreat in which he said he spent four days alone in a dark room.

"There's a finality to the decision," Rodgers said. "I don't make it lightly. I don't want to drag anybody around."

The podcast was released one day after Packers general manager Brian Gutekunst was asked about Rodgers and said that they "haven't had the conversations that we need to have yet." Gutekunst indicated he hoped a decision was made by the start of free agency on March 15.

"There's been some contact back and forth," Gutekunst said. "Obviously he's had some things on his plate. Hopefully those things will happen soon."

Gutekunst also indicated that he believes 2020 first-round pick Jordan Love is ready to be an NFL starting quarterback. Love has backed up Rodgers the past three seasons.

Rodgers, who is due to make about \$59.5 million if he plays, noted that "for everyone involved, directly and indirectly it's best for a decision earlier."

He referenced the latter stages of Brett Favre's career in Green Bay, when the Packers didn't know whether the Hall of Fame quarterback would play or retire. Rodgers backed up Favre for the first three seasons of his career.

Favre did retire in the spring of 2008 before changing his mind, leading the Packers to trade him to the New York Jets because they already had announced Rodgers as their starter.

"Look, I'm answering questions about it because I get asked about it," Rodgers said. "I'm talking about it because it's important to me. If you don't like it and think it's drama, me being a diva or whatever, just tune it out. That's fine. But this is my life. It's important to me. I'll make a decision soon enough and we'll go down that road and be really excited about it."

Rodgers has noted he planned this retreat several months ago and that it wasn't planned specifically so that he could think about his football future. Rodgers said he wanted a chance to "disconnect from technology and from the world" and give himself "the gift of rest."

But the solitude did give him plenty of opportunities



Associated Press

Green Bay Packers' Aaron Rodgers walks off the field after a game against the Detroit Lions on Jan. 8 in Green Bay.

to consider the possibilities.

Rodgers said he would have plenty of incentive if he does come back after a 2022 season in which he had his lowest passer rating as a starter after the Packers went 8-9 and missed the playoffs.

He compared it to the situation he faced heading into 2020, which marked the Packers' second year under coach Matt LaFleur and the season after the team drafted Love. Rodgers earned MVP honors in 2020 and 2021.

"I've been doubted before," Rodgers said. "Honestly I felt in the first year that Matt was here, Matt was in Green Bay in '19 and I felt at times like a game manager, like I didn't quite

understand what we were doing at times on offense. My job was to take care of the football and I did. I threw four interceptions and 26 touchdowns, and we were 13-3, but I felt like there was so much more. Then they drafted my replacement and I won MVP twice, and I threw 85 touchdowns and nine interceptions in two years.

"Obviously there were some changes that happened on the team and the coaching staff and I didn't have my best year playing (last season) and there are probably people who think I'm done. They thought I was done before I became COVID MVP twice. So there would be plenty of inspiration down that road."