

# StarTribune SPORTS

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## A COACHING CHANGE RECHARGED THE WILD, SHOWING GM BILL GUERIN WANTS TO WIN NOW.

By SARAH McLELLAN • sarah.mclellan@startribune.com

**S**uddenly, the Wild are on their best behavior. Last week started with a bad loss and a coaching change. But in winning twice under new coach John Hynes, the turnaround has been night and day. Their penalty kill is secure as Fort Knox, the offense left hibernation and first periods went from being their worst to their best. The Wild had lost nine of their past 10 trips to Nashville but waltzed in Thursday and ended the Predators' six-game win streak with a 6-1 blowout. "They're trying to make an impression," Hynes said of his new team. "But same thing for me: I'm trying to make an impression on them, too." President of Hockey Operations Bill Guerin played matchmaker after firing Dean Evason last Monday following a Sunday afternoon loss in Detroit. But if the sun ever sets on the Hynes honeymoon, Guerin won't be able to ignite a similar spark. It's the players who have the power to determine what's next. "Unfortunately, there are coaches that have to take that fall on the knife for players like us," Marcus Foligno said. "It's not fair. But at the same time, it's a wake-up call. It's on us." See **WILD** on C9 ▶

**WILD VS. CHICAGO** 1 p.m. Sunday at Xcel Energy Center (BSN)**WOLVES** 6:30 p.m. Wed. vs. San Antonio (BSN, ESPN)

## Showdown for the Holy Grail in size 15

By CHRIS HINE  
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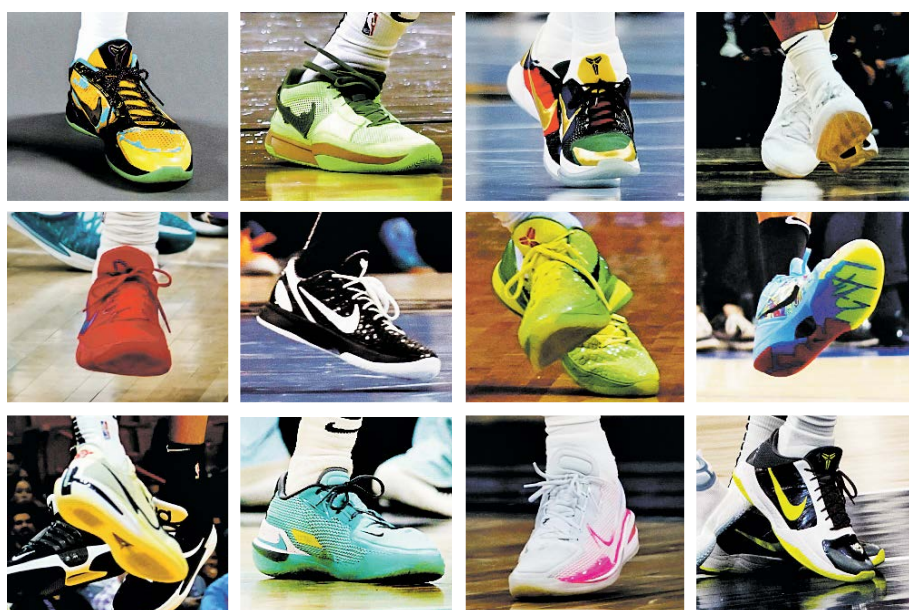
Most NBA players are big sneakerheads, and they'll use their connections and money to get their hands on dozens, if not hundreds, of limited-edition specialized kicks.

The bidding can be fast and furious, and most of the time buyers don't know who they are competing against. But that isn't the case for two particular Timberwolves.

Kyle Anderson and Naz Reid both wear size 15. Both love to amass large collections of shoes that they keep

in different parts of the country. Both are from New Jersey, and know a lot of the same people in the sneaker world. So when one misses out on a pair he really wanted, he knows who might have gotten them instead.

"I asked a guy for a pair of shoes and he was like, 'Naz got his hands on them,'" Anderson said. "Same thing with him. I may beat him to the punch." Added Reid: "Whoever gets them first, gets them first."

See **WOLVES** on C4 ▶**Wolves 123, Charlotte 117:**  
Big men lead the way. C4**PUMPED-UP KICKS**

Kyle Anderson and Naz Reid both wear around 300 pairs of sneakers. Fans can catch glimpses of their collections on the court — and maybe an ownership swap.

Star Tribune and Associated Press photos

**VOLLEYBALL  
NCAA TOURNAMENT**  
CREIGHTON 3, GOPHERS 0

## Gophers hustle until the bitter end

Late rally isn't enough to topple host Bluejays despite valiant effort.

By JEFF DAY  
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OMAHA - The Gophers wanted this moment, a rematch with Creighton in the second round of the NCAA volleyball tournament, to showcase the growth they have displayed since losing to the Bluejays in September.

Turns out Creighton has been improving, too.

The Bluejays defeated the Gophers 25-21, 25-20, 29-27 Saturday night behind a swelling home crowd to reach the Sweet 16. It was a match where they exploited the right matchups and did just enough in a thrilling third set after Minnesota found some answers.

For the Gophers, there simply wasn't enough time.

"When I look out on the court and I'm watching plays, I'm just seeing places where we didn't develop," Gophers coach Keegan Cook said. "We were on our way ... but time is precious and we just didn't teach and learn with enough ferocity here."

Creighton and their fan base have been yearning for this moment and the sold-out DJ. Sokol Arena didn't disappoint.

The Bluejays, undefeated here this season, have become a tournament mainstay under coach Kirsten Bernthal Booth but have struggled to reach the second weekend. Their fans See **GOPHERS** on C4 ▶

## Fleck's QB search will not be easy or cheap

**CHIP SCOGGINS**

P.J. Fleck is in the market for a starting quarterback. Anyone got a spare \$1 million you can loan the Gophers coach? That and a fundamental shift in offensive philosophy might do the trick. Actually, \$1 million might not be enough to attract an established Power Five quarterback searching for a new home. So says Nebraska coach Matt Rhule.

"Make no mistake that a good quarterback in the portal costs \$1 million to \$1.5 million to \$2 million right now," Rhule told reporters this week.

"Just so we're on the same page. Let's make sure we all understand what's happening. There are some teams that have \$6 [million] or \$7 million players playing for them."

Shocking? Yeah. Welcome to college sports circa 2023.

The aftereffect of the NIL (name, image and likeness) movement might make you curse into your morning coffee. It might make you lose interest in college sports. It might make you question the future of the entire enterprise.

This is reality now though, and the system is not going back to the old days when athletes were prohibited from transferring without penalty or earning compensation for their talent. Unless

See **SCOGGINS** on C6 ▶