THE WEEK AHEAD

Sporting event this week, June 2-8

Sunday, June 2

Golf north of the border

Canadian Open
11:30 a.m.
Watch: Golf Channel, CBS
Former BYU golfer Zac Blair shot 3-under to open the tournament at Hamilton Golf Club.

Tuesday, June 4-Sunday, June 9

Bees get some TV time

Salt Lake Bees vs. Suger Land Space Cowboys
6:35 p.m. at Smith's Ballpark
Watch: KMYU
The Bees open a six-day homestand. Thursday's, Friday's, Saturday's and Sunday's games will be televised.

Saturday, June 8

NWSL action in Sandy

Utah Royals vs. Washington Spirit
5:30 p.m. at America First Field
Watch: ION
Former BYU star Ashley Hatch has two goals and an assist for the Spirit this season.

THE GAME PLAN

June 15 at Montreal 5:30 p.m. TV: Apple	June 19 at Kansas City 6:30 p.m. TV: Apple	June 22 LA Galaxy 7:30 p.m. TV: Apple	July 3 Houston 7:30 p.m. TV: Apple	July 6 Atlanta 7:30 p.m. TV: Apple	
Saturday Washington 5:30 p.m.	June 16 at Bay FC 6 p.m.	June 21 at Washington 4 p.m.	June 29 Portland 8 p.m.	July 7 at Seattle 4 p.m.	
Sunday at Bay FC 2:30 p.m.	Tuesday Sugar Land 6:30 p.m.	Wednesday Sugar Land 6:30 p.m.	Thursday Sugar Land 6:30 p.m.	Friday Sugar Land 6:30 p.m.	

Kansas City Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker, shown in 2020, recently stirred controversy with his commencement speech at a Catholic university.

With rules changing, Chiefs ponder not using Butker on kickoffs

By LARRY HOLDER

Kansas City Chiefs special teams coach Dave Toub likely raised some eyebrows Thursday when he mentioned how the team might not use kicker Harrison Butker for kickoff duties thanks to the new rules. During Thursday's organized team activities session, safety Justin Reid and running back Louis Rees-Zammit — a former rugby player — executed kickoffs in place of Butker.

Toub's reasoning? Kickers could be more involved in tackling this season. The special teams coach would prefer not to put Butker in harms way given his value kicking field goals. Plus, he'd like to have a better tackler in on the play if possible.

"I'd like to have somebody go back and is able to make a tackle," Toub said in a news conference. "Butker is able to make a tackle, but I really don't want him making tackles all year long. If you watched the XFL, we watched every play. I bet kickers were involved in at least 25 to 40 percent of the tackles either trying to make a guy bounce back or making a tackle or just missing a tackle. We don't want Butker in that situation."

Toub said he knows Butker can boot the ball out the back of the end zone, but the team would give up more field position now because an opposing team starts at its own 30-yard line on touchbacks.

"Justin can kick ... and he can go down there and make tackles," Toub said. "He's an extra guy that they're probably not accounting for. They know that guy (a kicker) can go down and tackle, but a guy like Justin is a guy that they have to worry about. They have to get him blocked, and they have to give up blocking somebody else."

Reid has served as a backup kicker, per se, having filled in for Butker during a game against the Arizona Cardinals in the 2022 season after Butker sustained an injury.

This possibly more than hypothetical scenario comes on the heels of Butker's controversial statements during a commencement speech at Benedictine College, referred to Pride Month, the events in June demonstrating inclusivity and support for the LGBTQ+ community, as an example of the "deadly sins" as he advocated for a more conservative brand of Catholicism.

Butker also used the speech to criticize President Joe Biden on several issues, including abortion and the coronavirus pandemic, and questioned Biden's devotion to Catholicism. Butker also addressed gender ideologies and said a woman's most important title is "homemaker."

The Chiefs kicker said last week he doesn't have any regrets about his commencement address saying in his first public comments since the speech that he received "a shocking level of hate" but also support for his views.

"It's a decision I've consciously made and one I do not regret at all," Butker said at the Regina Caeli Academy Courage Under Fire Gala in Nashville, Tenn.

The NFL distanced itself from the kicker's comments and the Benedictine Sisters denounced the speech once the comments became widespread news. Quarterback Patrick Mahomes said he didn't agree with all of Butker's speech comments, but the kicker is "a good person." Tight end Travis Kelce said, "I don't think that I should judge him by his views."

Players say all the racket at French Open crosses the line

By MATTHEW FUTTERMAN

PHOTOS BY AURELIEN MORISSARD | The Associated Press

Fans of France's Hugo Gaston cheer with the French flag during his first-round match against American Ben Shelton at the French Open on Monday in Paris.

Let's start with the brass band.

That's what caught Ben Shelton off guard when he walked onto court Monday to face Hugo Gaston of France. The venue was Court 14, a sunken stage that can very quickly become a suffocating cauldron of noise and mayhem when the opponent is a native son.

"This is the first time that I've come out to a tennis match and had a band playing in the stands on my court," said Shelton. Shelton, the 15th seed at this year's French Open, is no stranger to rowdy crowds; he played two years of college tennis at the University of Florida. Away matches at Kentucky Tennessee and Georgia were especially nasty, he said.

"You play in the SEC (Southeastern Conference) all bets are off."

If the bets are off on campus, then at Roland Garros, they're somewhere in the Seine. All match long, the band played on, a bass drum thumping and summoning the rhythmic clapping, the trumpets and horns tooting and rousing the standing-room-only crowd of thousands to its feet to shake Shelton into as many faults and errors as it could.

This is how tennis rolls at the French Open, turning a genteel sport known for its etiquette-obsessed fans into the frenzies of soccer matches.

It's not everyone's cup of tea. The lords of Wimbledon would have none of it, and the All England Club has long set the standards for much of the sport. But these are two of just a handful of weeks during the tennis season when a tournament reminds a sport that it does not have to abide by the norms of Victorian-era Great Britain.

Players and fans alike might enjoy themselves a tad more.

"They're really into it and I felt like they really love tennis," said Denis Shapovalov, a Canadian who got similar treatment later that evening when he took on France's Luca Van Assche a few hours later on the same court. Shapovalov, a massive Toronto Maple Leafs fan, is no stranger to the boozy and brazen throngs at sporting events — just not the ones he's playing in.

"Pretty fun as a tennis player, even though it was against me."

After a series of pressure-cooker clashes in the early rounds, tennis players and fans are being forced to re-engage with the current rules of the game. At its best, tennis is a sport that inspires uncontrollable emotions, from awe and ecstasy to desolation and pain. Fans going through those emotions are expected not to show them — at least until a point is over — and even then, not to show them too much.

Lines do get crossed and in Paris, players not from France bear the brunt. Belgium's David Goffin was plenty salty after his five-set win over France's Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard on Tuesday night, taunting the crowd with a cupped ear for mere seconds after it spent more than three and a half hours taunting him.

The Parisians have form. Taylor Fritz ran around the court with his finger on his lips after toppling Arthur Rinderknech of France last year, screaming, inaudibly beneath the din of boos, that he wanted them to "let me hear it!"

Goffin was a little more unnerved. "It goes too far, it's total disrespect," the mild-mannered Belgian told reporters from his country following the match. He claimed a fan had spit gum at him.

"Soon there will be smoke bombs, hooligans and fights in the stands." He compared that behaviour to that of soccer fans — the implication that it simply has no place in tennis.

World No 1 Iga Swiatek then gently scolded the Court Philippe-Chatrier crowd on Wednesday for making noise in the middle of points as she prevailed in three sets over Naomi Osaka in a gripping duel.

Swiatek understands the enthusiasm of the French crowds, she said, but there is decorum in tennis, an expectation of silence in the audience, though plenty of her peers, namely Frances Tiafoe, think that concept should have gone away long ago. Reading between the lines, Swiatek, though addressing the topic in general, was only really talking about one point: as she moved on to a regulation drive forehand volley deep in the third set against Osaka, someone screamed out as she addressed the ball. She missed the volley.

If tennis players were constantly exposed to noises of varying pitch and intensity, mapped to the contours of their rallies — just like in almost every other sport — this kind of thing wouldn't be a problem.

When a gasp emerges from a vacuum, it is much more jarring.

"I just wanted to point out that it's not easy for us," Swiatek said. "French crowds can be kind of harsh, so I don't want to be under the radar right now. I don't know if that was a good decision or not, but I hope they can treat me as a human."

This has all caused quite the stir at the French Open, and tournament director Amelie Mauresmo said Thursday that she would no longer permit spectators to drink alcohol in the stands. Umpires and security officials have been put on alert to snuff out unruly behavior.

But fans getting emotional in the middle of a point, as long as it's not intentionally done to put off a specific player, is not a punishable offense.

"If you throw something at a player, that's black and white, you're out," Mauresmo said. "Expressing emotions, during a point, isn't the same thing."

Given the singular nature of the French Open, it's also hard to tell whether all this is a genuine referendum on the nature of spectatorship, or more of an occupational hazard of being in the City of Light for a fortnight. Home advantage is as old as sports and warfare, and there is something inherently unfair about it in tennis. Players from only four countries — Australia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States — can experience a home-court advantage in the Grand Slams, the most important events in the sport.

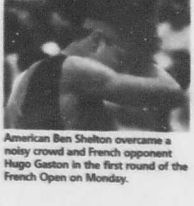
Everyone else has to make do with the extra oomph of a home crowd (and its proven effects on umpires and referees) at tournaments that don't mean nearly as much and offer far less prize money. The circumstances at this year's tournament are also a little strange.

Rafael Nadal vs Alexander Zverev and Swiatek vs Osaka aren't your typical first- and second-round matches; they're the kinds of occasions fans are used to seeing in semi-finals and finals, when the jeopardy is at its peak and emotions run highest. When Andy Murray won his first Wimbledon final against Novak Djokovic in 2013, the entire Centre Court crowd let out a pealing screech on match point, when Djokovic's first ball flew high and deep in the air, and an awed gasp when it landed not out, but in. He sent the ball back to Murray. Murray returned the favor.

Djokovic put the next ball in the net.

The venue exploded.

Petar Popovic, the coach of Corentin Moutet, put house money into full effect for a first-round match against Nicolas Jarry, a powerful Chilean coming off a run to the final in Rome. In February, a partisan crowd in Chile, where they do rowdy tennis as well as anyone, had made life fairly miserable for Moutet. Popovic told the press he wanted the French crowd to exact some revenge. And they did, razzing Jarry for every fault and error, breaking his concentration and his spirit, turning Court Simonne-Mathieu into a Roman amphitheatre. Moutet prevailed in four sets, including 6-0 in the last.



American Ben Shelton overcame a noisy crowd and French opponent Hugo Gaston in the first round of the French Open on Monday.

This rousing support can also only do so much. The last French woman to win the French Open was Mary Pierce in 2000. A French man hasn't won since Yannick Noah in 1983. Other players are simply better.

Let's get back to the band.

They are part of La Banda Paname, a collection of roughly 50 musicians who provide spirit and entertainment at various sports events throughout the region. BNP Paribas, the international bank that is one of the biggest sponsors of tennis and the French Open, has them on the payroll here, under the name "We Are Tennis". They are decked out in all white, with matching logoed polo shirts.

"We started at Queen's Club for the Davis Cup against Great Britain in 2015," said Vincent Raymond, who was part of the five-man crew on Tuesday.

"Andy Murray punished us."

Raymond was joined by bandmates, Julian, Brice, Nicholas and Yohann: two trumpets, drums, a trombone, a flugabone, and an emcee/conductor. Their mandate, he said, is to create noise, support France and support the sport. They have seats reserved all over the grounds, so they can bounce from court to court.

The way it's been going for French tennis, that means going wherever France needs them during the first week. Generally, the French players are out of the tournament after that. "Then we shift our strategy," Raymond said. "We want to provide a fair play atmosphere. It's tennis after all. The key is to stop playing before the umpire says no more."

The band, however, can only control what they can control. Once they get the crowd going, all bets are off, especially on Court Suzanne-Lenglen, the 10,000-seat gem of an arena, where Argentina's Tomas Martin Etcheverry took on Arthur Cazaux, the rising 21-year-old Frenchman in the first round.

Cazaux won the first set in a hurry then fell off a cliff, losing the next two. He was still getting pounded midway through the third, down a service break and seemingly minutes from defeat. His shoulders slumped, his legs dragged.

Then, as Cazaux, came back out onto the court after a change-over, the crowd grew louder than it had been all day, with plenty of help from that band. A collection of Cazaux's friends, seated just above the back of the court, traded chants and arm pumps with fans on the other side of the stadium, like they had been practicing for months.

Etcheverry took a few deep breaths, and served.

Fault.

More chants. More screams. A brief chorus.

Another fault.

Within minutes, the crowd had manifested a break for Cazaux. He couldn't hold his serve, so they manifested another for him.

"I had a second breath due to the crowd, so thanks to them," Cazaux said later. "I love this kind of atmosphere."

Then that refrain: "It's like a football match."

Etcheverry said the atmosphere was as tough as it gets.

"I play a lot of times against French guys," he said. "It's tough, every moment."

Alas, it was not tough enough. Cazaux fell in four sets, the crowd screaming until the dying moment, and then for a few more after.

The band checked the schedule, and moved to another court.

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