

# THE SHOW MUST GO ON

By Soham Kinikar

## SPORTS DURING COVID-19

SPORTS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CULTURE. AFTER ALL, THEY MAKE UP OUR SUNDAY AFTERNOONS AND OUR CHILDHOOD MEMORIES. GROWING UP WATCHING PLAYERS GLIDE UP AND DOWN THE COURT AND FLAWLESSLY PLAY THE GAME HAS INSPIRED MANY GENERATIONS AND CONTINUES TO DO SO. HOWEVER, AFTER THE ONSET OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE ENTIRE SPORTS WORLD CAME TO A GRINDING HALT. FOR MONTHS, SOME OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST STADIUMS WERE COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN. PLAYERS, COACHES, AND FANS ALIKE WERE ALL CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE SPORT.



HOWEVER, THE OFFICIALS OFTEN DEEMED "INCOMPETENT" BY FANS (AHEM, ROGER GOODELL) CAME UP WITH SEPERATE PLANS FOR EACH LEAGUE, AND CURRENTLY, THEY SEEM TO ACTUALLY BE WORKING. ADJUSTING TO THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE HAVE SEEN LEAGUES BUILD "BUBBLES" IN THE MIDDLE OF DISNEYLAND, TEST PLAYERS EVERY SINGLE WEEK, AND CREATE ICONIC SPORTS MOMENTS. LEAGUES LIKE THE NBA THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE HAVE CONTINUED LAST YEARS SEASON WHILE THE MLB AND THE NFL HAVE STARTED COMPLETELY ANEW. DESPITE COVID-19 AFFECTING SOME OF THE WORLDS BIGGEST SPORTS STARS AND CONCERNS ABOUT PLAYER SAFETY STILL REMAIN, IT HAS PROVEN TO BE SOMEWHAT OF A SUCCESS AND CAN SERVE AS A GUIDE TO REOPENING OUR PUBLIC SPACES. IT HAS ALSO PROVEN THE EXTREME LENGHTS THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO MAKE SURE GIANT PEOPLE CAN THROW A BALL INTO A BASKET.

## UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE



### BAYERN MUNICH TAKE HOME TITLE, PLUCKY UNDERDOGS LYON AND LEIPZIG SHINE

DESPITE THE TOURNAMENT BEING CREDITED TO HELPING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN ITALY AND SPAIN, THE COMPETITION CAME ROARING BACK ON THE 12TH OF AUGUST AND HOSTED A SHORTENED FORMAT OF THE TOURNAMENT, LEADING TO EXCITING GAMES WITH MANY UPSETS. THESE GAMES WERE CARRIED OUT IN "BUBBLE" IIN PORTUGAL, WHERE THE FINAL WOULD ALSO BE PLAYED. PLAYERS AND STAFF WERE TESTED REGULARLY TO ENSURE THAT COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS WERE FOLLOWED.

ULTIMATELY THE TOURNAMENT WAS A ROARING SUCCESS. A RECORD BREAKING BAYERN MUNICH TEAM MARCHED TO THE TITLE LED BY ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI (RIGHT). ON THEIR PATH TO THE FINAL, BAYERN EVISCERATED CHELSEA FC AND FC BARCELONA, 7-1, AND 8-2 RESPECTIVELY. IN THE FINAL, BAYERN DEFEATED PARIS SAINT GERMAIN BY A SCORE OF 1-0. BECAUSE OF THEIR HUMILIATING DEFEAT, BARCELONA STAR PLAYER LIONEL MESSI TRIED TO FORCE AN EXIT FROM THE CLUB THIS SUMMER. HE ULTIMATELY FAILED.

THE TOURNAMENT ALSO SAW MASSIVE UPSETS. FOR EXAMPLE, UNDERDOGS OLIMPIQUE LYON DEFEATED JUVENTUS WHO WERE LED BY THE LEGENDARY CRISTIANO RONALDO, AND MANCHESTER CITY, THE FAVORITES COMING INTO THE TOURNAMENT. LYON WERE LED BY STAR PLAYERS MAXWELL CORNET (BELOW) AND HOUSSEM AOUAR. THEIR FAIRYTALE RUN WAS ENDED BY A 3-0 DEFEAT TO BAYERN MUNICH IN THE SEMIFINALS.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRACKET, RED-BULL LEIPZIG SNUCK TO THE SEMIFINALS BY DEFEATING THE TOTTENHAM HOTSPURS IN THE ROUND OF 16, AND THEN SQUEAKING PAST A DEFENSIVELY ASTUTE ATLETICO MADRID TEAM, 2-1. THEY SAW THEIR RUN ENDED BECAUSE OF A LACKLUSTER PERFORMANCE AGAINST PSG IN THE SEMI-FINALS AND THEY LOST 3-0. THEY WERE LED BY MIDFIELDER MARCEL SABITZER, AND DESPITE THEIR LOSS, THEY LOOK TO THE FUTURE AS A PROMINENT THREAT TO WIN THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE.



# THE NBA BUBBLE

## SHORTENED FORMAT ENTERTAINS COUNTRY AS YOUNG STARS SHINE

AFTER UTAH JAZZ STAR RUDY GOBERT TESTED POSITIVE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS ON MARCH 11, 2020, THE NBA SEASON WAS PAUSED INDEFINITELY. THE ENTIRE LEAGUE SHUT DOWN, AND SPORTS FANS WERE CONCERNED WHEN THE LEAGUE WAS GOING TO RESTART. MANY LASHED OUT AGAINST GOBERT AND SAID THAT HIS ACTIONS WERE "IRRESPONSIBLE" AND THAT HE HAD COST THE LEAGUE MILLIONS BY MOCKING AND ULTIMATELY CONTRACTING THE CORONAVIRUS. HOWEVER IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, AS IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING SUPERSTARS KEVIN DURANT AND NIKOLA JOKIC ALSO CONTRACTED THE VIRUS.

AS THE MONTHS PASSED BY WE WERE DEVOID OF LIVE BASKETBALL. THE LAST DANCE, A DOCUMENTARY ON MICHAEL JORDAN CAUSED QUITE AN UPROAR ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MANY MEMES. HOWEVER, THE FANS GREW IMPATIENT. WE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT THE NBA HOSTING THE PLAYOFFS IN DISNEYWORLD, AND WE SHRUG THOSE OFF, SAYING, THEY COULDN'T POSSIBLY MOVE THE PLAYOFFS TO DISNEYWORLD AND FIT 330 PLAYERS IN A HOTEL JUST TO PLAY BASKETBALL. RIGHT?

WELL GUESS WHAT. APPARENTLY YOU CAN, AND THIS LEADS TO THE MOST ENTERTAINING PLAYOFFS SINCE 2011. THE NBA TOOK 22 TEAMS, PROSPECTIVE PLAYOFF TEAMS AND HAD THEM PLAY EIGHT GAMES TO DETERMINE THEIR FATE. IF ANY TEAMS WERE TIED THEY WOULD PLAY A "PLAY-IN" GAME TO DETERMINE THEIR FATES. ALTHOUGH THE FAVORITES COMING INTO THE BUBBLE WERE THE MILWAUKEE BUCKS AND THE LOS ANGELES LAKERS, TEAMS LIKE THE DENVER NUGGETS AND THE LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS POSED SIGNIFICANT THREATS AS WELL. THE STRUCTURING OF THE TOURNAMENT HAS LED TO SOME WILD GAMES SO FAR AS YOUNG STARS HAVE ENTERTAINED WITH THEIR FLASHY, EXCITING PLAY. ONE SUCH PLAYER IS JAMAL MURRAY (RIGHT) OF THE DENVER NUGGETS.

JAMAL MURRAY HAS BEEN THE TALK OF THE PLAYOFFS. IN THE BUBBLE, MURRAY HAS AVERAGED 32 POINTS PER GAME IN THE PLAYOFFS. TO PUT THIS IN CONTEXT, THE MOST SHAQUILLE O'NEAL AVERAGED IN THE PLAYOFFS WAS 30.7 POINTS PER GAME. ADDITIONALLY, ALONG WITH FELLOW SUPERSTAR NIKOLA JOKIC, HE LED THE NUGGETS TO A SERIES WIN AGAINST THE CLIPPERS WHEN THEY WERE DOWN 3-1. HE'S BEEN DOUBTED BEFORE FOR HIS INCONSISTENT PLAY, AND BEFORE THIS HE HAS NEVER AVERAGED ABOVE 20 POINTS IN A SEASON. ADDITIONALLY, HE HAS BEEN CALLED OUT FOR HIS DEFENSE AND HIS LACK OF EFFORT. HOWEVER, IN THE BUBBLE, MURRAY HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT OF A REVELATION. HE EXCELLED AGAINST TWO VERY DEFENSIVE TEAMS IN THE UTAH JAZZ AND THE LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS AND HIS DEFENSE HAS BEEN TURNED INTO AN ASSET FOR THE TEAM. MURRAY TRULY HAS FULFILLED HIS POTENTIAL AND THE NUGGETS LOOK TO HIM TO LEAD THEM AGAINST THE LAKERS.



Jamal Murray (above) celebrates after making a shot

ANOTHER SUPERSTAR THAT HAS PROVEN HIMSELF IN THE BUBBLE IS DEVIN BOOKER (LEFT) FROM THE PHOENIX SUNS. OFTEN DERIDED AS THE PUNCHING BAGS OF THE NBA, THE PHOENIX SUNS CAME INTO THE BUBBLE WITH A CHIP ON THEIR SHOULDER. LED BY BOOKER AND DEANDRE AYTON, THE SUNS WENT 8-0 IN THE BUBBLE AND WERE THE ONLY TEAM TO REMAIN UNDEFEATED. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY MISSED OUT ON THE PLAYOFFS BY A VERY SLIM MARGIN, BOOKER BURST OUT ONTO THE SCENE TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF AS A BONA FIDE SUPERSTAR. HE AVERAGED 31 POINTS, 4 REBOUNDS, AND 6 ASSISTS, AND WAS WIDELY CONSIDERED THE BUBBLE MVP. ALTHOUGH THE AWARD WENT TO DAMIAN LILLARD OF THE PORTLAND TRAILBLAZERS, BOOKER STILL MADE ICONIC MEMORIES IN THE BUBBLE. FOR EXAMPLE, HE MADE A GAME WINNING SHOT OVER THE LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS, WIDELY CONSIDERED THE BEST DEFENSIVE TEAM IN THE LEAGUE WHEN HEALTHY. BOOKER HAS EXPLODED LIKE THIS BEFORE, AND HE SCORED 70 POINTS AS A 20 YEAR OLD ONCE, BUT HE STILL REMAINED CONTROVERSIAL AS CRITICS BELIEVED THAT HIS POINTS WOULD NOT TRANSLATE INTO WINS. HE HAD PROVED THEM WRONG, AND THE 23 YEAR OLD SHOOTING GUARD HAS A BRIGHT FUTURE.

AS THE NBA CONTINUES FORWARD, WITH THE MIAMI HEAT PLAYING THE BOSTON CELTICS FOR THE EAST, AND MURRAY'S NUGGETS GO UP AGAINST LEBRON JAMES AND THE LAKERS, SPORTS LEAGUES SHOULD LOOK UP TO THE NBA AS A MODEL OF HOW TO PROGRESS FURTHER IN REOPENING SPORTS LEAGUES. ALL IN ALL THE BUBBLE HAS BEEN A RESOUNDING SUCCESS. ALONG WITH DELIVERING QUALITY BASKETBALL, NOT ONE PLAYER HAS TESTED POSITIVE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS. EVEN THOUGH FANS HAVE NOT RETURNED, THE RETURN OF THE NBA HAS PROVIDED US WITH SOME NORMALCY IN THESE TRYING TIMES, AND JUST FOR A MOMENT SPORTS HELP US TO FORGET THE HELLSCAPE KNOWN AS 2020.



Devin Booker (above) hits the game-winner against the Los Angeles Clippers to preserve their undefeated record in the Bubble