U.S. women seek to prove their potential on the ice

MILAN (AP) — As talented and deep as the Americans appear to be, coach John Wroblewski wasn't ready to accept his team being considered the favorite a day before the women's hockey tournament opens at the Milan Cortina Games.

After initially sidestepping the question following practice on Wednesday, Wroblewski reflected more on the lows — rather than the highs — the U.S. has endured in the four years since he took over.

"You say we're favorites. What if you would have asked this in February of 2024?" he said, referring to the U.S. losing a seven-game Rivalry Series of exhibition games to Canada. The Americans lost the final four games by a combined margin of 16-5.

"I mean, Canada was cleaning us up in Rivalry. We weren't even getting the puck," Wroblewski said. "I remember those bruises and those scars. And I'm sure you've got Hilary (Knight) and Megan (Keller),

Alex (Carpenter) in particular, they were in those games and it's not much fun to be in those games."

True enough.

The two nations are 2-2 in world championship tournaments since Canada won its fifth gold medal at the 2022 Beijing Games.

And though Canada holds the edge in winning three of the past four Rivalry Series, what's difficult to overlook is how dominating the Americans appeared in overwhelming their cross-border rivals in their most recent meetings spanning November and December.

The U.S. swept all four games by a combined score of 24-7. That included a 10-4 win in Game 3, which marked the most goals the Canadian women have ever allowed in international play.

Though the exhibition series generally isn't an indicator on how the two global powers fare in international competition, the sweep raised eyebrows over a potential shift in

power favoring the Americans.

"I don't know. You tell me?" said U.S. captain Hilary Knight, who will be making her fifth and potentially final Olympic appearance. "It's a clean slate every time you get to a tournament. You have to work hard."

The U.S. opens Group A play facing Czechia on Thursday in a four-game preliminary round schedule that closes with a showdown against Canada on Tuesday. And it's more than likely the two nations will meet yet again in the gold-medal match on Feb. 18.

Led by captain Marie-Philip Poulin, Canada returns 16 player from the team that set numerous scoring records and finished 7-0 in dominating the 2022 Beijing Games. The U.S. roster, by comparison, has been transformed by a youth movement. Only 11 of 23 return from 2022 on a team featuring seven players yet to complete their college careers.

Canada coach Troy Ryan is impressed, referring to the U.S. roster

as featuring one of the best young cores he's ever seen.

But he's not ready to give way to perception or prognosis, while acknowledging his team was not pleased with how it performed in the latest Rivalry Series.

"Joking with our team, I said, 'No one put a parade together for the first three Rivalry Series wins, so I'm not going to hang myself on a Rivalry Series loss,'" Ryan said.

"Correct me if I'm wrong, I think Denmark, Utica (New York), Brampton (Ontario), and Czechia, I think we were not favored," he added, referring to the sites of the past four world championships. "So it just feels normal."

The U.S. has won six straight meetings against the Canadians, dating to preliminary-round and gold-medal wins at the world championships in April.

"I don't mind being the underdog. But we don't really see ourselves as that," Canadian forward Brianne

Jenner said. "We know what the expectations are for our country. But you know what, we're fine with whatever story people want to tell about us. We're ready to prove ourselves the next two weeks."

The Czechs and Finland might also have a say in the matter. The two have split bronze over the past four world championships, with Czechia winning in 2022 and '23, followed by Finland winning the past two.

"It has allowed our confidence to grow. And with confidence comes hunger. So I think we're a hungry group," Czechia coach Carla MacLeod said of a team that only made its Olympic debut in 2022. "It's only our second Olympics. But certainly there's a belief in the room that we can go play our best games and see where it takes us."

Switzerland rounds out Group A. Sweden is considered the favorite to win Group B, which also features Japan, Germany, Italy and France, which is making its Olympic debut.

Top picks Maye, Darnold to square off in Super Bowl

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Drake Maye and Sam Darnold came into the NFL in similar fashion as No. 3 overall picks tasked with being franchise quarterbacks for struggling teams.

Their paths to the Super Bowl couldn't be much different.

Maye is looking to join Peyton and Eli Manning as the only quarterbacks selected in the top nine of the last 36 drafts to win a Super Bowl with the team he debuted with as a pro. Peyton Manning won it all in his ninth season with Indianapolis and Eli Manning in his fourth with the New York Giants after being acquired in a draft-day trade from San Diego.

Only two of the other 55 QBs taken in the top nine of the draft since 1990 won a Super Bowl with any team, with Trent Dilfer doing it in Baltimore after being drafted by Tampa Bay and Matthew Stafford with the Los Angeles Rams after being picked by Detroit.

Maye is trying to join Russell Wilson, Ben Roethlisberger, Tom Brady and Kurt Warner as the only QBs to win a Super Bowl in their first two seasons, with the Roethlisberger the only first-round pick to do it.

While Maye's success has been immediate, Darnold's has been any-

thing but.

Picked third by the New York Jets in 2018, Darnold struggled during his first three seasons before being traded to Carolina. He then spent two nondescript seasons in and out of the starting lineup with the Panthers before going to San Francisco as a backup in 2023.

That helped reset his career. He won 14 games as a starter in Minnesota last season before signing with Seattle and winning 14 games again in the regular season this year before making the Super Bowl.

Darnold could become the first starting quarterback to win a Super Bowl after previously playing for four other franchises. Brad Johnson, Jim Plunkett, Len Dawson and Nick Foles all played for two other franchises before winning a Super Bowl, with Foles doing it in his second stint with Philadelphia.

The Maye-Darnold matchup is a rare one between highly drafted quarterbacks, with only two other Super Bowls featuring two starting QBs picked in the top five of the draft. The other two were matchups of former No. 1 overall picks, with Matthew Stafford besting Joe Burrow in Super Bowl 56 and Peyton Manning topping Cam Newton in Super Bowl 50.

Fight on for USC

Southern California has produced more Super Bowl players than any other school but hasn't had a starting quarterback appear in the game until this year.

Darnold will be the first QB who finished his college career at USC to start in the Super Bowl after five other Trojans quarterbacks lost in either the conference or league title game before the Super Bowl.

The Trojans have had 70 players appear in the title game before this season, two more than second-place Miami.

North Carolina also will join the list of colleges to produce a starting quarterback in the Super Bowl, with Maye getting the honors. That will raise the total of colleges with a Super Bowl starting QB to 51.

Michigan has the most starts with 10 — all by Brady — while California has the most individual QBs, with Jared Goff, Aaron Rodgers, Craig Morton and Joe Kapp doing it. Vince Ferragamo, who began his college career at Cal before transferring to Nebraska, also started in the Super Bowl.

North Carolina, the alma mater of 11th president of the United States, James Polk, also can become the sixth school to produce a U.S. pres-

ident and a Super Bowl-winning quarterback.

Delaware was the last school to join that list when Joe Biden was inaugurated in 2021 — eight years after Joe Flacco won the Super Bowl. The other schools are Miami of Ohio (Benjamin Harrison and Roethlisberger), Michigan (Gerald Ford and Brady), Stanford (Herbert Hoover, John Elway and Jim Plunkett) and Navy (Jimmy Carter and Roger Staubach).

Missing stars

The Super Bowl is typically filled with star players, with an average of more than six first-team AP All-Pros taking the field for the title game the last three seasons.

This year's matchup features just one, with Seattle receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba the only player who earned first-team honors. The Seahawks did have four second-teamers, with defensive tackle Leonard Williams, linebacker Ernest Jones, cornerback Devon Witherspoon and punter Michael Dickson all making it. New England had two second-teamers in Maye and punt returner Marcus Jones.

There have been only two other Super Bowls since the 1970 AFL-NFL merger featuring only one first-team AP All-Pro, with Washington kicker Mark Moseley the sole hon-

oree in the 1982 season and Dallas linebacker Chuck Howley in the 1970 season.

Milton Williams tries to go back-to-back

Milton Williams turned a two-sack performance in last year's Super Bowl with Philadelphia into a $104 million contract in free agency with the New England Patriots.

Williams got back to the title game with his new team and now has a chance to join an elite group of players who won Super Bowls in back-to-back seasons with different teams.

The last time anyone completed the trick came eight years ago when Chris Long and LeGarrette Blount followed up titles in Super Bowl 51 with New England by beating the Patriots the following season with the Eagles.

The other two teams it happened came with members of the Cowboys and 49ers in the 1990s. Linebacker Ken Norton Jr. helped Dallas win back-to-back Super Bowls in the 1992-93 seasons before leaving to sign with San Francisco, where he won again in 1994.

Deion Sanders was Norton's teammate on the 1994 Niners before joining Dallas the next season, when he helped the Cowboys beat Pittsburgh.

Steelers hire Vikings assistant Angelichio as offensive coordinator

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike McCarthy hired former Minnesota Vikings assistant Brian Angelichio on Wednesday to serve as Pittsburgh's offensive coordinator.

Angelichio spent the past four seasons as the tight ends coach/passing game coordinator in Minnesota.

The hiring is a reunion for McCarthy and Angelichio. Angelichio spent three seasons as the tight ends coach on McCarthy's staff in Green

Bay from 2016-18. Angelichio has also worked for Carolina, Cleveland, Washington and Tampa Bay.

Danny Crossman is joining the Steelers as special teams coordinator. Crossman previously worked in the same position for Carolina, Detroit, Buffalo and Miami.

Joe Whitt Jr., who worked under McCarthy in Dallas from 2021-23, was hired as assistant head coach/secondary. Whitt spent the past two seasons as the defensive coordinator

in Washington.

Domata Peko, who spent 15 seasons in the NFL as a defensive tackle, will serve as defensive line coach. Peko was a defensive assistant in Dallas under McCarthy in 2024.

Pens' Jones suspended

NEW YORK — The NHL suspended injured Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Caleb Jones for 20 games on Wednesday for violating the terms of the NHL/NHLPA Per-

formance Enhancing Substances Program.

Jones, 28, is in his first season with the Penguins. The club placed him on injured reserve in late October with a foot injury, then assigned him to their American Hockey League affiliate in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton. He played one game for Wilkes-Barre in January before sustaining an upper-body injury.

Jones said through a statement released by the NHL Players Associa-

tion that he believes he was exposed to a contaminated substance while undergoing exosome therapy from an outside provider.

"While I did not use the prohibited substance intentionally or for performance enhancement, I understand that players are responsible for everything that enters their body and accept the discipline imposed by the program," Jones said. "I'm sorry to have let down my teammates, the Penguins organization, and our fans."

THE DAILY SCOREBOARD

NHL STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	54	36	14	4	76	193	139
Detroit	57	33	18	6	72	173	171
Montreal	57	32	17	8	72	199	187
Buffalo	56	32	18	6	70	193	171
Boston	57	32	20	5	69	195	182
Toronto	57	27	21	9	63	188	194
Florida	56	29	24	3	61	173	185
Ottawa	56	27	22	7	61	189	183

Metropolitan	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Carolina	56	35	15	6	76	195	163
Pittsburgh	55	28	15	12	68	187	167
N.Y. Islanders	57	31	21	5	67	166	161
Columbus	56	29	20	7	65	179	177
Washington	58	28	23	7	63	185	175
Philadelphia	55	25	20	10	60	166	178
New Jersey	58	28	26	2	58	145	172
N.Y. Rangers	56	22	28	6	50	151	178

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Colorado	54	36	9	9	81	208	136
Minnesota	57	33	14	10	76	190	164
Dallas	56	33	14	9	75	188	156
Utah	56	29	23	4	62	179	156
Nashville	56	26	23	6	58	162	188
Chicago	57	22	26	9	53	182	195
Winnipeg	56	22	26	8	52	160	175
St. Louis	56	23	29	4	50	143	198

Pacific	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	57	25	16	8	64	193	176
Edmonton	57	28	21	8	64	195	190
Anaheim	56	30	23	3	63	185	195
Seattle	55	26	20	9	61	158	163
Los Angeles	54	23	17	14	60	143	153
San Jose	54	27	23	4	58	169	183
Calgary	55	22	27	6	50	138	166
Vancouver	56	18	32	6	42	147	205

NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Tuesday's Games
Columbus 3, New Jersey 0
Carolina 4, Ottawa 3
Philadelphia 4, Washington 2
Tampa Bay 4, Buffalo 3, OT
N.Y. Islanders 5, Pittsburgh 4, OT
Toronto 5, Edmonton 2
Anaheim 4, Seattle 2

Wednesday's Games
Columbus 4, Chicago 0
Montreal 5, Winnipeg 1
Florida 5, Boston 4, SO
Minnesota 6, Nashville 5, OT
Detroit at Utah, late
San Jose at Colorado, late
St. Louis at Dallas, late
Edmonton at Calgary, late
Seattle at Los Angeles, late
Vancouver at Vegas, late

Thursday's Games
Carolina at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m.
N.Y. Islanders at New Jersey, 7 p.m.
Nashville at Washington, 7 p.m.
Ottawa at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Buffalo, 7 p.m.
Florida at Tampa Bay, 7:30 p.m.
Los Angeles at Vegas, 10 p.m.

Friday's Games
No games scheduled
Saturday's Games
No games scheduled

SCHOLASTIC SWIMMING

at Titusville
BOYS
200 medley relay — Titusville (Steinbuhler, Reynolds, LaLone, Slocum) 2:06.01, Oil City (Lander, Sharrar, Schake, Delp), Titusville (Vroman, Decker, Fullerton, Hosick).
200 free — Lander (OC) 2:07.81, Hironimus (T), Patterson (T), White (OC).
200 IM — Slocum (T) 2:38.99, LaLone (T), Lavery (T), Wilson (OC).
50 free — Reynolds (T) 28.37, Delp (OC), Hosick (T), Woodworth (OC), Bricca (OC).
100 fly — Patterson (T) 1:13.30, LaLone (T), White (OC).
100 free — Lander (OC) 55.26, Schake (OC), Lavery (T), Decker (T), Woodworth (OC).
500 free — Steinbuhler (T) 4:44.52, Sharrar (OC), Wilson (OC), Hosick (T).
200 free relay — Titusville (Reynolds, Lavery, Hironimus, Patterson) 1:52.90, Titusville (Decker, Fullerton, Hosick, LaLone), Oil City (Schake, White, Wilson, Woodworth)
100 back — Hironimus (T) 1:09.49, Steinbuhler (T), Slocum (T), Delp (OC), Bricca (OC).
100 breast — Reynolds (T) 1:18.05, Sharrar (OC), Decker (T), Schake (OC), Fullerton (T).
400 free relay — Titusville (Hironimus, Slocum, Steinbuhler, Patterson) 4:07.39, Oil City (Lander, Bricca, Delp, Sharrar).

GIRLS
200 medley relay — Oil City (Hall, McCain, Kissell, Collins) 2:25.91, Titusville (Peden, Jackson, Roberts, Whitman), Oil City (Lee, Milner, Wice, L. Felmlee).
200 free — Kissell (OC) 2:27.43, Peden (T), Crocker (T), Lee (OC), Pedley (OC).
200 IM — Herman (T) 2:44.13, Hall (OC), McCain (OC), Jackson (T).
50 free — Herman (T) 29.26, Collins (OC), Roberts (T), L. Felmlee (OC), Thompson (OC).
100 fly — Herman (T) 1:12.05, Wice (OC), Brosius (OC), Milner (OC).
100 free — Mucha (T) 1:07.01, Crocker (T), Nuhfer (OC), Collins (OC), J. Felmlee (OC).
400 free — Kissell (OC) 5:14.71, Peden (T), Crocker (T), Young-Johnson (OC), Wilson (OC).
200 free relay — Titusville (Roberts, Mucha, Peden, Jackson) 2:10.64, Oil City (Hall, Nuhfer, Brosius, L. Felmlee), Oil City (Young-Johnson, J. Felmlee, Pedley, Milner).
100 back — Kirvan (T) 1:17.09, Hall (OC), Lee (OC).
100 breast — Crocker (T) 1:26.50, McCain (OC), Roberts (T), J. Felmlee (OC), Young-Johnson (OC).
400 free relay — Titusville (Kirvan, Crocker, Crocker, Herman) 4:36.15, Oil City (Nuhfer, Wice, Collins, Kissell), Oil City (Brosius, L. Felmlee, Lee, McCain).

SPORTS SCENE

THURSDAY, FEB. 5
BOYS BASKETBALL
Clarion-Limestone at Cranberry (6 p.m.)
Union at Keystone (6 p.m.)
North Clarion at A-C Valley (6 p.m.)
Clarion at Moniteau (6 p.m.)

GIRLS BASKETBALL
Conneaut Area at Franklin (6 p.m.)
Rocky Grove at Jamestown (6 p.m.)
Redbank Valley vs. Forest Area at Tionesta (6 p.m.)
Jamestown at Cochranton (6 p.m.)
Greenville at Grove City (6 p.m.)
Titusville at Meadville (6 p.m.)

FRIDAY, FEB. 6
BOYS BASKETBALL

Franklin at Corry (6 p.m.)
Oil City at Warren (6 p.m.)
Maplewood at Rocky Grove (6 p.m.)
Cochranton at Cranberry (6 p.m.)
Keystone at A-C Valley (6 p.m.)
Clarion at Brookville (6 p.m.)
Slippery Rock at Grove City (6 p.m.)
Seneca at Titusville (6 p.m.)

GIRLS BASKETBALL
General McLane at Oil City (6 p.m.)
Cranberry at Clarion-Limestone (6 p.m.)
Moniteau at Clarion (6 p.m.)
SCHOLASTIC WRESTLING
Cranberry at Redbank Valley (6 p.m.)

SCHOLASTIC WRESTLING

at New Bethlehem
CURWENSVILLE 50, REDBANK VALLEY 22
107 — Kael McGary (C) pinned Colton Buzard, 1:59.
114 — Russell Bloom (C) pinned Corban Summerville, 3:32.
121 — Hayden Queen (C) dec. Heagan McCauley, 9-4.
127 — Javon Bunce (C) pinned Jaxon McKinney, :55.
133 — Gabe Clinger (RV) pinned Noah Barney, :52.
139 — Brandon Smith (RV) pinned Dean Swatsworth Jr., 3:06.
145 — Tristan Johnston (RV) pinned Kegan McMonigle, :58.
152 — Cooper Haag (C) pinned Jordan Titus, 2:32.
160 — Reed Hawkins (C) pinned Grant Shoemaker, 3:35.
172 — Timothy Gustafson (C) pinned Gavinn Rodriguez, :08.
189 — Jordan Smith (RV) major dec. Heath Hawkins, 10-2.
215 — Caleb Hendershot (C) tech. fall Devon Weckerly, 15-0.
285 — Brooks Hendershot (C) pinned Bailey Bowser, 1:17.

Exhibition
285 — Sloan Corman (RV) pinned Jackson Stephens, 3:50.

at Clarion
REDBANK VALLEY 50, CENTRAL CLARION 23
107 — Colton Buzard (RV) pinned Elizabeth Horn, 1:04.
114 — Corban Summerville (RV) won by forfeit.
121 — Jaxon McKinney (RV) pinned Shaun Roberts, 1:35.
127 — Gabe Clinger (RV) won by forfeit.
133 — Grayson Aaron (C) pinned Dawson Wright, :35.
139 — Brandon Smith (RV) tech. fall Jackson Mravintz, 18-3.
145 — Tristan Johnston (RV) pinned Tate Allison, 3:55.
152 — Jordan Titus (RV) pinned Mason Best-Whitmer, 6:15 (SV)
160 — Grant Shoemaker (RV) pinned Ben Naser, 3:50.
172 — Kord Stewart (C) pinned Gavinn Rodriguez, 3:50.
189 — Jordan Smith (RV) dec. Jacob Henry, 12-9.
215 — Marlon Lewis (C) tech. fall Devon Weckerly, 15-0.
285 — Dylan Albertine (C) pinned Bailey Bowser, 1:45.

Exhibition
133 — Carson Johnston (RV) tech. fall Katelynn Davis, 20-4.

BASKETBALL BOXSCORES

VARSITY GIRLS
BROOKVILLE (36)
Wilson 2 1-2 5, Northey 3 2-4 9, Whitling 4 5-5 16, Guth 3 0-0 6, Plyler 0 0-2 0, Yoder 0 0-0 0. Totals: 12 8-13 36.

CRANBERRY (39)
Fleeger 4 4-6 12, Wenner 3 2-2 9, Ishman 2 0-0 4, Stewart 0 0-0 0, Shumaker 3 0-0 6, Schwab 0 0-0 0, Morrow 4 0-0 8. Totals: 16 6-8 39.

Score by Quarters
Brookville	13	6	12	5	— 36
Cranberry	6	16	6	11	— 39

3-point goals — Brookville (Whitling 3, Northey), Cranberry (Wenner).

MONITEAU (64)
Brunst 4 0-0 10, Eury 2 1-2 7, Matz 5 5-6 15, C. Thompson 3 2-4 8, A. Thompson 8 0-0 21, Baptiste 0 0-0 0, Hartle 1 1-2 3. Totals: 23 9-14 64.

NORTH CLARION (49)
Baumcratz 10 2-3 25, Carll 0 2-2 2, Reisinger 2 0-0 6, Ki. Freeman 6 0-0 14, Thompson 0 0-0 0, Hannold 0 2-2 2. Totals: 18 6-7 49.

Score by Quarters
Moniteau:	20	19	9	16	— 64
North Clarion	7	14	14	14	— 49

3-point goals — Moniteau (A. Thompson 5, Eury 2, Brunst 2), NC (Baumcratz 3, Reisinger 2, Ki. Freeman 2).

KARNS CITY (53)
Venesky 9 2-3 20, Summerville 3 0-0 6, Farren 2 0-0 4, Barrett 0 2-2 2, Dailey 5 2-4 12, Ritzert 2 1-3 6, Emrick 0 1-2 1, Mahood 1 0-0 2. Totals: 22 8-14 53.

UNIONVA-C VALLEY (11)
Fletcher 2 0-0 5, Best 0 0-0 0, Raschiatore 1 0-0 2, Warfield 0 0-0 0, Black 0 0-0 0, Kifer 1 0-0 3, J. Dehart 0 0-0 0, Watson 0 0-0 0, M. Dehart 3 1-1 7, Hall 2 0-0 4. Totals: 9 1-1 21.

Score by Quarters
Karns City	16	16	14	7	— 53
Union/A-C Valley	9	4	3	5	— 21

3-point goals — KC (Ritzert), UACV (Fletcher, Kifer).

VARSITY BOYS
COCHRANTON (67)
Wright 1 0-0 2, W. Carroll 8 0-0 16, Shorts 3 1-2 8, R. Haskins 2 0-0 4, P. Haskins 1 0-0 3, Rynd 6 0-2 12, Walker 3 0-1 6, N. Carroll 2 1-2 7, Sliker 1 0-0 2, Scharf 1 0-0 2, Counselman 1 0-0 2, Rodax 0 0-0 0, McCartney 0 0-0 0, McKay 0 0-0 0, White 0 0-0 0, Minnich 0 0-0 0, Kelly 1 0-3 3. Totals: 30 2-7 67.

REYNOLDS (34)
Williams 4 4-6 12, Zachrich 5 0-0 12, Guerino 1 0-0 2, Heasley 0 1-2 1, Mull 2 0-0 5, Hernandez 1 0-0 2. Totals: 13 5-8 34.

Score by Quarters
Cochranton	7	27	24	9	— 67
Reynolds	7	10	2	5	— 34

3-point goals — Cochranton (N. Carroll 2, Shorts, P. Haskins, Kelly), Reynolds (Zachrich 2, Mull).

8TH GRADE BOYS
SAEGERTOWN (24)
No names available.

ROCKY GROVE (48)
Ca. Barrett 5 4-4 17, D. Hughes 5 0-0 10, Burchanowski 3 0-0 8, Bell-Carone 1 0-0 2, Alcorn 3 1-2 9, Kas. Hughes 1 0-0 2. Totals: 18 5-6 48.

Score by Quarters
Saegertown	7	7	8	2	— 24
Rocky Grove	8	12	13	15	— 48

3-point goals — RG (Ca. Barrett 3, Burchanowski 2, Alcorn 2).

SPORTS ON TV