

AP Photo/Paul Sancya

Chase Elliott (9), William Byron (24), Christopher Bell (20) and Daniel Suarez (7) battle for position during a NASCAR Cup Series race at Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, Mich., on June 7.

Bell takes on NASCAR's Tricky Triangle with a cast on left wrist

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONG POND, Pa. — Christopher Bell will race at Pocono and possibly the next month or so with a cast on his left wrist.

Bell sustained “a normal broken bone” that didn’t require surgery during a hit at Michigan International Speedway last week. Bell kept both hands on the wheel during the crash with Chase Elliott and “slightly smashed” his left hand during an impact that registered 69 Gs.

“Right now, I’m pretty much driving the car one-handed,” Bell said Saturday.

Doctors expect Bell to fully recover in six weeks. He has enough mobility in the cast to maneuver Pocono, nicknamed the “Tricky Triangle,” but could face tougher tests over the next two weekends with consecutive road-course races in San Diego and Sonoma, California.

“I hope for more healing before we get to those tracks for sure,” he said.

As for Pocono, Bell plans to be behind the wheel for all 400 miles Sunday. Nonetheless, Brandon Jones will be on standby if Bell has problems. Jones sat through simulator sessions earlier this week to get up to speed in the No. 20 Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing.

“It’s either going to be I’m going to commit to the race and I’m going to do it, or I’m going to just start and ride around until the first yellow,” said Bell, who hadn’t gotten behind the wheel until practice Saturday. “But, as of right now, I’m full commit planning on running 400 miles.”

Bell’s cast was molded to better fit around the steering wheel, and his

team “took a lot of material off of the left side of the wheel just to make it skinnier,” Bell said.

“I feel like we’re as ready as we can get and see what happens,” he added.

Bell remembers every detail of the accident despite a jarring hit that dislodged a SAFER barrier and caused a 20-minute red flag for repairs.

“Once I hit the wall, my earpiece popped out, so I scared the crap out of my wife and probably everyone else listening because I didn’t respond to (my spotter) whenever he was checking on me,” Bell said. “But my ear deal popped out, so I didn’t have any communication.”

Also concerning: His car was on fire.

“I was trying to get out as quick as I could,” he said. “I knew my wrist was broke right away because I couldn’t disconnect my shirt. I reached down, tried to disconnect my shirt and I couldn’t squeeze the button, so I had to use my right hand to do that.”

He also injured a foot, but X-rays were negative. His foot ended up just being badly bruised.

“I knew right away that my head was OK because I didn’t have any sort of headache, didn’t black out,” Bell said. “I remembered everything. ... Just super, super blessed that I didn’t hit my noggin and glad I can continue on.”

THREE-PEAT ON THE LINE FOR DENNY HAMLIN

Denny Hamlin will try to deliver the second three-peat of the NASCAR season — and at the track where he’s enjoyed his most success.

Hamlin won the last two races, at

Michigan and Nashville, and three of the last four. No one would be surprised to see him make it three in a row and four of five at Pocono, where he has seven career Cup Series victories and a staggering 24 top-10 finishes in 36 starts.

He said Saturday that his confidence is at an all-time high.

“I feel very confident in the way that I’m approaching each racetrack, the way that I need to get speed out of the cars, what I need out of them in traffic, all those things,” he said. “I feel pretty dialed in with that right now.”

In NASCAR’s modern era (1972-present), there have been 30 instances of a driver winning at least three races in a row. Of those, the driver who accomplished the streak has won the series championship 12 times.

Fellow 23XI driver Tyler Reddick won the first three races of the season. If Hamlin wins Sunday, the series would have two three-peat winners in the same season for the first time since 2018.

START OF RACE MOVED UP

The start time for Sunday’s race was moved up two hours because of inclement weather in the forecast. Instead of a 3 p.m. EDT start, the green flag will drop shortly after 1 p.m.

WHO IS THE BETTING FAVORITE?

Hamlin is the consensus betting favorite at plus-260 to win the race, the Great American Getaway 400. Reddick is the second choice at plus-625, followed by Bell (plus-825) and Kyle Larson (plus-850).



AP Photo/Frank Franklin II

Cleveland Cavaliers’ James Harden during the first half of Game 2 in the Eastern Conference finals NBA playoffs series against the New York Knicks, on May 21 in New York.

Harden arrested on misdemeanor weapon charge

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cleveland Cavaliers player James Harden was arrested on Saturday in Houston on a misdemeanor charge of unlawful carrying of a weapon in a motor vehicle, according to the Harris County District Clerk’s Office.

Harden was arrested at 3:41 a.m. and booked just before 5 a.m., then posted \$100 bond and was released from police custody, according to charging documents, which said he had a handgun in plain view that was not in a holster.

His arraignment is scheduled for June 22, according to the clerk’s office website. Harden is listed as a Houston resident in court documents.

“The Cleveland Cavaliers are aware of the arrest of James Harden this morning and are in the process of gathering additional information,” the team said in a statement. “We are in contact with James and his rep-

resentation and will continue to monitor developments as they become available. At this time, we will have no further comment.”

A message sent to Harden’s representatives from The Associated Press seeking comment was not immediately returned.

Harden, 36, just finished his 17th NBA season and has the right to exercise a \$42.3 million option to return to the Cavaliers next season. He indicated when Cleveland’s playoff run ended with a loss to the New York Knicks in the Eastern Conference finals that he would like to remain with the club, which would suggest he’s willing to forgo the option in favor of a longer contract with the Cavaliers.

Harden is an 11-time All-Star and an eight-time All-NBA selection who earned MVP honors in the 2017-18 season while playing for the Houston Rockets.

Olympic gold medal-Stanley Cup double at stake for Americans

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
AP HOCKEY WRITER

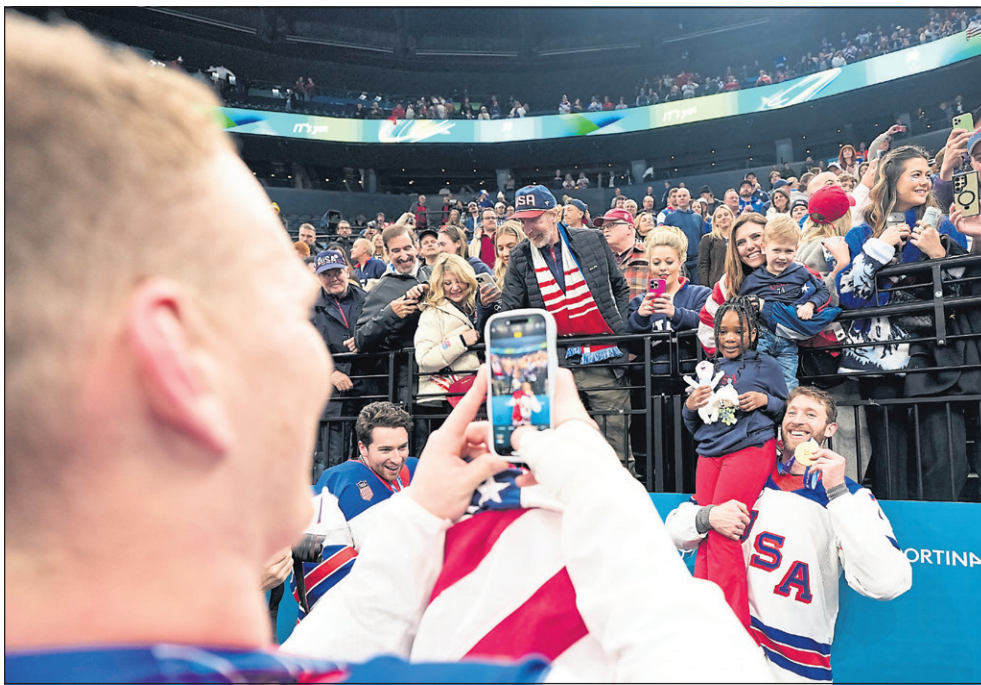
Ken Morrow liked to consider himself the answer of a trivia question as the only hockey player who won an Olympic gold medal and hoisted the Stanley Cup in the same year. He was part of the 1980 U.S. “Miracle on Ice” team and then joined the New York Islanders for their first of four titles in a row.

A half-dozen Canadians have done it since the NHL started sending players to the Olympics, but at this moment, more Americans have walked on the moon than accomplished what Morrow did. He is the only one.

That will soon change, no matter how the Cup final ends. After the U.S. won gold at the Olympics for the first time in 46 years, Carolina’s Jaccob Slavin is one victory away from joining Morrow, unless Vegas wins Games 6 and 7 to put Jack Eichel and Noah Hanifin in that exclusive club.

“I’ve had my 46 years,” Morrow told The Associated Press by phone Friday. “I’m always one that likes to see new people win the Cup, guys get a chance to do something that they’ll remember the rest of their lives. And for whoever does it this year, yes, I think it’s great.”

Morrow won the Stanley Cup four times in a row as part of that Islanders dynasty. Eichel is the



AP Photo/Hassan Ammar

United States’ Jaccob Slavin (74) poses with his gold medal after the men’s ice hockey gold medal game between Canada and the United States at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy, on Feb. 22.

only U.S. player in the final with a Cup ring, and he had a major part in the Golden Knights’ championship run in 2023.

After helping the U.S. win gold in Milan in February, Eichel says there are similarities and differences to those journeys.

“One’s nine, 10 months; one’s two weeks,” Eichel said. “One of them is winner-take-all of just one game at a time. These are seven-game series, so it’s different in that sense. I think from an emotional standpoint and a mentality, I think there’s a lot of similarities: just the investment in winning and the feeling in the

room and everything that comes with it.”

The single-elimination element is a good way of thinking of playoff hockey, Eichel said, though Hanifin pointed out that it is drastically different preparing for a game at a time at the Olympics than enduring the ups and downs of a postseason.

“When you’re playing seven-game series, you can kind of build over time and if you hit a little bit of a setback or some adversity, you can kind of learn from it and build and come back better,” Hanifin said. “Whereas Olympics, when you get into those medal rounds, it’s a one-

and-done situation, so it’s different in that regard.”

If the Hurricanes win, it would be some measure of retribution for Seth Jarvis, who played for Canada in the final and lost to the U.S. in overtime on Jack Hughes’ winning goal.

When Carolina had him, Slavin and bronze medalist Sebastian Aho pose for a photo with their medals in their Olympic jerseys, Jarvis in a behind-the-scenes video quipped about reliving his nightmares and brought up the stuffed animal versions of an Olympic mascot that IOC officials gave to a group of players after los-

ing the biggest game of their lives.

Before the start of the final, Jarvis acknowledged the events are two separate things.

“Obviously, losing in the gold medal is going to suck forever,” Jarvis said. “But now I get a chance to be a winner and win something big here with a group of guys that I’ve been grinding with for five years, been through the ups and downs of it and people that I just really care about.”

Two more losses would put Jarvis back in the same spot, albeit without another stuffer. One more defeat by the Golden Knights would mean losing twice in a final this year for Mitch Marner, Shea Theodore and Mark Stone.

Before the series began, Slavin was working hard to keep his brain from drifting to the possibility.

“It crosses my mind,” Slavin said. “But we’ve got to go out and do a job first, so not trying to give it too much thought.”

In the nearly five decades since Morrow completed the Olympic gold-Stanley Cup double, the entire situation has changed. The NHL has participated in the Olympics six times since 1998, so players are already professionals.

Morrow at age 23 went less than a week and a half between beating the Soviet Union in the “Mir-

acle on Ice” in Lake Placid, New York, visiting the White House, having his first practice with the Islanders and making his NHL debut.

“I was trying to earn a living,” Morrow said. “I had to kind of really change focus quickly into trying to earn a job with the New York Islanders, and it wasn’t a sure thing for me when I first came to them right after the Olympics. Am I going to be able to play in the league? Those were questions that I was facing in trying to make a living. And these guys certainly didn’t have that facing them after the Olympics.”

They just had to get back to doing their job, which was a challenge in itself. Vegas and Carolina each finished atop its division and got through three rounds of the playoffs.

That gave Eichel, Hanifin and Slavin an opportunity to join Morrow, Steve Yzerman and Brendan Shanahan from Detroit in 2002, Jonathan Toews, Brent Seabrook and Duncan Keith from Chicago 2010, and Drew Doughty from Los Angeles in 2014 in the history books.

“For myself, it’s been a pretty surreal year: Winning gold was awesome, and then having the chance to play for a Stanley Cup is awesome,” Slavin said. “I take it as a blessing and just thankful for it.”