

Ownership Changes, Comedy Milestones and AI Controversies

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Welcome back to the Spotlight! Thanks to our neighbors in the North, this edition is coming to you with a firsthand account straight from the secondhand smoke-filled room that is New York. I'd like to think that the Canadians would be gracious enough to complement the campfire aroma with some s'mores, but with Ontario native Justin Bieber performing at the halftime show at this weekend's World Cup final, I guess we can call it even. Fortunately, poor air quality has not detracted from the entertainment quality in the week past and this weekend to come.

Indeed, not even a plume of smoke could drown out the afterglow of Jay-Z's three consecutive sell-out concerts at his Yankee Stadium residency last weekend, where eager and (for Sunday night's show that started about 4 hours later than originally scheduled) saintly patient fans to three decades worth of songs from his singular hip-hop career, with special guest appearances by Beyoncé, Rihanna, Eminem, Pharrell Williams, Nas and Usher (to name a few). The residency itself was emblematic of the intersection between sports, entertainment and fashion, not just because the venue is home to the New York Yankees and among the concert attendees were some of the biggest names in the sports world, but also because the branded merch included customized versions of Yankees jerseys and jackets commemorating the residency. The man who made the Yankee hat more famous than a Yankee can, also made Yankee merch more expensive than a Yankee can, with prices 2-3x above retail for comparable non-HOV merchandise.

Wednesday night, at Lincoln Center, New York played host to the biggest night in entertainment and sports, the ESPY Awards. There, the New York Knicks continued their torrid summer, going a perfect five for five in each award category the team or its players (most notably, Jalen Brunson and OG Anunoby) had been nominated.

Then, the very next day, Fanatics Fest kicked off at the well-ventilated and air-conditioned Javits Center, where-as the name would suggest-fans gathered to meet their favorite athletes, peruse some of the biggest brands in the sports and entertainment business and step into immersive activations.

And of course, last but not least, on Sunday, the FIFA World Cup Final between Spain and Argentina will be played at New York/New Jersey Stadium. Quite a lot of bright spots amidst the gray skies and reddened Sun. But if that's still not bright enough, the Spotlight is here to illuminate the way.

- Billionaire tech founder and venture capitalist Vinod Khosla emerges as the winning bid for the Seattle Seahawks, bringing to the table a similar professional background as the team's predecessor owner, Paul

Allen. On a separate but related note, Khosla also makes for a refreshing summer side dish to bring to the table at your next cookout

- Comedian John Mulaney makes history becoming the first comedian to perform at Chicago's Wrigley Field - a welcome change for Cubs fans used to watching *unintentional* comedy for years at Wrigley Field.
 - AI music startup Suno is revealed to have scraped data from Genius, Deezer and YouTube to train its generative AI model. Although this was discovered by analyzing hacked code, the dead give-away about its using YouTube data should have been the facility with which it makes songs about cats.
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