

Realignment plan approved

Detroit will move to the AL Central and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays will replace the Tigers in the AL East

By Ronald Blum
The Associated Press

BALTIMORE — In a move that likely will result in Kansas City or Milwaukee switching to the National League next season, baseball owners finally approved a realignment plan Wednesday.

Detroit will go from the AL East to the AL Central, and the expansion Tampa Bay Devil Rays will replace the Tigers in the AL East. The AL team to switch leagues will be designated after the World Series, and owners and officials said the Royals had first choice. If Kansas City declines, Milwaukee has agreed to move, they said.

"We did support radical realignment, but this does not appear to be radical realignment," Royals general manager Herk Robinson said. "I would say this is more of an adjustment than a realignment. But I cannot speak for [team chairman] David Glass or the board."

Owners approved the plan 27-0 during a telephone conference call shortly before Game 6 of the AL championship series. The San Francisco Giants, who threatened to sue to block a larger realignment plan, abstained, and the two 1998 expansion teams were not allowed to vote.

"We have taken care of the two most immediate concerns, moving Tampa Bay into a more agreeable geographic division and creating a 16-14 league alignment," said acting commissioner Bud Selig, who also owns the Brewers.

Tampa Bay had spent months trying to avoid an assignment to the AL West, the only open division spot last January. Arizona was put in the NL West during the January vote, and the Tigers said they were willing to switch to the AL Central, but Kansas City refused to move from the AL Central to the AL West, forcing the realignment debate to drag on for nine months.

With the switches, the NL will have 16 teams next season and the AL 14. That enables owners to bunch interleague games into specific periods of the season, as was done this year, the initial season of interleague play.

Selig initially had pushed for radical geographic re-

alignment, in which 15 teams would have switched leagues, the Yankees would have played in the same division with the Mets, and the Cubs would have played together with the White Sox.

When that plan failed to gain enough support, he backed a seven-team proposal in which the four AL West teams would have gone to the NL in exchange for Florida, Montreal and another team, possibly Houston.

San Francisco threatened to sue to block that, claiming a move of Oakland to the NL would have violated its exclusive NL rights to the Bay area. In addition, the players' association, not wanting the AL to lose its nationwide exposure, also opposed the plan, threatening to stop interleague play after the 1998 season.

As part of the resolution, owners extended their special voting requirements for realignment, due to expire Wednesday, through Oct. 31, 1998. Giants owner Peter Magowan tried to get that out of the resolution, and abstained after his attempt failed.

"The baseball lawyers are taking the position the resolution overpowers the NL constitution and the Major League Agreement and gives the realignment committee all power, including invading the territory of clubs. We don't agree with that," Magowan said.

Selig said Wednesday's vote was only the first step, that he envisioned additional switches for 1999 or beyond.

"We have conducted extensive research since the process began in January, and it shows that our fans want more significant realignment, and so do our clubs," Selig said.

Magowan wasn't so sure.

"Who knows? This thing might die of its own weight," he said. "I don't think there's that much support for grand realignment."

Selig admitted future realignment will be studied "in conjunction with the interleague play and the future of the designated hitter."

Owners need approval from the players' association to continue interleague play beyond 1998, and the union had threatened to use its approval power to block larger realignment.

Teams also have proposed eliminating the DH in exchange for expanding active rosters from 25 players to 26, a plan the union opposes. NL owners strongly oppose the DH and AL owners are split on its elimination.

ALCS: Orioles strand 14 runners

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three-run homer off Benitez, who had surrendered a lead just once all season. The Indians prevailed in the 12th inning of Game 3 on a bungled squeeze bunt, then won again the following day, scoring twice on a wild pitch that didn't get 15 feet from home plate.

And they did it all without Albert Belle, the sullen star who left as a free agent during the off-season. The new-look Tribe has only 10 players left from the 1995 World Series team which lost to the Atlanta Braves.

"It may not be a better club, but it has far fewer distractions," general manager John Hart said before the game.

Mussina set an ALCS record with 15 strikeouts in Game 3, but the Orioles failed to score during his seven innings and lost 2-1 in the 12th. The right-hander was even sharper this time, retiring 20 of the first 21 batters while allowing only a leadoff double by David

Justice in the fifth.

Again, however, Baltimore couldn't give him any support and he left after allowing only one hit, two walks and striking out 10.

His line for the ALCS: 15 innings, four hits, no earned runs, 25 strikeouts and two no-decisions.

Mussina set records for strikeouts in an ALCS (25) and in one postseason (41).

Cleveland starter Charles Nagy allowed nine hits and three walks in 7 1-3 innings, but he matched zeros with Mussina to keep the Indians in the game.

Baltimore stranded 14 runners and went 0 for 12 with runners in scoring position. Rafael Palmeiro was the worst offender, going 0 for 3 and stranding five.

Mussina retired the first 12 Indians before Justice doubled to the gap in left-center. He did not advance.

While Mussina was perfect through four innings, the Orioles got at least one hit in each of the

first five. Nagy struck out Palmeiro with two on and two outs in the first inning, then retired Brady Anderson on a grounder with two outs and two runners in scoring position in the second.

Palmeiro stranded another in the third, popping out with a runner on third base. The trend continued in the fourth, when Cal Ripken led off with a double but remained at second.

In the fifth, Geronimo Berroa and Harold Baines hit two-out singles before Palmeiro hit a meek comebacker. Mussina was perfect again in the sixth, and in the bottom of the inning Chris Hoiles hit a shot to center that the wind brought back to Grissom's glove at the warning track.

At the request of Fox Sports, the game started at 4:16 p.m. Both teams were worried that the shadows that cross the pitcher's mound would make pitches difficult to see, but the cloudy sky made that a non-issue.

Tulsa sets tournament record with win

Paula Patterson leads Oregon with a two-over par, third-place finish

By Rob Moseley
Sports Reporter

Tulsa set a tournament record of 17-over-par in winning the 54-hole Edean Ihlantfeldt Invitational, which ended Wednesday at the par-72 Sahalee Country Club in Redmond, Wash.

The Golden Hurricanes' Christina Kuld also tied the tournament record for low individual score.

The Oregon women slipped one spot, finishing third after holding second place for the first two rounds. The Ducks fired a com-

bined 37-over-par 901, 20 strokes behind Tulsa's tournament record of 881 and eight strokes behind second-place Stanford.

Kuld shot a final-round 72 to finish five under. Her total score of 211 tied the tournament record set in 1993 by Arizona's Annika Sorenstam, who won the Ladies' Professional Golf Association's U.S. Open in 1995 and 1996.

Stanford's Hilary Homeyer was the only other player to break par, finishing second with a three-under 213.

Paula Patterson was Oregon's top finisher with a tie for third at two-over.

The Ducks' Kylie Wilson and

Pam Sowden each shot a 10-over 226 to finish in a tie for 15th with one other competitor.

Anika Heuser finished in a tie for 28th at 16-over 232, and Karen Bristow rounded out the scoring for Oregon with a 238, 22 over par.

Other Pacific-10 Conference schools competing included Southern California, which finished tied for fourth at 908, Oregon State, sixth at 910, Washington, seventh at 921, Washington State, ninth at 927, and California, which was 11th at 937.

The Ducks will take the next few weeks off before returning to action Nov. 1-3 in the Rolex Match-Play Tournament.

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