

Hurry up! Nats, Cubs, Red Sox on the clock

By BEN WALKER
AP Baseball Writer

Even before Max Scherzer, Bryce Harper and the rest of the ramped-up Washington Nationals hit the field for their first full-squad workout at spring training, they got the message.

There it was, printed across the top of a practice schedule posted in the clubhouse at Space Coast Stadium. Simple and direct, from manager Matt Williams.

"The road to the World Series begins today."

A challenge? A prediction? A statement?

Or, perhaps, a rally cry from Wrigley Field to Fenway Park to Dodger Stadium. Because as Major League Baseball launches speed-up rules this year to cut the length of games, a lot of teams will be on the clock when the season begins Sunday night.

Throw in the return of Alex Rodriguez from a drug suspension, the possible reinstatement of Pete Rose — imagine the roar he'd get at the All-Star Game in Cincinnati — and fresh ideas pitched by new Commissioner Rob Manfred, and it's a full plate going into opening day.

"There are so many plot lines unfolding, especially at the start of the year. It's like a very meaty novel — people want to see how it's going to turn out," Toronto Blue Jays sage R.A. Dickey said.

Fans are in a hurry to take their seats. They just might need a little extra time at the ballparks to get through the metal detectors that are of enhanced security.

Chicago Cubs newcomer Jon Lester will throw the first pitch of the season, a Sunday night special against St. Louis.

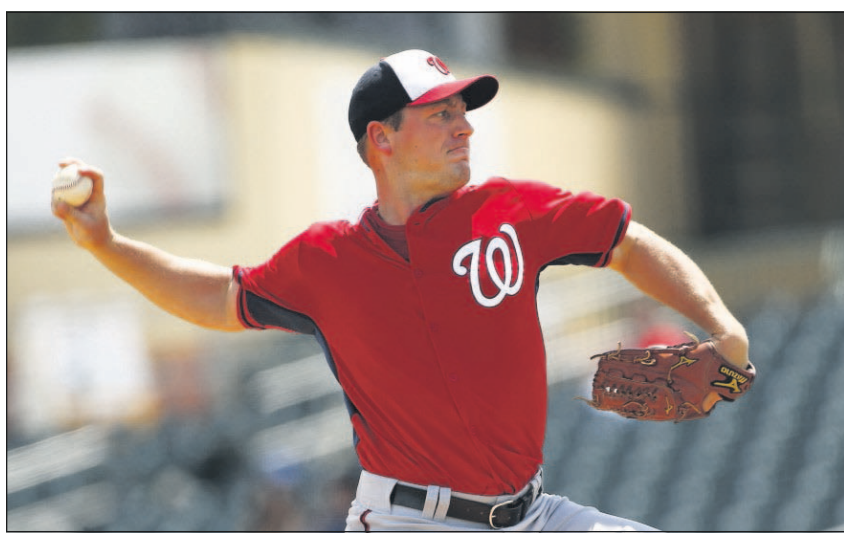
Hope springs eternal all over, and now there's a special kind of Chicago Hope. Credit that to a key free agent — wily, ol' manager Joe Maddon.

The Cubs haven't won the crown since 1908, before Wrigley was built. As the fabled ballpark gets a renovation that includes a giant, bright video board, the franchise is being refurbished, too.

"I always feel good vibes in baseball," Maddon said.

The feeling is mutual across the big leagues. From Cuba to Canada, from the Bay Area to the snow-besieged Northeast, great expectations abound.

Pablo Sandoval, Hanley Ramirez and



AP Photo/John Bazemore

Washington Nationals starting pitcher Jordan Zimmermann (27) works in an exhibition spring training baseball game against the Miami Marlins Wednesday in Jupiter, Fla.

the remade Boston Red Sox; Nelson Cruz with the run-starved Seattle Mariners; Jimmy Rollins and the Los Angeles Dodgers, with their \$270 million payroll.

Hey, if Kansas City can come so close in the World Series — should Alex Gordon have tried to score in Game 7? — and Pittsburgh can blossom into a perennial playoff contender, then any club truly can reverse its fortunes.

"You look at what the Royals and Pirates have done," Yankees veteran Carlos Beltran said. "The success they've had, other teams want to emulate that. They inspired a lot of people to think, 'This could be us.' The Cubs, the Mets, the White Sox, more. Everybody has a chance."

Count the Houston Astros in there. Not far removed from steady 100-loss seasons, they're on the rise.

"The game of baseball is such an up and down game," Astros catcher Jason Castro. "That's why optimism plays such a role."

No wonder Harper, after hearing his Nats had added Scherzer to their robust rotation, said he started laughing and thought: "Where's my ring?"

Toss the Angels, the Cardinals, the Padres, the Indians, the Tigers and champion Giants and a few more into the mix, along with Yasmany Tomas and plenty of Cuban prospects.

"You have more young talent now, elite talent. More than I've ever seen from the mound," Dickey said. "That's why so

many teams are hopeful, because youth is hopeful."

So start with this: With Derek Jeter gone, who will reign as the face of the majors? Could be Andrew McCutchen, despite trimming his trademark dreadlocks. Or \$325 million man Giancarlo Stanton or unanimous MVP Mike Trout or King Felix or ace Clayton Kershaw, provided he can overcome his October struggles.

Maybe the main man on Madison Avenue will be the MadBum himself, Madison Bumgarner. That is, if his long left arm holds up after he threw 270 innings while becoming the World Series MVP and leading San Francisco to its third title in five years.

The Giants get a boost with the return of injured pitcher Matt Cain. That's a common theme, guys named Matt coming back from health woes — Harvey, Wieters, Moore. Plus, Prince Fielder, Jose Fernandez and Manny Machado are on the mend.

Several stars weren't so lucky in spring training. Pitchers Yu Darvish, Zack Wheeler, Marcus Stroman and Tim Lincecum already are lost for the season, Cliff Lee and Justin Verlander are ailing, and Kershaw is OK after being hit in the face by a line drive.

Giants sparkplug Hunter Pence is out for a while, his forearm broken by an errant pitch. Blue Jays outfielder Kevin Pillar missed 10 days and was hurt in a much different fashion — he strained his side when he sneezed.

Warriors blank the Cheesemakers, 11-0

The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — The Warrenton Warriors scored in every at-bat Thursday afternoon, and pitchers Brock Johnson and Joe Little did the rest in an 11-0 non-league baseball win over Tillamook at Huddleston Field.

The Warriors had all the runs they would need in the first inning, when Justice Watson was hit by a pitch to lead off, then scored on an infield single by Little, coupled with a Tillamook error.

Tillamook committed five errors on the day, and three Tillamook pitchers struggled to find the strike zone.

The Warriors scored six runs in the third inning on three bases-loaded walks and a wild pitch, with a two-run single by Little to left field scoring Kory Thomas and Watson for a 9-0 advantage.

On the mound, Johnson gave up just two hits and a walk in four innings, before Little closed out the fifth and final inning.

Warrenton had seven hits, two each from Gavon McFadden and Little.

The Warriors are scheduled to host a doubleheader with Willamina at noon Saturday.

Seaside 18, Corbett 4

CORBETT — Seaside racked up 18 runs and 14 hits in five at-bats Thursday, in an 18-4 win at Corbett.

It was the first win of the season for the Gulls, as pitcher Jacob Bassett allowed just two hits with four walks and 11 strikeouts.

At the plate, Brent Walsh was 4-for-5 and drove in two runs; Dawson Blanchard had two doubles and four RBIs; Scott Plampin also drove in four runs on two hits; and Zach Quicke had two doubles and two RBIs.

SOFTBALL

Warrenton 9, Vernonia 3
VERNONIA — Warrenton won a nonleague

softball game at Vernonia Thursday, 9-3.

The Warriors scored six runs in the top of the first and coasted to the victory. Warrenton improves to 4-2 overall.

Landree Miethe had three of Warrenton's eight hits, while Rachel Dyer was 2-for-3 with two RBIs and a run scored.

In addition to driving in two runs with a double, Warrenton pitcher Niqui Blodgett scattered five hits, with 11 strikeouts and two walks.

Warrenton hosts a doubleheader with Willamina at noon Saturday.

TRACK

Warriors off to great start
PORTLAND — The Warrenton boys took second place out of nine teams Wednesday, in a Lewis & Clark League preview track meet at Portland Christian.

Catlin Gabel took the team title with 170 points, followed by the Warriors (149) and Clatskanie (111).

The Catlin Gabel girls also took first, with the Lady Warriors fourth.

The Warrenton boys scored most of their points in the throwing events, where Bryton Kyme won the discus (104 feet, 11 inches) and took second in the shot put (38-3), while Nathan Pringle took second in the javelin (115-1).

Elsewhere, freshman Austin Stein swept the hurdle events, running 20.42 seconds in the 110-meters and 49.24 in the 300 meters.

Ray Alcobendas, Jesse Salcedo, Jed Emonds and Tyler Whitaker teamed up to win the 400-meter relay in 48.30.

Whitaker was second in the high jump (5-4) and the long jump (18-8).

On the girls' side, Warrior freshman Macen Fritz swept the hurdles, posting a 19.67 in the 100 and 54.78 in the 300.

Warrenton freshman Clark Kish had a winning toss of 84-2 in the javelin.

SCOREBOARD

PREP SCHEDULE

TODAY

Baseball — Knappa at Delphian (2), 3 p.m.
Softball — Astoria at R.A. Long, 4 p.m.; Knappa at Delphian (2), 3 p.m.
Girls Golf — Tillamook Scramble, 9 a.m.; Seaside at Ridgeview, 1:30 p.m.

SATURDAY

Baseball — Seaside at Gladstone, 2 p.m.; Willamina at Warrenton (2), Noon
Softball — Cascade at Seaside (2), 2 p.m.; Willamina at Warrenton (2), Noon
Track — Tillamook Invitational, 11 a.m.; Seaside at Junction City, 10 a.m.
MONDAY
Baseball — Astoria at Valley

Catholic, 5 p.m.

Softball — Seaside at Clatskanie, 4:30 p.m.
Boys Golf — Astoria Fish Invitational, 10:30 a.m.

BASEBALL

HIGH SCHOOLS
Warrenton 11, Tillamook 0

Elinsky, Rawe (3), Ramage (3) and Harmon; Johnson, Little (5) and McFadden. W: Johnson. L: Elinsky. RBI: War, Little 2, Wilson, Watson, Holthusen, Thomas, Johnson, Cochran. 2B: Til, Reeves. HBP: War, Watson, Michaelson. LOB: Tillamook 4, Warrenton 5.
Tillamook 000 00-0 3 5
Warrenton 216 2x-11 7 1

RELIGION BRIEFS

Grace Episcopal

Grace Episcopal Church, 1545 Franklin Ave., is holding a Good Friday Liturgy at 7 tonight. The Holy Saturday Liturgy (the last service of Holy Week and Lent) is at noon Saturday. Holy Saturday ends at sundown.

Grace Church marks the 129th Easter Sunday celebration in this church building on Sunday with two services, at 8 and 10 a.m. The first service in the building was held April 25, 1886.

The Alleluias return to the service, and a special cross will be out for children to flower. All are invited to bring bells to celebrate the return of the Alleluias, and to bring flowers from their gardens. Following the 10 a.m. service, there is a Hot Cross Bun Social and an Easter Egg Hunt.

Sunday is also Labyrinth Sunday, and it will be open for walking from 3 to 6 p.m. A labyrinth introduction is offered at 3 p.m., upon request. It takes an average of 30 minutes to complete the walk. The Labyrinth is available the first Sunday of each month.

Grace Church is offering a Taizé Prayer and Song service at 7 p.m. Wednesday, featuring songs of peace with musicians Jennifer Goodenberger (piano) and Shelley Loring (flute). The service consists of simple repeated chants, periods of silence, prayers individual and

communal, and the lighting of candles. Grace conducts this evening prayer service on the second Wednesday of each month. All are welcome.

For information, call the church at 503-325-4691 or go to www.graceastoria.org

Assembly of God

WARRENTON — Calvary Assembly of God Church, 1365 S. Main Ave. in Warrenton, is holding a free Indoor Easter Egg Hunt from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday.

For information, call 503-861-1712 or go to <http://warrentoncag.org>

Crossroads Community Church

Crossroads Community Church, a Friends Fellowship at 40618 Old Highway 30, is holding a free Easter Egg Hunt for children ages 0 to 10 at 10 a.m. Saturday, with prizes and refreshments. A child evangelism presentation is optional.

An Easter Pancake Breakfast is being held at 9:45 a.m. Easter Sunday, followed by a church service at 10:45 a.m. All are welcome.

For information, go to www.crossroads-friends.org

Sunrise Service

The North Coast Ministerial Association is holding a Community Easter Sunrise Service Easter Sunday at 7 a.m. at the base of the Astoria Column. People from a number of area

congregations are participating. The public is welcome. If the weather is bad, the service will be held at the Hilltop Church of the Nazarene, 725 Niagara Ave.

Community sing

SEASIDE — A Seaside Community HU Sing takes place at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at the Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway. Regardless of one's beliefs or religion, anyone can sing HU (pronounced hue), an ancient name for God; it is for the spiritual upliftment of those who come, and is not directed to any other purpose. For information, call Seann Valen at 503-717-5485, email access49@gmail.com or go to www.eckankar.org

Society of Friends

SEAVIEW, Wash. — The Lower Columbia Worship Group of the Society of Friends (Quaker) meets at 3 p.m. Sunday in the Peninsula Church Center Fireside Room (south building), 5000 N Place, in Seaview. This is a "silent" (unprogrammed) worship group. All are welcome to visit and participate. For information, call 503-895-7474.

Cannon Beach Community Church

CANNON BEACH — Cannon Beach Community Church, 132 E. Washington St., holds an Evensong service at 6 p.m. the first and third Sunday of the month. All are welcome.

Evensong features Wes Warhmund (guitar, flute and clarinet) and meditative songs, Psalms, readings, candlelight and time for quiet reflection.

For information, call the church at 503-436-1222.

Seaside United Methodist

SEASIDE — Easter Sunday services at Seaside United Methodist Church, 241 N. Holladay Drive, take place at 10:30 a.m. The Rev. John Tindell will give his Easter Message, followed by the choir, directed by Debbie Vail, singing the Easter Cantata "God Hath Provided the Lamb." Children are welcome.
For information, go to <http://seasideoregonumc.org> or call 503-738-7562.

Bethany Free Lutheran

Bethany Free Lutheran Church, 451 34th St., is celebrating Easter beginning with a breakfast at 9 a.m. Sunday, served by the men of the church. Sunday school with Bible story, games and an egg hunt follow at 9:45 a.m. The worship service is at 11 a.m. The public is welcome.
For information, call 503-325-2925.

Warrenton United Methodist

WARRENTON — Decorating the floral cross begins at 9 a.m. Sunday at Warrenton United Methodist Church, 679

S. Main Ave. in Warrenton, and all are invited to assist or come at 10 a.m. for the Easter service of music, prayer and scripture. Refreshments and socializing immediately follows.

The building is handicapped accessible, open seating is practiced during all services, and everyone is welcome. For information, call Rev. Jane Hill at 503-861-0825.

Unitarian Universalist

The Pacific Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is holding a service at 11 a.m. Sunday at the First Congregational Church, 820 Alameda Ave. Rev. Ann Robben Dott asks the question, "What Does Easter Mean to You?"

Peggy Coreson is the lay leader, Kate and Mike Summers are providing refreshments and Veja Lahti is the greeter. A board meeting follows.

For information, call 503-338-6883 or go to www.pacuuf.org

Astoria United Methodist

The Astoria United Methodist Church is holding an Easter Celebration at 11 a.m. Sunday. The day begins with the decorating of the Living Floral Cross at 10 a.m. All are welcome to come and participate. The Rev. Carol Prichard is delivering a sermon, "The Seeds of Uprising," and there will be special instruments and musical offerings. The children are

invited to join us in the sanctuary for a fun Easter Craft and Yummy Easter treats.

The church is handicapped accessible. We also provide large-print bulletins. All are invited to stay for coffee and refreshments after the service. For more information, please see our website at www.unit-edmethodistastoria.org. We will be honored with your presence as we celebrate our risen savior.

Young Life

GEARHART — Young Life North Coast is the beneficiary of a Family and Friends night from 5 p.m. till closing Tuesday at McMenamins Sandtrap, 1157 N. Manion Ave. in Gearhart. Mention you are with Young Life, and 50 percent of the food and drink bill will be donated to the ongoing work of Young Life North Coast.

Young Life is a multicultural ministry, and its programs are custom made for youth throughout their adolescent years. Youths' lives are dramatically impacted when caring adults spend time with them; because their leader believes in them, they begin to see that their lives have great worth, meaning and purpose.

For information, contact Area Director Shane Spell at 503-739-0212 or shane@thenorthcoast.younglife.org or go to <http://thenorthcoast.younglife.org>

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