

# US celebrates Wambach's last game, but falls 1-0 to China

By **BRETT MARTEL**  
AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Abby Wambach walked off the field for the final time like a rock star — mic drop and all.

It sounded as if she was ready to party like one, too.

She wasn't able to leave with a victory in her final game with the U.S. national team. China's 1-0 win on Wednesday night — the U.S. team's first home loss in more than a decade — wasn't going to diminish the triumphant nature of Wambach's extraordinary career.

"Tonight is a celebration," Wambach asserted. "The result, obviously, is annoying. It would be better if we had won, but the reality is I played in so many games. This result doesn't shape or determine or define my career."

Wambach said her teammates apologized profusely to her afterward, but she told them, "There's nothing to be sorry about. Today wasn't about getting a result."

Wambach played into the 72nd minute, managing two threatening headers and a shot on goal from inside the penalty area before subbing out of a match for the final time.

"It's kind of symbolic; I get 70 minutes and we don't score a goal," Wambach said, alluding to why it's time for her, at 35, to retire.

The career scoring leader in international play — for men and women, with 184 goals — kicked off her cleats and hugged each teammate on the field before walking to the bench, smiling, to embrace her coaches and remaining teammates as the crowd chanted her name.

"I love this team," Wambach said in comments delivered on the field to fans after the game. "It has been my pleasure and my honor to represent you all, the fans, for as long as I've been able to. ... The future is so bright. These women are going to kill it."

And she made it clear that, despite the loss, it was time to celebrate, saying, "Bourbon Street, watch out," before dropping the microphone and walking off alone as her teammates waited behind, applauding with the rest of the crowd.



Gerald Herbert/AP Photo

**U.S. forward Abby Wambach reacts during a presentation to her before the team's international friendly soccer match against China in New Orleans, Wednesday. Wambach retired from international competition after the game.**

China scored in the 58th minute, when forward Wang Shuang volleyed in a bounding cross from Wang Shanshan.

The U.S., which won the Women's World Cup this summer, had gone 104 home games without losing since falling to Denmark in 2004.

Kristine Lilly and Mia Hamm started in that 3-1 loss Denmark in Philadelphia, while Wambach came in as a sub. The U.S. women had gone 91-0-13 since.

The Americans nearly tied China in the 87th minute when Lindsey Horan beat goalkeeper Zhao Lina, but Horan was ruled just a step offside when she received the pass from Christen Press.

That was the closest of several near misses.

Horan's header forced a diving save by Lina in the 82nd minute. In the 84th minute, Carli Lloyd's pass sent Press into the penalty area for a hard drive from the left side. But Press, who had

subbed in for Wambach, shot it right at Lina. In added time, Emily Sonnett's header went just over the cross bar.

The game wrapped up the U.S.'s nine-game "Victory Tour" in which it went 7-1-1, outscoring opponents 40-3.

Wambach got her 10th start of the year in her send-off game and also was designated the captain.

It was apparent from the outset that the Americans' plan of attack was based in part on sending high crosses into the penalty area in hopes of connecting with Wambach for one of her trademark headers. She put two headers toward goal in the first 2 minutes, but both were blocked away by defenders.

"We really wanted to get her a goal. She did well, had a few chances," Lloyd said. "It's unfortunate to lose the match but at the same time this is a celebration of Abby and what she's done for the

## SCOREBOARD

### PREP SCHEDULE

#### TODAY

**Girls Basketball** — Catlin Gabel at Warrenton, 6:15 p.m.; Gaston at Knappa, 6:15 p.m.; South Bend at Ilwaco, 7 p.m.

**Boys Basketball** — Catlin Gabel at Warrenton, 8 p.m.; Gaston at Knappa, 8 p.m.

#### FRIDAY

**Girls Basketball** — Central Linn at Knappa, 6:15 p.m.; Jewell at Willamette Valley Christian, 6 p.m.

**Boys Basketball** — Central Linn at Knappa, 8 p.m.; Jewell at Willamette Valley Christian, 7:30 p.m.

**Wrestling** — Seaside at Astoria, 5:30 p.m.

#### SATURDAY

**Girls Basketball** — Naselle at Warrenton, 6:15 p.m.; Kalama at Ilwaco, 7 p.m.

**Wrestling** — Seaside at Nestucca, 9 a.m.; Wahkiakum Invitational, 9:30 a.m.

## SEASIDE HOLIDAY CLASSIC

### BASKETBALL

#### Thursday's Schedule

(All games at Seaside HS; game times are approximate)

#### Girls

10 a.m.: Elma vs. Astoria  
1 p.m.: Corbett vs. Newport  
4 p.m.: Sisters vs. Lost River  
7 p.m.: Madras vs. Seaside

#### Boys

11:30 a.m.: Elma vs. Astoria  
2:30 p.m.: Corbett vs. Newport  
5:30 p.m.: Sisters vs. Castle Rock  
8:30 p.m.: Madras vs. Seaside

Bracket available online at <http://bit.ly/227jsuS>

team and I think that's what matters."

In the 30th minute, Wambach was able to sidestep a defender and attempt a lunging toe-poke from about 10 yards out, but couldn't muster the power or placement to beat Lina.

Some of the greats in women's soccer were drawn to the Superdome for Wambach's 255th game with the national team, including Hamm and Brandi Chastain, who starred on the 1999 World Cup-winning squad.

# Sea lions: It's estimated there are more than 300,000 along the West Coast

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extensive damage to docks and preventing slips at the basin from being rented to boat owners. Hunsinger estimated 143 prospective customers are waiting to get a slip at the West End Mooring Basin, where sea lions have not congregated, while the east mooring basin remains empty, except for two docks near the breakwater with mostly commercial vessels.

"I don't know why we have to provide those sea lions a home," Hunsinger said, adding the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration should help the Port solve

the problem or compensate the agency for the damage caused by the animals.

Sea lions were protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972, when their population was as low as 25,000. Current estimates have the population at more than 300,000 along the entire West Coast. NOAA oversees protection of sea lions through the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The Port's attorney, Tim Ramis, said the idea sounds like a novel first-time effort, and that he would look into the options.

Executive Director Jim Knight said the most effective

barriers tried by NOAA were rolled steel that keeps sea lions from jumping on docks. He estimated the barriers could cost the Port \$450,000 to \$500,000.

"It's a daunting number," he said, adding the Port may need to find an alternate solution.

### Raise the bar

Robin Brown, Marine Mammal Program Leader for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, said he has worked on the sea lion issue with the Port for decades.

About 15 years ago, Brown said, he helped the Port create drawings of 1.5-inch galva-

nized steel pipes elevated nearly 2 feet above the edges of the docks, a strategy he said has worked in various ports in the Puget Sound region.

"To do the East End Mooring Basin, you're talking about \$15,000 to \$20,000," Brown said. "The marinas in Puget Sound have done that, and they have been effective."

Brown said a shortage of prey in California, a growth in the sea lion population and stronger runs of smelt and salmon are driving the sea lions into the Columbia River. He said it is a problem the Port will have to deal with for decades.

"Really, the only way to

deal with it is to make the investment for some significant and solid barriers," Brown said, adding marine mammal problems are near the bottom in funding priorities for NOAA.

### Starving sea lions

Sharon Melin, a wildlife biologist with the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, said she recently found California sea lion pups in their San Miguel Island rookeries averaged 26 pounds, more than 30 percent less than usual and the lowest average weights in more than 40 years of monitoring. The starvation points to their mothers' difficulty in foraging because of unsea-

sonably warm waters driving prey farther offshore. Mothers and young tend to stay closer to their California rookeries.

Melin said the expectation is for the large die-offs and strandings of the last couple of years to continue with El Niño conditions.

"For the most part, this doesn't affect the males as they tend to migrate out of the area in late August and remain north of San Francisco through most of the winter and spring," she said.

Both Melin and Brown said the seasonal availability of prey will determine where and how many sea lions aggregate.

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