

# SPORTS

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## SPORTS IN BRIEF

### Trail Blazers game postponed by slick court

*Associated Press*

MINNEAPOLIS — The game between the Portland Trail Blazers and Minnesota Timberwolves scheduled for Monday night was done in by something no one could have seen coming: warm weather in the Twin Cities in early March.

The NBA postponed the game due to a slippery court caused by condensation from an ice sheet underneath it and outside humidity on a day in which temperatures reached the mid-60s.

"I'd like to apologize to our fans and certainly to the Trail Blazers," Timberwolves president and coach Tom Thibodeau said shortly after the game was postponed. "Obviously the safety of the players has to come first. It's unfortunate, but it's the right thing to do."

It was the second time this season that a game had to be postponed because of a slippery court. The game between the Kings and 76ers in Philadelphia was postponed on Nov. 30. A makeup date will be announced in the coming days.

### Raiders find new financing for stadium

*Associated Press*

ALAMEDA, Calif. — The Oakland Raiders told the NFL on Monday they have found a new partner to finance their proposed stadium in Las Vegas: Bank of America.

A person familiar with the Raiders' plans said the team presented the new proposal with financing backed by Bank of America to the NFL's stadium and finance committees. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the plan was not made public.

The Raiders had been seeking a new partner for the proposed \$1.9 billion, 65,000-seat domed stadium after casino magnate Sheldon Adelson withdrew a \$650 million pledge last month.

The state of Nevada has committed \$750 million to the project, while the Raiders and NFL would pay the remaining \$500 million if three-quarters of the league's owners approve a move. A vote could come at the owners meetings later this month.

Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf also made a presentation to the committees on Monday in hopes of persuading owners to prevent the Raiders from moving. Schaaf offered no new plans to satisfy concerns from the league about a proposed new stadium near the site of the Coliseum, the person said.

### Mariners Martin serenaded by mariachi band

*Associated Press*

PEORIA, Ariz. — A mariachi band was there to serenade Leonys Martin after he arrived in the Seattle Mariners' clubhouse on his 29th birthday.

The four-member band then remained the outfielder's constant companion throughout morning workouts Monday, filling the air on the back fields at the spring training complex with lively music.

And if the accompanying band wasn't enough to draw attention to Martin, there was the huge sombrero he wore while taking some swings in the batting cage, catching flyballs and doing some running drills.

Martin said it was an amazing feeling to have teammates set up the surprise for him.

Asked who was primarily responsible, Martin smiled when he mentioned Felix Hernandez, the standout pitcher who then came up from behind strumming on one of the instruments.

Martin said it was a birthday he will never forget.



Eric Engman/Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

Race rookie Ryan Anderson of Minnesota drives his team onto the Chena River during the restart of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in front of Pike's Waterfront Lodge, Monday in Fairbanks, Alaska. It's the third time the starting location of the 1,000-mile trek to Nome, Alaska has been moved from Anchorage to Fairbanks due to low snow and poor trail conditions south of and through the Alaska Range.

# Howls, high-fives mark start of Iditarod race

By **MARK THIESSEN**  
*Associated Press*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Mushers pumped their fists and high-fived fans Monday as they set out one-by-one on the world's most famous sled dog race, a nearly 1,000-mile trek through the grueling Alaska wilderness.

The grandson of a co-founder of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race was the first competitor on the trail in Fairbanks, in the heart of the state.

Ryan Redington, 33, of Wasilla led the other 70 mushers out of the chute nearly a half-century after his grandfather, Joe Redington Sr., helped stage the first race in 1973.

The contest has a staggered start so fans, including 2,600 schoolchildren, can cheer on the competitors, who leave every two minutes.

One race rookie, 53-year-old Roger Lee, threw his fist in the air as he took off from the chute.

Lee was born in California to British parents and grew up near Liverpool, England, listening to the Beatles and harder rock groups. He has seen AC/DC in concert 157 times in 16 countries, according to his race biography.

Lee spent 10 years with the British Army Air Corps before moving to America, where he serves with the Air Force. He took a one-year sabbatical to train for the Iditarod.

### Ceremonial start

The fan-friendly ceremonial start of the race was held Saturday in Anchorage.

The competitive start is normally held a day later in Willow, about 50 miles north of Anchorage. But that start would have taken mushers over the Dalzell Gorge, where a lack of snow has left alders exposed on the trail and open water in places that normally would be frozen this time of year.

Winter conditions were not a concern in Fairbanks, where the temperature was minus 35 degrees Monday morning. The start was delayed a day to give mushers time to drive their dogs 360 miles north to the city of about 100,000.

Eighty-four mushers signed up for the race, and 13 scratched. The latest was Otto Balogh, a 40-year-old rookie from Budapest, Hungary, who cited health concerns when dropping out of the race two hours before it began.

### Winning streak

Dallas Seavey, 30, has won four out of the last five races. He feels no pressure to get a record-tying fifth win, and is fully cognizant that winning streaks can only go for so long.

"And I'm truly OK with that, as long as I can look back on the race and know I ran my team to the best of their ability, and we all

had a good run," Seavey said.

He received \$75,000 and a new pickup for winning last year's race.

Jeff King, a four-time champion wearing dark sunglasses, hugged friends before taking off. He then slapped hands with fans as his dog team went through the chute.

Last year, King and musher Aliy Zirkle were attacked by a drunken man on a snowmobile in separate assaults near the village of Nulato. One dog on King's team was killed, and other dogs were injured.

The attacks prompted a rule change to allow mushers to carry satellite or cell phones.

Zirkle has told The Associated Press she sewed a satellite phone into her parka as a safety precaution after last year's attack, which left her shaken. She finished third last year and has five straight top-five finishes.

The Iditarod hasn't had a female winner since the late Susan Butcher won her fourth race in 1990. Asked at the ceremonial start if it's time for another, 58-year-old Cindy Abbott said: "It is. That would be awesome."

But she readily admits it won't be her. The Beatrice, Nebraska, native and former California college professor suffers from a rare blood disorder. She said she can't run at the level of sleep deprivation that is required to win the race.

## UConn still No. 1, Creighton enters women's hoops poll

Oregon State is at No. 8

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — None of Creighton's players was even born the last time the Bluejays were ranked.

The team has its first ranking since 1992, entering The Associated Press women's basketball poll on Monday at No. 23.

"We had a lot of good teams over the years, we've been in some NCAA Tournaments, just haven't been ranked," said Jim Flanery, who has been head coach at the school since 2002. "In some ways it's harder on the women's side to be there because you don't have the attrition of the NBA that you have on the men's side. Women's teams can be good and it's hard to be elite I think because you look on the men's side — Kentucky, Duke, UNC — they lose kids after one year, makes for more parity."

While Flanery has the Bluejays in the poll for the first time in 25 years, UConn remained the unanimous top choice from the 33-member national media panel. The Huskies (31-0), who have been No. 1 for 14 straight weeks, have 106 consecutive victories. They play in the American Athletic Conference Tournament final Monday night.

Creighton also plays Monday in the Big East semifinals against Marquette.

"I'd rather be ranked later in the year as it's a better reflection of how good you are and how



AP Photo/Jessica Hill

Connecticut head coach **Geno Auriemma, center, talks to his team during a timeout during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game against Central Florida in the American Athletic Conference tournament semifinals at Mohegan Sun Arena, Sunday in Uncasville, Conn.**

well you played," Flanery said. "We had votes in preseason and started 1-3 and didn't get a lot of votes after that."

Stanford made one of the biggest moves in the rankings, climbing four spots to No. 6 after winning the Pac-12 Tournament. The Cardinal were followed by Mississippi State, Oregon State, Duke and Florida State to round out the Top 10. The Blue Devils also rose four places by reaching the ACC Tournament final.

## Kansas, Villanova, UCLA, Gonzaga stay 1-4 in AP poll Oregon moves up to fifth place

*Associated Press*

Kansas, Villanova, UCLA and Gonzaga held onto the top four spots in The Associated Press college basketball poll.

The Jayhawks (28-3) are No. 1 for the second week in a row. They received 59 first-place votes Monday from the 65-member national media panel.

Villanova (28-3) was No. 1 on two ballots while UCLA (28-3) got three first-place votes. Gonzaga (30-1) received the other first-place vote.

Oregon and North Carolina exchanged places at fifth and sixth while Arizona stayed seventh.

Kentucky moved up one place to eighth and was followed by Baylor and Louisville.

West Virginia was 11th followed by SMU, Purdue, Duke, Cincinnati, Florida State, Florida, Butler, Saint Mary's and Wichita State.

The last five ranked teams were Virginia, Notre Dame, Iowa State, Wisconsin and Maryland.

Maryland (24-7) returns after being out of the poll for one week. The Terrapins replace Miami (20-10), which lost to Virginia Tech and Florida State in the Hurricanes' first appearance in the poll this season.

The season's final poll will be released March 13.

Even with the loss of Miami, the Atlantic Coast Conference still leads with six ranked teams. The Big 12 is next with four, followed by the Pac-12 and Big Ten with three each.