

Ichiro, Mariners top Athletics 9-7 in Tokyo

By **STEPHEN WADE**
Associated Press

TOKYO — Ichiro drew all the cheers. Most everyone else on the Seattle Mariners did all the hitting.

A crowd that came to salute Ichiro Suzuki in his homeland saw Domingo Santana deliver the biggest hit at the Tokyo Dome, a grand slam that sent Seattle over the Oakland Athletics 9-7 Wednesday in the Major League Baseball opener.

Batting ninth and knowing he'd get two plate appearances, Ichiro popped up and worked a walk. The 45-year-old star took his spot in right field to begin the bottom of the fourth inning, then was pulled to another huge ovation. He was met with hugs from the Mariners on the diamond.

"The fans in Japan probably aren't used to the reception I got from my teammates, but it's not that unusual in the majors," Ichiro said.

Mariners manager Scott Servais said Ichiro will play in Thursday's final game of the series, but there is no guarantee he'll start.

"We certainly want to give him an opportunity to go out and play, but we also want to get some other guys in the game," Servais said. "I understand everybody wants to see him go all nine innings. We're trying to do the best thing



AP Photo/Toru Takahashi

Ichiro Suzuki fouls a ball in the fourth inning.

for the team and Ichiro understands."

This marked the earliest opening day ever — the summer sport actually started on the last day of winter. No doubt, most fans in North America were sound asleep when Oakland's Mike Fiers threw the first pitch at 2:36 a.m. Pacific time.

A year after the Cubs' Ian Happ homered on the very pitch of the season, the ball again was flying.

Tim Beckham also homered as several

Seattle newcomers excelled. Khris Davis, who led the majors with 48 home runs last year, Stephen Piscotty and Matt Chapman connected for the A's.

"It was great. It's a fun crowd to play in front of. Even the pregame stuff was exciting. I think everybody had a good time," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said.

A packed crowd of 45,787 was buzzing for its favorite star, sending cheers, chants and camera flashes for Ichiro bounding all around the park. Signs and Ichiro jerseys were plenty, too.

Ichiro became the second-oldest position player to start an opener, only a few months younger than Julio Franco was for Atlanta in 2004. Several of the players in this game weren't born when Ichiro began his pro career.

Ichiro is getting very near the end of a sensational pro career that began in Japan in 1992 when he was at 18. He stopped playing last May to become a Mariners special assistant — after totaling 4,367 hits on both sides of the ocean — and struggled in spring training this year.

Santana, one of many Mariners new to the lineup, had no trouble at the plate. His opposite-field grand slam capped a five-run burst in the third for a 5-2 lead and Beckham's drive in the fifth made it 9-4.

Beckham got three hits and three times. Also making a nice debut for Seattle were Jay Bruce, who singled for MLB's first hit of the season, and Edwin Encarnacion, who scored twice.

The Mariners won for the 12th time in 15 openers. They also beat the A's in 2012 when MLB last started in Japan.

Seattle starter Marco Gonzales hung in for six innings, allowing three earned runs and seven hits, and got the win. Felix Hernandez had started the last 10 openers for the Mariners.

Hunter Strickland pitched a scoreless ninth for a save in his first game for Seattle. Edwin Diaz, who led the majors with 57 last year, was traded with Robinson Cano to the Mets in the offseason.

Fiers, making his first opening day start at 33, was hit hard for three innings and took the loss.

UP NEXT

Mariners: LHP Yusei Kikuchi makes his major league debut in his home country. The 27-year-old lefty starred for Seibu last season, then joined Seattle with a contract that could be worth \$109 million over seven years. Kikuchi mixes a hard fastball with a tough, looping curve.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

US-backed Syrian fighters search tunnels in last IS pocket

BAGHOUZ, Syria — U.S.-backed Syrian fighters are searching tunnels a day after seizing most of the last pocket of land held by Islamic State militants.

The long-running battle to retake the last outpost held by IS in eastern Syria appeared to have reached its conclusion, with no signs of battle today, although officials said a few remaining IS militants still had not surrendered.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces seized control Tuesday of the encampment held by IS after hundreds of militants surrendered overnight, signaling the group's collapse after months of stiff resistance. Fighters celebrated after months of grueling battles and an on-again off-again offensive that saw thousands of people, many of them women and children, evacuated from the pocket.

The complete fall of Baghouz would mark the end of the Islamic State group's self-declared caliphate, which at its height stretched across large parts of Syria and Iraq. For the past four years, U.S.-led forces have waged a destructive campaign against the group. But even after Baghouz's fall, IS

maintains a scattered presence and sleeper cells that threaten a continuing insurgency.

Mozambique mourns as Cyclone Idai's death toll rises

CHIPINGE, Zimbabwe — Mozambique began three days of national mourning today for more than 200 victims of Cyclone Idai, while the death toll rose over 100 in neighboring Zimbabwe from one of the most destructive storms to strike southern Africa in decades.

Torrential rains are expected to continue into Thursday and floodwaters are still rising, according to aid groups trying to get food, shelter and clothing to desperate survivors. It will be days before Mozambique's inundated plains drain toward the Indian Ocean.

People have been reported clinging to rooftops and trees since the cyclone roared in over the weekend. The United Nations humanitarian office said the town of Buzi, with about 200,000 people, was at risk of becoming at least partially submerged.

Aid workers were shocked as they arrived in the Mozambique port city of Beira, estimated to be 90 percent destroyed. The 500,000 residents of the city, which has some neighborhoods that are below sea level, are

scrambling for food, fuel and medicine.

Disney closes \$71B deal for Fox entertainment assets

Disney has closed its \$71 billion acquisition of Fox's entertainment business, putting "Cinderella," "The Simpsons," "Star Wars" and "Dr. Strange" under one corporate roof.

The deal is likely to shake up the media landscape. Among other things, it paves the way for Disney to launch its streaming service, Disney Plus, due out later this year. It will also likely lead to layoffs in the thousands, thanks to duplication in Fox and Disney film-production staff.

By buying the studios behind "The Simpsons" and X-Men, Disney aims to better compete with technology companies such as Amazon and Netflix for viewers' attention — and dollars.

Disney needs compelling TV shows and movies to persuade viewers to sign up and pay for yet another streaming service. It already has classic Disney cartoons, "Star Wars," Pixar, the Muppets and some of the Marvel characters. With Fox, Disney could

add Marvel's X-Men and Deadpool, along with programs shown on such Fox channels as FX Networks and National Geographic. Fox's productions also include "The Americans," "This Is Us" and "Modern Family."

EU fines Google \$1.7 billion for abusing online ads market

BRUSSELS — European Union regulators have fined Google \$1.7 billion for abusing its dominant role in online advertising, the third big antitrust penalty they've given the internet giant since 2017.

The latest punishment means the commission has now issued Google with almost \$10 billion in fines from probes into various parts of the Silicon Valley tech company's business.

In the latest ruling, Google and parent company Alphabet were found to have breached EU rules by imposing restrictive clauses in contracts with websites that used its AdSense advertising business. That prevented Google rivals from placing their ads on these sites, the EU's competition commissioner, Margrethe Vestager, said today.

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