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SPORTS

NBA season travels to Disney World

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association have finalized terms of the deal that will allow the league to restart the season at the Disney World campus near Orlando, Florida next month.

The league and the union made the announcement Friday.

Many of the details were already known, such as how “stringent health and safety protocols” would be in place for the 22 teams that will be participating, that no fans will be present and that games will be held in three different arenas at the ESPN Wide World of Sports complex.

With all necessary details completed and agreed upon, the league said it would release the schedule for the 88 “seeding games” — eight games for each of the 22 clubs, starting on July 30 — later Friday, as well as the national broadcast schedule for that portion of the season.

“We have worked together with the Players Association to establish a restart plan that prioritizes health and safety, preserves competitive fairness and provides a platform to address social justice



Carmelo Anthony and Damian Lillard during a break in action as the Portland Trail Blazers face the Washington Wizards in an NBA game at the Moda Center in Portland in March.

issues,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. “We are grateful to our longtime collaborator Disney for its role in playing host and making this return to play possible, and we also thank the pub-

lic health officials and infectious disease specialists who helped guide the creation of comprehensive medical protocols and protections.” Those protocols will be critical, given the current

state of coronavirus testing in Florida. Numbers in the Sunshine State have soared in recent weeks, and Orange County — the Orlando area — has seen at least 10% of all tests

come back positive for 10 consecutive days. That’s more than double what the rate in that part of the state was from June 6 through June 15, and more than 10 times higher than the 0.9%

clip of positive tests there from May 9 through May 22.

Earlier Friday, the league and the union announced that 16 of 302 players tested on Tuesday, the first day of mandatory testing leading up to the restart, came back positive for coronavirus. Players who tested positive must remain in self-isolation until they satisfy public health protocols for discontinuing isolation and have been cleared by a physician.

“It has taken true collaboration between the league and the union — special kudos to our Executive Committee and several other team reps — along with the continued support and assistance from medical experts, public health officials and many others,” NBPA executive director Michele Roberts said. “Additionally, our platform in Orlando presents a unique opportunity to extend the ongoing fight against systemic racism and police brutality in this country.”

The league and the union announced earlier this week that addressing racial issues and inequality in the country will be a priority during the restarted season.

The NBA suspended its season March 11 because of the coronavirus.

Major League Baseball returns with a 60-game schedule set

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball issued a 60-game schedule Tuesday night that will start July 23 or 24 in empty ballparks as the sport tries to push ahead amid the coronavirus pandemic following months of acrimony.

A dramatically altered season with games full of new rules was the final result of failed financial negotiations. But for fans eager to see any baseball this year, at least now they can look forward to opening day.

The announcement by MLB came while more players continue to test positive for the virus — at least seven on the Philadelphia Phillies alone and Colorado star Charlie Blackmon. And a stark realization remained, that if health situations deteriorate, all games could still be wiped out.

“What happens when we all get it?” Milwaukee pitcher Brett Anderson tweeted Monday.

One day after the players’ association rejected an economic agreement and left open the possibility of a grievance seeking hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars in damages, the bickering sides agreed on an operations manual. Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred then unilaterally imposed the schedule, his right under a March agreement with the union.

In a twist, the sides expanded the designated hitter to games between National League teams for the first time and instituted the radical innovation of starting extra innings with a runner on second base.

Playoff teams remain at 10 for now — there is still talk of a possible expansion. The rejected deal had called for 16 teams.

Players will start reporting for the resumption of training on July 1. It remains to be seen which players will report back to work — high-risk individuals are allowed to opt out and still receive salary and service time, but others who sit out get neither money nor the service credit needed for eligibility for free agency and salary arbitration.

Each team will play 10 games against each of its four division rivals and 20 total games against the five clubs in the corresponding regional division in the other league, according to details obtained by The Associated Press.

This will be MLB’s shortest season since 1878, a schedule of such brevity that some fans may question the legitimacy of stats and records.

No decision has been made on whether fans can start attending games at some point.

“I think we need to get on the ground running and get comfortable that we can play games in empty stadiums safely before we move forward fans,” Manfred said. “My patience in that regard is in part based on the fact that there are so many different situations. Some places there looks like there’s no prospect. Other places they’re more aggressive. I think we need to be patient and even where we have the option, we need to make sure that we know

exactly what we’re doing before we jump into it.”

No matter what, the season will be among the most unusual ever for a sport that takes pride in the race for titles being a marathon and not a sprint: Washington started 19-31 and 27-33 last year but finished 93-69 to earn a wild card and won a seven-game World Series for its first title.

“There’s a lot more pressure because in a 60-game schedule, I think that you have 25% more teams that can compete, that had no idea they were going to compete for 162 games,” said Hall of Fame pitcher John Smoltz, now a broadcaster.

The trade deadline will be Aug. 31 and the deadline to be in an organization for post-season eligibility is Sept. 15. Teams could resume making trades at noon EDT on Friday, when rosters will no longer be frozen.

Active rosters will be 30 players during the first two weeks of the season, 28 during the second two weeks and 26 after that. They will not expand to 28 on Sept. 1, as originally intended this year.

With no minor leagues,

teams will be allowed to retain 60 players each, including a taxi squad of up to three players, one of which must be a catcher. Taxi squad players get paid at minor league salary rates but receive a \$108.50 daily allowance.

MLB is keeping the planned innovation that pitchers must face three batters or finish a half inning — players refused to agree a year ago but also waived their right to block.

The injured list minimum for pitchers will remain 10 days rather than revert to

15, as initially intended. The 60-day injured list will be a 45-day list this year and there will be a new COVID-19 injured list for players who test positive, are exposed to the virus or exhibit symptoms.

Public opinion shredded both sides as they locked in a ferocious financial battle during a pandemic that has led to more than 120,000 deaths and 2.3 million infections in the U.S. and led to a 14.7% unemployment rate, the highest since the Great Depression.

‘WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ALL GET IT?’

Brett Anderson | Milwaukee pitcher

Volunteer

Pick of the Week

Simon is one dashing fellow - from his long jet black luxurious coat to gorgeous yellow eyes. He is sweet, mild mannered and sure to keep your lap warm during a chilly afternoon movie while snuggled on the couch. He also plays ball and comes to a whistle. He loves dogs + would be better with older children, but needs to be the only cat. Simon is 7 yrs old and ready to go to a wonderful home!

(Read about the pet of the week on Facebook)

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