

MLB may consider limits on pitching changes, shifts

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Limiting pitching changes, restricting defensive shifts, altering the strike zone and installing pitch clocks are among the ideas Major League Baseball may consider as it undertakes a multiyear review of the game that could include the sport's most radical changes in decades.

Baseball owners were given a lengthy presentation Thursday during their quarterly meeting of how the sport has changed in the past 40 to 50 years.

"Sometimes baseball fans think about what should happen with the game sort of with an artificial construct, that the choice is between preserving 'The Game,' as it came down originally from the mountain, and making some changes to that game," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said.

"The point of the conversation today was that the game has changed dramatically. It's changed organically. It kind of has flowed where the competitive juices of managerial and general managerial decisions have taken it. And the question is, you take a snapshot after 40 years of that and you



Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred speaks to reporters following owners meetings in Houston on Thursday.

say, wow, here's what it looks like, here's what it used to look like and should we be thinking about what has occurred and whether we want to allow it to continue to go on on the path it's on?"

If implemented, some of the changes could be the most revolutionary since the AL adopted the designated hitter in 1973 or perhaps even since the number of

balls for a walk was reduced from five to four in 1889.

"I think it's kind of ridiculous. It changes the game completely," Orioles reliever Brad Brach said before Baltimore hosted Houston on Thursday night.

Orioles catcher Matt Wieters wasn't too enthused, either.

"I don't like things that would actually change the way the game

is played. If you make the game shorter without changing its integrity, I'm all for it. But the things that are being talked about can mess with the integrity," he said.

Offense dropped steadily after the start of drug testing in 2003 until an uptick started in the second half of last season. Strikeouts have set records annually for much of the past decade, increasing from an average of 12.74 per nine-inning game in 2006 to 15.57 this season.

And the average time of a nine-inning game is exactly 3 hours — Manfred highlighted that Game 7 of the 1960 World Series took 2:36 for Pittsburgh's 10-9 win over the New York Yankees.

Manfred acknowledged some of the increased length was caused by added TV commercials.

"We did not and we are really not at the point of making recommendations or having the owners make decisions about what if any changes are necessary," Manfred said.

Manfred also said defensive shifts have changed the game: There were 2,464 on balls in play in 2011 and this year's total projects to 28,117, according to Baseball Info Solutions. Pitchers per

nine-inning game have increased from 6.89 in 2000 to 7.88 last year.

"You can make an argument that more relievers have lengthened the game, more pitching changes has slowed the pace of the game and the unbelievable effectiveness of those relief pitchers have robbed some of the action from the game," Manfred said.

While Manfred would like to see pitch clocks, which have been used successfully in the minor leagues since 2015, the union has been reluctant, leaving the matter for this year's bargaining.

"There's too many scenarios within a game that depend on either the pitcher or the batter to take a little extra time and if you get penalized for that," Boston pitcher Clay Buchholz said. "I don't see how that's going to make the game any better. It's going to actually cost people some jobs, I think. No, I don't think I'd be in favor of that."

"But the commissioner is the commissioner, he can do what he wants to do. If that happens, then I'll abide by it and go from there," he said.

The current contract between owners and players will expire Dec. 2.

PHS PASSING: Receivers put in summer work with Bower

Continued from 1B

"He's a kid that I feel extremely confident handing over some of the reins when audibling or giving him some options (at the line of scrimmage)," Davis said. "I think he just brings some intangibles to the game."

But Davis also said it's important to remember Bower's never taken a varsity snap under center.

"He's still learning timing, where he's waiting for kids to be wide open instead of anticipating, but that comes with just (playing at) game speed," he said. "Every time you take

that first snap, the speed of the game seems pretty fast. So hopefully we can get him over those early new issues if that's what you want to call it, but I have the utmost confidence in him."

Despite having never caught a varsity pass from Bower, the Bucks' receivers entered fall practice feeling ahead of the game due to the amount of work they were able to get with Bower during the summer. Bower and Jerome traveled to several camps together, but the entire group assembled regularly on their own as well.

"Things are going really great," Lani said. "We've put in as much (work) as we possibly can. We'll just come up here (to the practice field) and play 7-on-7 against each other and just get reps in as much as we can during the summer-time."

"It helped us build team chemistry and just helped us build as a unit," said Stephan, who was Jerome's replacement on the varsity roster last season. "I feel a lot more ready. I feel like I'm not just getting pushed into something."

Davis, whose uncle

"Mouse" Davis is widely considered to be the originator of the run and shoot offense, said he's also looking to get the backfield more involved in the passing attack this season.

"I've got three senior running backs who have played in a system where they haven't been involved very much in the passing game, but that's going to change this year to include them more," said Davis of returning rushers Jamal Vann, Deven Page and Gabe Walker.

"(Bower) has a great arm and everything, so I

wouldn't be too mad if we do a lot of passing," said Page before adding. "I am looking forward to running a lot, though."

Davis said he's got music for Page's ears, too, and the running game won't be forgotten.

"They like to joke that being Mouse Davis' nephew, it comes as second nature to throw the football, but I have to be more balanced and I think I look at that as being a better coach for myself and calling a better football game," he said. "With the capable running backs that I have right now,

I feel like that has to be a huge part of our offense to be successful."

The Bucks will get their first look at the whole picture under game conditions on Friday, Aug. 26 at a jamboree in Hood River, but all signs remained positive as their first week of practice wraps up today.

"I honestly think that we've come together a lot better than we would," Walker said. "It seems like we're doing pretty well."

Contact Matt Entrup at mentrup@eastoregonian.org (541) 966-0838.

SALE: Nintendo owned team since '92

Continued from 1B

sioner Rob Manfred said the deal will close Friday or Monday.

This will be the first transfer in control of an MLB team since Ron Fowler led the purchase of the San Diego Padres in August 2012.

Stanton will take over as control person from current chairman Howard Lincoln, who is retiring. The Mariners anticipate a seamless transition in management.

"There's not a soul, other than the people retiring, that will be impacted, because all of these same partners are still involved," Mariners chairman emeritus John Ellis said.

Nintendo of America, under the direction of Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi, bought the Mariners from Jeff Smulyan in 1992. Under Nintendo's ownership, the Mariners moved from the Kingdome to Safeco Field in 1999.

"We all started it with this very generous input from Mr. Yamauchi and Nintendo. It's the only way we saved the team," said Ellis, who will remain a director. "Now to have the same group rearranging its percentages, John Stanton taking over, the Japanese backing down to 10 percent, is the transition that guarantees to the team for the future."

Nintendo is selling all but 10 percent of its stake in the franchise and the regional sports network ROOT Sports. The transition shifts the percentage of ownership shares within First Avenue Entertainment LLLP, which owns the franchise and a majority interest in ROOT Sports, holdings the team said in April were valued at \$1.4 billion.

Stanton said in April the ownership group includes 17 investors and there will be no majority owner among the group.

MARINERS: Cano blasts 26th home run, tied for 3rd in AL

Continued from 1B

with a double. Matt Shoemaker (7-13) limited the Mariners to two earned runs — on solo homers to Robinson Cano and Nelson Cruz — and five hits. He struck out five and walked two.

Hisashi Iwakuma (14-8) allowed three runs and six hits over seven innings, snapping a streak of three straight wins. Seattle remained 2 1/2 games behind Boston for the second AL wild card.

Nick Vincent took over for Iwakuma in the eighth inning and for the second time in the series, had trouble getting around Pujols.

With the Angels hanging on to a 3-2 lead, Escobar doubled to lead off and Trout was intentionally

walked two batters later. Two nights after taking Vincent deep, Pujols cleared the bases with a double to the left-center gap, putting Los Angeles up 5-2. Andrelton Simmons made it to second when Pujols was caught in a rundown but Vincent then gave up a single to Nick Buss and was removed for lefty Vidal Nuno.

Jeffrey Marte's pinch-hit single scored Simmons for a four-run lead.

Cano homered for the 26th time in the first inning. It was his 10th home run on the first pitch, the most in baseball. Cruz's 31st home run in the sixth inning cut Los Angeles' lead to 3-2. He's now tied with Chicago's Todd Frazier for third in the AL.

The Angels scored two

runs off of Iwakuma in the first inning and Jett Bandy hit his eighth home run in the fifth inning to make it 3-1.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Mariners: LHP James Paxton threw a bullpen on Thursday and reported no effects of the forearm tightness that landed him on the 15-day disabled list a day prior. He'll make rehab start with Triple-A Tacoma this weekend. ... RHP Steve Cishek made a rehab start with short-season Everett on Wednesday, throwing one inning and focusing mostly on fastballs. Cishek was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a left hip labrum tear on Aug. 4 (retroactive to Aug. 2).

UP NEXT

Mariners: LHP Wade LeBlanc will make his first



Seattle Mariners' Robinson Cano blows bubble as he rounds the bases on a solo home run against the Los Angeles Angels during the first inning of a baseball game in Anaheim, Calif., Thursday, Aug. 18, 2016.

start against Milwaukee since Sept. 4, 2012. Seattle is 7-1 in LeBlanc's eight appearances this season and

he's 2-1 with a 5.19 ERA in five career appearances against the Brewers.

SEAHAWKS: Next host the Dalls Cowboys on Aug. 25

Continued from 1B

the entire first half, leading the Vikings to their only offensive touchdown on Jerick McKinnon's 1-yard touchdown run late in the second quarter.

Blair Walsh was perfect on a 27-yard field goal, after missing from the same distance in the NFC wildcard game and costing the Vikings a playoff victory. But Walsh missed wide left from 47 yards with 2:09 left that would have given the Vikings the lead.

Seattle's overhauled offensive line struggled after a decent debut last Saturday against Kansas City. Russell Wilson played the entire first half and was sacked four times, getting pulled down awkwardly on the last sack. Wilson was 5 of 11 for 77 yards.

The bright spot for Seattle's starting offense was again running back Christine Michael. Projected as the No. 2 running back when the season begins, Michael finished with 55 yards on 10 carries.

Seattle hits the field again for their last preseason home game on Aug. 25 when they host the Dallas Cowboys at Century Link Field with a 7 p.m.



Seattle Seahawks quarterback Trevon Thompson against the Minnesota Vikings during the second half of a preseason game on Thursday in Seattle.

PRESEASON FOR EVERYONE

It's preseason for everyone, including the officials. Referee Ed Hochuli had a slip in the third quarter when the

Vikings called timeout, but he announced, "Time out Baltimore," before correcting himself.

ROOKIE WATCH

Vikings: QB Joel Stave played the entire second half and was 6 of 14 for 67

yards. Seahawks: DT Jarran Reed was disruptive against both the Vikings' starting offense and their reserves. Reed had three tackles, but gave Seattle a scare in the third quarter when he stayed down on the field for a few moments getting looked at by trainers. He walked off under his own power.

POSITION BATTLES

Vikings: RT Andre Smith played nearly the entire first half with the starting offense in his bid to hold off T.J. Clemmings for the starting job. Smith stayed mostly out of the spotlight with the exception of a holding call that was declined.

Seahawks: Mike Morgan started at strong-side linebacker. Morgan has appeared to hold the edge in the competition as the most experienced option in Seattle's system.

INJURY UPDATE

Vikings: CB Xavier Rhodes left the game in the first quarter with a hamstring injury.

Seahawks: RB Thomas Rawls did not play, but he did go through a full pregame warmup, the strongest sign that Rawls may be ready for the regular

season.

QUOTABLE

"It's nothing at all to be concerned about," Bridgewater told the Vikings' TV broadcast. "Like coach Zimmer said, it was his decision. It was just good to be out there supporting the guys."

Team	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Minnesota	0	11	0	7	18
Seattle	0	0	0	11	11

Second Quarter
Min—McKinnon 1 run (Asiata pass from S.Hill), 2:24.
Min—FG Walsh 27:03.

Fourth Quarter
Sea—Pope 4 run (Boykin run), 12:53.
Sea—FG Hauschka 49, 5:50.
Min—Sherels 53 interception return (Walsh kick), 1:33.
Attendance—68,469.

	Min	Sea
First downs	17	21
Total Net Yards	258	327
Rushes-yards	26-70	31-187
Passing	188	140
Punt Returns	4-28	4-6
Kickoff Returns	2-59	1-26
Interceptions Ret.	1-53	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	16-31-0	16-34-1
Sacked-Yards Lost	1-8	6-68
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	1-0
Penalties-Yards	6-90	12-111
Time of Possession	27:09	32:51

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
RUSHING—Minnesota: Pressley 6-28, Ham 8-25, McKinnon 9-15, Asiata 3-2. Seattle: Pope 10-86, Michael 10-55, Collins 6-13, Farmer 1-12, Boykin 2-11, Brooks 2-10.
PASSING—Minnesota: S.Hill 10-17-0-129, Stave 6-14-0-67. Seattle: Wilson 5-11-0-77, Boykin 10-20-1-127, Heaps 1-3-0-4.
RECEIVING—Minnesota: Thielen 4-61, Rudolph 2-54, Asiata 2-20, Ham 2-18, Patterson 2-17, Pruitt 1-12, Carter 1-6, McKinnon 1-5, Diggs 1-3. Seattle: Goodley 5-65, Lawler 3-47, Lockett 2-39, Vannett 1-15, Farmer 1-13, Michael 1-9, McEvoy 1-8, Collins 1-8, Brooks 1-4.
MISSSED FIELD GOALS—Minnesota: Walsh 47. Seattle: Hauschka 53.