

Pro Baseball

MLB aggressively looking at pace-of-play fixes

League asks to start All-Star 11th inning with runner on 2nd base

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK — A runner would be put on second base at the start of the 11th inning of the All-Star Game and each additional inning, according to the latest pace-of-game proposal by Major League Baseball.

The experiment also would be used in the 10th inning of spring training games, according to the Jan. 9 proposal obtained by The Associated Press. Spring training games would be capped at 10 innings.

Concerned about injuries in games that don't count, the players' association isn't expected to oppose the concept. MLB isn't considering using the rule in any games that count.

Baseball experimented with the rule last year at the rookie level Gulf Coast and Arizona leagues, putting a runner on second base starting in the 10th. Extra-inning games in those two leagues averaged 27 minutes longer than nine-inning games, down from 43 minutes for all other minor leagues.

Unable thus far to negotiate a deal with players for a pitch clock or limits on mound visits, baseball owners discuss their next step this week during meetings that end Thursday in Beverly Hills, California.

Commissioner Rob Manfred met Jan. 23 with union head Tony Clark. Manfred has long vowed to make changes for this season with or without an agreement but says his preference is for a deal and is willing to negotiate the rules.

MLB has the right to implement the proposal it made last offseason, which includes a 30-second clock between batters and a 20-second clock between pitches that would reset when a pitcher steps off the



AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, File

In this March 8, 2015, file photo, Seattle's J.A. Happ throws a pitch between innings as pitch clock counts down in the background during a spring training game against the Cincinnati Reds in Good-year, Ariz. MLB owners and executives meet this week in Beverly Hills, Calif., and will discuss whether to push ahead with pitch clocks and limits on mound visits despite opposition from players.

rubber and when he makes or feints a pickoff throw, according to details obtained by the AP. There also would be a limit of one mound trip per pitcher each inning, whether by a manager, coach or player, and a second visit would result in a pitching change. Violations would be punished by ball-strike penalties.

Nine-inning games averaged a record 3 hours, 5 minutes during the 2017 regular season and 3:29 during the postseason. Players have resisted a pitch clock while appearing slightly more amenable to limits on mound visits.

Los Angeles Angels owner Arne Moreno is among those who doesn't think radical changes are needed.

"We just watched a World Series game that lasted over five hours and my wife hung with me the whole night," he said last week at the Hall of Fame news conference. "I would probably say I'm a traditionalist and let them play."

Under the latest MLB proposal, there would be a pitch timer this year only when no runners are on base and it would be set to 18 seconds.

A 20-second timer with runners on base would be added for 2019.

The clock would not be used for the pitch following a foul ball or an umpire calling time, and there would be no penalties this year during spring training or April. Starting in May, each player would receive a warning for a violation and penalties would not start until a team's third violation in a game. A player, manager or coach leaving the bench to argue a violation call would be automatically ejected.

There would be a 35-second timer between at-bats, and while there would not be ball-strike penalties for violations this year, frequent violators would be subject to discipline for "just cause." The MLB proposal says management would agree to the union's Jan. 5 counter-proposal that ball-strike penalties start May 1, 2019, if the average time between plays in 2018 is 46 seconds or more or the average time of a nine-inning game through Aug. 31 this year is three hours or more.

Management also would agree to the union's proposal there be

a between-inning and pitching change timer of 2:05 for most games, 2:25 for national television games and 2:55 for tiebreaker and postgame games. There would be no ball-strike penalties this year. If an inning ends when a pitcher is on base, at the plate or on deck, the clock would start when the pitcher leaves the dugout for the mound. If an inning ends with the catch on base, at the plate or on deck, the clock would start when he enters the dugout.

Both sides would agree that there be no ball-strike penalties for inning-break violations until May 1, 2019. Management's trigger for violations would be that inning breaks for locally broadcast games this year average 2:25 of more or the average time of a nine-inning game through Aug. 31 this year is three hours or more. The timer would be set at 2:25 for locally broadcast games, 2:45 for national TV games and 3:15 for tiebreaker and postseason games. In the first season of a between-innings time, a team would receive three warnings before a ball-strike penalty is imposed.

Mound visits without a pitching change would be limited to six per team over the first nine innings with one additional trip each extra inning. The amount for the first nine innings would drop to five in any season after the average time of nine-inning games through Aug. 31 is three hours or more. Additional mound trips would be allowed after pitcher-catcher cross-ups on pitch signals.

Teams also agreed at the union's option they either would make a \$100,000 contribution to the union's Players Trust charity for each minute the average game time in a season through Aug. 31 drops below three hours or make a \$500,000 total gift to the players on the teams with the two quickest game time averages and the two teams with the greatest improvement. Players on a team would have the option to donate their share to charity.

BRIEFLY

Mac-Hi Baseball holding Comedy Night Fundraiser

MILTON-FREEWATER — The Mac-Hi baseball team is putting the fun back in fundraising. On Friday evening, the team is holding a Comedy Night fundraiser presented by Blue Mountain Tire Pros. with stand-up comedian Kermit Apio as the headliner. According to a press release, Apio has been featured on the radio show The Bob and Tom Show and has appeared on television on NBC, A&E and PBS. He has also performed on college campuses across the country, and recently performed at The Gesa Powerhouse Theatre in Walla Walla on New Year's Eve. The show will take place at Jack Williams Auditorium at McLoughlin High School on Friday night at 7 p.m. The majority of the seating is first-come, first-serve and the school is expecting a sellout. Tickets are \$12 in advance, which can be purchased at the school, and \$15 at the door.

For more information contact Mark Michaud at Mark.Michaud@miltfree.k12.or.us or on Facebook at Facebook.com/MacHiBaseball.

Five Oregonians to compete in Pyeongchang Olympics

MILTON-FREEWATER — More than 240 athletes will be representing the United States at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics beginning next week, with a few Oregonians as a part of that group.

Five Oregonians in total will be making the trip, three males and two females. Ben Ferguson, of Bend, will be competing in the snowboard halfpipe; Tommy Ford, of Bend, will be competing in alpine skiing events; Sam Michener, of Gresham, will compete in four-man bobsled; and Bend's Laurene Ross and Portland's Jacqueline Wiles will be competing in alpine skiing.

Colorado has the largest contingent competing with 31 athletes, while California has 22, Minnesota 19, New York 18, and Utah 16.

Texas Governor orders criminal probe of gymnastics ranch

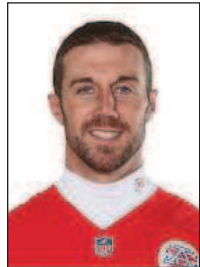
AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has ordered a criminal investigation into claims that former doctor Larry Nassar abused some of his victims at a Texas ranch that was the training ground for U.S. women's gymnastics.

Body: Abbott ordered the Texas Rangers, the state's top criminal investigations unit, to look into the Karolyi Ranch. It hosted training camps for more than a decade until earlier this year. The Walker County Sheriff's Office is already investigating.

Several gymnasts have said Nassar abused them at the ranch.

Abbott called the allegations "gut-wrenching." He ordered the state investigation because the claims involve multiple jurisdictions and states.

Chiefs trade QB Alex Smith to Washington for pick, player



Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Kansas City has agreed to trade quarterback Alex Smith to Washington, a move that spells the end of Kirk Cousins' time with the Redskins and hands the Chiefs' job to Patrick Mahomes. Two people with direct knowledge of the deal confirmed the move to The Associated Press on Tuesday night on condition of anonymity because the transaction can't be completed until the start of the new league year in March. One person told the AP the Redskins had agreed to a four-year extension with

Smith, who had one year left on his contract. Smith, who turns 34 in May, spent the past five seasons with the Chiefs, leading them to the playoffs four times while throwing for 102 touchdowns and 33 interceptions. He carries a \$17 million salary-cap hit for 2018.

Kansas City saves cap space and can turn to Mahomes, the 10th pick in last year's draft out of Texas Tech, as its new starter.

Smith becomes Washington's new franchise quarterback after throwing for 31,888 yards and 183 touchdowns in 12 NFL seasons with the San Francisco 49ers and Chiefs.

BLING: Seniors had input, but coaches scaled back final design

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feeling than before." The ring displays a rectangular face with the words 'State champions' emblazoned in silver split among the top and bottom edge, with shiny stones lining the left and right edges. In the middle is the Hermiston 'H' logo in purple and gold with the Bulldog head in the middle.

Gutierrez, an all-state defensive back this past season, said that a group of seniors had a little bit of input into the design, though they soon realized the ring they envisioned was a bit too flashy and would be too expensive. The final design was scaled back, but still got the approval of the players.

"(Coach David) Faaeteete kind of made it look nicer, I think," Gutierrez said.

The team also had custom-made t-shirts for the presentation, with



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston senior Beau Blake poses for a photo with his family during a football state championship ring presentation on Tuesday.

all players and coaches wearing black shirts with the words 'Ring 'em up' in purple and white

lettering with a picture of the ring in centered between the words. After receiving the rings from

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard table with columns for Local boys, Prep boys basketball, Prep girls basketball, Men's college basketball, Women's college basketball, Eastern Conference, Western Conference, NHL, and Pro Bowl. It lists various teams, scores, and game details.