

Winter Olympics

American medal haul well short of USOC projections

By EDDIE PELLIS
Associated Press

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea — It was a sweeping goal, spelled out on a colorful, full-screen slide and presented to leaders of the U.S. Olympic Committee in a meeting last year.

Sports executives in America targeted athletes on Team USA to win 37 medals at the Pyeongchang Games.

Heading into the final 48 hours of action, the United States had 21. Even if things were to go well over the handful of remaining events, the team will fall more than 10 medals short of the goal.

The information on the slide, obtained by The Associated Press, offers a slice of the data the USOC board uses to set expectations and approve funding for an upcoming Olympics. Providing resources to help athletes win medals at the Games is one of the federation's foremost missions. It spends more than \$60 million every four years, delivered from several different revenue streams into a variety of different programs, to fund Winter sports.

But the USOC has long been reluctant to make its predictions public, essentially stepping away from the numbers game since the departure of former chairman Peter Ueberroth, who always urged executives to under-promise, then over-deliver.

The USOC's chief of sport performance, Alan Ashley, acknowledged the 2018 team will not reach its goal, while also saying "we're doing fine."



In this Feb. 16 file photo, Lindsey Jacobellis, of the United States, finishes her run during the women's snowboard cross quarterfinals at Phoenix Snow Park at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

"I look at it and I go, 'OK, medals are one story, but if you look at the depth of everything that's going on, and the number of people who are fourth and fifth place, and the commitment level and intensity of the athletes, you can't ask for more than that,'" Ashley told AP.

Heading into Friday night's action, 21 U.S. teams or athletes — including Mikaela Shiffrin, Nathan Chen and Lindsey Jacobellis — had finished fourth or fifth in their events, which accounts for part of the gap between expectations and reality.

Lindsey Vonn was one of the Americans with the most medal potential. She finished third in the downhill, tied for sixth in the

super-G and DNF in the combined. She insisted that America's performance shouldn't be judged strictly by the medal count.

"The expectation of winning gold medals is pretty out of whack and I think we need to be proud of all of our athletes for how much they've sacrificed and put in to be here," she said. "Medals — they're not necessarily what the Olympics are all about. ... To quantify it in how many medals you have is not appropriate and doesn't respect the athletes and what they've put in to be in these games."

To be sure, the U.S. has enjoyed its share of inspiring success stories, including a cross-country victory by Kikkan Randall and Jessie Diggins

Olympics Medal Count

PYEONGCHANG WINTER OLYMPICS			
•Through 2 of 8 medal events for Feb. 24			
•Through 92 of 98 total medal events			
Nation	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Norway	13	14	11
Canada	11	8	9
Germany	13	7	6
United States	8	8	6
Netherlands	8	6	4
France	5	4	6
Austria	5	3	6
Switzerland	4	6	4
OA Russia	1	5	8
South Korea	4	4	4
Sweden	6	5	0
Japan	3	5	3
Italy	3	2	5
China	1	6	2
Czech Republic	1	2	3

and the women hockey team's shootout victory Thursday over Canada to halt a 20-year stretch without a gold medal.

Hockey and cross country were among the sports in which the USOC did not over-promise in its internal document. It predicted both sports would garner only one medal, with a "stretch" goal of two in each sport.

Under that same "stretch" scenario across all sports, the document said the U.S. could win 59 medals, which would've shattered its 37 medal haul in 2010, the all-time mark for any Winter team. It set a minimum goal of 25 medals.

On the sport-to-sport breakdown, several teams missed their mark.

—Speedskating was tabbed to win four medals; through Friday, it had one.

—Bobsled and luge predicted a total of four; they had two.

—In the strangest twist, freestyle skiing and snowboarding — action sports that have padded the U.S. medal count over the last few

Olympics, and especially this year — were pegged to collect 18 medals. Heading into Saturday, those sports had amassed 10. Wins by Shaun White, Chloe Kim, Red Gerard and others turned the Phoenix Snow Park into a consistent beacon of hope for a struggling team. And yet, the over-projections in those sports accounts for a large chunk of the shortfall.

The U.S. dipped to 28 medals in 2014, and the AP projects a finish of 23 this year. Reflected as a percentage of medals won — the number available has steadily grown with the addition of more action sports, among others, to the program — the U.S. took 14.3 percent in 2010, 9.6 percent in 2014 and will be at 7.5 percent this year if it closes with 23.

Funding for Winter sports, meanwhile, has been on a steady uptick this decade. The amount granted to Winter sports federations in the years 2015-16 increased by nearly 6 percent from the corresponding window of the previous Olympic cycle, 2011-12.

Ashley of the USOC said he's prepared for questions at the next board meeting, where he'll deliver a breakdown of what went right and wrong in Pyeongchang.

"They're going to ask questions, but if you start looking into the details of what happened here and how people performed, they performed great," he said. "Sometimes you're on one side of it, and sometimes you're on the other side. But I feel the same way now as I did when we walked into these Games. We have a really, really good team with an amazing bunch of athletes."

Pro Basketball

Trail Blazers come back from break, easily take care of Jazz

By MATTHEW COLES
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — CJ McCollum and Damian Lillard believe the crucial stretch of the long NBA season starts now and the Portland Trail Blazers have laser-like focus.

"We understand what's at stake now," McCollum said. "One game — a loss or a win — could sway the Western Conference playoff race."

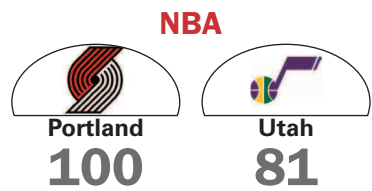
McCollum scored 26 points, Lillard added 24 and the Trail Blazers snapped the Utah Jazz's 11-game winning streak with a 100-81 victory on Friday night.

"We did a great job keeping our focus, even when they made shots, went on runs and the crowd got into it. Our mentality allowed us to weather each storm that came," Lillard said.

McCollum and Lillard drove through and around the Jazz defense, which was ranked at the top of the league during their streak.

The Jazz finally got within single digits at 90-81 but McCollum scored on three consecutive isolation plays, all contested jumpers.

"We knew it was a big posses-



sion on that first one as they had cut our lead from double digits and their fans were getting into it," McCollum said. "Called me a pick-and-roll, trying to get me some space. Got to the free throw line area, which is more of a sweet spot for me, a comfort shot. I rose up and hit it, so we just did the same thing again and again."

Lillard cooled off from his previous three games, when he shot 42 for 76 and scored more than 44 points a game. But he worked numerous screens and had the Jazz defenders chasing the ball and opening opportunities for the other Blazers.

Jusuf Nurkic scored 15 points and Al-Farouq Aminu had 12 for the Blazers, who are now tied for sixth place in the Western Conference and just one-and-a-half games out of third place.

Donovan Mitchell had 21 points for Utah. Rudy Gobert scored 15 and Joe Ingles contributed 12 but



Portland Trail Blazers guard Damian Lillard, right, goes to the basket as Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game Friday, Feb. 23, 2018, in Salt Lake City.

AP Photo/Rick Bowmer

the Jazz were sloppy with ball.

During their long winning streak, the Jazz consistently came up with loose balls in key scramble

situations. Against Portland, the Jazz couldn't seem to hold on to the basketball, committing 20 turnovers and having numerous

rebounds and passes squirt right through their hands.

"Turning the ball over as much as we did makes it really difficult. Obviously, we struggled on the offensive end. To me, it really starts there," Utah coach Quin Snyder said. "We just didn't have that juice."

The Blazers have now won four of five, with the only loss a blowout to the Jazz on Feb. 11.

After Mitchell trimmed the Portland lead to 53-49, McCollum hit two 3-pointers and a runner to spark a 13-2 run. After the Jazz cut it back to 11, Lillard's crossover stepback jumper gave the Blazers an 80-64 lead entering the final period.

The Blazers are looking to follow a pattern of strong finishes as they reached the playoffs with a 17-11 closing record in 2016 and an 18-8 post-All-Star Game mark in 2017.

"Our guys were really locked in. I was really pleased with the way we sustained our defensive focus throughout the game," Portland coach Terry Stotts said.

UP NEXT
Blazers visit the Phoenix Suns on Saturday night.

Oregon House bill expands return-to-play power for kids with concussion

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A bill to expand the types of health professionals who can medically release a student athlete to play after a concussion is headed to the Oregon House.

The Senate unanimously approved Senate Bill 1547 Feb. 19, and the House Health Care Committee voted 9 to 2 Friday, Feb. 23, to send the legislation to a full vote of the House as early as next week.

Health care committee members Rep. Knute Buehler, an orthopedic surgeon, and Rep. Cedric Hayden, a dentist, voted against the proposal. The bill also was opposed by the Oregon Medical Association, Oregon Association of Orthopedic Surgeons and the Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of Oregon.

The Senate Health Committee proposed the law change, describing it as a "child safety" bill, after convening a work group on treatment of athlete concussions and hearing the group's recommendations. Under existing law, only medical doctors, osteopathic doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and psychologists are allowed to

medically release a student athlete with a suspected concussion. The bill would expand that authority — with online training and certification — to athletic trainers,

physical therapists, occupational therapists, chiropractic physicians and naturopathic physicians.

The online concussion training by Oregon Health and Science University would be required to release students to play unless the provider is a physician, who are exempt from the training. Some lawmakers, including Rep. Alyssa Keny-Guyer, D-Portland, said they see the training exemption for physicians as a weakness in the bill.

"If we were to do an amendment the one that I think would have been more important is that the physicians also get the specific training because ... there is so much emerging research," Keny-Guyer said.

On Friday, Buehler, a Republican from Bend, proposed removing athletic trainers from the list of qualified providers in the bill. Athletic trainers do not all have master's degrees. Another concern is that



athletic trainers have greater potential conflicts of interest in whether an athlete returns to play, Buehler said. "Athletic trainers don't have the separation that

many of the other providers on that list have from undue conflict of interest, and I think many times athletic trainers are under significant pressure to get kids back into games, and it puts them in an awkward position."

Other representatives on the health care committee blocked that change. Rep. Rich Vial, R-Scholls, said trainers work with student athletes the most and need specialized training in concussions. "I have become convinced in the last couple of days that the trainer being closest to the situation of anybody and with our increasing consciousness about the very profound effects of these brain injuries, I am inclined to support having the trainers both get the certification and continue to be in a position to help us."

Dan Meek of the Oregon Progressive Party testified that the law change puts child safety at risk, especially those in contact sports. Traumatic brain injury was

found in 110 of 111 former NFL players whose families donated their brains to the Boston University School of Medicine, according to a study published last year by the Journal of the American Medical Association.

"Senate Bill 1547 makes it more likely that Oregon students will suffer CTE because it allows more people to approve having a student turn to playing on a school team, after having suffered a blow that resulted in symptoms of concussion," Meek wrote in testimony to lawmakers.

Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), caused by head trauma, can lead to dementia, memory loss, suicidal thoughts, and personality and mood changes, among other progressive symptoms, Meek testified. A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed that CTE was found in the brains of three of 14, or 21 percent, of high school players and 48 of 53, 91 percent, of college players.

The bill also "rewrites the law to more broadly exempt anyone and any entity involved in school sports from any liability for harm caused to players," Meek testified.

BRIEFLY

No. 12 Oregon State gets early lead, holds on to beat Arizona

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Marie Gulich had 20 points and 12 rebounds and Oregon State jumped out early and cruised to a 65-40 victory over Arizona on Friday night.

Oregon State (22-6, 13-4 Pac-12 Conference) has won six in a row. Arizona (6-22, 2-15) has five straight double-digits losses and was held to fewer than 50 points for the eighth time this season.

Gulich has scored 20-plus points in three consecutive games and collected her 14th double-double of the season. Katie McWilliams added 11 points for the Beavers, who shot 59 percent in the first half and 47.5 percent overall. Gulich had 10 points on 5-of-6 shooting and nine rebounds as the Beavers built a 35-16 halftime advantage.

Next, Oregon State travels to face Arizona State on Sunday.

No. 8 Oregon gets rare win 57-44 in Tempe

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — Sabrina Ionescu scored 16 points and No. 8 Oregon

moved a step closer to its first Pac-12 title in 18 years, beating Arizona State 57-44 Friday to end a 15-game losing streak in Tempe.

Oregon (26-4, 15-2 Pac-12) won the first meeting by shutting down Arizona State in the third quarter. The Ducks took control of the rematch with similar blueprint.

Trailing by one at halftime, Oregon hounded the Sun Devils (19-10, 10-7) into one missed shot after another to build an 11-point lead. Arizona State scored eight points in the quarter and went 4 for 17 shooting.

The Ducks broke the school record for wins in a season and matched the mark for conference wins, set in 1998-99. They had not beaten Arizona State on the road since 2000.

Oregon has won five straight, nine of 10 and needs only to beat struggling Arizona on Sunday to win its first Pac-12 title since 1999-2000.

Oregon had an easier time solving Arizona State's defense in the third quarter, hitting seven of nine shots and going on an 11-0 run lead 40-31.

Oregon kept the cushion in double digits most of the fourth quarter to end its long desert drought. Next, Oregon plays at Arizona on Sunday.