



AP Photo/Alex Brandon
Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred stands with trophy before the MLB Home Run Derby, at Nationals Park, Monday, July 16, 2018 in Washington. The 89th MLB baseball All-Star Game will be played Tuesday.

As MLB mulls rule changes, union hints at work stoppage

By **RONALD BLUM**
AP Baseball Writer

WASHINGTON — Major League Baseball wants a broad discussion with players about rule changes to combat decreased offense and longer games, an initiative likely to be met by a testy union stung by declining free-agent prices and already raising the possibility of a work stoppage after the 2021 season.



Clark

Commissioner Rob Manfred and players’ association head Tony Clark outlined their differing agendas during separate sessions with the Baseball Writers’ Association of America before Tuesday night’s All-Star Game.

“There is a growing consensus or maybe even better an existing consensus among ownership that we need to have a really serious conversation about making some changes to the way the game is being played,” Manfred said. “We are not at the point where I can articulate for you what particular rule changes might get serious consideration. I can tell you the issues that concern people: I think that the period of time between putting balls in play, the number of strikeouts, to a lesser extent the number of home runs, the significance of the shift and what it’s done to the game, the use of relief pitchers and the way starting pitchers are going to be used.”

Clark repeatedly maintained players are reluctant to change as “stewards of the game.”

“We may get to a point where those coming to the ballpark or have an interest in coming to the ballpark for whatever reason aren’t 100 percent certain that what they are seeing is the type of game that they want to see,” he said.

More than 100 free agents remained unsigned when spring training began this year. Many agreed to deals at a fraction of the price they thought they were worth and for fewer years than they expected.

“What we experienced last offseason was a direct attack on free agency, which has been a bedrock of our economic system, and if that is going to be different, then we have some very difficult decisions to make moving forward,” Clark said.

Baseball had eight work stoppages from 1972-95 but has had labor peace since. The current five-year contract runs through the 2021 season, and Clark left open a possible return to the era of strife.

“To the extent there are challenges to those rights, historically I would suggest those have manifested themselves in a particular way,” he said.

The union filed a grievance in February against Miami, Oakland, Pittsburgh and Tampa Bay, accusing the teams of failing to appropriately spend revenue-sharing money in

an effort to improve their on-field product. Manfred dismissed the allegations, saying the grievance was filed “really for publicity reasons.”

Manfred said the lack of interest in free agents was due to the dearth of quality.

“At the end of the year you’ll look at the performance of those players,” he said, “I’m pretty sure, based on what’s already in the books, you’re going to make the judgment that the clubs made sound decisions as to how those players should be valued.”

Management is alarmed by what is taking place on the field. Strikeouts (24,537) are on track to surpass hits (24,314) for the first time. Strikeouts also are likely to set a record for the 12th straight season, and this year’s average of 17.0 per game is up from 12.6 in 2005. The current big league batting average of .247 would be the lowest since 1972.

There have been 20,587 shifts on balls in play, according to Baseball Info Solutions. That projects to a full-season total of 34,668 — up 29.8 percent from last year and an increase from 6,882 for the entire 2013 season. That has decreased the batting average of stars such as Washington’s Bryce Harper, who is hitting just .214.

And the average attendance of 28,568 is down from the 30,159 at the break last year, when the final figure was 30,042. MLB has not dropped below 30,000 since 2002.

Manfred blamed early season bad weather.

“We’ve made up some ground,” he said. “We were down as much as 8, 9 (percent) early, we were back to like 5.5 percent down, and I’m optimistic.”

Lack of competitiveness among rebuilding teams also is a likely factor. Three teams are on track to lose 100 or more games, which would match the record set in 2002, and five others are on a pace for 90 or more defeats.

Clark called the attendance drop “dramatic” and said while weather is partly to blame “the concerns that fans have in regards to the competitive integrity piece is one of them” along with “players being moved from teams that fans had a connection with.”

While he wouldn’t cite teams for tanking, he said it appears many clubs are deciding to rebuild if analytics tell them they can’t compete to win the World Series.

“This is only what I am hearing, that teams are making decisions against the backdrop of what they believe their roster is going to yield and the landing place of where their team is going to be at the end of the year, that those data points suggest if you’re not in a particular place, then it may make more sense not to look to be the last team standing,” he said.

Woods says British Open becomes best shot at a major

By **DOUG FERGUSON**
AP Golf Writer

CARNOUSTIE, Scotland — Tiger Woods doesn’t feel as old at the oldest championship in golf.

Back at the British Open for the first time in three years, Woods broke from his tradition on Tuesday morning. Instead of being among the first on the tee for practice, he didn’t show up at Carnoustie until his news conference just before lunch. Then, he played nine holes with Masters champion Patrick Reed and Bryson DeChambeau.

This was not a case of a 42-year-old needing his rest.

Entering the year having not played any major since the end of 2015 and the start of three back surgeries, Woods has been feeling better as 2018 has gone on. And there’s something about links golf that inspires him.

“It’s my favorite type of golf to play,” Woods said. “I love playing here, this type of links golf, or a style of links golf down on the Aussie sand belt ... because it is creative. We’re not going to get the most perfect bounces. And I think that’s the fun challenge of it.”

He made his links debut at Carnoustie in 1995 as an amateur at the Scottish Open, a week before his British Open debut at St. Andrews. He hasn’t contended on the back nine in the previous Opens at Carnoustie, in 1999 and 2007, though he wasn’t far from a playoff.

Might this be his best shot at winning another major?

“Not to be smart, but it is the next major I’m playing,”



AP Photo/Alastair Grant

Tiger Woods of the United States walks the 3rd hole during a practice round for the 147th British Open Golf championships in Carnoustie, Scotland, Tuesday, July 17, 2018. The Open Golf championships starts Thursday.

Woods said with a laugh.

But over time, he thinks it might be his best chance because of history. Woods recalls 53-year-old Greg Norman playing in the final group at Royal Birkdale in 2008, a major Woods missed because of knee surgery. The following year, Woods missed the cut for the first time at the British Open when 59-year-old Tom Watson was one putt away from winning at Turnberry.

“You don’t have to be long to play on a links-style golf course,” Woods said. “You get to places like Augusta National, where it’s just a big ballpark, and the golf course outgrows you, unfortunately. That’s just the way it goes. But a links-style golf course, you can roll the ball. Distance becomes a moot point.”

That said, distance is

everything at Carnoustie this year, which Woods discovered when he arrived Sunday.

How far the ball travels in the warm, dry air is not the issue. It’s how far it travels once it gets on the baked turf.

Dustin Johnson discovered that when he arrived on Saturday and reached the 499-yard 18th hole, with a stiff breeze at his back and fairways running only slightly slower than they did on the weekend at Shinnecock Hills.

He hit driver into the burn. The next day, his drive was a few yards short of the burn.

“I hit some irons, and depending on the wind, I’ll probably hit anywhere from ... I’ve hit 3-wood, 3-iron and 4-iron off the tee,” Johnson said. “I like all of them.”

SCOREBOARD

Baseball

MLB				
AMERICAN LEAGUE				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	68	30	.694	—
New York	62	33	.653	4½
Tampa Bay	49	47	.510	18
Toronto	43	52	.453	23½
Baltimore	28	69	.289	39½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	52	43	.547	—
Minnesota	44	50	.468	7½
Detroit	41	57	.418	12½
Chicago	33	62	.347	19
Kansas City	27	68	.284	25
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	64	35	.646	—
Seattle	58	39	.598	5
Oakland	55	42	.567	8
Los Angeles	49	48	.505	14
Texas	41	56	.423	22

NATIONAL LEAGUE				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	53	42	.558	—
Atlanta	52	42	.553	½
Washington	48	48	.500	5½
Miami	41	57	.418	13½
New York	39	55	.415	13½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	55	38	.591	—
Milwaukee	55	43	.561	2½
St. Louis	48	46	.511	7½
Pittsburgh	48	49	.495	9
Cincinnati	43	53	.448	13½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	53	43	.552	—
Arizona	53	44	.546	½
Colorado	51	45	.531	2
San Francisco	50	48	.510	4
San Diego	40	59	.404	14½

Tuesday’s Games
All-Star Game: AL 8, NL 6, 10 innings

MLB				
NORTHWEST LEAGUE				
(Second Half)				
North Division				
	W	L	Pct.	GB
Everett (Mariners)	17	15	.531	—
Tri-City (Padres)	16	16	.500	1
Vancouver (Blue Jays)	15	17	.469	2
Spokane (Rangers)	13	19	.404	4
South Division				
	W	L	Pct.	GB
Hillsboro (D-Backs)	22	10	.687	—
Boise (Rockies)	18	14	.563	4
Salem-Keizer (Giants)	16	16	.500	6
Eugene (Cubs)	11	21	.343	11

Tuesday’s Games
Salem-Keizer 6, Eugene 2
Hillsboro 6, Boise 10, 11 innings
Spokane 6, Everett 3
Tri-City 10, Vancouver 4
Wednesday’s Games
Spokane at Everett, 11:05 a.m.
Boise at Hillsboro, 1:05 p.m.
Salem-Keizer at Eugene, 7:05 p.m.
Vancouver at Tri-City, 7:15 p.m.

Soccer

MLS						
EASTERN CONFERENCE						
FC	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Atlanta United FC	12	4	5	41	43	24
New York City FC	12	4	4	40	40	24
New York	11	5	2	35	37	19
Columbus	8	7	6	30	24	25
New England	7	5	7	28	32	28
Montreal	9	12	0	27	26	35
Philadelphia	7	9	3	24	25	30
Chicago	6	10	5	23	33	41
Orlando City	7	11	1	22	27	42
Toronto FC	4	11	4	16	30	38
D.C. United	3	7	5	14	26	30
WESTERN CONFERENCE						
FC	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
FC Dallas	11	3	5	38	31	22
Los Angeles FC	10	4	5	35	41	28
Sporting K.C.	9	5	6	33	37	27
Portland	8	3	6	30	26	22
Real Salt Lake	9	9	2	29	29	37
LA Galaxy	8	7	4	28	34	30
Houston	7	6	2	26	36	26
Vancouver	7	8	5	26	30	40
Minnesota United	7	11	1	22	26	38
Seattle	4	9	5	17	16	23
Colorado	4	11	4	16	22	32
San Jose	2	11	6	12	29	39
NOTE: Three points for victory, one point for tie.						
Wednesday’s Games						
New England at Minnesota United, 5 p.m.						
Saturday’s Games						
D.C. United at Atlanta United FC, 12:30 p.m.						
Vancouver at Seattle, 1 p.m.						
LA Galaxy at Philadelphia, 4 p.m.						

New England at New York, 4 p.m.
Toronto FC at Chicago, 4 p.m.
Orlando City at Columbus, 4:30 p.m.
FC Dallas at Houston, 6 p.m.
Colorado at Real Salt Lake, 7 p.m.
Montreal at Portland, 8 p.m.
Sunday’s Games
Los Angeles FC at Minnesota United, 4 p.m.

Basketball

WNBA				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	13	9	.591	—
Washington	13	9	.591	—
Connecticut	12	11	.522	2
New York	7	15	.318	6
Chicago	7	15	.318	6
Indiana	2	20	.091	11
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	16	6	.727	—
Phoenix	15	8	.652	1½
Los Angeles	14	9	.609	2½
Dallas	13	9	.591	3
Minnesota	12	10	.545	4
Las Vegas	10	13	.435	6½

Tuesday’s Games
Dallas 104, New York 87
Atlanta 86, Connecticut 83
Wednesday’s Games
Seattle at Chicago, 9 a.m.
Indiana at Minnesota, 10 a.m.

Golf

PGA TOUR		
FedEx Cup Standings		
Through July 15		
	Points	Money
1. Dustin Johnson	2,013	\$5,599,752
2. Justin Thomas	1,986	\$5,858,980
3. Bubba Watson	1,854	\$5,121,848
4. Justin Rose	1,743	\$5,007,303
5. Jason Day	1,603	\$4,347,887
6. B. DeChambeau	1,578	\$4,462,598
7. Patrick Reed	1,491	\$4,486,125
8. Phil Mickelson	1,468	\$3,955,062
9. Patton Kizzire	1,361	\$3,246,531
10. Tony Finau	1,327	\$3,394,142
Notables		
13. Brooks Koepka	1,282	\$4,034,417
16. Rickie Fowler	1,159	\$3,344,197
39. Rory McIlroy	850	\$2,649,063
40. Jordan Spieth	795	\$2,080,394
49. Keegan Bradley	722	\$1,878,158
50. Tiger Woods	706	\$1,817,712

Upcoming Schedule
BRITISH OPEN
Site: Carnoustie, Scotland.
Course: Carnoustie Golf Links. Yardage: 7,402. Par: 71.
Purse: \$10.5 million. Winner’s share: \$1,890,000.
Television (all times EDT): Thursday-Friday, 10:30 p.m. to 1 p.m. (Golf Channel); Saturday, 1:30-4 a.m. (Golf Channel), 4 a.m. to 12 p.m. (NBC); Sunday, 1:30-4 a.m. (Golf Channel), 4 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (NBC).
Defending champion: Jordan Spieth.

LPGA TOUR		
Money Leaders		
Through July 15		
	Tm	Money
1. Ariya Jutanugarn	18	\$1,797,765
2. Nasa Hataoka	15	\$947,743
3. So Yeon Ryu	14	\$887,254
4. Inbee Park	10	\$878,137
5. Sung Hyun Park	14	\$844,012
6. Brooke M. Henderson	18	\$843,597
7. Moriya Jutanugarn	18	\$842,582
8. Minjee Lee	16	\$792,447
9. Jin Young Ko	15	\$723,387
10. Jessica Korda	12	\$720,717

Upcoming Schedule
July 26-29 — Aberdeen Standard Investments Ladies Scottish Open, Gullane GC, East Lothian, Scotland
Aug. 2-5 — Ricoh Women’s British Open, Royal Lytham & St. Annes, Lancashire, England

Auto Racing

NASCAR CUP SERIES		
Playoff Points		
Through July 15		
(*driver qualified for playoffs)		
1. Kyle Busch*	—	
2. Kevin Harvick*	—	
3. Martin Truex Jr.*	—	
4. Clint Bowyer*	—	
5. Joey Logano*	—	
6. Erik Jones*	—	
7. Austin Dillon*	—	
8. Brad Keselowski	+189	
9. Kurt Busch	+159	
10. Kyle Larson	+137	
11. Denny Hamlin	+131	
12. Aric Almirola	+96	
13. Ryan Blaney	+89	
14. Jimmie Johnson	+54	

15. Chase Elliott +37
16. Alex Bowman +19
17. Ricky Stenhouse Jr. -19
18. Paul Menard -55
19. Ryan Newman -94
20. Daniel Suarez -108

Upcoming Schedule
Sunday — Foxwoods Resort Casino 301, New Hampshire Motor Speedway, TV: NBCSN, 11 a.m.
July 29 — Gander Outdoors 400, Pocono Raceway, TV: NBCSN, 11:30 a.m.

Cycling

TOUR DE FRANCE

Tuesday
At Le Grand-Bornand, France
10TH STAGE
A 98.5-mile ride in the Alps from Annecy to Le Grand-Bornand, with one Hors category and three Category 1 climbs

1. Julian Alaphilippe, France, Quick-Step Floors, 4:25:27
2. Jon Izagirre, Spain, Bahrain-Merida, 1:34 behind
3. Rein Taaramae, Estonia, Direct Energie, 1:40
4. Greg Van Avermaet, Belgium, BMC Racing, 1:44
5. Serge Pauwels, Belgium, Dimension Data, same time
6. Lilian Calmejan, France, Direct Energie, 2:24
7. Dan Martin, Ireland, UAE Team Emirates, 3:23
8. Primož Roglič, Slovenia, LottoNL-Jumbo, same time
9. David Gaudu, France, Groupama-FDJ, same time
10. Geraint Thomas, Britain, Sky, same time
11. Romain Bardet, France, AG2R La Mondiale, same time
12. Steven Kruiswijk, Netherlands, LottoNL-Jumbo, same time
13. Adam Yates, Britain, Mitchelton-Scott, same time
14. Jakob Fuglsang, Denmark, Astana, same time
15. Chris Froome, Britain, Sky, same time
16. Ian Boswell, United States, Katusha Alpezin, 10:52
44. Tejay van Garderen, United States, BMC Racing, same time
65. Chad Haga, United States, Sunweb, 18:52
119. Taylor Phinney, United States, EF Education First-Drapac, 27:50
153. Lawson Craddock, United States, EF Education First-Drapac, same time