

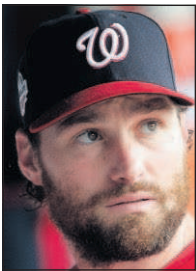
Nationals throw in the towel, trade players

Murphy traded to Cubs, Adams shipped to St. Louis

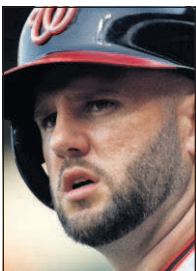
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Essentially throwing in the towel on a disappointing season, the Washington Nationals traded second baseman Daniel Murphy to the Chicago Cubs and first baseman Matt Adams to the St. Louis Cardinals on Tuesday.

Despite a roster that boasts such stars as Max Scherzer and Bryce Harper, Washington went into a three-game series at home against Philadelphia with a losing record of 62-63, 7½ games behind the NL East-leading Atlanta Braves.



Murphy



Adams

General manager Mike Rizzo and ownership gambled at the July trade deadline, standing pat and expressing faith in the roster as constituted. The Nationals trounced the New York Mets 25-4 that night, but are 9-10 since, including a 2-5 road trip through Chicago and St. Louis that featured a 4-3 loss at Wrigley Field on a two-out, walk-off grand slam.

“We felt that coming off that road trip and into this most recent home-stand was a time that was a litmus test for us ... and we felt that the timing was right to make the vital decisions that we had to make,” Rizzo said.

The deals came three weeks after the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline, and the Nationals aren’t getting much in return.

For Murphy, who was hitting .300 since his return from knee surgery, the Cubs are swapping Class A infielder Andrew Monasterio and a player to be named or cash. For Adams, the Cardinals are sending \$50,000 to Washington.

“These are tough decisions, to trade ultimate professionals like Daniel Murphy and Matt Adams is never easy,” Rizzo said. “We felt this was the best way to facilitate what we are trying to do not only in 2018 but beyond.”

The 33-year-old Murphy was a big hitter during his time in Washington. A postseason star in 2015 with the Mets, he signed with the Nationals that winter and was an All-Star the next two years. Murphy missed the first 64 games this season but hit

in 11 straight before being stymied by Miami’s Jose Urena on Sunday.

“My thoughts are it’s really bittersweet,” Murphy said. “I sat at this podium probably 2½ years ago. The Washington Nationals were the only offer I had. They took a chance on me three years ago and I feel very disappointed in myself that it kind of came to this point,

I guess would be the easiest way to describe it.”

Asked how close the team came to including Harper — a free agent after the season — in the Tuesday deals, Rizzo said: “You have to get a deal that makes sense to trade one of the elite players in the game.”

Harper, who struggled for much of the first half, won the Home Run Derby during the All-Star festivities at Nationals Park. Since the break he is hitting .350 with seven home runs, 25 RBIs and 21 runs scored in 28 games.

“I’ve been part of this organization for seven years and I look forward to coming in and doing my job every single day and I had no fear of being traded or let go on waivers or anything like that,” Harper said.

The Nationals were coming off two consecutive division titles under manager Dusty Baker, who was fired after last season and replaced by rookie skipper Dave Martinez.

Murphy expressed support for Martinez, without even being asked about him.

“Right man for the job here in DC,” Murphy said.

The Nationals’ high-water mark came on May 30 when they defeated the Orioles for their sixth straight win to improve to 33-22. They haven’t won more than three straight games since.

“We’re definitely not in an ideal spot,” veteran first baseman Ryan Zimmerman said. “We had a chance a couple of times to gain some ground and couldn’t really string together many wins in a row.”

Given the moves, Martinez was asked how he convinces his team that the three games against the contending Phillies are still big.

“What’s funny is that I’ve had guys already come in the office and I don’t think I need to convince them,” he said. “They know what we are playing for and they’re all in.”

LITTLE LEAGUE WORLD SERIES

New bats, fewer homers



AP Photo/Tom E. Puskar

Peachtree City, Georgia’s Ben Traxler (2) follows through on his base hit scoring the winning run against Houston, Texas of an elimination baseball game at the Little League World Series tournament in South Williamsport, Pa., Monday, Aug. 20, 2018. Peachtree City, Georgia won the game 7-6 in 9 innings, eliminating Houston, Texas.

By TOMMY BUTLER
Associated Press

SOUTH WILLIAMS-PORT, Pa. — New bat rules aimed at keeping the ball in play and pitchers safer is having another effect at the Little League World Series: fewer home runs.

Until this season, bats were frequently made from reinforced carbon fiber polymer. The problem was that as they were used over time, the bats actually sent balls farther and at higher speeds — sometimes called the trampoline effect.

Under a new bat performance standard from USA Baseball, bats in 2018 are now built to act more like the wooden bats used in the majors — less ping and less pop. While keeping pitchers and infielders safer from laser comebacks and line drives, coaches agree the new bats have less power.

“Crazy different, man,” said Kurt Barr, coach of the

Michigan team representing the Great Lakes. “You see it out there, it takes almost a perfect shot to hit it over a 225-foot fence. The ball sounds good coming off the bat, the swing looks good and these things just die.”

Only 10 home runs had been hit in about 20 games as the LLWS reached its midpoint Monday night, with no team accounting for more than one.

In 2017, a whopping 61 homers were hit across the tournament and the U.S. champs from Lufkin, Texas, hit 11 by themselves.

No pop off the barrel means teams can’t rely on the long ball anymore. Whether that’s a good or bad thing seems to depend on whether you’re asking a coach or a player.

“I’ll rethink a lot of my strategy, quite frankly, because I think it’s really hard to hit a home run on a 225-foot field in Little League these days,” Barr

said. “With that said, I think it’s fantastic. I love the quality of baseball that’s being played, it forces defense, it forces small ball, it forces you as a manager to think about how to move guys over and the whole sacrifice thing.”

“It’s not ‘just go up there and just go barrel the ball and flip it over the fence,’ cause that’s frankly what was happening.”

Hawaii coach Gerald Oda said the change has had pros and cons.

“The good thing about it is that it’s more of a defensive pitching thing, and you take out that sometimes you can just throw the bat out and (the ball) can go. With these bats it will not go,” Oda said. “The difficult thing, too, is that not everybody is big, so it makes it really difficult for especially the younger guys that haven’t hit their growth spurt or are that big and strong.”

The players are on the

opposite side of the fence, unlike the baseballs.

“I just wish it was the old bats so it would go farther,” said Ka’olu Holt, a pitcher and third baseman for Hawaii. “(We’d get) more base hits and it would be more exciting because we’d get more hits in and it would be harder for the pitcher.”

Aukai Kea, a pitcher and infielder for Hawaii, is one of the 10 players to hit a home run in this tournament, ending an 11-inning game against Georgia with a walk-off blast in the first game.

“This year’s bats are kinda toned down so it’s harder for the hitters to get on base,” said Kea. “Since you guys are talking about the other night, I thought that ball was gone but it just hopped over the fence. Just by luck it hopped over the fence. If that was with the other bats, I’m pretty sure it would have hit someone on the hill.”

WNBA PLAYOFFS

Sparks eliminate defending champion Lynx

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Chelsea Gray scored 26 points, helping the Los Angeles Sparks beat the defending champion Minnesota Lynx 75-68 on Tuesday night to advance to the second round of the WNBA playoffs.

It was the fourth straight year Los Angeles and Minnesota have met in an elimination playoff game — with each team winning the past two WNBA championships. The Lynx hadn’t been eliminated in the first round since 2004.

Temi Fagbenle made an open corner 3-pointer to pull Minnesota to 72-68

with 52.4 seconds to go, but Maya Moore was off on a contested 3-pointer on their next possession and Nneka Ogumike sealed it at the free-throw line.

Sixth-seeded Los Angeles (20-15) will play at No. 3 seed Washington on Thursday.

Ogumike added 19 points for Los Angeles and Riquana Williams scored 17. Candace Parker was held to two points.

Sylvia Fowles had 18 points and 12 rebounds for her 21st playoff double-double for seventh-seeded Minnesota (18-17). Moore added 14 points and Fagbenle scored a career-high 15 points.

Four-time WNBA champion Lindsay Whalen, who announced her retirement earlier this season, scored nine points in her final game.

Mercury oust Wings

TEMPE, Ariz. — DeWanna Bonner had 29 points and 11 rebounds and Diana Taurasi collected 26 points and 12 assists, helping the Phoenix Mercury beat the Dallas Wings 101-83 on Tuesday night in the opening game of the WNBA playoffs.

Phoenix (21-14) advances to play at Connecticut in another single-elimination round on Thursday.

Phoenix broke it open in the third quarter, hitting six 3-pointers. Bonner banked in a long 3 just before the shot clock expired and Taurasi added a 3 on its next possession, part of an 11-0 run that lifted the Mercury to a 79-59 lead.

Brittney Griner added 17 points for fifth-seeded Phoenix (21-14). Taurasi made six 3-pointers, helping the Mercury go 13 of 29 from long range.

Skylar Diggins-Smith scored 23 points for No. 8 seed Dallas (15-20). Elizabeth Cambage had 22 points, 12 rebounds and six assists in her playoff debut.

SCOREBOARD

Local slate

VOLLEYBALL				
Thursday				
Dufur at Weston-McEwen, 2 p.m.				
Imbler at Weston-McEwen, 4 p.m.				
Ione at Helix, 4 p.m.				
Umatilla at Helix, 7 p.m.				
Friday				
Heppner at Irrigon, 1 p.m.				
Echo at Country Christian, 1 p.m.				
Umatilla vs. Heppner (at Irrigon), 3 p.m.				
Echo vs. Hosanna Christian (at Country Christian), 4 p.m.				
Umatilla at Irrigon, 5 p.m.				
Saturday				
Pendleton at Lewiston (ID), 8 a.m.				
Mac-Hi at La Grande, 8 a.m.				
Weston-McEwen, Pilot Rock, Heppner at Grant Union Tournament, 8 a.m.				
Echo vs. North Clackamas Christian (at Country Christian), 3 p.m.				
BOYS SOCCER				
Friday				
Mac-Hi at Stayton, 3 p.m.				
Umatilla at Riverside, 4:30 p.m.				
GIRLS SOCCER				
Friday				
Mac-Hi at Stayton, 1 p.m.				
Saturday				
Mac-Hi at Estacada, 9 a.m.				
COLLEGE FOOTBALL				
Saturday				
College of Idaho at Eastern Oregon, 6 p.m.				
WOMEN’S COLLEGE SOCCER				
Wednesday				
Eastern Oregon vs. Midland (Neb.) (at Prescott, AZ), Noon				
Baseball				
MLB				
AMERICAN LEAGUE				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	88	39	.693	—
New York	79	46	.632	8
Tampa Bay	65	61	.516	22½
Toronto	57	69	.452	30½
Baltimore	27	89	.294	50½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	73	52	.584	—

Minnesota	60	65	.480	13
Detroit	52	74	.413	21½
Chicago	47	78	.376	26
Kansas City	38	88	.302	35½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	76	50	.603	—
Oakland	76	50	.603	—
Seattle	72	55	.567	4½
Los Angeles	63	64	.496	13½
Texas	56	72	.438	21
Tuesday’s Games				
Toronto 3, Baltimore 2				
Cleveland 6, Boston 3				
Detroit 2, Chicago Cubs 1				
N.Y. Yankees 2, Miami 1, 12 innings				
Tampa Bay 4, Kansas City 1				
Minnesota 5, Chicago White Sox 2				
Arizona 5, L.A. Angels 4				
Oakland 6, Texas 0				
Houston 3, Seattle 2				
Wednesday’s Games				
Baltimore (Hess 2-7) at Toronto (Pannone 0-0), 9:37 a.m.				
Minnesota (Gibson 7-9) at Chicago White Sox (Rodon 4-3), 11:10 a.m.				
Texas (Minor 9-6) at Oakland (Jackson 4-2), 12:35 p.m.				
Houston (Morton 12-3) at Seattle (Gonzales 12-8), 1:10 p.m.				
Chicago Cubs (Lester 13-5) at Detroit (Liriano 3-8), 4:10 p.m.				
Cleveland (Carrasco 15-6) at Boston (Johnson 4-3), 4:10 p.m.				
Kansas City (Junis 6-11) at Tampa Bay (Stane 1-3), 4:10 p.m.				
N.Y. Yankees (Lynn 8-8) at Miami (Richards 3-7), 4:10 p.m.				
L.A. Angels (Despaigne 2-1) at Arizona (Buchholz 6-2), 6:40 p.m.				
AL WILD CARD STANDINGS				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	79	46	.632	+4
Houston	76	50	.603	—
Oakland	76	50	.603	—
Seattle	72	55	.567	4½
NATIONAL LEAGUE				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	70	55	.560	—
Philadelphia	68	57	.544	2
Washington	63	63	.500	7½
New York	55	70	.440	15
Miami	50	77	.394	21

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	71	53	.573	—
St. Louis	70	57	.551	2½
Milwaukee	70	58	.547	3
Pittsburgh	63	64	.496	9½
Cincinnati	56	70	.444	16
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Arizona	70	56	.556	—
Colorado	68	57	.544	1½
Los Angeles	67	60	.528	3½
San Francisco	62	65	.488	8½
San Diego	50	78	.391	21
Tuesday’s Games				
Atlanta 6, Pittsburgh 1				
Washington 10, Philadelphia 4				
Detroit 2, Chicago Cubs 1				
N.Y. Mets 6, San Francisco 3				
N.Y. Yankees 2, Miami 1, 12 innings				
Chicago Cubs (Lester 13-5) at Detroit (Liriano 3-8), 4:10 p.m.				
N.Y. Yankees (Lynn 8-8) at Miami (Richards 3-7), 4:10 p.m.				
San Francisco (Kelly 0-1) at N.Y. Mets (Syndergaard 8-3), 4:10 p.m.				
San Diego (Nix 1-1) at Colorado (Gray 9-7), 5:40 p.m.				
L.A. Angels (Despaigne 2-1) at Arizona (Buchholz 6-2), 6:40 p.m.				
St. Louis (Flaherty 7-6) at L.A. Dodgers (Buehrer 6-4), 7:10 p.m.				
NL WILD CARD STANDINGS				
	W	L	Pct	GB
St. Louis	70	57	.551	½
Milwaukee	70	58	.547	—
Philadelphia	68	57	.544	½
Colorado	68	57	.544	½
Los Angeles	67	60	.528	2½
Washington	63	63	.500	6
Pittsburgh	63	64	.496	6½

North Division						
	W	L	Pct.	GB		
Vancouver (Blue Jays)	16	10	.615	—		
Spokane (Rangers)	14	12	.538	2		
Tri-City (Padres)	11	14	.440	5½		
Everett (Mariners)	11	14	.440	5½		
South Division						
	W	L	Pct.	GB		
Hillsboro (D-Backs)	18	8	.692	—		
Eugene (Cubs)	12	14	.461	6		
Salem-Keizer (Giants)	12	14	.461	6		
Boise (Rockies)	9	17	.346	9		
Tuesday's Games						
Salem-Keizer 9, Boise 6						
Hillsboro 6, Eugene 5						
Spokane 6, Everett 0						
Vancouver 5, Tri-City 2						
Wednesday's Games						
Boise at Salem-Keizer, 6:35 p.m.						
Eugene at Hillsboro, 7:05 p.m.						
Spokane at Everett, 7:05 p.m.						
Vancouver at Tri-City, 7:15 p.m.						
LITTLE LEAGUE						
Little League World Series						
At South Williamsport, Pa.						
Wednesday, August 22						
Game 21: Guayama (Puerto Rico) vs.						
Surrey (British Columbia), Noon						
Game 22: Grosse Pointe Woods (Mich.)						
vs. Peachtree City (Ga.), Noon						
Game 23: Seoul (South Korea) vs. Kawa-						
guchi (Japan), 4:30 p.m.						
Game 24: Staten Island (N.Y.) vs. Honolu-						
lu, 4:30 p.m.						
Basketball						
WNBA						
PLAYOFF GAMES						
First Round						
Tuesday, Aug. 21						
Phoenix 101, Dallas 83						
Los Angeles 75, Minnesota 68						
Second Round						
Thursday, Aug. 23						
Los Angeles at Washington, 6:30 p.m.						
Phoenix at Connecticut, 8:30 p.m.						
Soccer						
MLS						
EASTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Atlanta United FC	15	4	6	51	53	29