

Cole, Rendon among 131 free agents on market

By RONALD BLUM
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK — Washington third baseman Anthony Rendon became a free agent Thursday, a day after homering to spark Washington's seventh-inning comeback in Game 7 of the World Series.

Houston pitcher Gerrit Cole also went free after warming up in the bullpen but never getting into the season finale.

And Nationals pitcher Stephen Strasburg, the World Series MVP, could be joining them in the next few days. He has the right to opt out of his contract, which has \$100 million over four years remaining.

Baseball's business season starts shortly after the final out.

"I think it's hard to kind of fast-forward," Astros manager AJ Hinch said. "Seasons end really fast. I don't care if you get all the way to the seventh game of the World Series. It's all of a sudden — boom! — it's over."

Cole, Rendon and Strasburg all are represented by Scott Boras, known for slow, methodical negotiations. Last winter, he reached outfielder Bryce Harper's \$330 million, 13-year contract with Philadelphia on Feb. 28.



Houston Astros starting pitcher Gerrit Cole walks to the dugout after the third inning of Game 5 of the baseball World Series against the Washington Nationals on Oct. 27, 2019, in Washington.

AP Photo/Patrick Semansky

Cole, a 29-year-old right-hander who went 20-5 this year, is expected to get a record contract for a pitcher, topping David Price's \$217 million, seven-year deal with Boston before the 2016 season and Justin Verlander's \$31.33 million average sal-

ary under a three-year deal with the Astros that started in 2019.

Cole tweeted a letter Thursday praising Houston fans.

"Before I became an Astro I didn't know much about Houston, but after just two

years you have made it feel like home," he wrote. "This is a relationship between a team and ... fans like no other that I know."

Strasburg, a 31-year-old right-hander, just finished the third season of a \$175 million deal and at 18-6 also is com-

ing off his best season. Rendon led the major leagues with 126 RBIs while hitting .319 with 34 homers.

A total of 131 players became free agents Thursday, and 53 more potentially are eligible pending decisions on team, player and mutual

options during the next few days.

Among the pitchers available are major league ERA leader Hyun-Jin Ryu, Zack Wheeler, Madison Bumgarner, Rick Porcello, Cole Hamels, Jake Odorizzi and Dallas Keuchel, who went free after the 2018 season and waited until June to reach a one-year deal with Atlanta.

Others eligible include shortstop Didi Gregorius, third baseman Josh Donaldson and outfielders Yasiel Puig, Marcell Ozuna and José Abreu — the AL RBIs leader.

Yankees closer Aroldis Chapman and Boston slugger J.D. Martinez also have the right to opt out, and catcher Yasmani Grandal has a mutual option with Milwaukee.

Teams must decide by Monday whether to make \$17.8 million qualifying offers to their former players who became free agents. Players are eligible for the offer if they were on the roster for the season and never received a qualifying offer before. The price dropped for the first time, by \$100,000, following a second straight slow offseason for roster moves.

Edwin Encarnación's \$25 million option was declined by the Yankees, triggering a \$5 million buyout.

Seahawks claim wide receiver Josh Gordon off waivers

By CURTIS CRABTREE
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — Wide receiver Josh Gordon has joined the Seattle Seahawks a day after being released off injured reserve by the New England Patriots.

Seattle claimed Gordon off waivers Friday. He joins a crowded receiver group in Seattle, which was already carrying seven receivers on its active roster.

"He's a unique talent," coach Pete Carroll said

after practice Friday. "Next week, we'll take a look and see what he looks like. He's done a lot of good stuff and made a lot of good plays. We'll find out more next week. Won't have anything to do with this game."

Gordon was among New England's leading receivers this season, with 20 catches for 287 yards and a touchdown through six games. But he was placed on injured reserve last week with knee and ankle injuries. His tenure with New England was over a week later.

Gordon was reinstated by the NFL in August after having been suspended indefinitely in December 2018, missing the final three games of last season for violations of the league's substance abuse policy. It ended what had been a strong year for Gordon, who had 40 catches for 720 yards and three touchdowns in 11 games.

A 2012 second-round draft pick by the Cleveland Browns, Gordon was also suspended for the first two games of the 2013 season

for a substance abuse policy violation but still caught 87 passes for nine touchdowns and a league-leading 1,646 yards and was named to the All-Pro team.

"He's a big play guy," Carroll said. "He's been able to really stretch the field. Those that I know have worked with him and coached him, they rave about his talent and his play-making ability."

Seahawks cornerback Jamar Taylor was teammates with Gordon in Cleveland for two seasons

in 2016 and 2017. Gordon only appeared in five games over that stretch due to his struggles off the field, but Taylor spoke highly of the teammate he saw over that span.

"He tried to do everything right and the dude made plays for us," Taylor said. "For anybody, this is one of the best organizations I've been around from an upstairs standpoint and a coaches' standpoint. I think he'll fit in perfect here."

Linebacker Mychal Kendricks also spent time with

Gordon in Cleveland last year before Gordon was traded to the Patriots.

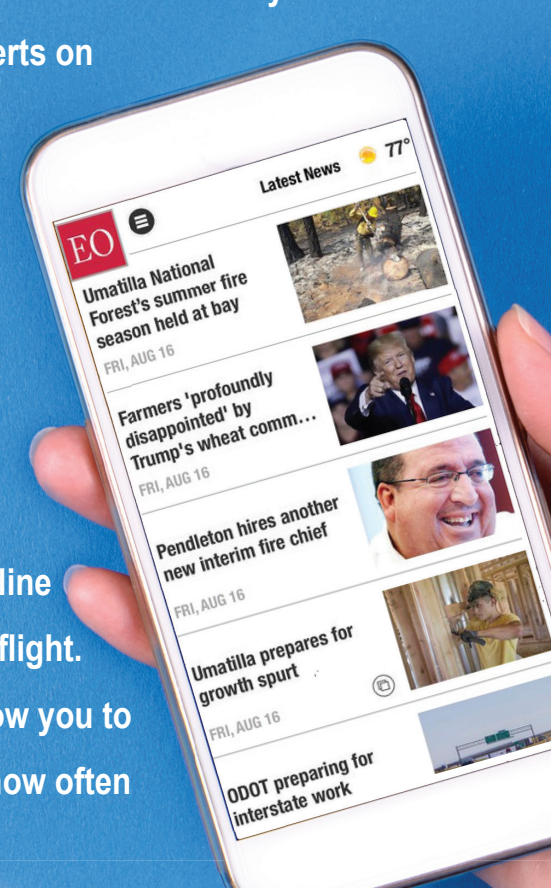
"He's going to do just fine here. He was cool, man. He's a good dude," he said. "I know how much of a tremendous athlete he is and what he can do for a team so the fact that we got him, it's lit. It's real lit."

The Seahawks waived defensive end Dekoda Watson to clear space for Gordon. Watson had been signed Wednesday when safety Tedric Thompson was placed on injured reserve.

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