MLB moving All-Star Game in response to voting restrictions

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

John Bazemore/Associated Press, File

Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred speaks on his phone as he watches a spring training baseball game between the Atlanta Braves and Boston Red Sox on March 10, 2021, in Fort Myers, Fla.

NEW YORK — Atlanta lost Major League Baseball's summer All-Star Game on Friday over the league's objections to sweeping changes to Georgia voting laws that critics — including the CEOs of Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines and Coca-Cola — have condemned as being too restrictive.

The decision to pull the July 13 game from Atlanta's Truist Park amounts to the first economic backlash against Georgia for the voting law that Republican Gov. Brian Kemp quickly signed into law March 25.

Kemp has insisted the law's critics have mischaracterized what it does, yet GOP lawmakers adopted the changes largely in response to false claims of fraud in the 2020 elections by former President Donald Trump and his supporters. The law includes new restrictions on voting by mail and greater legislative control over how elections are run.

MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred made the decision to move the All-Star events and the amateur draft from Atlanta after discussions with the Major League Baseball Players Association, individual players and the Players Alliance, an organization of Black players formed after the death of George Floyd last year, the commissioner said in a statement. A new ballpark for the events wasn't immediately revealed.

"I have decided that the best way to demonstrate our values as a sport is by relocating this year's All-Star Game and MLB draft," Manfred said. "Major League Baseball fundamentally supports voting rights for all Americans and opposes restrictions to the ballot box."

Kemp called it a "knee-jerk decision" that means "cancel culture and woke political activists are coming for every aspect of your life, sports included. If the left doesn't agree with you, facts and the truth do not matter."

"This attack on our state is the direct result of repeated lies from (President) Joe Biden and Stacey Abrams about a bill that expands access to the ballot box and ensures the integrity of our elections," Kemp said in a statement. "I will not back down. Georgians will not be bullied."

Georgia state House Speaker David Ralston, a powerful Republican who backed the voting law changes, said the baseball league's decision "robs Georgians of a special celebration of our national pastime free of politics." Like other Republicans in the state, he vowed to stand behind the new law.

The new Georgia law adds strict identification requirements for voting absentee by mail, limits the use of ballot drop boxes and makes it a crime to hand out food or water to voters waiting in line, among many other provisions. Georgia Republicans say changes were needed to maintain voter confidence in the election system.

Democrats and voting rights groups say the law will disproportionately affect communities of color. On Wednesday, two of Georgia's most prominent business leaders sided with the law's opponents.

Delta CEO Ed Bastian labeled the law "unacceptable," while Coca-Cola chief executive James Quincey called the legislation a "step backward."

After MLB pulled the All-Star Game out of Atlanta on Friday, the Atlanta Braves issued a statement saying the team was disappointed.

"This was neither our decision, nor our recommendation and we are saddened that fans will not be able to see this event in our city," the team said. "The Braves organization will continue to stress the importance of equal voting opportunities and we had hoped our city could use this event as a platform to enhance the discussion."

Meanwhile, Abrams, who has championed voting rights since her narrow election loss to Kemp in 2018, blasted the new law. The Democrat is being closely watched to see if she seeks a rematch against Kemp in 2022.

"Georgia Republicans must renounce the terrible damage they have caused to our voting system and the harm they have inflicted on our economy," Abrams said. "Our corporate community must get off the sidelines as full partners in this fight."

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, a Democrat, said she supports the MLB's decision. Atlanta will no doubt share in the economic loss, though the Braves' home stadium is now located outside the city, in suburban Cobb County.

"Unfortunately, the removal of the MLB All-Star Game from Georgia is likely the first of many dominoes to fall until the unnecessary barriers put in place to restrict access to the ballot box are removed," Bottoms said in a statement.

College: 'This bill is about fairness'

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ruling that NCAA rules violated anti-trust laws.

A court ruling is expected later this year.

A 'patchwork' of rules

This isn't Courtney's first rodeo on the issue. SB 5 is nearly identical to Senate Bill 1501, which Courtney introduced in February 2020. SB 1501 rolled through the 2020 legislative session, passing the Senate 24 to 5 a couple weeks after it was introduced but stumbling near the end of the political race. The bill didn't get a final vote before the session adjourned in early March 2020.

During public hearings, Oregon university officials and athletes urged the House Committee on Rules to delay state action until NCAA regulations on the subject could be adopted.

Oregon State University gymnast Halli Briscoe, OSU's Student Athlete Advisory Committee president and chair of the Pac-12 Student-Athlete Leadership Team, told the committee action by states could lead to a "patchwork" of rules for athletes.

"I fear unintended consequences including a patchwork of inconsistent state laws, unfair recruiting and competitive advantages, difficulty monitoring compensation, inequitable treatment of female athletes and the exploitation of athletes by profession and commercial enterprises," Briscoe said during a February 2020 public hearing.

Courtney, who testified before the House committee, said SB 1501 was "long overdue."

"This bill is about fairness," Courtney said in late February 2020. "These student-athletes give everything to their school and their sport. They create revenue for their school through sold-out stadiums and increased enrollment. But these athletes don't get a dime of that money. They don't even get a percentage of the sales of jerseys with their own name on it. It's time that their contributions are recognized in a substantial way."

If it had been approved, Courtney's SB 1501 would have taken effect in 2023 to give the NCAA time to draft national rules. His SB 5, however, includes an emergency clause, meaning that if approved, it would go into effect the day it's signed.

John Locher/Associated Press, File

Oregon's Nyara Sabally (1) shoots over Oregon State's Taya Corosdale (5) during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game in the second round of the Pac-12 women's tournament on March 4, 2021, in Las Vegas.

BMCC:

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deter Hillmick from bringing Perez aboard.

"I am super excited to see what she can do," he said. "I think she will be absolutely fantastic."

Perez wasn't the only one excited about her playing college soccer.

"My mom cried," she said.

An honor student, Perez plans to major in education, with a goal of teaching elementary or middle school students.

A family game

Gabriela Perez coached her daughter from the time she first put on soccer cleats until middle school. In return, Brianna watched her mom play, learning the game from the sidelines.

"I would go watch her play," Perez said of her mom. "She was really good. She's played her whole life."

When Irrigon announced there would be no girls team this year, Gabriela had no problem with her daughter playing on the boy's team.

"She thought it was an awesome idea," Perez said. "She said it was a good way to improve my game."

While mom and daughter have honed their skills, it's Perez's little brother Ethan who could be the best of them all.

"He's 11 years old and he's very good," Perez said.

Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Irrigon's Brianna Perez makes a beeline for the ball to head off Trinidad Mendoza, of Riverside, during a home game on Thursday, April 1, 2021.

Ducks:

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at this time last year, albeit for just four spring practices. He didn't play last fall and with Ashford getting attention while playing baseball, Brown returning and the hype surrounding Thompson, Butterfield has gotten lost in the shuffle to some on the outside. However, Cristobal made it clear it's not that way inside the program.

"He is certainly not flying under the radar in practice because he's doing a great job," Cristobal said. "He's talented. He's a big guy. When we recruited him, he was really thin and the weight room has certainly paid off for him. It's impressive to watch him throw the football with such ease. He's a guy who can throw it from the hash to outside the opposite numbers, which not many guys can do that. He's very smart. He's very accurate. Hard worker. Another guy that's tough."

Ashford is splitting time with UO baseball where he is in a rotation in center field. Cristobal said the former four-star prospect made a jump academically from the fall to winter and it's carrying over on the field.

"He's an exceptional competitor," Cristobal said. "I look forward to seeing more."

ON THE SLATE

SATURDAY, APRIL 3

Prep football
Heppner vs. Toledo at Redmond, 1 p.m.

Prep volleyball
Hood River Valley at Pendleton, 11 a.m.
Mitchell/Spray at Echo, 1 p.m.
Umatilla at Griswold, 1 p.m.
McLoughlin at Nixyaawii, 11 a.m.
Riverside at Irrigon, 1 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Heppner, 4 p.m.

Prep girls soccer
Crook County at Pendleton, noon
Stanfield/Echo at Riverside, 1 p.m.

Prep boys soccer
Pendleton at Crook County, noon
Walla Walla at Hermiston, noon

College women's soccer
Blue Mountain at Walla Walla, noon

MONDAY, APRIL 5

Prep golf
Hermiston at Walla Walla, noon

TUESDAY, APRIL 6

Prep volleyball
Sherman at Echo, 5:30 p.m.
Ione/Arlington at Griswold, 5 p.m.
Heppner at Stanfield, 5 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Grant Union, 4 p.m.

Prep girls soccer
Umatilla at Riverside, 3 p.m.

Prep boys soccer
Hermiston at Richland, 7 p.m.
Umatilla at Riverside, 5 p.m.

Prep baseball
Chiawana at Hermiston (2), 4 p.m.

Prep boys tennis
Hanford at Hermiston, 4 p.m.

Prep girls tennis
Hanford at Hermiston, 4 p.m.

College men's basketball
Wenatchee Valley at Blue Mountain, 7:30 p.m.

College women's basketball
Wenatchee Valley at Blue Mountain, 5:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7

College women's soccer
Blue Mountain at Columbia Basin College, 2 p.m.

College men's soccer
Blue Mountain at Columbia Basin College, 4:15 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 8

Prep football
Ione/Arlington at Pilot Rock, 7 p.m.

Prep volleyball
Ione/Arlington at Mitchell/Spray, 5 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Weston-McEwen, 5 p.m.

Prep track and field
Hanford at Hermiston, noon

College baseball
Spokane at Blue Mountain (2), 1 p.m.

PREP STANDINGS

Through games played April 1

PREP FOOTBALL

5A SPECIAL DISTRICT 1

Team	League	Overall
Pendleton	3-1	3-1
Redmond	2-1	3-1
Hood River Valley	2-2	2-2
Ridgeview	2-2	2-2
The Dalles	1-0	2-1
LaSalle Prep	1-1	3-1
Parkrose	0-1	1-3
Putnam	0-3	1-3

MID-COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

Team	League	Overall
Chiawana	6-0	6-0
Kamiakin	5-1	5-1
Kennewick	5-1	5-1
Richland	3-3	3-3
Walla Walla	2-2	2-2
Hermiston	1-3	1-3
Pasco	1-4	2-4
Hanford	0-4	1-4
Southridge	0-5	0-6

2A BLUE MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

Team	League	Overall
Heppner	4-0	4-0
Weston-McEwen	2-1	3-1
Umatilla	2-3	2-3
Grant Union	1-2	2-2
Stanfield	1-2	2-2
Irrigon	0-1	0-3
Riverside	0-1	0-2

1A SPECIAL DISTRICT 2

Team	League	Overall
Dufur	3-0	4-0
Wallowa	2-1	2-1
Pilot Rock	2-1	2-2
Powder Valley	1-0	3-1
Enterprise	1-1	1-1
Imbler	1-1	1-2
Crane	1-2	1-3
Elgin	0-0	0-1
Union	0-1	0-1
Cove	0-2	0-2
Ione/Arlington	0-2	0-3

1A SPECIAL DISTRICT 4 (6-MAN)

Team	League	Overall
South Wasco County	4-0	4-0
Joseph	3-0	4-0
Sherman/Condon	2-1	3-1
Dayville/Monument	1-0	1-2
Mitchell/Spray/Wheeler	1-3	1-3
Harper Charter	0-1	0-1
Prairie City	0-2	0-2
Echo	0-4	0-4

2A BLUE MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

Team	League	Overall
Heppner	5-0	7-1
Grant Union	3-2	4-5
Union	1-0	8-1
Weston McEwen	0-1	7-3
Enterprise	0-1	2-5
Pilot Rock	0-2	5-5
Stanfield	0-3	2-8

1A BIG SKY LEAGUE

Team	League	Overall
Condon	7-1	7-1
Echo	7-1	7-2
Sherman	5-3	5-3
South Wasco County	4-1	4-5
Dufur	3-1	5-4
Ione/Arlington	3-5	3-5
Lyle/Wishram	2-1	2-1
Trout Lake	1-3	1-4
Mitchell/Spray	1-5	1-6
Glenwood/Klickitat	0-4	0-4
Bickleton	0-8	0-8

1A OLD OREGON LEAGUE

Team	League	Overall
Imbler	4-1	4-3
Joseph	1-0	6-1
Wallowa	1-1	5-3
Cove	1-3	2-5
Powder Valley	0-0	8-0
Nixyaawii	0-0	7-3
Griswold	0-0	2-7
Elgin	0-0	1-1
Pine Eagle	0-2	0-5

PREP GIRLS SOCCER

5A INTERMOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

Team	League	Overall
Redmond	3-0-2	6-1-2
Ridgeview	2-1-2	5-5-2
The Dalles/Dufur	2-1-1	4-3-1
Hood River Valley	1-0-3	2-4-3
Crook County	0-2-0	0-4-0
Pendleton	0-4-0	0-8-0

3A/2A/1A SPECIAL DISTRICT 6

Team	League	Overall
Riverside	2-0-0	6-2-0
Nyssa	2-0-0	5-1-0
Umatilla	0-1-0	1-2-3
Stanfield/Echo	0-1-0	0-4-2
Four Rivers	0-2-0	0-7-0

PREP VOLLEYBALL

5A INTERMOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

Team	League	Overall
Ridgeview	8-1	11-3
Crook County	7-1	10-2
Pendleton	5-4	8-5
Hood River Valley	3-5	3-7
The Dalles	2-7	2-8
Redmond	1-8	2-10

3A EASTERN OREGON LEAGUE

Team	League	Overall
Burns	3-0	10-1
Vale	2-2	4-6
Irrigon	0-0	6-4
Riverside	0-0	2-8
Umatilla	0-0	1-6
Nyssa	0-3	3-6

PREP BOYS SOCCER

5A INTERMOUNTAIN CONFERENCE

Team	League	Overall
Hood River Valley	5-0-1	5-2-1
Ridgeview	4-1-0	6-3-0
The Dalles/Dufur	3-2-1	4-3-1
Pendleton	1-3-0	1-4-0
Crook County	0-3-0	0-6-0
Redmond	0-4-0	1-7-0

3A/2A/1A SPECIAL DISTRICT 6

Team	League	Overall
Nyssa	1-0-1	2-4-1
Riverside	0-0-0	5-2-1
Umatilla	0-0-0	3-3-0
Irrigon	0-0-0	0-7-0
Four Rivers	0-1-1	0-5-2