

NBA

Blazers open '21 season at home

The Portland Trail Blazers will open the 2021-22 regular season at home against Sacramento on Oct. 20.

That jump starts an 82-game schedule as the NBA looks to return to a normal number of games for the first time since the 2018-19 season.

The Blazers (42-30 last season) will play 16 nationally televised games, with five on TNT, four on ESPN and seven on NBATV. The Blazers' season opener will not be nationally televised and the team will not play on Christmas Day, which will feature five games.

The Blazers games will air on Root Sports.

Portland probably needs to get off to a good start because the second half of the season will include 25 road games, with a stretch in March of nine out of 10 games coming on the road over 20 days.

—The Oregonian

Giannis joins Brewers ownership

MILWAUKEE — One month after leading the Milwaukee Bucks to their first NBA title in half a century, Giannis Antetokounmpo is teaming up with the city's other major pro sports franchise by joining the Milwaukee Brewers' ownership group.

"Man, this is unbelievable," Antetokounmpo said Friday at a news conference. "This is a dream come true for a kid from Sepolia, Athens, Greece, born from immigrant parents. I could have never imagined I would be in this position."

Antetokounmpo modeled a Brewers jersey with No. 34, the same number he wears on the basketball court. Brewers principal owner Mark Attanasio joked that he wondered whether president of baseball operations David Stearns might want to try out the 6-foot-11 forward at first base.

Attanasio and Antetokounmpo said they finalized this agreement in May. Antetokounmpo said he and the team kept it quiet at the time because they didn't want to distract the Bucks' playoff run and the early part of the Brewers' season.

Attanasio said Antetokounmpo is the first new individual investor who has been added to the Brewers ownership group since Attanasio purchased controlling interest of the franchise in 2005.

Antetokounmpo said he started thinking about getting involved in ownership of a pro sports franchise last year while he was in the NBA playoff bubble at Walt Disney World. Antetokounmpo, who is from Greece, said his team first discussed the possibility of buying a European soccer club.

But the two-time NBA MVP said he wanted to team up with the Brewers to show his support to the city of Milwaukee.

"Milwaukee made me who I am today," said Antetokounmpo, who signed a supermax contract extension with the Bucks in December.

The two-time NBA MVP isn't the only notable Wisconsin athlete with an investment in another of the state's pro franchises. Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers has a minority ownership stake in the Bucks.

—Associated Press

COLLEGE SPORTS

Pac-12, Big Ten and ACC near agreement to align

BY J. BRADY MCCOLLOUGH
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — The Pac-12, Big Ten and Atlantic Coast conferences are nearing an agreement to join forces to map the future of college sports, and an announcement could come as early as next week, a source familiar with the discussions confirmed.

The impending alliance, first reported by The Athletic, comes in response to the Southeastern Conference's move to add the Big 12 Conference's two powerhouse programs, Texas and Oklahoma, which was announced earlier this summer. Fear quickly set

in that the SEC's bold strike to move to 16 teams would center too much influence in one of the "Power Five" leagues and lead to a wave of realignment similar to a decade ago.

This alliance featuring conferences that cover the entire country with behemoth brands such as Ohio State, Michigan, USC, Clemson and Notre Dame (the latter of which competes under the ACC banner in all sports but football) could theoretically squash those fears in one fell swoop.

If those conferences agreed to begin scheduling intriguing nonconference matchups exclusively with each other, there

would be little need to go pilaging one another — or adding any of the remaining Big 12 schools — for an edge in media rights negotiations.

The Big 12's omission in the alliance is significant and would place its eight schools in danger of losing their standing in a power conference. The Big 12 could elect to raid the American Athletic Conference or risk the AAC coming for some of its teams.

But this move would likely stabilize the conference makeup at the top.

While realignment has gotten the most attention since Texas' and Oklahoma's move

to the SEC, this alliance has been made with broader goals in mind.

As college sports faces large looming questions about professionalization (currently in the form of name, image and likeness), the NCAA's outdated governance structure (the association is planning a "constitutional convention" in November to assess big-picture priorities) and the proposed expansion of the College Football Playoff to 12 teams, the three aligned leagues want to make sure the SEC doesn't have an outsized role in charting the way forward.

If the 41 schools in the Pac-

12, Big Ten and ACC are as like-minded as they believe, they should be able to rein in any SEC aggression prompted by the addition of Texas and Oklahoma to move toward a dominant football "superconference" that intends to play by its own rules.

With this alliance, the Pac-12, led by new commissioner George Kliavkoff, will have gained more than any other conference during this wild summer, jumping fully ahead of the Big 12 in stature and guaranteeing its place at the big kids' table going forward despite a decade of underperforming in football and men's basketball.

Youth baseball

Reliving the dream

Bend North Little League World Series memories still fresh 5 years later

BY BRIAN RATHBONE • The Bulletin

Walking through a small shop Thursday in McCall, Idaho,

Julian Mora saw a television airing the Little League World Series and he could not help but to reminisce.

Five summers ago, Mora and his 12 Bend North Little League teammates lived the dream of young baseball players across the world by making it to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where the top 16 little league teams in the world gather each summer. This year's tournament began Thursday.

"It doesn't feel like it has been that long," said Mora, now a senior at Summit High. "It hadn't set in what we did and how cool it was."

Once the all-star season started that summer, Mora, Zack Reynolds, Sam Renner, Aaron Platner, Blaine Causey, Braeden Intlekofer, Chase Terry, Caleb Carpenter, Isaiah Jensen, Bowen Nelson, Joe Schutz, Declan Corrigan and Evan Ullman, along with coaches Steve Mora, Al Ullman and Joel Jensen formed a bond through baseball that is still felt years later.

"I don't think a lot of people will ever have that," said Renner, who no longer plays baseball but has turned into one of Oregon's top high school



Gene J. Puskar/AP file

Bend North players in a parade before the Little League World Series in Pennsylvania in 2016.

"I don't put any pressure on myself anymore. I played on ESPN, had those big moments. That transfers over today."

— Aaron Platner, member of Bend North Little League team that went to the Little League World Series five years ago

golfers for Summit. "It was closer than siblings. It was scary. We were close, close."

They might have spent more time together during the summer than most families. When they were not playing in tournaments, their days still revolved around baseball. They would practice in the morning and another later in the evening. Sandwiched between the practices were team trips to the river or all going out to share a meal.

"It was a big ask of the players and the parents," said Steve Mora, the team's manager. "Everyone was 100% in."

Two practices a day and weekend tournaments could seem like a grind

for some, but for a dozen 12-year-old boys, there was no better way to spend the summer.

"I just enjoyed hanging out with everybody," said Platner, now a star pitcher for Mountain View. "Spending time with your best friends is the best thing."

It turns out, winning baseball games was pretty fun too and Bend North did a lot of that.

The run to the Little League World Series was not a complete shock to those on the team. The summers leading up to the world series run were spent traveling across the northwest trying to get a sense of how they stacked up against the other teams in the region.

"To us it wasn't surprising," said Reynolds. "We knew we put in the work and that was the goal all along. That was the goal for the past two or three years."

But at the Northwest Regional held in San Bernardino, California, the goal nearly fell a step short. Bend North had to win three elimination games to reach the championship game and a rematch against Lynnwood Pacific — the team that had beaten them in the tournament opener. The second time around, Bend North won 5-1.

"We had to play every day to get back," said Julian Mora. "We just rallied and came back in the championship. That is the tournament that defined our team the most."

In many ways, the win in San Bernardino was the apex of the whole run. Nothing beat celebrating on the pitcher's mound, then running around the stadium flying the Bend North Little League flag.

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John Locher/AP

Manny Pacquiao, left, of the Philippines, and Yordenis Ugás, of Cuba, pose for photographers during a news conference Wednesday in Las Vegas. The two are scheduled to fight in a welterweight championship bout Saturday in Las Vegas.

BOXING

Manny Pacquiao set to take on Yordenis Ugás

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Even Manny Pacquiao is uncertain whether his 26-year professional boxing career is ending Saturday night when he faces Yordenis Ugás for the WBA welterweight title.

Pacquiao has plans and ambitions reaching far beyond the fight game at this point in his wild life, and that's why he might be saying goodbye at T-Mobile Arena. If he enters the presidential race in his native Philippines a few weeks

after this bout, as nearly everyone expects, he will be running for a job that would effectively prevent him from fighting again.

While the 42-year-old Pacquiao has said nothing official, his fans around the globe realize it's at least one of the final chapters in a boxing story with few equals.

"I never imagined what I would have accomplished in boxing from the beginning of my career leading up to now," Pacquiao said. "I went from nothing to something in order

to be an inspiration for people both inside and outside of the ring."

Pacquiao (62-7-2, 39 KOs) is returning to the ring after a two-year absence — the longest of his career — to fight for another world title in front of a big Vegas crowd and a pay-per-view audience.

In the next few weeks, almost everyone in the Philippines expects him to declare his candidacy ahead of the May 2022 presidential election.

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