

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Oregon's season opener is sold out

The Oregon Ducks' season opener will be played in front of a capacity crowd.

The Chick-fil-A Kick-off Game between the Ducks and reigning national champion Georgia is officially sold out, game officials announced Wednesday.

"This has already proven to be one of the toughest tickets we've ever seen for the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game," Peach Bowl CEO and president Gary Stokan said in a statement. "You have the defending national champions squaring off with arguably the most successful Pac-12 team in the CFP era. With two passionate fan bases and the best neutral-site matchup on opening weekend, it's no surprise we've seen such a strong demand for tickets."

It's the 14th time in 18 games the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game — scheduled for Sept. 3 (12:30 p.m., ABC) at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta — will be sold out. The marquee event began in 2008 and has featured an average attendance of 67,064.

The Ducks and Bulldogs will battle for the Old Leather Helmet Trophy, with the winners wearing the helmet on the field after the game, starting with the head coach.

It's Oregon first appearance in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game and it will be only the second meeting between Pac-12 and SEC teams, with the SEC claiming the lone victory. In 2018, Auburn beat Washington.

"This is going to be a tremendous matchup between two of college football's premiere programs," Oregon coach Dan Lanning said in a statement. "The game being sold out already speaks to the power of these two brands and the national buzz around this matchup, and we look forward to seeing Duck fans out in full force in Atlanta."

— The Oregonian

CYCLING

Vingegaard moves closer to Tour title

PEYRAGUDES, France — Tadej Pogacar claimed a third stage win as he sprinted away from Jonas Vingegaard in the punishing last climb of a grueling trek in the Pyrenees but failed to take significant time out of the Tour de France leader on Wednesday.

Pogacar, the two-time defending champion, attacked in the final kilometer up to Peyragudes to win Stage 17 stage but could not drop Vingegaard, who made another step toward a maiden Tour de France win.

Vingegaard was runner-up last year behind Pogacar. The Danish rider has been impressive since the start in Copenhagen and once again showed no sign of weakness during Wednesday's tough ride featuring four big climbs.

Vingegaard crossed the finish line just behind Pogacar, with Brandon McNulty completing the stage podium, 32 seconds behind the pair.

With the time bonus awarded to the stage winner, Pogacar moved four seconds closer to Vingegaard, who now has an overall lead of 2 minutes, 18 seconds in the general classification.

— Associated Press

TRACK AND FIELD

A golden feeling

For Ukrainian high jumper, world silver might as well be gold



Gregory Bull/AP

Yaroslava Mahuchikh, of Ukraine, competes during the women's high jump final at the World Athletics Championships in Eugene on Tuesday.

BY EDDIE PELLIS • AP National Writer

EUGENE — The second-place finish at world championships was beside the point for Ukraine's best high jumper, Yaroslava Mahuchikh.

"For me, it's gold," she said Tuesday night, as she looked down at her newly won prize, one nobody would have been right to expect four months ago after she took a three-day car trip to flee her hometown and get away from the bombing.

Mahuchikh left shortly after her country came under siege by the Russian military. The war grinds on.

Though thousands of civilians and soldiers are dying, Mahuchikh felt it was her duty to keep doing what she does best, if for no other reason than to give people back home something to be happy about. And, she said, to show Ukraine is strong.

"We will fight for our independence and for our territory," she said. "And of course, finally, we will win."

She came into the biggest high jump contest of the year as a favorite, in part because the three-time defending champion, Maria Lasitskaya, is from Russia and not allowed to compete in major events due to the war.

The Ukrainian finished behind the surprising Eleanor Patterson of Australia, who had one fewer miss than Mahuchikh at 2.02 meters (6 feet, 7½ inches), which made the difference between first and second.

Still, this was a night to celebrate for Ukraine, and for Mahuchikh, who said she felt the

warmth from the stands, where the yellow-and-blue Ukraine flags dotted a few seats and fans cheered for her before every jump.

"Now, everything is for our Ukrainian people, and everything you do, you want to show the good results," she said.

The silver medal goes alongside the gold she won at the world indoor championships in March. That came shortly after she escaped her hometown of Dnipro, which had come under attack by Russia and, she said, is under siege today.

See **Track** / A7

MLB | COMMENTARY

Mariners All-Stars Rodriguez, France enjoy American League's annual victory

BY LARRY STONE

The Seattle Times

LOS ANGELES — If you considered the All-Star Game to be the national coming-out party for Julio Rodriguez's mega-stardom, most of the heavy lifting was done Monday in the Home Run Derby.

"After that, everyone knows who Julio is," said teammate Ty France.

On Tuesday, Rodriguez was quiet, or at least as quiet as a fun-loving, effervescent 21-year-old can be in the American League's 3-2 win, going 0 for 2 yet still managing to charm the national television audience.

If you viewed the game as an opportunity to showcase the too-little-recognized skills of France, well, it didn't quite work out according to plan. The last player selected to the game and the last non-pitcher inserted into it, France struck out in his only appearance, yet still headed back to Seattle with the giddy countenance of someone who just had a lifetime dream fulfilled — in his hometown, no less.

And if you regarded the Mid-Summer Classic as an annoying interruption of the Mariners' win-a-day stampee through the American League, well, I've got good news. The game is over, a perfunctory American League victory at Dodger



Abbie Parr/AP

Seattle Mariners' Ty France (left) and Julio Rodriguez in the dugout during the MLB All-Star game Tuesday in Los Angeles.

Stadium fueled by Giancarlo Stanton's two-run home run. Because the AL always wins — nine in a row, and 21 of the last 24. How does such dominance happen?

"We're just better, I think," deadpanned White Sox reliever Liam Hendriks, who had a starring role in a little J-Rod comedy act in the eighth inning. "No, I just think in games like this, it's all a matter of kind of luck. Everyone on that field is amazing at their job. They're the best of the best, and I think the American League has managed to pull out a couple of timely swings at the right time."

And now, more to the point, on Friday the M's host

the division-leading Houston Astros, led by American League manager Dusty Baker, and find out if the All-Star break was a momentum-killer.

Oh, and Seattle is now on the clock. The next time the All-Star Game is held, it will be next July at T-Mobile Park, with the Mariners as the host team for the first time since 2001.

It seems vaguely possible that 2001 was the last time something else happened, but we won't get into that here, except to say that the Mariners' single-minded mission in the second half will be to end that storyline once and for all.

See **Mariners** / A6

PAC-12 FOOTBALL | COMMENTARY

Five reasons San Diego State is the obvious expansion option

BY JON WILNER

The (San Jose) Mercury News

The array of lifeboats available for the Pac-12 seemingly has been reduced by one.

The conference is no longer discussing a merger or alliance with the Big 12, according to an ESPN report.

In the realignment game, nothing is official until it's official — and sometimes not even then. But if we presume the leagues don't reconsider a partnership, the Pac-12 seemingly is left with three paths to survival:

- Join forces with the ACC under an ESPN media rights umbrella.
- Stick together (without the ACC) as a 10-school conference.
- Stick together (without the ACC) and expand.

If expansion is the preferred outcome, one school stands as the obvious addition: San Diego State.

The Aztecs have been preparing for this opportunity for a decade and borrowed from the expansion blueprint used by Utah, which spent years readying itself for the moment the Pac-12 called.

Here are five reasons the Aztecs make so much sense for the conference:

1. The competitive factor

Admittedly, we don't have

a good handle on San Diego State's Olympic sports, but it doesn't matter.

Realignment is about football, men's basketball, and football.

Also, football.

On the field, the Aztecs are 6-1 against the Pac-12 since 2017, with wins over Utah, ASU, UCLA, Stanford and Arizona.

They have won at least 10 games in five of the past six seasons (excluding 2020) and were ranked in the end-of-year AP poll in 2016 and 2021.

While SDSU hasn't reached the same level of success as Cincinnati — or Boise State under Chris Petersen — the program is on the next tier.

Add the resources and cache that would come with Pac-12 membership, and the Aztecs would more than hold their own on a weekly basis.

Meanwhile, the men's basketball program is plenty worthy of an invitation, having qualified for the NCAAAs in nine of the past 12 years.

(Had COVID- not intervened, the Aztecs would have been a No. 1 or 2 seed in the 2020 tournament.)

Also, have you seen the state of Pac-12 basketball lately? SDSU would enhance the overall product.

See **Pac-12** / A6