

## MLB proposes up to 16 teams will make playoffs

Teams with less than .500 record could participate in postseason

**The Associated Press**

Maybe this might get Mike Trout back into the playoffs. Major League Baseball is tossing around plenty of ideas these days to start up a shortened season delayed by the coronavirus pandemic — a DH in the National League, neutral-site games,

personal rosin bags for pitchers. Now comes a proposal that would truly upend the sport: up to 16 playoff teams. More than half the 30 clubs advance. No need to finish over .500, probably. In this skewed season, heck, perhaps 35 wins in 76 games or so could

be enough to play into October. What's next, the Winnipeg Jets in the World Series? OK, we've heard this before, that an extra wild-card team or two represents the NHL-ization of baseball. But to some, an expansion from 10 playoff clubs to 16 would mean the end of civilization as we know it. Longtime manager Jim Riggleman chuckled at that notion.

"I think that whatever they come up with this year to play, anything goes. That's fine," he said. "But moving forward into next year, I wouldn't be in favor of that many teams making the playoffs. I don't think many players would be, either." "To say that 16 of 30 teams are playoff teams," he said, "you've got to raise the bar higher than that." Other sports are accustomed to a plethora of

postseason hopefuls. The NBA has been putting 16 of 30 teams in the playoffs. The NHL welcomes 16 of 31. The NFL will bump up from 12 squads to 14 of 32 this season. For Aaron Judge, Clayton Kershaw, Juan Soto and others on elite teams, an expanded playoff field and extra games might make it tougher to bring home the trophy. In its offer to players Monday, MLB

didn't specify how a playoff format would work with as many as eight teams in each league for this year and 2021. For Josh Bell, Joey Votto, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and more whose clubs often are way behind, this could be an opportunity. Get off to a surprising 15-6 start in a dramatically shortened season, and there's a chance. No doubt, a lot of Trout

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### BRIEFS

#### Brennan shoots 85 at golf showcase

**COON RAPIDS** — Mankato East grad Aaron Brennan shot 85 and tied for 69th Tuesday at the Minnesota High School Senior Showcase, hosted by the Minnesota Golf Association at Bunker Hills Golf Course. The Minnesota Golf Association sponsored the tournament for seniors after this spring's golf season was cancelled by the pandemic. Bunker Hills hosts the Class AAA tournament each season.

Brennan shot a 2-over-par 38 on the opening nine holes but struggled on the second nine. Nicolai Amende, who just graduated from Mankato West, placed 111th after shooting 148. Other area participants were Andrew Heggen of Wells (85), Cade Horner of St. Peter (91) and Sam O'Brien of Waseca (91).

*The Free Press*

#### Djokovic thinking of skipping U.S. Open

**BELGRADE, SERBIA** — Top-ranked Novak Djokovic is thinking of skipping the U.S. Open — if it is played — and instead returning to competition on clay ahead of the rescheduled French Open. Speaking to Serbia's state broadcaster RTS on Tuesday, Djokovic said the restrictions that would be in place for the Grand Slam tournament in New York because of the coronavirus pandemic would be "extreme" and not "sustainable."

Tennis went on hiatus in March because of the COVID-19 outbreak. All sanctioned tournaments have been scrapped until at least late July. That includes the French Open, which was supposed to end last weekend but was postponed until September, and Wimbledon, which was canceled for the first time since 1945.

The U.S. Tennis Association is expected to make a decision as soon as next week about whether to hold the U.S. Open.

#### Pro Football HOF ready to reopen

**CANTON, OHIO** — The Pro Football Hall of Fame will reopen Wednesday after nearly a three-month closure caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The hall closed on March 16, but permission has been granted by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine for museums, science centers and zoos to open.

There will be several health and safety guidelines in place for visitors and workers at the shrine. All employees must wear face coverings and visitors are also encouraged to do so.

*The Associated Press*

For college athletes, unusual offseason has been

## CHALLENGING

### New training facility helps two Mavericks get ready for season

By Chad Courrier  
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This is a big offseason for Hunter Toppel. The Minnesota State line-men is entering his senior season, hoping to help the football team get back to the national championship game and catch the eye of scouts so that he can play professionally after this fall.

So he's been working out as best he can, trying to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic that made this a tricky three-month period to prepare for the upcoming season.

"I'm trying to be as positive as I can," Toppel said. "I feel like when we get to the season, there's going to be a big separation and we'll see who has been putting in the work. I want to be one of the people who shines this season."

Toppel and other college-aged athletes have been working out at small-group camps this week at ETS Performance, a new fitness facility opening in Mankato. Located on North Victory Drive, in the rear of a building also occupied by Minnesota Valley Action Council and Again thrift store, ETS specializes in sport-specific, individualized training by building strength, flexibility and quickness with a mix of weight lifting, stretching and resistance training.

ETS Performance has eight locations in Minnesota, and is co-owned by former Minnesota State football player Adam Thielen, who is now with the Minnesota Vikings. Former Mavericks and NHL hockey player Ryan Carter and former Minnesota State football player T.J. Schraufnagel are co-owners of the Mankato facility.

The facility opens to the public today, as allowed by Gov. Tim Walz's loosening of restrictions on fitness centers.

For the athletes, it's a more supervised workout, with structure and encouragement they might not get lifting weights with their buddies. From standard bench press to assisted pull-ups, the workouts are intense and fast-paced.

"It's good to have someone watching you, showing you how to do things right and correct things you're doing wrong," said Toppel, who has been focusing on conditioning during the last couple months to make sure he's in shape when more intense workouts begin.

Chance Bowen, who will be a junior defensive end this season at Minnesota State, played just a few snaps last season before injuring



Photos by Chad Courrier

Minnesota State football player Hunter Toppel goes through a workout at ETS Performance, a fitness facility in Mankato that is opening today.



Minnesota State football player Chance Bowen is working his way back from an Achilles injury that ended his season in the first game last year.

his left Achilles tendon and missing out on Minnesota State's special season. He's been working out with friends and doing physical therapy for the last few months, but he was happy to find a more structured workout.

"It's good for me because I feel like I do better in a structured workout than I do on my own," Bowen said. "This is a very important (offseason) because I want to get back where I was and show people what I can do. I can help the team a lot."

Toppel and Bowen both said they've heard that they might be able to return to the Minnesota State weight room in early July, if university restrictions are relaxed. Until then, they'll continue to

work out at ETS Performance, getting ready for a season they hope will occur in about three months.

"I think everybody that's coming back wants to get back where we were last year," Toppel said. "The whole playoff experience, the week in Texas with teammates ... it was great."

"We want it to turn out differently so we know that we need to keep training harder and harder. (This pandemic) is something everyone has had to deal with. We've made sure that we stay connected and make sure everyone is accountable because teams that have that chemistry in the summer will be more successful than the ones that don't."

Follow Chad Courrier on Twitter @ChadCourrier.

**"It's good for me because I feel like I do better in a structured workout than I do on my own. This is a very important (offseason) because I want to get back where I was and show people what I can do. I can help the team a lot."**

CHANCE BOWEN, MINNESOTA STATE DEFENSIVE END

## PGA honors Floyd

8:46 tee time will be vacant at Colonial

**The Associated Press**

**FORT WORTH, TEXAS** — The PGA Tour is leaving the 8:46 a.m. tee time vacant this week at Colonial as part of a tribute to George Floyd and to support efforts to end racial and social injustice.

In a memo to players Tuesday, Commissioner Jay Monahan said there would be a moment of silence in each of the four rounds at the Charles Schwab Challenge that will coincide with the 8:46 a.m. tee time.

The time reflects how long — 8 minutes, 46 seconds — authorities say Floyd was pinned to the ground under a white Minneapolis police officer's knee before the handcuffed black man died.

"It has quickly become a universal symbol for the racial injustice faced by the black community," the memo said.

The PGA Tour has been shut down the last three months because of the coronavirus pandemic, and it returns at Colonial with attention shared among the health and safety concerns of running a tournament and the civil unrest sparked by Floyd's death across the country.

Monahan and Harold Varner III, one of three PGA Tour members of black heritage, had a 10-minute conversation last week that the tour posted to its website to try to figure out ways golf could do its part.

"I think there will be discussion. I think some will forget about it. I think so many people will move on," Varner said Tuesday after arriving at Colonial. "But the conversation I had with Jay when we weren't being recorded, I think this week won't be the last week."

"I'm just super fortunate to be able to say something and have it matter, but also be a part of the change," Varner said. "Everyone in this society right now is going to be a part of that."

Monahan had written a memo last week to staff and players in which he said while it was difficult to figure out what role he should play, "we shouldn't be deterred."

The memo said the vacant 8:46 a.m. tee time for the 148-man field was "an effort to amplify the voices and efforts underway to end systemic issues of racial and social injustices impacting our country."

The moment of silence will start with three short blasts of the horn.



# NASCAR considers banning Confederate flag

## Bubba Wallace speaks out against racial symbol; other drivers agree

By Dan Gelston  
The Associated Press

The familiar scene of Confederate flags waved by fans at NASCAR tracks could soon be a relic of racing's good ol' boy roots.

Bubba Wallace — the lone black driver in the sport — stepped forward this week and declared it is time for the stock car series with deep ties to the South to ban the flag at its properties and formally distance itself from what for millions is a symbol of slavery and racism.

The signs are everywhere that NASCAR could do so. As the nation grapples with social unrest following the death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis, the predominantly white field of drivers united for a video promoting social change.

A black NASCAR official took a knee before Sunday's race near Atlanta in what may have been a first for the series and the governing body vowed to do a better job of addressing racial injustice.

Wallace — who wore a black T-shirt with the words "I Can't Breathe"

at Sunday's race — seized the moment and issued his most compelling comments yet on the topic of race and racing: "My next step would be to get rid of all Confederate flags."

"There should be no individual that is uncomfortable showing up to our events to have a good time with their family that feels some type of way about something they have seen, an object they have seen flying," Wallace told CNN. "No one should feel uncomfortable when they come to a NASCAR race. So it starts with Confederate flags. Get them out of here. They have no place for them."

Wallace arrived in the sport hyped as a trailblazer of sorts in a series that had long lacked diversity in the field. He finished second in the 2018 Daytona 500, but has had limited success and often needed patchwork sponsorship deals to keep racing.

His biggest reach for now is as an agent of change: The 26-year-old Alabama native has pushed the issue of race to the front burner for NASCAR.

"We want all to feel welcome at our events in the



The Associated Press

A NASCAR official kneels during the national anthem before a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Atlanta Motor Speedway on Sunday.

future," said Daryl Wolfe, NASCAR executive vice president and chief sales and operations officer.

NASCAR has been more open in recent times to the eradication of the Confederate flag. Former chairman Brian France in 2015 tried to ban the flying of Confederate flags at race tracks, a proposal too broad to enforce and one that angered NASCAR's core Southern-based fan base.

Not everyone obliged and fans staunchly defended their Confederate flags and

raised them from their RVs. "Now, it's kind of a middle finger," NASCAR historian Dan Pierce said.

But as Confederate monuments are toppled around the South and calls for social justice continue to ring out, those fans may have run out of time.

Wallace will make another statement today when NASCAR returns to Martinsville Speedway in Virginia. He is driving a #BlackLivesMatter paint scheme for the Richard Petty Motorsports' No. 43 Chevrolet.

"I think it's going to speak volumes for what I stand for," Wallace said on a Twitter video. "We knew the Martinsville race was open, we did not spell sponsorship for that, and it sparked an idea of, why not run a #blackout car?"

The message is simple for Wallace: "All lives will not matter until black lives matter."

Wallace, though, conceded he rarely gave the Confederate flag much thought.

"What I'm chasing is

checked flags, and that was kind of my narrative," Wallace told CNN.

Wallace is silent no more and has emerged as NASCAR's outspoken leader in the wake of Floyd's death. His fellow drivers have followed his lead and broken with past protocols, where any hint of ranking corporate sponsors often led to muted responses to societal issues.

"I think it's one of those things that some of us are just ignorant about and don't really think about it or worry about it," 2017 Cup champion Martin Truex Jr. said Tuesday. "And then you hear somebody like Bubba talk about it and how he feels about it and it wakes you up a bit. Yeah, I think NASCAR is going to do the right thing there."

Two-time Daytona 500 champion Denny Hamlin said he would support NASCAR taking a hard line on the Confederate flag.

"NASCAR's going to continue to make changes and I'm sure they'll look at what flags they want to fly in the infield," Hamlin said. "If you look at all the haulers each and every weekend, they've got the American flags flown all over the top of them. That's what we salute when we do the national anthem."

## SCORECARD

### TV TODAY

**AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL**  
4:30 a.m. (Thursday)  
FS1 — AFL: Richmond at Collingwood

**AUTO RACING**  
6 p.m.  
FS1 — NASCAR Cup Series: The Blue-Emu Maximum Pain Relief 500, Martinsville Speedway, Ridgeway, Va.  
NBCSN — Monster Energy Supercross: Round 14, Salt Lake City

**FISHING**  
7 a.m.  
ESPN2 — Bassmaster Elite Series: Day 1, Lake Eufaula, Ala.  
11 a.m.  
ESPN2 — Bassmaster Elite Series: Day 1, Lake Eufaula, Ala.

**KBO BASEBALL**  
4:25 a.m.  
ESPN — Doosan at NC  
4:25 a.m. (Thursday)  
ESPN — Doosan at NC

**MLB BASEBALL**  
6 p.m.  
ESPN — MLB Draft: Round 1  
MLBN — MLB Draft: Round 1

**NBA BASKETBALL**  
6 p.m.  
ESPN2 — NBA2K League  
SOCCER (MEN'S)  
1:30 p.m.  
ESPN — DFB-Pokal: Eintracht Frankfurt at Bayern Munich, Semifinal

## AP SPORTLIGHT

June 10  
1890 — The Preakness Stakes is run outside Baltimore, at Morris Park in New York. The race is then suspended for three years and resumes at the Brooklyn Jockey Club's Gravesend Course from 1894-1908.  
1932 — Gene Sarazen leads wire-to-wire to win the British Open by five strokes ahead of Macdonald Smith at Prince's Golf Club in Sandwich, England. Sarazen finishes with a tournament record of 283.  
1933 — Johnny Goodman wins the U.S. Open golf title, making him the last amateur to win this event.  
1934 — Italy beats Czechoslovakia 2-1 in extra time to win the second FIFA World Cup at the Stadio Flaminio in Rome. Italy trailing 1-0, ties the game at the 80th minute. Angelo Schiavio scores the winning goal in extra time.  
1944 — A rare triple dead heat occurs in the Carter Handicap at Aqueduct with Bossuet, Brownie and Wait a Bit crossing the finish line together.  
1950 — Sixteen months after near-fatal car accident, Ben Hogan wins the U.S. Open. Hogan beats Lloyd Mangrum and George Fazio in an 18-hole playoff at the Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa.  
1977 — Al Geiberger sets a PGA Championship 18-hole record when he shoots a 59 in the Danny Thomas Classic.  
1978 — Affirmed, ridden by Steve Cauthen, wins the Belmont Stakes to capture the Triple Crown in one of the greatest battles in racing history. Affirmed edges Alydar for the third time.  
1995 — Trainer D. Wayne Lukas wins a record five straight Triple Crown races as Thunder Gulch takes the Belmont Stakes. Lukas is the first trainer to win the Triple Crown races with two different horses. Lukas' Timber Country won the Preakness.  
1996 — Colorado's Patrick Roy makes 63 saves before Uwe Krupp scores 4:31 into the third overtime to give the Avalanche a 1-0 victory against the Florida Panthers at Miami Arena and complete a four-game sweep of the Stanley Cup Final.  
2010 — Southern California is placed on four years of probation, receives a two-year bowl ban and a sharp loss of football scholarships. The NCAA cites USC for a lack of institutional control. The NCAA found that Reggie Bush, identified as a "former football student-athlete," was ineligible beginning at least by December 2004. The NCAA also orders USC to vacate every victory in which Bush participated while ineligible. USC loses 30 scholarships over a three-year period, 10 annually from 2011-13.

## TRANSACTIONS

**BASKETBALL**  
NBA G League  
Named Brian Shaw head basketball coach of new NBA G League team.

**FOOTBALL**  
National Football League  
DETROIT LIONS — Signed DE Julian Okwara.

**HOCKEY**  
National Hockey League  
DALLAS STARS — Placed D Ondrej Vala on waivers with the intent to terminate his NHL contract.

**SOCCER**  
National Women's Soccer League  
WASHINGTON SPIRIT — Signed F Meghan McCool to a one-year contract.

**COLLEGE**  
BARTON COLLEGE — Named Derek Hamm men's and women's head and golf coach.  
BUFFALO — Named Brendan Foley men's basketball assistant coach.

# Colleges devising plans for who gets into games

## Administrators deal with limited capacity because of concerns about coronavirus

The Associated Press

Athletic administrators at schools with high ticket demand for college football are making plans to determine who gets a seat if stadium capacities are reduced because of concerns about the coronavirus.

This is a particularly painful task for athletic director Bill Moos of Nebraska, which has sold out every home football game since 1962. The Cornhuskers are a year-round passion in his state, and the season ticket renewal rate for the 2020 season is a robust 93%.

So which fans will gain entry to 85,000-seat Memorial Stadium if capacity is reduced by half or even 75%?

Moos and his staff are weighing a number of variables, including whether all or some of the seven scheduled home games are played. How much money the season-ticket holder donates annually and how long he or she has owned the season tickets are also factors to determine priority. Moos is quick to point out that doesn't mean people down the list would get shut out.

"If they haven't been with us for 40 years and given



The Associated Press

Nebraska fans fill General Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb., last season for a game against South Alabama.

us a generous amount of money, they're still fans and there should be a place for them as well," he said.

Moos said it's possible some Husker fans would be allowed to attend five games, some four, some three and others two.

The ticketing dilemma is just one wrinkle schools are working through as college football pushes toward some kind of season. The complications of bringing students back to school and ensuring they are safe vary from state to state and from campus to campus. But most schools are planning for games — and putting fans in the seats if they can.

"I've been in this industry 50 years and dealt with a lot of stuff, but nothing like this," said Fred Maglione, a Philadelphia-area consultant in the sports and live

entertainment industry. "Everybody's trying to figure this out. The real challenge is that you don't just have a Plan A and a Plan B. You're down to Plan Z. You have so many different scenarios you run through your mind every day because the playing table changes every day."

At Alabama, the ticket renewal rate was 90% for 102,000-seat Bryant-Denny Stadium. Spokeswoman Jessica Pare didn't disclose how Alabama would determine which fans can attend other than to say different models are being looked at and "our hope is not to have to use those models."

At Ohio State, where the renewal rate was 88%, athletic director Gene Smith has said he could envision games played with no more than 40,000 to 50,000 in

102,000-seat Ohio Stadium. Consideration would be given to parents and guests of players, students and faculty.

A priority points system likely would determine who else gets in. That system awards points for, among other things, amount of money donated, consecutive years as a season ticket holder, and whether the ticket holder is an alumnus or letterwinner in a varsity sport.

Clemson athletic director Dan Radakovich said there have been orders for 60,000 season tickets at 81,500-seat Memorial Stadium, and no priority system has been finalized. Arkansas has sold 31,000 season tickets and stopped single-game sales until it's known how many fans will be allowed in 76,000-seat

Razorback Stadium. Moos said he expects to know by mid-July how many Nebraska games will be played and if the season will start as scheduled. Then, once the stadium capacity is established, he'll set into motion the plan for how holders of the 70,000 season tickets will be accommodated.

Regardless of capacity, Moos sees no end to the Huskers' ongoing NCAA record sellout streak, which stands at 375 games.

"If we are told, for example, that we can have only have 30,000 in Memorial Stadium and we get 30,000 — that's a sellout," Moos said.

Maglione said ticket renewal rates might not be true indicators of demand in the coronavirus era. He said some fans who renewed after the virus emerged in March might have done so in order to hold their seats for future seasons.

Maglione said athletic departments likely will need to secure confirmations from those who plan to attend. Space will open for fans lower on the priority list if ticket holders with higher priority don't feel safe and stay away.

"You're going to have to raise your hand if you want to go, I have a hunch," Maglione said. "Athletic departments are going to have to be in communication with fans each week to say who wants to attend and then there's going to be some kind of priority system and/or lottery system."

# BASEBALL: Drastically enlarged postseason field proposed by owners

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fans wouldn't mind that. The three-time AL MVP and eight-time All-Star has never won a playoff game in his career — he made it only once, when his Angels were swept by Kansas City in the 2014 Division Series.

Would this definitely lead to subpar clubs in the playoffs?

Put it this way: If eight teams had qualified for the playoffs in each league from 1995 (when wild cards started) through 2019, a total of 46 MLB clubs at

or below .500 would have made it, the Elias Sports Bureau said. That'd average out to just under two per season.

Only once has a big-league team reached the playoffs with a losing record. George Brett, Willie Wilson and the 1981 Royals went 50-53 overall but qualified for an expanded postseason because of a 30-23 mark in the second half of a strike-split season.

Veteran skipper Bobby Valentine is OK with extra playoff teams — with a

caveat. "More the better this year," he wrote in an email to The Associated Press, "but they should have copied the Japanese league."

Valentine, who managed in Japan, pointed out the early playoff rounds there are hugely tilted. As in, those matchups automatically start at 1-0.

"The winner of the division gets a win in each round in advance. So there is real incentive to play every game hard," he said. "If it is best-of-three, winner

has to win one game. Wild card and other teams need to win two."

For much of major-league history, only the AL and NL pennant winners after the regular season got to advance — straight to the World Series. The postseason field became four in 1969 when division play began, then doubled to eight with wild cards in 1995. In 2012, extra wild cards boosted the playoff field to 10.

To Riggelman, who managed San Diego, the Cubs,

Seattle and Washington, it's already gone far enough.

"When wild cards first started, I wasn't sure that I would like it, but I did," he said. "But I didn't like having more than one wild card in each league. It was like you played all year, you won (a) wild card, and now we lose one game and we're out?"

"Beyond this season, talking about 16, I wouldn't have that many teams in the playoffs," he said. "You can water it down too much."