

Examining UMD's two newest athletics contracts

New deals include raises, but also system-wide language on termination

By Matt Wellens
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The recent contract extensions awarded to University of Minnesota Duluth athletic director Josh Berlo and Bulldogs women's hockey coach Maura Crowell include raises and other financial incentives, however, the new agreements also contain broad and extensive language that allows the university to terminate Berlo and Crowell for cause prior to the expiration of their contracts in 2026.

Berlo, who was hired by the Bulldogs in April 2013, is scheduled to make a base salary of \$181,750.82 in 2021-22 with a \$5,000 retention base salary increase scheduled for May 1, 2022. Another \$10,000 increase scheduled for May 1, 2024, would bring his salary

to \$196,750.82. On top of that, the university will now make a \$5,000 yearly payment to Berlo's university retirement plan beginning in 2022.

"Under Josh Berlo's leadership, our athletic programs continue to see sustained success on multiple levels," UMD chancellor Lendley Black said in a statement. "This contract extension exemplifies my confidence in his leadership and the direction of Bulldog athletics. Josh is a valuable part of my leadership team and has brought benefit to UMD through his sound financial management, fundraising success, enhanced community engagement, student success in the classroom, and outstanding accomplishments in competition."

Berlo last signed an extension in 2017 that gave him a base salary of \$156,829, with retention bonus salary increases of \$5,000 in 2018 and 2020.

Crowell, who was hired as the second head coach in UMD women's hockey history in 2015, also last signed an extension in 2017. After taking the Bulldogs to the NCAA Frozen Four last season, she was entering the final year of that extension with a scheduled base salary of \$190,000 in 2021-22 after making \$180,000 in 2020-21. Per her new deal, Crowell will still receive a base salary of \$190,000 in 2021-22 with a \$5,000 increase coming each season after that, culminating at \$215,000 in 2025-26.

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Don Davis / file / The Rink Live
University of Minnesota Duluth athletic director Josh Berlo (left) and men's hockey coach Scott Sandelin (third from left) meet with Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan on April 24, 2019, as they made the rounds of the Minnesota Capitol celebrating the Bulldogs' recent national championship.

PREP TRACK AND FIELD

Esko goes for a double

Eskomoms looking to make a run at both Section 7A titles

By Jon Nowacki
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Esko track and field coaches were always wondering how far it was to the baseball infield from the discus throwing circle at Cloquet High School.

Nobody ever bothered to measure it because they had never known anybody who could throw it that far.

Well, at the last-chance meet May 27, Esko senior Gage Stankiewicz found out, hitting the infield 176 feet away.

"We were joking after that, 'Well, I guess we know where the baseball infield is,'" Esko track coach Matt Peterson said. "We were all like, 'Oh, oh,' that's getting out there."

Stankiewicz won the discus and finished second to Barnum's Garrett Coughlin in the shot put last week as Esko swept both the boys and girls Section 7A South Subsection team titles. That was the first time the Esko girls won it since 2016 while the boys won it in 2019. Esko also swept the Polar League titles this season.

"We've had a good year so far," Peterson said, laughing.

Peterson coaches the girls team while Gary Beaudot coaches the boys. The Esko girls haven't won the section title since 2012.

The two programs qualified nearly 50 athletes for the section finals.

"What's crazy about it is that both teams are very young," Peterson said.

Esko will be looking to challenge the likes of Mesabi East and Rock Ridge, a co-op of Virginia and Eveleth-Gilbert, for the girls team title while the boys will look to challenge Greenway/Nashauk-Keewatin and Rock Ridge for the boys team title. It's almost the same Mesabi East girls team that won the section two years ago except one Ava Hill, but that's one big exception (Hill is now running for Minnesota).

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Jamey Malcomb / file / jmalcomb@pinejournal.com
Esko senior Gage Stankiewicz practices throwing the discus April 6. Stankiewicz qualified for the state meet in the discus as a sophomore in 2019.

SECTION 7 TRACK



Photos by Jed Carlson / jcarlson@superiorteleg.com
Cloquet's Olivia Jameson wins the 100 meter hurdles during the meet at the NBC Spartan Sports Complex in Superior on May 4.

CENTER OF ATTENTION

Cloquet the place for section meets all week

By Jon Nowacki
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If you're a fan of high school track and field, you're in for a treat this week as Cloquet High School will host both the Section 7AA and 7A meets this week.

Normally Section 7AA rotates each year between a northern location and a metro location. This year, the north is not only the host, but the meet will be held over two days instead of the traditional single day. It was originally scheduled with COVID-19 in mind.

"It was just a way to reduce the amount of people and capacity there," Lumberjacks coach Tim Prosen said. "The whole year has been planned, then changed, then re-planned. Eventually you just have to go with what you have, you know?"

The Section 7AA girls meet is at 10 a.m. Wednesday, the Section 7A boys and girls meet is at 10:30 a.m. Thursday and the Section 7AA boys meet is at 10 a.m. Saturday. That's a triple helping of track with a lot of field on the side.

"That's good though," Prosen said, laughing. Esko girls coach Matt

Peterson agreed: "It'll be crazy, but that's awesome."

Track coaches really get into it, crunching and comparing numbers like they work for NASA, but Prosen admits this year's Section 7AA meet is more of an unknown as teams kept their meet schedules closer to home due to COVID-19.

While the Section 7A meet is basically all teams from the Northland, the Section 7AA meet includes Twin Cities schools, as there just aren't that many large schools in the Northland.

"I just don't know what the north metro looks like, because we just haven't seen them," Lumberjacks coach Tim Prosen said. "It's been a very untraditional year, so I just don't have a feel for it. Typically, those big schools down there, the Forest Lakes and the Andovers, just because they're so significantly bigger than all the other schools, do quite well. And the weather down there helps, too, but we expect to hold our own with them."

Track is big in Cloquet. It's not just a novelty or to stay in shape for other sports but taken seriously.



Cloquet's Miles Fischer leads a lap on his way to a first-place finish in the 1600 meter run at the triangular at the NBC Spartan Sports Complex in Superior on May 4.

Both the Lumberjacks and girls teams have swept the Lake Superior Conference team titles every year since 2016, and they both won their respective section True Team meets this spring.

The state True Team meets were done virtually this year,

with the Lumberjacks boys finishing second to Willmar by just 3.5 points and the girls finishing seventh.

"I just don't have a feel for what's out there," Prosen said. "I didn't realize how strong we were."

TRACK: Page B3

Gophers' Joel Johnson to lead St. Thomas women's hockey

By John Shipley
St. Paul Pioneer Press

Joel Johnson, the interim Team USA women's hockey coach who helped the Gophers win four NCAA titles as associate head coach since 2010, has been hired to lead the St. Thomas women's hockey team as it transitions to Division I.

Johnson has been the associate head coach to Brad Frost at Minnesota for the past 11 years. The Tommies, which has been playing the Division III Minnesota Intercollegiate



Johnson

Athletic Conference, will play its first Division I schedule this fall. "Through our national search that spanned an impressive pool of candidates, it became clear that Joel is the right individual to lead our women's hockey program, now and into the future," St. Thomas vice president and athletics director Phil Esten said in a statement released by the

school. "He epitomizes what it means to be a Tommie as a relationship-focused servant leader that develops his student-athletes both on and off the ice."

Tom Palkowski led the Tommies program for the past 14 seasons, going 202-87-36 over the past 12 seasons and two Division III Final Four appearances in the past six.

Johnson joined the Gophers as an assistant coach in 1999, then became the Bethel men's coach from 2004-10, leading the Royals to their only NCAA

tournament appearance. He is currently the interim head coach of the USA Hockey's national women's team.

"I have been so impressed first with the overall direction of the University of St. Thomas, and specifically the bold and impressive commitments shown as the department of athletics transitions to Division I status," Johnson said in a statement. The women's hockey program has a great foundation of success, and I look forward to building upon that.

"I believe St. Thomas is uniquely positioned to attract and develop the very best student-athletes not only from the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota, but from across North America."

While at Minnesota, Johnson helped guide the Gophers to six national titles and 11 Frozen Fours. Primarily responsible for the defense, he has coached six WCHA Defensive Players of the Year.

Johnson will be formally introduced at a press conference on Thursday afternoon.

TRACK

From Page B1

Cloquet junior Olivia Jameson is one of the Northland's top athletes. She's good in the hurdles and jumps and was a state qualifier in the high jump in 2019.

Junior Bella Harriman and sophomore Seija Suominen are strong in the throwing events, Taylor Wick and Katie Turner are strong in the jumping events and Alexa Snesrud and Caley Kruse are strong in the sprinting events.

"Olivia Jameson is as good as they come," Prosen said. "She'll do some damage, but again, I just don't know what the north metro schools will have. A team might have a good athlete in one event, but Olivia could go to state in four events."

Among other athletes to watch ...

Paul Nisius has been running the Duluth Denfeld program after recently retiring as Minnesota Duluth's track and field coach. The Hunters only have two seniors, including Claire Barlass (800/400). Junior Elliana Jouppi is the only returner who scored points in the 2019 section meet as she placed in both the high jump and triple jump events.

Duluth East has been led this spring by seniors Allie Niska, a state qualifier in the 200 in 2019, distance runner Crystal Kaczmarczyk and thrower Kylene Schubitzke. They also have an up-and-coming distance runner in eighth-grader Anna-Brita Helmer and a junior sprinter and pole vaulter in Bianca Lott.

Hermantown is strong in the hurdles with the likes of senior Allison Anderson and sophomore Elise Harriman, senior Addie Peterson in the 1,600 and sophomore Liv Birkeland in the 400/800.

Hibbing has a gifted pole vaulter in junior Julia Gherardi, who has the top mark in the state at 12-foot-6 this spring, a school record. The Bluejackets also have a multi state qualifier in senior Ayva Burkes in the 400 and senior Haley Hawkinson, a basketball standout who is strong in the hurdles and jumping events. This was Hibbing's final season in the Iron Range Conference as the Bluejackets are joining the Lake Superior Conference for 2021-22.

► Look for a preview of the Section 7AA boys meet in Saturday's News Tribune.



Jed Carlson / jcarlson@superioretelegram.com

Hermantown's Liv Birkeland runs her way to a first-place finish in the 800 meter run during the triangular at the NBC Spartan Sports Complex in Superior on May 4.

ESKO

From Page B1

Esko traditionally loads up on the relays, trying to qualify as many athletes as possible for the state meet. The Eskomos only have six seniors but they've got a couple good ones: Stankiewicz in the throwing events and Dylan Edland in the hurdles.

Stankiewicz



Johnson

"It's interesting when you talk about our boys team," Peterson said. "Our boys team doesn't have a lot of heavy hitters. Gary just has a lot of good depth, picking away at it at subsections with a lot of thirds and fourths."

The Esko girls only have two seniors. Again, they got a couple good ones in Zoie Johnson (throwing events) and Allison Thornton (high jump, relays).

Stankiewicz and Johnson are something special.

"I've had the pleasure of working with them since they were eighth-graders," said Peterson, who specializes in the throwing events. "Throws are kind of my thing."

Johnson is making her mark in track even as she competes as a power-hitting first baseman in softball. She is the daughter of Minnesota Duluth Hall of Famer Kerrick Johnson, who was the first Bulldogs male athlete to ever capture an NCAA individual title in any sport, which he accomplished in the 1992 NCAA Division II indoor shot put and 1993 DII outdoor discus.

Zoie Peterson will play college volleyball at Augsburg.

"Zoie is unbelievably talented," Peterson said. "With all the attention shown toward Gage, Zoie has kind of



Photos by Jed Carlson / jcarlson@superioretelegram.com

Esko's Gwendolyn Lilly (right) clears a hurdle just ahead of Northwestern's Lily Nichols to take second place in the 100 meter hurdles at the Packy Paquette Invitational at the NBC Spartan Sports Complex in Superior on May 21.

been lost in the shuffle. Right now, she has the third-best throw in the state of Minnesota in Class A in the discus at 121-10."

Among other Esko standouts are junior Emily Rengo and eighth-grader Kaitlyn McConnell in the sprints and relays.

"We're hopeful," Peterson said. "We're hoping we can squeak out a section title for the first time in nine years. We're hoping."

Among boys, both GNK and Rock Ridge have the "big hitters" Peterson was referring to. The boys 800

and 1,600 meter races Thursday will be state-caliber, with Rock Ridge sophomore Cameron Stocke and Isaac Swanson both running sub-2 minutes at subsections. Stocke will continue his rivalry with GNK senior Geno Uhrbom in the 1,600. Uhrbom swept the Class A 1,600 and 3,200 titles as a sophomore but wasn't able to defend his titles last year due to COVID-19.

"Those are top-five matchups in the state," Peterson said. "It's going to be great — I can't wait to watch it. There'll be a lot of fun stuff to watch on

Thursday. Hopefully the weather holds out and it's not blazing hot (he laughed, knowing how that feels)."

Another one to watch will be Stankiewicz. When he throws the discus, people take notice.



Esko's Keone Anderson is the first to cross the finish line in the 4x800 relay at the Packy Paquette Invitational at the NBC Spartan Sports Complex in Superior on May 21.

Stankiewicz didn't just break Esko's school discus record this year. He shattered it.

The record was held by Bill Hudspith, a toss of 162-7 in 1975.

Stankiewicz went 169-9 April 20 at Moose Lake when it was 30 degrees and snowing. One of the people who couldn't have been more proud was Hudspith, who works with Esko's throwers.

"Gage has taken that record and is running away with it," Peterson said. "There's a great picture that Angie Hudspith, Bill's daughter, took of the two of them standing together

right afterwards. It was a good moment."

The current record is the 178-4 that Stankiewicz tossed at the Packy Paquette Invitational May 21 in Superior, giving him Minnesota Class A's best mark for a time. The Eskomos can only imagine what's next.

"That's a bomb," Peterson said. "I know as of (Monday night), he was on the phone with North Dakota State, so he's starting to get a lot of attention. I'd venture to guess that everyone in the Midwest will reach out to him now. It's just a matter of what he decides."

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Despite another early exit, this Wild team feels different

By Dane Mizutani
St. Paul Pioneer Press

In a perfect world for the Wild, they would be battling the Colorado Avalanche in the second round of the NHL playoffs right now, not talking about this season in the past tense.

After a round of exit interviews earlier this week, Wild players and coaches have gone their separate ways with their offseason in full swing much sooner than they expected.

Perhaps coach Dean Evason put it best. While the Wild should feel a lot of pride in what they accomplished this season, they should also be feeling immense disappointment that they are watching the rest of the playoffs from the discomfort of their couch.

After finishing 35-16-5 in the regular season, third in the West division, the Wild lost in seven games to Vegas in the opening round of the playoffs.

“Every season when we go in, our goal is to win the Stanley Cup, so in that sense, it was a failure,” Evason said. “But we had a good regular season and we can build on that. We are looking forward to that next season.”

If it feels different heading into this offseason from a fan’s perspective, just know the Wild are feeling that, too. There’s an overarching sense of optimism surrounding this core and its potential to become a legitimate Stanley



Brad Rempel / USA TODAY Sports

Minnesota Wild forward Nick Bjugstad (27) celebrates his goal with forward Nico Sturm (7) and forward Nick Bonino (13) against Vegas Golden Knights in the third period in Game 6 of the first round of the 2021 Stanley Cup Playoffs on May 26 at Xcel Energy Center.

Cup contender in the future.

With star rookie Kirill Kaprizov leading the way, and other highly skilled players taking the next step, the Wild established themselves among the most exciting teams in the league this season. Let’s just say the high-octane offense is nothing like the Jacques Lemaire-coached teams of the past that used to win by lulling opponents to sleep.

“It’s felt different,” defenseman Matt Dumba said. “This isn’t your old Minnesota Wild team.”

That has to be music to the ears of general manager Bill Guerin. He has been trying to change the culture of

the franchise ever since he took over 22 months ago, and he finally started to see the fruits of his labor this season.

Just look at the way the Wild battled tooth and nail with the Golden Knights in the playoffs. After falling behind 3-1 in the series, the Wild battled back to tie the series with back-to-back victories before ultimately running out of gas in Game 7.

“If we’re going to go out, that’s the way to go out,” Guerin said. “I’m proud of our players and I’m proud of our coaching staff. I feel like there’s a lot of buzz in the market for our team, and for good reason.”

Though the Wild would

have loved to make a deeper run at the Stanley Cup this season, that seemed like a long shot. This was always going to be a transitional year for the Wild, and they exceeded expectations every step of the way.

Whether it was Kaprizov taking the league by storm, dynamic winger Kevin Fiala continuing his ascension, two-way center Joel Eriksson Ek taking a gigantic leap, or various other players stepping up, the Wild have a lot to feel good about moving forward.

“I think the steps that our players took as individuals and the steps that we took as a team were big,” Guerin said. “The process that we’re going through to try to build a championship team is good. I really do feel that we took steps in the regular season. And in the playoffs. It was disappointing to go out in the first round, but the signs I see in my seat as a general manager were positive.”

Maybe the biggest step forward for the Wild came off the ice. There was a close-knit vibe in the locker room this season with captain Jared Spurgeon in charge. While playing in the middle of a pandemic could have pulled the team apart, Spurgeon made sure it brought the team together.

“Just being happy for each other and supporting each other is a big thing,” Spurgeon said. “Everyone was

happy for each other, whether they were scoring goals, making plays or getting that recognition. I think that’s huge.”

Added Fiala: “I feel that our team is like a family. There’s something special in this team. Everybody wants to win and wants to do everything for each other. We had some up and downs all season, but we always stuck together. That’s why I love this team.”

What’s the next step for the Wild?

“We just need to continue to grow,” Evason said. “We’ve seen the individual growth in so many players. That just has to continue to get better and better. The way we played as a group and as a team on a nightly basis, with a team-first mentality, was very exciting to us as a coaching staff and as a franchise. We just want to continue to build on that.”

As for Guerin, while he admitted the Wild are maybe a little further along than he expected at this point, he isn’t satisfied with where they are.

“It’s going in the right direction,” Guerin said. “Can I say we’re ahead of schedule? Not really, because we got knocked out in the first round, and that’s not good enough. There are some signs from this team that I’m extremely happy with. We made some really good steps this year.”

UMD

From Page B1

Per their contracts, both Berlo’s and Crowell’s salaries are subject to furloughs, pay freezes, salary reductions and other adjustments that may be required of other UMD employees, the university or athletic department, as was the case during the last two seasons because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both were part of the University of Minnesota’s system-wide pay cuts for employees who made \$60,000 or more.

Berlo’s new contract — which was signed on May 24, 2021 — is still subject to approval by the University of Minnesota Board of Regents at their meeting this week.

Crowell’s contract, which was signed back on May 6, 2021, is not subject to board of regents approval.

It pays to win

Berlo’s new deal also includes new competition related incentives related to the men’s and women’s hockey programs that are retroactive to the 2020-21 season. Berlo will receive \$1,000 if the men’s hockey team reaches the NCAA tournament and \$1,000 if the women do as well. Both teams made the NCAA tournament in 2020-21. It was the sixth-consecutive NCAA tournament berth for the men.

Berlo currently sits on the NCAA’s National Collegiate Women’s Ice Hockey Committee, which is in charge of overseeing the selection and seeding of the NCAA tournament. In 2020-21 because of the pandemic, it was the committee members who selected the eight-team field, but in 2021-22, the Pairwise rankings are expected to once again dictate who is in and out of the tournament.

“I value and appreciate the commitment and compensation the university provides myself and all of our athletic department staff and coaches,” Berlo said. “My motivation and purpose have always come from the opportunity to support and lead our programs



Clint Austin / File / caustin@duluthnews.com

Minnesota Duluth head coach Maura Crowell talks to her players during a timeout at the NCAA Women’s National Collegiate Ice Hockey Championship quarterfinal game on March 15 at Erie Insurance Arena in Erie, Pennsylvania.

and student-athletes to reaching their greatest potential.”

While new to Berlo’s contract, men’s hockey coach Scott Sandelin, football coach Curt Wiese and Crowell all have competition bonuses written into their contract for themselves and their assistant coaches.

In her new deal, Crowell saw her bonus for reaching the NCAA tournament doubled to \$5,000. A new \$2,500 bonus for reaching the NCAA championship game is also available while the \$5,000 bonus for reaching the Frozen Four and \$10,000 for winning the national championship remain the same.

The bonus pool for Crowell’s two assistant coaches also increased, most notably when it comes to NCAA tournament success. The NCAA tournament participating bonus pool

doubled to \$5,000, a \$2,500 NCAA title game bonus was added — the \$2,500 Frozen Four bonus remains the same — and there is now \$7,500 available to split among the two assistants for winning a national championship, compared to just \$4,000.

Crowell’s director of operations is now also eligible for WCHA and NCAA bonuses, with that person receiving \$250 when UMD hosts a first-round WCHA playoff series or finishes in the top four of the league, \$500 for winning a WCHA regular or postseason title, \$500 for reaching NCAA tournament, \$750 if the team reaches the Frozen Four and \$1,000 for winning an NCAA title.

“It’s always been important for me to take care of the people that take care of me and our players,” Crowell said. “I’m very appreciative

of the support of both Josh and the chancellor, and the university, really, to make that happen. (My staff) is a big part of the operation.”

Sandelin also added bonuses for his director of operations in his most recent extension in 2019.

And like Sandelin in 2019, Crowell is also now eligible to receive up to eight tickets for all conference and NCAA tournament games for personal use. The university will also pay for Crowell’s spouse and

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Under Josh Berlo’s leadership, our athletic programs continue to see sustained success on multiple levels.

LENDLEY BLACK, UMD chancellor

children to accompany her to any NCAA tournament games UMD is playing in, subject to a maximum of \$750 per person for tickets, travel and two additional rooms for lodging.

‘Terminate for cause’

In addition to the added financial perks, Crowell and Berlo’s new agreements include extensive new language on how to terminate them for cause. It’s a trend sweeping across the University of Minnesota system as much of the same language can also be found in the 2020 contract extension of Gophers athletic director Mark Coyle.

Section 3.1 of both contracts, “The University’s Right to Terminate for Cause” includes specific language that covers NCAA violations, fraud and dishonesty, gambling, outside activities and income, honoring the decisions of the sports medicine staff, and the use of drugs, alcohol and other controlled substances,

like steroids.

Section 3.1 also includes broad language that allows the university to fire Berlo and Crowell for “participation in any act, situation, or occurrence, which, in the University’s judgement, brings Athletic Director or the University into public disrepute, embarrassment, contempt, scandal or ridicule.”

“All of the language around that is typical for university contracts like this,” said Lynne Williams, UMD’s director of marketing and public relations.

The university has the right to terminate both Berlo and Crowell without just cause, however, it could be costly.

If UMD fires Berlo without cause, the university must pay Berlo his base salary for the remainder of the contract. Crowell’s termination fee when without cause is one half of the remaining base salary that would otherwise be payable for the remainder of the agreement.

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“I remember just like it was yesterday, the feeling that I had being confused when our Japanese players were congratulating each other at the end of the 12th inning and we tied and I asked my pitching coach, ‘What are they doing?’ He said, ‘A tie’s better than a loss.’”

— TREY HILLMAN, Miami Marlins third base coach

MLB extra-inning rule a hit with some, whiff with others

By Jorge Castillo
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — May 1 was the 101st anniversary of a remarkable if obscure baseball game rediscovered every year. On that date in 1920, Leon Cadore, a right-hander for the Brooklyn Robins, and Joe Oeschger of the Boston Braves tossed 26-inning complete games opposite each other. Cadore is estimated to have thrown 338 pitches. Oeschger tossed 316. The game ended in a 1-1 tie because of darkness after 3 hours and 50 minutes.

The Dodgers — the Robins’ descendants — were in Milwaukee for the anniversary this year. Cadore’s name accordingly resurfaced during the television broadcast while the Dodgers and Brewers played a game that would’ve been unrecognizable to him.

The Brewers beat the Dodgers that day, 6-5, in 11 innings at American Family Field. Starter Dustin May blew out his elbow in the second inning and the Dodgers used 10 pitchers. The Brewers countered with six. The Dodgers, left without a bench, used Clayton Kershaw as a pinch-hitter with the bases loaded in the 10th inning for the second time in a week. The game still lasted 4:48.

It probably would’ve gone longer if a runner wasn’t placed at second base to start each extra inning. It’s a rule Major League Baseball — an institution slow to enforce change in recent decades — initially implemented in 2020 to expedite results during the pandemic-shortened 60-game regular season after trials in the minors. It was kept for the 2021 regular season — not the postseason — after widespread approval outweighed initial aversion. The rationale: The league wants to avoid marathon games for both baseball and entertainment purposes.

On the baseball front, shorter games help reduce injuries when pitchers are throwing harder than ever while limiting the need for teams to hastily overhaul bullpens for fresh arms. As for entertainment, MLB has been spurred by the reality that most fans aren’t sticking around to watch regular-season games go 15 innings at the pace games are played today.

“The current regular-season extra-innings rule has been enormously popular with our fans and with our Clubs, and has significantly reduced the length of extra-inning games,” Morgan Sword, MLB’s executive vice president of baseball operations, said in a statement.

The rule isn’t a permanent solution — at least not yet. The league and players’ union are expected to discuss permanently adopting it when the current collective bargaining agreement expires Dec. 1.

The league considered several ideas before choosing “the minor league rule,” including ending games in a push



Mitch Stringer / USA TODAY Sports

Minnesota Twins outfielder Rob Refsnyder (38) scores in the 10th inning on a wild pitch by Baltimore Orioles pitcher Adam Plutko (35) at Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore on May 31, 2021.

to make the next day’s game worth two wins, having a statistic serve as the tiebreaker after the ninth inning (most hits or fewest strikeouts are examples), taking one fielder off the field each inning, a home run derby, and sudden death to end the game after an extra half inning.

In the sudden-death scenario, a situation would be created in which the team on offense has a roughly 50% chance of scoring (a runner at first with nobody out or runners at first and second with one out are possible examples). If the team on offense scores, it wins. If not, the team on defense wins.

The league also contemplated enforcing the answer adopted by sports leagues around the world: the tie. Though an odd concept — even sacrilegious to some — for Major League Baseball, Japan’s Nippon Professional Baseball league and Korea’s KBO League, the highest level of baseball in those countries, have ties after 12 innings.

Miami Marlins third base coach Trey Hillman spent five seasons as a manager in Japan and two in Korea. Hillman said he’s against the countries’ iteration because ties aren’t included in the standings. Theoretically, Hillman said, a team can win the first game, tie for the rest of the season and finish in first place with a 1.000 winning percentage. He said MLB would have to adopt a points system to give wins more value.

“I remember just like it was yesterday, the feeling that I had being confused when our Japanese players were congratulating each other at the end of the 12th inning and we tied and I asked my pitching coach,” Hillman said. “I said, ‘What are they doing?’ He said, ‘A tie’s better than a loss.’”

Players, executives and scouts offered opinions on the tie split along three groups: indifferent, pro, and against.

“Just tradition,” one executive said. “That’s pretty much the only argument against it.”

“I actually like the

runner on second,” one scout said. “I would vote for that over ties. I think the runner on second adds some excitement. Much more exciting than just starting an inning clean.”

“I’ve always said ties should be a thing,” Toronto Blue Jays and former Dodgers pitcher Ross Stripling said in a text. “Maybe play a normal 10th inning and then it’s a tie. There are 162 games. [I] find it hard to think it’d really affect standings that much.”

In late April, the Pioneer League went another route, announcing it would settle ties this year not with extra innings, but with a home run derby. Each team designates a hitter to see five pitches. The game’s winner is determined by who hits more home runs. The teams pick another hitter to see five pitches if the round ends in a draw.

In its announcement, the league explained the reason for the change is “to avoid excessive strain on our pitching staffs.”

The home run derby isn’t unprecedented. The Futures Collegiate Baseball League, an eight-team New England summer league, introduced a variation of the home run derby to break ties in 2016. In the FCBL, up to three batters on each team are given three minutes and two timeouts to hit as many home runs as possible. Any member of the team, player or coach, can throw the pitches.

The difference is that the Pioneer League is the

first professional league and the first league with a direct relationship with MLB to venture into this territory. The league’s eight teams began their 92-game seasons May 22. Through Wednesday, one game had been decided by the home run derby.

“I’m not a fan of it,” Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. “I get the fan interest to finish a game with a derby. It is what it is if that’s the rule. But I kind of like baseball determining the outcome of a game.”

Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner tweeted his approval of the Pioneer League’s decision within hours

of the announcement. It wasn’t the first time he lobbied to use a home run derby as a tiebreaker. Last April, during the league’s shutdown, Turner pushed for MLB to implement the home run derby after the 10th inning as the league contemplated ways to curtail the toll on players in anticipation of a truncated schedule.

MLB instead chose to start extra innings with a runner on second base. The change was initially met with resistance, as with most changes in baseball, but it grew on people within the sport, leading to its adoption in 2021.

PREP SUMMARIES

GOLF

Saturday’s Results
Section 7AAA
At Grand National Golf Club, Hinkley
Par 72
BOYS
Team
1. Duluth East 308-309—617; 2. Princeton 314-311—625; 3. Andover 310-322—632; 4. Elk River 316-316—632; 5. Forest Lake 313-320—633; 6. Anoka 312-326—638; 7. St. Michael-Albertville 318-323—641.
Individual
1. Bradu Holland, ER, 72-72—144; 2. Ben Mertz, DE, 75-72—147; 3. Jack Reinardy, And, 76-73—149; 3. Kaden Nelson, DE, 73-76—149; 5. Lucas Ostlund, P, 77-73—150; 5. Alex Wold, DE, 75-75—150.

SOFTBALL

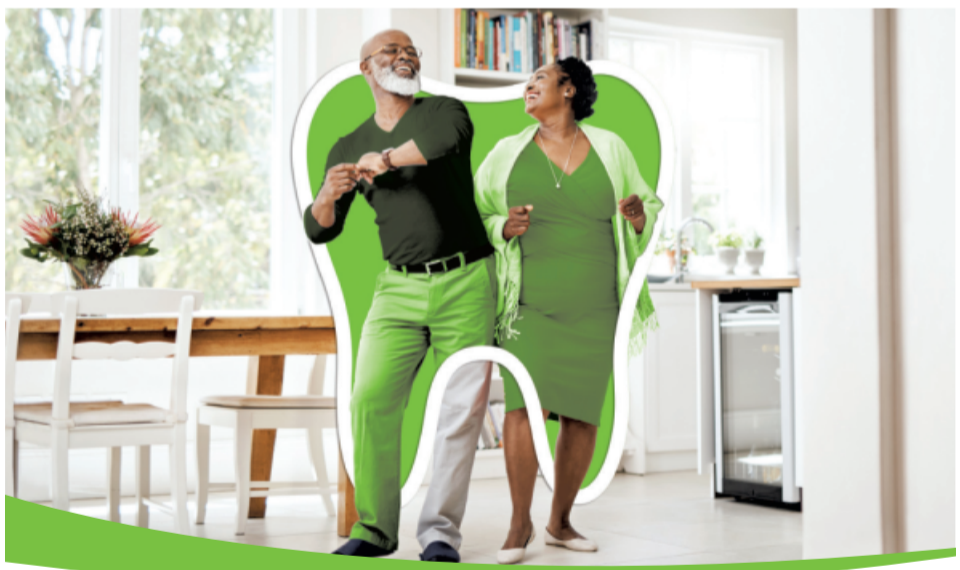
Saturday’s Results
7AAA
Coon Rapids 5, Duluth East 1
WP: Abby Ness 6IP, 1R, 8H, 0BB, 2K. LP: Cassie Bergman 6IP, 2R, 9H, 3BB, 2K. DE: Sydney Zwak 1-3, R. CR: Leah Nummela 2x2, 2R, 2SB.

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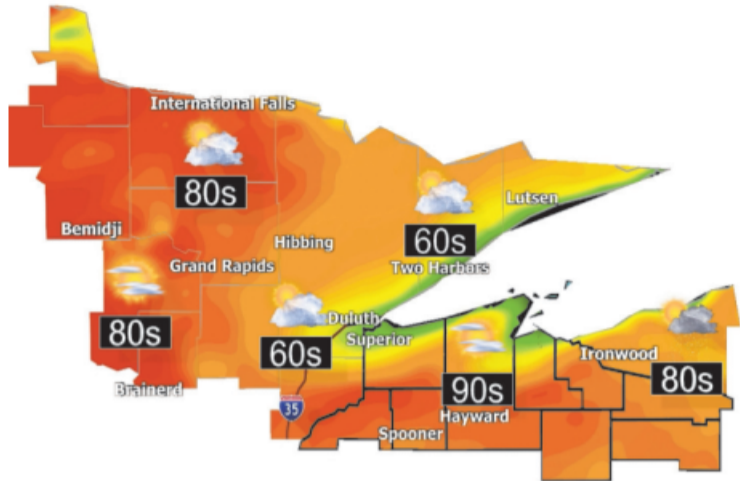
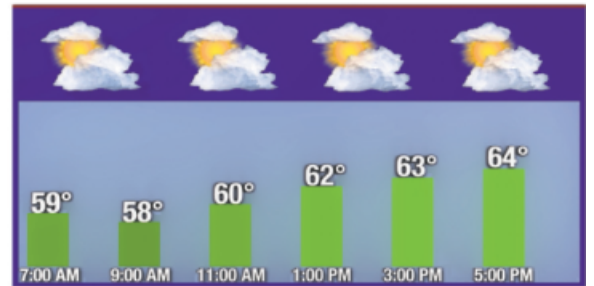
Jared Piepenburg, Jesse Ritka, Chief Meteorologist John Wheeler, Lydia Blume, Andrew Whitmyer

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
65/58 Partly Cloudy	78/52 Partly Cloudy	56/52 Scattered Thunderstorms	77/56 Mostly Sunny	78/60 Mostly Sunny	78/57 Partly Cloudy	80/58 Mostly Sunny
Wind: E 12 mph	Wind: SE 10 mph	Wind: E 16 mph	Wind: NW 10 mph	Wind: W 10 mph	Wind: N 8 mph	Wind: E 7 mph

*Average wind speed for each day



Regional Weather	Today		Tomorrow		Regional Weather	Today		Tomorrow	
	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo		Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo
Ashland, WI	68	55	80	50	Hayward, WI	90	66	89	63
Bemidji, MN	92	65	89	63	Hibbing, MN	87	62	89	56
Brainerd, MN	93	70	96	68	Minneapolis, MN	95	76	96	75
Ely, MN	86	64	87	57	Silver Bay, MN	66	54	70	48
Grand Marais, MN	62	53	62	50	Spooner, WI	90	67	90	66
International Falls, MN	89	64	85	59	Superior, WI	64	52	74	47

US Cities	Today		Tomorrow		World Cities	Today		Tomorrow	
	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo		Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo
Atlanta	86	69	88	71	Amsterdam	76	53	77	56
Boston	86	65	74	56	Bangkok	86	79	89	79
Chicago	77	64	76	64	Beijing	85	64	95	65
Dallas	93	75	93	75	New Delhi	107	88	104	85
Denver	92	64	95	56	Jakarta	90	77	89	77
Houston	91	77	91	76	Moscow	66	58	66	57
Kansas City	90	72	92	75	Oslo	76	53	78	57
Las Vegas	96	69	91	67	Paris	82	60	82	60
Los Angeles	73	53	79	56	Rio de Janeiro	76	67	78	67
Memphis	83	72	81	73	Seoul	87	67	73	66
Miami	87	78	86	78					
New York	88	72	81	61					
Orlando	92	73	95	75					

StormTRACKER forecast

Today will be cooler than recent days with highs in the upper 60s. Clouds will gradually clear throughout the day. A slight chance of thunderstorms is possible tonight and tomorrow. Temperatures will be in the low 80s Thursday then cooling off to the mid 60s Friday with rain showers. The weekend will look to rebound with nicer weather in the upper 70s for the high and sunny on Saturday.

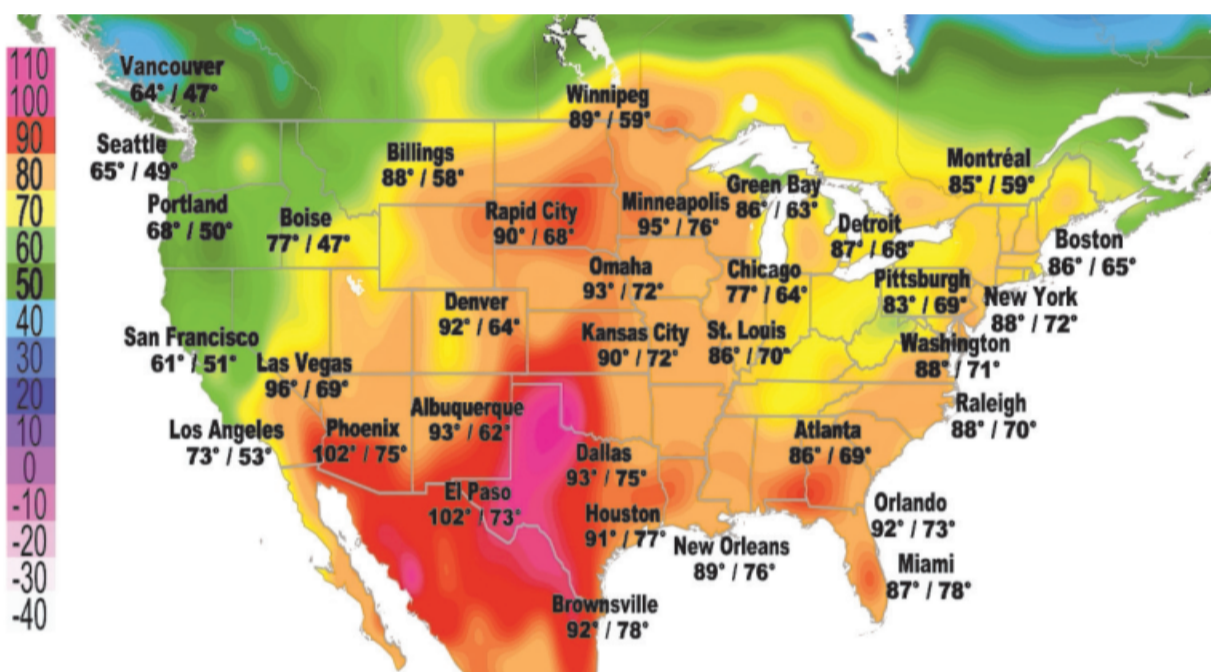


Almanac Through 6 pm Monday

Temperature	High	Low
Monday	86°	67°
Normal	70°	48°
Record	88° in 1894	34° in 1934

Precipitation	In Inches
Monday	0
Month To Date	.06"
Departure From Avg Month To Date	-0.81"
Year To Date	8.63"
Departure From Avg Year To Date	-1.56"

Sunrise: 5:14 a.m. Sunset: 9:01 p.m.
Moonrise: 4:41 a.m. Moonset: 8:36 p.m.



NFL must make amends for 'race-norming' fiasco

Black players were eligible for smaller concussion settlements due to race-based mental baseline

By Sam Farmer
Los Angeles Times

The NFL has promised to put an end to the controversial practice of "race-norming," which assumed Black players started out with a lower level of cognitive function and thereby makes it harder for those retirees to prove they qualify for payouts in the administration of the 2017 \$1 billion-plus concussion settlement.

"We are committed to eliminating race-based norms in the program and more broadly in the neuropsychological community," the NFL said in a statement, while maintaining that no such discrimination took place in the administration of the settlement.

The revelation came to light last year when former players Najeh Davenport and Kevin Henry sued the league, alleging that race-norming led to them being denied a portion of the settlement. A judge dismissed the case earlier this year, and the NFL and Christopher Seeger, the lead attorney for the players in the concussion settlement, said the use of race-norms was not mandatory and up to the individual doctors to use or ignore while performing the evaluations.

Harry Edwards, a sociologist and longtime staff consultant for the San Francisco 49ers, has spent a half-century studying the intersection of sports and society. He spoke Sunday to the Los Angeles Times about race-



John Sleezer / The Kansas City Star / TNS
Pittsburgh Steelers running back Najeh Davenport (44) steps over Kansas City Chiefs' Patrick Surtain on a 48-yard run in the second quarter, at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh on Oct. 15, 2006.

norming, what it suggests and what the NFL should do to repair the damage it has caused.

When did you first become aware of race-norming as it relates to the NFL concussion settlement?

Edwards: I've known about this since last August. When it first became an issue, I was contacted by some people who have been looking at this thing as a eugenics issue for quite some time. But the details of it didn't start coming out until the NFL faced that lawsuit. Then as we got more and more into it, it became clear that this was simply unacceptable.

It's morally unconscionable, most certainly politically unsustainable and legally indefensible. You can't have 74% of the players in

the league Black but when it comes to actually being able to claim access to funds resulting from brain damage, dementia, CTE, other kind of cognitive-deficit-inducing conditions that are directly related to football, all of a sudden there's a different standard for them. There's a presumption that they come in at a cognitively lower ranking. A lower baseline.

What was your initial reaction to the notion of race-norming?

Edwards: It's ridiculous, it's asinine, it's almost comedic that it would get this far. And not only that but that the NFL would be fighting a lawsuit by two Black players who say, "Hey, this isn't fair." And the response was to fight the lawsuit. So at the end of the day we've got

“*This was a matter of policy, and that's what makes it different than segregation. That's what makes it different than the lack of Black head coaches, the dearth of Black GMs and front-office personnel. This was policy, which made it not just different but dumb.*

HARRY EDWARDS, sociologist and longtime staff consultant for the San Francisco 49ers

some work to do.

Some players say their requests to be included in the settlement were rejected with insufficient explanation. From your perspective, is that common among players?

Edwards: Of course. You just get a no. But when you go back to it and start digging into it, you find out that the whole situation is race-normed, where you have to show greater decline to get the same benefits that a white player does. Because the presumption is that as a Black player, you start with lower cognitive capability to begin with. The Black dumb jock.

Most of the time this stuff takes place within the context of gentlemen's agreements. That was the case with the Black quarterback, Blacks being blocked from the league up until 1946, but those were based on gentlemen's agreements.

This was a matter of policy, and that's what makes it different than segregation. That's what makes it different than the lack of Black head coaches, the dearth of Black GMs and front-office personnel. This was policy, which made it not just different but dumb.

What would you advise the NFL to do?

Edwards: Complete transparency. "We're going to rectify this. We're going to go back and review every case that was turned down, Black and white. And where necessary, we're not just going to grant access but do what we

can in terms of reparations for the damage that has been done in the meanwhile."

Do you have reason to be optimistic that will happen?

Edwards: One of the things I'm optimistic about is that there are some good people at the NFL, at the top, in the middle, and people who just came in. Coaches, administrators, front-office folks who want to get this right. Hopefully with the additional pressure of sunlight, they will have a greater chance of prevailing in terms of transparency, rectification, reparations when necessary, and turn the corner on this.

I put [NFL Commissioner] Roger Goodell in that category. I know him off-site, off-script and out of the spotlight. He's the commissioner when he sits up in that office on Park Avenue, but as a human being and a man he's an eminently decent guy. If I didn't think that was the case, I wouldn't bother bringing this kind of stuff up to him.

It's a tough situation because, hey, that's his job. He answers to 32 franchise owners. He can't just fly off and say, "We're going to do it this way," if the medical committee or whoever says, "We're going to do it that way."

But this is one the whole league should get behind and say, "This is not us. This is not who we are."