

MLB Commish: Pace Of Game Rules Crucial To Luring Young Fans

BY BOB BAUM
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PHOENIX (AP) — Commissioner Rob Manfred says new rules intended to speed up the pace of games are aimed at luring younger fans to baseball.

Manfred, speaking publicly on the changes for the first time since they were announced last Friday, said the rules are a "measured" approach worked out with the players' association.

This season, batters will be required to have one foot in the batter's box and pitchers and batters will be required to be ready to go at the conclusion of television commercials.

"The issue of attracting a younger audience and a pace of game is related," he said.

Manfred said he has four children in their 20s.

"I have a passing familiarity with that generation," he said, "and one thing I can say for sure is their attention span seems to be shorter than

the rest of ours."

Last season, the average length of a major league game was a record 3 hours, 2 minutes.

"I certainly want to reverse the trend of increasing the length of the game," Manfred said, "and I'm really intent on the idea that we're going to have an average game time that's going to start with a 'two' next year as opposed to a 'three.'"

The commissioner spoke at a news conference on spring training media day, an event that draws the managers and general managers from the 15 clubs that train in Arizona.

Any rules changes have to be done with the cooperation of the players' association, Manfred said.

"I talked with (players union executive director) Tony Clark on Thursday, the night before the changes were announced," Manfred said. "I had a very positive conversation with Tony. We began these discussions with a conceptual understanding between Tony and me that we were going to proceed with caution on

pace of the game."

He said they wanted to make sure nothing was done to "change the way the game is played."

Manfred declined to speculate on what might be done if the rule changes don't have the desired result.

"I have said repeatedly that I think pace of play is going to be an ongoing, multi-year evolution," Manfred said, "a series of changes over a period of time. We were pleased with the experiment with a pitch clock in the Arizona Fall League. We were pleased enough with the experiment that it was expanded to Double-A and Triple-A."

"I have no set position with respect to whether we're going to go beyond that at this point," he said.

He said, "The reason we're doing experimentation is to make sure we understand it really well before we make a decision on what we're going to do at the big league level. And obviously that's a (collective) bargaining topic as well."

A sampling of managers showed

they are in favor of the new rules.

"I don't think it's going to be a major adjustment," Kansas City manager Ned Yost said. "Except for a few guys."

"There's guys you sit there in the dugout and then they take 45 seconds in between pitchers," he said. "I'm like, 'Get your tail in there and let's go.' That (the rules) hopefully will eliminate that."

With stricter rules in the minors, the next generation will be accustomed to a faster pace, Arizona manager Chip Hale said.

"It's going to take some time," he said. "Once you get this generation of minor league kids that are even under harder rules to the big leagues, you'll see them play the game quicker. And you might not even have to have rules."

Players are subject to a possible \$500 fine for violating the batter's box rule, Manfred said the names of those fined will not be made public.

As for the drop in offense in the majors, Manfred said he's waiting to

see if it really is a problem before considering any changes to help.

He was asked about the possibility of eliminating the call of low strikes.

"If and when we reach the conclusion that we have a lack of offense problem that's persistent and needs to be addressed," he said, "there's a list of topics that we've thought about and that is one on the list."

Manfred said it was just speculation of possible action when he earlier spoke of eliminating defensive shifts.

On another matter, Manfred said whether he would do anything about Pete Rose's ban from baseball "will depend on whether or when I receive a request from Mr. Rose."

"I'm not going to comment on the substance of Mr. Rose's situation since ultimately I have to make that decision," Manfred said. "But the process will be set as a result of private communications between Mr. Rose and my office."

Menno, Parker Win 9B Openers



LEFT: Menno's Tara Spencer, left, puts up a shot over Marion's Sarah Ptak during their District 9B game Monday night in Menno.



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

RIGHT: Parker's Rylie Christensen, left, drives around Freeman Academy defender Clara Koerner during their District 9B game Monday night in Menno.

MENNO — Kaylee Kessler scored 16 points and the Menno Wolves beat Marion 50-34 in the first round Monday night of the District 9B Girls' Basketball Tournament in Menno.

Tara Spencer recorded 12 points and seven rebounds for Menno (9-12), which will host top-seeded Freeman tonight (Tuesday) at 6:30 p.m.

Abby Herrboldt chipped in with 10 points and five assists for Menno, while Lindzie Vaith grabbed seven rebounds.

In the season-ending loss for Marion (3-16), Devin Nelson had 12 points and nine rebounds, and Renae Kayser scored 11 points. Kaitlyn Engbrecht posted nine rebounds, five assists and seven steals.

MARION (3-16)	7	16	23	34
MENNO (9-12)	8	24	42	50

Parker 51, Freeman Academy 37

MENNO — In the first round of the District 9B Tournament, Parker trounced Freeman Academy 51-37 in Menno on Monday.

Rylie Christensen totaled 20 points and 10 rebounds for Parker, and Lauren Hunstad added 17 points to the win.

Parker, now 8-13, will face second-seeded Scotland tonight (Tuesday) at 8 p.m. in Menno.

For Freeman Academy, which ends its season 8-13, Hannah Yoder tallied 14 points and had six steals.

FREEMAN ACADEMY (6-15)	13	23	28	37
PARKER (8-13)	16	27	33	51

District 10B

Centerville 54, Alcester-Hudson 37

ALCESTER — Centerville defeated Alcester-Hudson 54-37 in the first round of the District 10B girls' basketball tournament on Monday night.

Rebecca Hybertson recorded 24 points and seven steals for Centerville (15-6). Val Sunderland added 14 points and 11 rebounds.

Alcester-Hudson (3-18) was led by Cassidy Walth who recorded 15 points and seven rebounds. Julie Dickau added seven points and eight rebounds.

Centerville advances to play top-seeded Gayville-Volin tonight (Tuesday) in Alcester.

CENTERVILLE (15-6)	13	26	42	54
ALCESTER-HUDSON (3-18)	15	20	32	37

District 12B

Marty Indian 60, Andes Central 48

LAKE ANDES — In the first round of the District 12 B Tournament, Marty Indian took out Andes Central 60-48 in Lake Andes.

Apollonia Zepher netted 18 points, grabbed six rebounds, and had 15 steals for Marty Indian. Lainey Honomichl added 14 points to the win.

For Andes Central, Bevia Black Cloud totaled 17 points. Tearanie Stotz grabbed nine rebounds, and Annie Houseman had seven rebounds.

Marty Indian will advance in the tournament and will play Burke-South Central Tuesday. Andes Central ended its season with a 2-19 record.

ANDES CENTRAL (2-19)	10	17	32	48
MARTY INDIAN (12-9)	15	34	54	60

Gregory 52, Colome 37

COLOME — Gregory outscored Colome 52-37 in the first round of District 12B girls' basketball tournament on Monday night.

Megan Preslicka led Gregory with 18 points and 10 rebounds. Briana Leber added 15 points and six rebounds.

Taylor Hranbanek recorded 12 points and Mariah Kinzar added 11 for Colome.

Gregory will travel to Avon on Tuesday night for round two of the 12B tournament.

Crofton, Wausa Advance In Boys' Sub-District Play

RANDOLPH, Neb. — Crofton came out on top 59-53 over Ponca in the first round of Nebraska boys' basketball Sub-District C2-7 tournament on Monday night.

Tyler Koch put 19 points for Crofton and Brock Mueller followed up with 18 points. Koch also recorded eight rebounds, while Mueller added six.

Ponca's offense was led by Logan Kingsbury's 21 points. Connor Day added 13 points.

Crofton will play Hartington-Cedar Catholic in game two of C2-7 sub-districts on Tuesday night.

PONCA (8-14)	11	20	34	53
CROFTON (4-17)	16	28	28	59

Sub-District D2-3

Wausa 52, Winside 41

PONCA, Neb. — In the

Sub-District D2-3 opener, Wausa sent Winside home 52-41 Monday night in Ponca.

Jordan Burns totaled 24 points for Wausa, and Kyle Kleinschmit added 13 to the win.

For Winside JaShaun Vyborny scored 15 points.

Wausa will play Bancroft-Rosalie on Tuesday, and Winside ended its season with a 0-20 record.

WINSIDE (0-20)	5	12	27	41
WAUSA (8-15)	17	28	36	52

Sub-District C1-8

Norfolk Catholic 81, Madison 46

NORFOLK, Neb. — In the first round of the Sub-District C1-8 tournament game, Norfolk Catholic trounced Madison 81-46 in Norfolk Monday night.

Nate Boyle netted 16 points for Norfolk Catholic. Seth Montag totaled 14 points, and David Engelhaupt added nine to the win.

For Madison Zach Wells cashed 25 points. Lane Hegemann put up 10 points, and Ty Hegemann scored nine points.

Norfolk will proceed in the tournament Tuesday night, and Madison ended its season with an 8-15 record.

MADISON (8-15)	10	22	31	46
NORFOLK CATHOLIC (13-13)	18	41	61	81

Regular Season

West Central 65, Elk Point-Jefferson 57, OT

HARTFORD — After being tied at 55 points each, West Central defeated Elk Point-Jefferson 65-57 in overtime in Monday night boys' basket-

ball action.

Cody Bussell put up 21 points for West Central and Noah Verttrus added 14.

Brandon Koupal and Michael Murphy each scored 14 for EPJ.

Both teams will be in action in the Region 4A tournament, West Central next Tuesday and EPJ on March 5.

ELK POINT-JEFFERSON (8-11)	9	25	44	55	57
WEST CENTRAL (11-9)	6	22	38	55	65

Hanson 64, Scotland 33

ALEXANDRIA — Hanson thrashed Scotland 64-33 Monday night in the last game of the regular season at Hanson.

Taylor Nichols posted 20 points and 11 rebounds for Hanson, while Jordan Marquart added 18 points and nine assists.

For Scotland (8-12), Shaye

Bloch totaled 15 points.

Both teams commence the district tournament Monday.

SCOTLAND (8-12)	8	16	25	33
HANSON (16-4)	28	42	50	64

MVP 47, MCM 46

SALEM — Mt. Vernon-Plankinton thwarted McCook Central Montrose 47-46 Monday night in Salem.

Cody Renken totaled 13 points for MVP, and Bobby Beach Pattison added 10 points and eight rebounds to the win.

For MCM Cole Cheeseman totaled 12 points. Anthony Tuschen added 11 points and Will Gottlob grabbed seven rebounds.

MVP starts the district tournament Monday, and MCM travels to Baltic Friday.

MT. VERNON-PLANKINTON (14-6)	16	23	37	47
MCCOOK CENTRAL-MONT. (13-8)	15	25	35	46

Sophomore Amanda Zahui Takes Charge For Minnesota Women

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Amanda Zahui B. has spent the past 2 1/2 years quietly and gradually assimilating to life and basketball in the United States after coming to Minnesota from Sweden.

She shortened her name from Zahui Bazoukou to Zahui B. because it was easier to pronounce and fit better on the back of her maroon and gold jersey.

She worked hard on her English to better communicate with her teammates. She worked hard on her diet and workout regimen to lose weight and fit in with the up-tempo offense under new coach Marlene Stollings.

Becoming more and more comfortable every day in her new country, Zahui is now forcing the rest of the Big Ten to adjust to her.

The 6-foot-5 center is coming off a monster week, combining for 66 points and 56 rebounds in two victories that have all but locked up a spot for the Golden Gophers in the NCAA tournament.

She had 39 points and 29 rebounds in a win over Iowa and followed it up with 27 points and 27 boards while play-

ing all 50 minutes of a double-overtime victory over Michigan on Sunday.

"I have high goals for myself. I want to become the best," Zahui said on Monday. "I want to do whatever it takes to help my team win. I'm surprised that it's going this well, that I'm actually doing what I'm dreaming about."

Zahui — which rhymes with wowie — has put the Golden Gophers (22-6, 11-5 Big Ten) program back on the national scene after some down years, and earned some well-deserved recognition.

After her game against Iowa in which she set the conference record for rebounds, Arizona Cardinals receiver Larry Fitzgerald and former Gophers stars Lindsay Whalen and Janell McCarrville all reached out to her on Twitter and her cell phone hasn't really stopped ringing.

"I'm not used to it yet. I like it. I don't know how much I like it," Zahui said. "I kind of like to be in the corner and not be in the front stage, except on the court."

Zahui is subdued in interview situations but is as fiery as they come on the

court. Every blocked shot, every layup in traffic, every key defensive rebound is followed by a demonstrative roar as her long, wavy dark hair shakes off the back of her head.

Her emergence has helped the Gophers overcome the loss of preseason Big Ten player of the year candidate Rachel Banham to a knee injury.

One more victory will tie the school record for victories in a season and the Gophers have won five straight games as tournament time approaches.

"You can't explain it," forward Shae Kelley said. "I don't even think I knew at the time she had that many. She's just out there and I'm getting ready to get (the rebound) and she's there."

Zahui was a little-known recruit of former Gophers coach Pam Borton, a member of the Swedish national team whose father is from the Ivory Coast and mother was born in Sweden to parents of French and Spanish descent. Her parents met in Stockholm, and she was "always the giant" growing up who initially resisted efforts to get her into basketball.