

Sports

Diamondbacks top Philadelphia in record 13-homer game

Rockies out-slug Cubs despite Chicago's 3-HR inning

PHILADELPHIA: The Diamondbacks hit a franchise-record eight home runs, and they combined with the Phillies for a major-league-record 13 homers as Arizona won 13-8 at Philadelphia on Monday. Arizona's Eduardo Escobar hit two home runs and finished with four hits and five RBIs. Ildemaro Vargas also hit two home runs while Jarrod Dyson, Ketel Marte, David Peralta and Alex Avila each homered for the Diamondbacks. Marte had three hits and two runs as the Diamondbacks won their fifth in a row. The Diamondbacks' previous season high for home runs in a game was five. The Phillies added five home runs—two by Scott Kingery and one apiece for Jean Segura, Rhys Hoskins and Jay Bruce. Kingery also had a triple in his 3-for-5 game for the Phillies, who dropped their second in a row.

ROCKIES 6, CUBS 5

Charlie Blackmon homered and had three hits, Nolan Arenado and Ian Desmond also hit home runs, and Colorado beat Chicago in Denver. Ryan McMahon had a tiebreaking single in the eighth to lift the Rockies. Scott Oberg (4-0) pitched an inning of relief, and Wade Davis got the final three outs for his eighth save. David Bote, Anthony Rizzo and Kyle Schwarber all hit third-inning homers for the Cubs.

ANGELS 5, DODGERS 3

Wilfredo Tovar's fielder's choice plated the tiebreaking run, and Mike Trout smacked a two-run homer as the Los Angeles Angels rallied to beat the Los Angeles Dodgers to begin the Freeway Series at Anaheim, Calif. The Angels pushed across two runs in the bottom of the eighth without benefit of a hit as they won for just the third time in the past eight games. Ty Buttrey (4-2) worked the eighth, and Hansel Robles worked out of a ninth-inning jam for his eighth save. Chris Taylor delivered a two-run double for the Dodgers, who fell for only the fourth time in the last 17 games.

BRAVES 13, PIRATES 7

Host Atlanta hit a season-high five home runs, including two by Ozzie Albies and a grand slam by

Ronald Acuna Jr., and the Braves rolled over Pittsburgh. Acuna delivered his 15th homer to highlight a five-run outburst in the second inning that erased a 1-0 deficit and put the Braves ahead to stay. Albies added a solo homer in the third and another in the seventh, his eighth and ninth. Freddie Freeman hit his 18th homer in the fourth, a two-run shot. Atlanta third baseman Josh Donaldson and Pittsburgh starter Joe Musgrove and manager Clint Hurdle were ejected in the first inning. Donaldson was grazed by a fastball and exchanged words with Musgrove. Donaldson shoved catcher Elias Diaz, who was trying to shield his pitcher, and players from both teams rushed onto the field.

RAYS 6, ATHLETICS 2

Aided by three home runs, Charlie Morton extended his unbeaten streak to 21 games with seven shutout innings as Tampa Bay won the opener of a three-game series with Oakland in St. Petersburg, Fla. Brandon Lowe, Kevin Kiermaier and Ji-Man Choi hit two-run homers, helping the Rays prevail in their first meeting of the season with the A's. Morton (8-0) struggled early but retired the last 14 batters he faced before turning a 4-0 lead over to the Tampa Bay bullpen. The veteran, whose unbeaten streak began last August against Oakland, allowed just two hits and two walks in his seven innings. He struck out seven.

RANGERS 4, RED SOX 3 (11 INNINGS)

Elvis Andrus hit a tiebreaking single in the 11th inning as Texas rallied past host Boston to begin a four-game series. Andrus' game-winner drove in Danny Santana, who began the frame with his fourth hit of the game, a double. Jesse Chavez (2-1) escaped a bases-loaded jam with two outs in the 10th to get the win for Texas, and Chris Martin pitched a perfect bottom of the 11th for his second save. Ryan Brasier (2-3) took the loss for Red Sox, who tied the game in the bottom of the ninth after blowing the lead in the top of the ninth.

CARDINALS 4, MARLINS 1

Marcell Ozuna scored two runs in his return to his



PHILADELPHIA: Jarrod Dyson #11 of the Arizona Diamondbacks lined out to end the top of the fifth inning against the Philadelphia Phillies at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Diamondbacks defeated the Phillies 13-8. — AFP

former home stadium, and Michael Wacha pitched six scoreless innings as St. Louis won at Miami. Ozuna went 2-for-3 with a double, a single and a walk as the Cardinals snapped a three-game losing streak despite getting just four hits. Ozuna is 5-for-7 in his past two games and is hitting .462 in seven career games against the Marlins. Wacha (4-2) improved his career record against Miami to 3-0. He allowed five hits—all singles—and two walks, striking out four in his first win since May 9. He had been relegated to the bullpen after losing his second straight start on May 22.

NATIONALS 12, WHITE SOX 1

Trea Turner doubled, tripled and homered, and Anibal Sanchez pitched six strong innings to boost

Washington past host Chicago. Kurt Suzuki smacked a ninth-inning grand slam as part of a six-run rally that punctuated the Washington rout. Suzuki knocked in five runs, Adam Eaton had three hits, and Juan Soto, Howie Kendrick and Victor Robles added two hits apiece. Washington's 16-hit attack proved to be plenty of support for Sanchez (2-6), who limited Chicago to one run on four hits and one walk with one strikeout.

METS-YANKEES, PPD

The opener of the annual Subway Series between the New York Yankees and New York Mets at Yankee Stadium was postponed due to heavy rain. The game will be made up as part of a day-night doubleheader Tuesday. — Reuters

Land of the rising scrum: Japan packs down for World Cup

FUKUOKA: A newly refurbished stadium, tattoo-friendly baths and enough traditional street bars to satisfy the thirstiest fan: Japan's southern port city of Fukuoka is pulling out all the stops for the Rugby World Cup.

With just 100 days to go until rugby's showcase kicks off in Asia for the first time, organisers are confident everything is in place for what could be the most open World Cup yet. Fukuoka's 20,000-seat, saucer-shaped stadium, surrounded by trees, is being spruced up with new lighting, seats and screens, and fresh turf.

The city hosts three group matches, including games involving Ireland and France, and organisers are leaving nothing to chance amid headlines of beer shortages and bans on tattoos at onsens, traditional Japanese baths.

Onsens generally bar people with tattoos, given their historic link to organised crime in Japan, but officials are surveying establishments willing to relax the rules for the tournament.

"By the time the tournament rolls around, we will be able to offer a full list of onsens that fans can enjoy," Kazuhiro Shinohara, head of the regional organising committee, told AFP. But with beer-guzzling supporters descending en masse, Shinohara is in no doubt as to the priority after fears host cities had underestimated rugby fans' drinking capacity. "The biggest point in our view is nightlife and alcohol—more than anything, rugby fans drink a lot of beer," he said, adding he was briefing establishments to ensure kegs are full.

Fukuoka will be the only host city where fans can slake their thirst at traditional street bars, or "yatai", tiny stalls seating only a dozen or so which sell booze and comfort food.

BAR-HOPPING FANS

A Fukuoka speciality, around 100 yatai line the city streets, the idea being to visit several in an evening—good news for bar-hopping fans.

Business was clearly booming for Frenchman Remy Grenard, 42, a rare foreign yatai owner, with several customers waiting for a coveted spot at his bar.

Offering wine and cassoulet stew, a French twist on



FUKUOKA: A ground keeper works on the pitch at the Fukuoka Hakatanomori stadium, one of the venues for the 2019 Rugby World Cup, in Fukuoka. — AFP

the traditional offering, Grenard is hoping for a flood of visitors during the World Cup.

"They told me there would be 3,000 French fans in one day," joked Grenard as he chatted with customers, only stopping to extinguish a brief kitchen fire or pose for selfies with locals. "Only problem, I've only got 10 seats and I would need a month to feed them all!"

After previously warning local organisers to raise their game, tournament director Alan Gilpin told AFP they were "exactly where we want to be with 100 days to go". Ticket sales had shown "incredible demand", Gilpin said. "We're heading for a sell-out, so that's great." On the pitch, Gilpin said there were "genuinely more contenders than there have been in a World Cup for a very long time" with "more unpredictability" than ever.

AN 'UNFAMILIAR' SPORT

Not everything has been plain sailing though, with a recent mix-up on the ticketing website forcing red-faced organisers to refund tickets listed for the wrong venue. The ejection of Japan's Sunwolves from Super

down with my emotions," Thomas said Monday after practicing at sun-drenched Pebble.

"I just feel like he handled that really well. So maybe if I got in that scenario then I could — I hate to say channel my inner BK, to boost his ego—but definitely show some of those characteristics." Thomas has had his own experience defending a big lead. He took a seven-stroke lead into the final day of the 2017 Sony Open, and won by the same margin. "It's still, to this day, the most nervous I've been teeing off," Thomas said, adding that the pressure only increased with reporters helpfully pointing out that "No one has ever blown a seven-shot lead in the history of the PGA Tour on Sunday."

"Every question I got was led with that," he said. "It was tough at the Sony Open. So I can't imagine how it was at the PGA Championship." Koepka passed the test and arrived at Pebble Beach this week chasing history. He can become just the second golfer, after Willie Anderson in 1903, 1904 and 1905 to win three straight US Open championships after his victories at Erin Hills in 2017 and wind-whipped Shinnecock Hills last year.

Thomas says there's no better place to pursue such a feat than the scenic course on the rugged northern

Rugby, meanwhile, has raised doubts about how to capitalise on the World Cup to double the game in the country and across Asia. On the streets of Fukuoka too, organisers face a challenge to promote rugby in baseball-mad Japan.

"I am not personally interested in it," said Tomoaki Ueda, a 50-year-old salesman, adding that his American-football-playing colleague is more excited. "I am from the baseball generation."

Takashi Tsukamoto, a 35-year-old maintenance worker, admitted: "I don't even know when it will be held. Baseball and football are big in Fukuoka—rugby is not even shown on regular TV."

Kazuhiro Obata, who is in charge of supervising the matches in Fukuoka, is aware of the issue, admitting rugby is "unfamiliar for many Japanese" but urged the public to seize a "once-in-a-lifetime" chance to see the world's best. "Our duty is to convey to people how brilliant it is," he said. "If they watch it, I am absolutely convinced people would feel the appeal of rugby. There's no sport like it." — AFP

California coast.

"Every major has their 'Oh, wow, you won the US Open at Pebble Beach or you won the Open Championship at St. Andrews,'" Thomas said. "This is as good as it gets for a US Open."

Koepka was on the course Monday. So was 15-time major champion Tiger Woods—whose 15-shot US Open triumph at Pebble in 2000 remains a monumental achievement. "From what I've heard from everybody, the course is absolutely perfect," said Thomas, who limited himself to the practice areas on Monday. "Jordan (Spieth) said it's the best poa annua greens he's ever seen in his life."

"I'm excited to check it out. I really do love US Opens," Thomas said. "I love the test, the grind. They just have a different feel to them, like all the majors do." With an iconic venue at their disposal, the US Golf Association will be under the microscope.

Woods and world number three Rory McIlroy went on record last month saying they wished the USGA would go back to traditional US Open style course set-up of tight fairways and dense rough, and perhaps forego some of the gimmicky multiple teeing grounds, graduated rough and chipping areas that have featured in recent years.—AFP

Thomas hopes for chance to 'channel inner Koepka'

PEBBLE BEACH: Justin Thomas says missing the PGA Championship with a wrist injury was difficult but instructive, and he hopes he'll have a chance to apply what he learned watching Brooks Koepka's Bethpage triumph when the US Open tees off this week at Pebble Beach.

"I feel like I learned a lot," said the world number seven, who claimed his lone major title at the PGA Championship at Quail Hollow in 2017. The seven-shot lead Koepka took into the final round at Bethpage last month dwindled to one stroke on the back nine before he emerged with the victory—his fourth major triumph.

"Watching how he handled that and the adversity that was thrown at him and just the shots that he hit when he needed to, because I know that I can get a little bit up and

Stronger, faster, but not higher: Tokyo Olympics to warn on weed

TOKYO: In what you might call a joint statement, Tokyo 2020 organisers yesterday noted the need to warn countries with relaxed cannabis laws that weed isn't allowed in Japan.

"There are countries and regions around the world that have relaxed rules recently on the use of cannabis," noted Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto.

"The use of cannabis constitutes a violation of the law in Japan and that needs to be fully communicated," he added. Muto said the topic was raised by a member of the Tokyo 2020 executive board as something that should be transmitted to the heads of country teams when they visit Tokyo ahead of the Games.

Cannabis rules in Japan are strict, with up to five years' prison for personal use and seven years for dealing. Cannabis is also listed as a performance-enhancing drug by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

The US anti-doping agency USADA notes on its website that marijuana could "decrease anxiety and tension, resulting in better sport performance under pressure". "Due to the illegal nature of marijuana in most countries, the use or abuse of marijuana does not exhibit the ethics and moral judgment that upholds the spirit of sport," the body adds.

The issue hit the headlines in Japan when two Japanese snowboarders were punished after traces of marijuana were detected in their hair following a party in December 2015.

One of the athletes admitted taking the drug at a party while on tour in Colorado, where cannabis was legalised for recreational purposes in 2012, provided the user is 21 years old. Skateboarding and surfing, two counter-culture pursuits with reputedly high rates of drug use, are among the sports that will be contested at Tokyo 2020. — AFP



HAMILTON: Justin Thomas of the United States plays his shot from the third tee during the final round of the RBC Canadian Open at Hamilton Golf and Country Club in Hamilton, Canada. — AFP