

Deadline looming again

NFL owners will meet once more to discuss labor

By DAVE GOLDBERG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GRAPEVINE, Texas

What was supposed to be the absolutely, positively final meeting to solve the NFL's labor problems began Tuesday, with owners trying to decide whether to accept the union's latest proposal.

A decision on whether to extend the collective bargaining agreement was unlikely to come down until today, close to the latest deadline of 8 p.m.

It will take that long for the owners to resolve their differences over internal revenue sharing, the most divisive issue facing them. If they don't get that straight, a deal is unlikely.

Much of the early hours of Tuesday's meeting were spent simply listening to commissioner Paul Tagliabue go through details of the



AP PHOTO

Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones talks to reporters about labor talks outside the NFL owners meeting in Grapevine, Texas, on Tuesday.

union's proposal. Then Tagliabue outlined revenue sharing, but there was no discussion before the owners broke for dinner.

"We haven't punched anybody yet," said Pittsburgh owner Dan Rooney, who described Tagliabue's remarks as "excellent, super."

"He described how the owners and players should be in this together for the good of the league," added Rooney, who has helped to solve past labor disputes.

League spokesman Joe Brown said Tagliabue had agreed with Gene Upshaw, the executive director of the NFL Players Association, that the owners would

have a decision no later than 8 p.m. today. That would come as the union, which is meeting in Hawaii, conducts its executive board session.

There seemed to be some hope they would reach an agreement that would extend the contract that runs out after the 2007 season. It came from Dallas owner Jerry Jones, who is 180 degrees away from Buffalo owner Ralph Wilson on sharing but suggested for the first time that he might have to give in a bit.

"We want to play football," Jones said as he entered the meeting. "We have an obligation to everyone, particularly our fans."

"My gut is we're going to come up with something, but it's still up in the air. It's going to be long and drawn out and tough."

Finding a solution now is critical because free agency, pushed back twice, is scheduled to start Thursday with a \$94.5 million salary cap that could go as much as \$10 million higher if there is an extension.

And although both sides have agreed there will be no more extensions, there would be one more if there is an agreement, until

12:01 a.m. Friday to give teams time to get everything in order.

If there is no settlement, then 2007 would have no salary cap and create the kind of uncertainty that neither side really wants.

Revenue sharing hasn't been dealt with during the negotiations, even though Upshaw has contended all along that no agreement can be reached without it.

If nothing else, the tone of the owners was far different at this meeting than in New York on Thursday, when they took just 57 minutes to reject the union proposal. Later that day, they extended the deadline for free agency for three days and again extended it Sunday night just as it seemed talks had broken off.

That led to Tuesday's meeting and the discussion about revenue sharing, which will be necessary to meet the union's proposal for just less than 60 percent of the league's total revenues.

Low-revenue teams such as Buffalo, Cincinnati and Indianapolis say high-revenue teams — Dallas, Washington and Philadelphia, for instance — should contribute proportionately to the player pool.

HORSES

INDIANAPOLIS

Panel reforms rules for racing to address doping

State regulators adopted sweeping new rules Tuesday to guard the integrity of an Indiana horse racing industry tainted by doping allegations.

But breeders and veterinarians questioned whether the reforms and their estimated half-million dollar pricetag were needed.

An Indiana Horse Racing Commission report that four horses run in the state have tested positive for cocaine during the past two years helped lead to the reform plan, dubbed "Integrity '06." The five-member panel unanimously adopted 21 of the 22 proposed racing rules that will implement the reforms immediately.

A nearly daylong meeting saw some contentious debate between the five commissioners, who were generally united behind the reform plan, and veterinarians, breeders and pari-mutuel track operators.

Many of the new rules affect veterinarians. One of them now requires the vets to be escorted by security personnel while they are in the track stables injecting horses with the only drug horses can receive on race days, furosemide.

LOCAL

PREP WRESTLING

State finals matches to be shown on cable TV

Starting today, the championship matches from the Indiana High School Athletic Association individual wrestling state finals can be seen on cable television, the IHSAA announced Tuesday.

Insight cable Channel 96 in Greenwood, Bright House Networks cable Channel 63 and Comcast cable Channel 76 in Indianapolis will air the Feb. 18 individual and team state championship matches.

The 14 state championship matches will air at 7 p.m. today. The broadcast will be replayed at 7 p.m. Friday.

Franklin Community High School wrestlers Phil Glasser (171 pounds) and Cody Johnson (215) competed in individual state championship matches. Both finished as state runners-up.

The Feb. 25 state team championship dual match between Evansville Mater Dei and Belmont will be shown at 7 p.m. March 15. It will be replayed at 7 p.m. March 17.

The state team championship matches were contested at Center Grove High School.

Pitching, home runs carry Americans to opening win

By BOB BAUM
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHOENIX

One after another, the American pitchers were untouchable. A pair of big blows provided all the help they needed.

Jake Peavy and a parade of relievers combined on a four-hitter against a lineup loaded with major-leaguers Tuesday, leading the United States to a 2-0 victory against Mexico in its World Baseball Classic debut.

Home runs by Derrek Lee and Chipper Jones were all that was necessary on offense.

"Today I felt proud," Lee said. "I felt like the whole country was watching."

Lee hit a 1-1 pitch from starter Rodrigo Lopez over the right-field fence, and Jones homered on the first pitch he saw in the tournament off Oscar Villarreal in the seventh.

These U.S. stars have been talking pride and patriotism since gathering Friday.

"I've never had a better feeling in my life," Peavy said. "It was the coolest thing I have ever done



AP PHOTO

Team USA's Chipper Jones celebrates his home run in the seventh inning of a World Baseball Classic game against Mexico in Phoenix on Tuesday. The Americans won 2-0.

when Team USA took the field today."

Added Jones, "I probably had more butterflies today than any playoff games."

Peavy allowed one hit, an infield single by Karim Garcia that easily could have been ruled an

error on second baseman Chase Utley to start the game. The 24-year-old San Diego Padres right-hander struck out three, throwing just 23 pitches.

Mike Timlin, Chad Cordero, Dan Wheeler, Todd Jones, Joe Nathan and Brad Lidge each threw an inning of relief for the U.S. squad, which has 11 relievers on its roster.

The U.S. pitchers combined for nine strikeouts and no walks, shutting out Mexico in only 2 hours, 6 minutes.

No Mexican hitters got beyond first. Three baserunners were erased on double plays.

"It was a good game," Mexico manager Paquin Estrada said through a translator, "but there really was no room for mistakes."

From the first pitch, it was apparent this was no spring training game.

The crowd of 32,727 at Chase Field was loud and lively with Mexican supporters waving their red, white and green national flags and chanting "Me-xi-co! Me-xi-co!" When a U.S. batter got two strikes, there were shouts of "ponche," or "strikeout."

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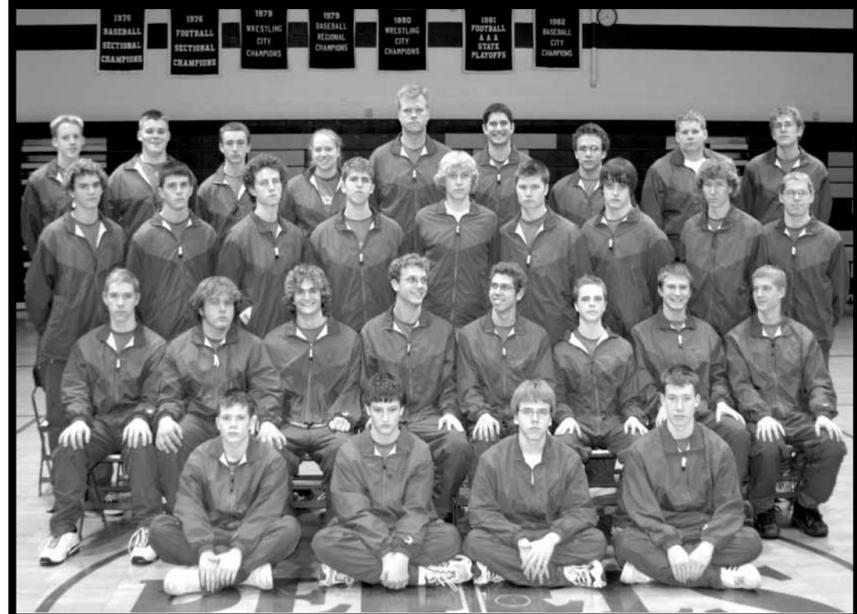
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The Roncalli High School Boys' Swimming and Diving Team claimed the school's first ever Sectional Championship in February. All 23 swimmers in the Sectional meet earned personal best times.

Rebel swimmers were represented in four different events at the 2006 State Swimming Finals. State Finalist Swimmers and Sectional Champions included Bryce Mason (50 and 100 freestyle), Nicholas Barkman (200 freestyle), Eric Barkman, Greg Rennekamp, Bryce Mason, Nicholas Barkman, Eric Whelchel, Jake Ezell, Curtis Cox and Larry Webb (200 freestyle relay) and Bryce Mason, Jake Ezell, Eric Whelchel, Nicholas Barkman, Will Cordell, Curtis Cox, Eric Barkman and Chris O'Neal (400 freestyle relay).

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