

NBC tried to change Olympic ceremony for ratings

BY MATT BONESTEEL
THE WASHINGTON POST

In 2011, NBC won the right to broadcast all of the Olympic Games from 2014 through 2020 at a cost of \$4.38 billion. This year's Rio Olympics alone will cost the network \$1.23 billion. Three years later, the network re-upped with the International Olympic Committee through 2032 for the eye-popping amount of \$7.65 billion.

The IOC, of course, was thrilled with all this money. "The agreement is a major contribution to the long-term financial stability of the entire Olympic Movement," it said in a statement announcing the latest extension.

But reciprocity only goes so far. Sure, the IOC agreed to move the ratings-magnet

swimming finals at this year's Olympics to the nighttime in order to placate its sugar daddy, and now some of those finals won't begin until after midnight Rio time (much, much to the chagrin of some). But when NBC went to Olympic officials and asked that it change the order of the Parade of Nations at the Aug. 5 Opening Ceremonies so that the U.S. athletes would come out at a more ratings-friendly time, it said no.

Bloomberg's Tariq Panja explains why:

"In the traditional Parade of Nations, teams enter the arena in alphabetical order. Switching the languages would have put the United States's 555 athletes near the back, giving American audiences a reason watch the full

broadcast. As it is, the team will enter somewhere in the middle, because in Portuguese, the delegation is known as Estados Unidos.

"Communications director Mario Andrada told the Americans yesterday that International Olympic Committee rules require that the official language of the opening ceremony has to be that of the host country."

And so Portuguese is the language of choice and the U.S. athletes will come out 64th in the 207-nation parade, sandwiched between the Federated States of Micronesia and Estonia (who will be getting a ton of free advertising).

NBC, which took a bunch of heat for its heavily tape-delayed broadcast of the 2012 Olympics in London (five hours ahead of Eastern Time), has a much better



SERGIO MORAES | REUTERS

A woman rides her bicycle as she passes over a newly painted bicycle lane ahead of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games near Barra da Tijuca beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Wednesday.

time-slot situation this year because Rio is only one hour ahead of the East Coast so viewers will see many more

events as they happen. Still, the network will be showing this year's Opening Ceremonies on a one-hour delay so

its broadcast can start at 8 p.m. EDT.

Spoiler alert: The U.S. marches early.



BOB DECHIARA | USA TODAY SPORTS

Boston Red Sox relief pitcher Joe Kelly pitches during the seventh inning against the Detroit Tigers at Fenway Park on Tuesday.

Red Sox Joe Kelly adapts to bullpen

BY TIM BRITTON
THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

BOSTON — The role may be different, but the challenges facing Joe Kelly feel awfully similar.

RED SOX NOTEBOOK
Even as Kelly's fastball hit 101 on the radar gun on multiple occasions in his bullpen debut Monday night, the right-hander still needs to establish his secondary weapons.

"At the major-league level as opposed to the Triple-A level, he's still going to have to use that breaking ball. Even with plus velocity, you have to get them off it," Red Sox pitching coach Carl Willis said Monday night. "With major-league hitters, as unbelievable as it sounds, you still have to mix pitches enough to keep them from cheating to put that fastball in play and hit a line drive like [Justin] Upton did."

Indeed, Kelly had described his approach to relieving as trying to strike everybody out, and flashing a fastball in triple digits in that opening encounter with Upton seemed a fine starting point — until the Detroit outfielder smoked a laser to right-center for a lead-off triple. The pitch was 101 mph coming in and 111 going out, according to Statcast.

"The same thing applies in this role as it did while he was starting. His need to use his secondary pitches exists," manager John Farrell said Tuesday. "That's going to always be part of Joe's plan for success. He can't rely just on velocity because as we've seen, the swing and miss rate is low despite upper-90s to 100 mph. It's all part of Joe understanding who he is as a pitcher."

"How he can complement that pitch with a secondary pitch is going to be the difference," Willis said.

Kelly showed both a slider and a curveball on Monday, getting a swing-and-miss on the bigger curve. For now, he's sticking with both.

"He wants to work in both. There are days he has a better feel for one as opposed to the other," Willis said. "That's kind of still a work in progress to see if one evolves to be a better one."

"[The slider] might be a

pitch I need to probably throw a little bit more out of the pen," Kelly said. "If I have to throw it five times an at-bat, I'll have to just to make the fastball play up that much more."

That does mean, though, that at least for the time being Kelly is shelving his changeup — a pitch he has often described as his best secondary weapon.

"We want to simplify things," said Willis. "I don't think it's a pitch we'll shelve altogether, but finding a breaking ball as a go-to is first and foremost."

It was last August that Kelly started finding a rhythm with those secondary pitches and took off as a starter; he labored to locate consistency with them this season.

While the main goal remains the same for him, Kelly is facing some adjustments to a bullpen role that's different than the long-man and middle-relief roles he served occasionally in St. Louis. He's learning the differences in scouting reports for a reliever and a starter — the latter allowing for days of preparation rather than just a few minutes.

For instance, Kelly regretted his pitch selection to Upton on Monday. Hoping to exploit Upton's aggressiveness, Kelly threw him fastballs up, only to fall behind 3-1. He grooved the fastball Upton laced for the triple.

Kelly was able to induce soft contact after that, though James McCann fought off a triple-digit fastball in on his hands for an RBI single through a drawn-in infield.

"It's going to be a learning process," Kelly said. "Obviously they have a different approach against guys coming out of the bullpen.... Are they going to be patient because they might think I walk guys or are they going to be swinging because they know I throw hard?"

The Red Sox will be monitoring that transition closely. Whether Kelly can quickly adapt to his new role could dictate Boston's comfort level with its current bullpen. Should the right-hander have trouble as a reliever over the next week, it could force Dave Dombrowski's hand to add to that pen from outside the organization.

Dustin Johnson sees chance at Baltusrol

BY LARRY FINE
REUTERS

SPRINGFIELD, New Jersey — While many players bemoan the short turnaround between the British Open and PGA Championship, jammed closer together to accommodate the Rio Olympics golf tournament, the implacable Dustin Johnson just rolls on.

The long-hitting, poker-faced American, who won last month's U.S. Open for his first major, is in a groove and welcomes the challenge posed by Baltusrol when the PGA Championship gets underway on Thursday.

"I'm feeling good. I've got a lot of confidence in the game. I feel like I've been playing really consistent all year," Johnson told reporters on Wednesday.

"I feel like every week I've gone out, I've had a chance to win. Right now I feel like everything is going pretty well."

Johnson tied for second at last week's Canadian Open for his sixth consecutive top 10 finish, a stretch that in-



BRIAN SPURLOCK | USA TODAY SPORTS

PGA golfer Dustin Johnson takes a break while practicing his putting for the PGA Championship golf tournament at Baltusrol Golf Course on Wednesday.

cluded back-to-back wins in the U.S. Open at Oakmont and the WGC-Bridgestone and a tie for ninth at the British Open.

The easy-going Californian, who will be grouped with Masters winner Danny Willett and British Open champion Henrik Stenson for the first two rounds, was unfazed about facing the year's last major just two weeks after Royal Troon.

"It's definitely different, playing so many majors pretty close together. But I don't know, I've done pretty well this year, so I kind of like it," he said.

Earlier this year Johnson also enjoyed four top-fives from five events including a tie for fourth at the Masters and a tie for fifth in the WGC-Dell Match Play.

World number two Johnson, one of the longest driv-

ers in the game, said improving his wedge shots was a key.

"Probably the biggest difference this year than years past is my wedge game. It's a lot sharper. I've got a lot more control with my wedges," said Johnson, adding that he worked on it for the first time since joining the tour.

The combination of his accurate driving and improved wedge game has him in a positive mood about the 7,428-yard, par-70 Baltusrol layout that finishes with back-to-back par-fives.

"I feel like it sets up well for me," he said. "It's pretty long. You've got to drive it straight."

Johnson feels he does his best work in the biggest events.

"I like the majors," he said. "I feel like I do very well on really hard golf courses where pars are good scores."

Johnson said his appetite for majors was whetted by his U.S. Open triumph. "Maybe even more of a desire to get a second one."

MLB warns Puig over Patriots

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THE SPORTS XCHANGE

Major League Baseball has threatened to fine Los Angeles Dodgers right fielder Yasiel Puig if he wears customized cleats again.

Puig received a letter from Joe Garagiola Jr., MLB's senior vice president of standards and on-field operations, stating that the outfielder will be subject to a fine if he wears the customized Nike shoes on the field again, according to the Orange County Register. The fine could be as much as \$5,000 for a violation.

Puig first wore shoes with an American flag theme on the Fourth of July and later wore shoes, designed by a local artist, with a Cuban flag theme, according to ESPN.com.

Puig recently wore shoes that were a tribute to retiring

Dodgers broadcaster Vin Scully. One shoe read "WIN FOR VIN," complete with a superimposed image of Scully's face on the side. The other shoe read "#ITFDB" — a reference to Scully's famous line to start games: "It's time for Dodger baseball."

The legendary announcer, who has worked for the team since 1958, announced last August that the 2016 season would be his final year calling games for the Dodgers.

Puig is currently day-to-day after tweaking his right hamstring running down the first-base line last Thursday at Washington. He did not start for the fifth consecutive game on Tuesday night due to the hamstring strain.

Puig is hitting .255 with seven home runs and 32 RBIs in 79 games this season.

Red Sox

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horrible pitch. It just wasn't a great one either."

Tigers starting pitcher Michael Fulmer threw just 98 pitches over 7 2/3 innings but couldn't hold on to a 3-1 lead. Fulmer allowed three earned runs on seven hits, walked none and struck out three.

Designated hitter Victor Martinez went 4-for-4 with two RBIs and catcher James McCann hit a home run for the Tigers, who left 10 men on base.

Bruce Rondon (4-2) earned the win in relief and Justin Wilson secured his first career save for Detroit.

Red Sox starter Eduardo Rodriguez left after throwing 101 pitches in 5 1/3 innings. He allowed three earned runs on nine hits and issued three walks. He also struck out six batters.

Boston infielders Dustin Pedroia and Xander Bogaerts homered and Mookie Betts delivered a game-tying triple in the bottom of the eighth.

"The one to Betts in the

eighth inning was just a little up and over the plate," Fulmer said. "He just caught up with it and drove it."

Travis Shaw led off Boston's half of the eighth with a single, took second on a sacrifice bunt and went to third on a groundout. Betts then ripped a line-drive triple to the triangle area in center field to score Shaw. Third base coach Brian Butterfield stopped Betts at third and Rondon struck out Pedroia to end the inning.

"I was thinking I've got to go, I've got to go," Betts said about his race around the bases. "I'm not as fast as I used to be, so it's just a triple."

The Red Sox, who have lost five of their past six games, scored first when Pedroia hit a solo home run to center field as the second batter of the bottom of the first.

Martinez ripped a two-run single in the top of the third to give the Tigers a 2-1 lead. McCann homered with one out in the sixth to give Detroit a 3-1 lead.

Bogaerts answered with a solo home run of his own leading off the seventh inning to pull Boston within 3-2.

tion for the whole year, so our philosophy really is going to remain unchanged for a while here, in terms of repetitions," McDaniels said when asked how the quarterback repetitions will be divided in practice. "We usually split them up pretty evenly. We don't really put anybody in first and second groups, or third groups, at this point."

"What we really try to focus on is getting everybody opportunities to work on their fundamentals and techniques, and to work with the different players on our team because we don't know right now who's going to be doing what six, seven weeks from now."

"They're both going to get plenty of reps, and so is Jacoby. We're going to do what we've normally done in the past ... all those guys have things we can get better at, and we're excited to coach them all and to work with every one of them."

Brady is eligible to participate in all preseason practices and games. Preparation is a strong suit for Garoppolo, McDaniels said, easing concern leading up to his first career start. "His preparation, the

time he spends at it, he cares deeply about getting better each day," McDaniels said.

Patriots sign tight end, guard

The New England Patriots added to their depth on Wednesday by signing tight end Bear Pascoe and offensive guard Jon Halapio to contracts.

Terms of the deals were not disclosed by the Patriots, who also placed defensive back Nate Ebner on the reserve/did not report list. The 27-year-old is expected to participate in the 2016 Summer Olympics with the United States rugby team.

Pascoe has reeled in 40 receptions for 336 yards and two touchdowns in seven seasons with the New York Giants, Atlanta and Detroit during his NFL career. The 30-year-old was released by Chicago at the tail end of training camp last season and did not catch a pass in three games with the Lions toward the end of the campaign.

Selected by New England in the sixth round of the 2014 draft, Halapio was released by the Patriots and joined Denver's practice squad late in that season. The 25-year-old signed with Arizona prior to the 2015 campaign, but has yet to appear in an NFL game.

Beach

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said she was elated that True and Masters decided to again return to their home state and compete in this year's race.

"Ben and Riley will bring a large amount of inspiration to our younger runners, especially in our inaugural year of the high school mile," Samuelson said in a news release.

True also will be among the favorites for the Open title, where he and Jenkins will compete against a handful of young international track speedsters, Olympic medalists and high-level marathoners for the \$10,000 top prize.

The world-class athletes will join a race day field of more than 6,600 runners who will wind along the fast, relatively flat course that begins near the Crescent Beach State Park entrance on Route 77 in Cape Elizabeth and ends 6.2 miles later in Fort Williams Park at the Portland Head Light, the most photographed lighthouse in America.

The 2016 race beneficiary is My Place Teen Center, a free, year-round, after-school youth development program for kids in Greater Portland, which receives a \$30,000 donation from the TD Charitable Foundation, the charitable giving arm of TD Bank, which has donated \$570,000 to Maine charities over the history of the race.