

Emotional Peyton Manning says goodbye

BY LARRY FINE
REUTERS

Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning bid an emotional farewell to the NFL on Monday after an 18-year career that established him as one of the game's greatest quarterbacks.

"Today I retire from the game of pro football," Manning, who capped his brilliant career by helping Denver win the Super Bowl last month, told a packed news conference in Denver. "It was the right time."

Manning, who battled back from a foot injury that cost him six games last season, said he would surely miss the game.

"When someone thoroughly exhausts an experience they can't help but revere it. I love the game," he said. "So you don't have to wonder if I'll miss it. Absolutely. Absolutely, I will."

Manning, who turns 40 later this month, retires as



Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning hugs executive vice president of football operations and general manager John Elway during his retirement announcement Monday afternoon at the UCHealth Training Center in Englewood, Colorado.

the NFL's all-time leader in passing touchdowns and yards and as the only five-time winner of the league's Most Valuable Player award. The cerebral signal-caller left the football stage on a high-point, becoming the old-

est quarterback to win a Super Bowl and first to win with two different teams following the NFL crown he won with the 2006 Indianapolis Colts.

Manning, who became the face of the NFL as a glamor quarterback and ubiquitous TV pitchman, has been hailed for his meticulous preparation and ability to find holes in opposing defenses as he surveys them at the line of scrimmage.

Recently, however, he has come under fire off the field.

He was among the athletes cited in a lawsuit filed by a group of former female students who are suing the University of Tennessee over its handling of sexual assault complaints made against student-athletes.

Manning was also hit by a recent allegation that he had human growth hormone sent to his house in 2011 while he was recovering from neck surgery.

Asked about the sexual

assault allegation that goes back some 20 years ago, Manning said: "This is a joyous day and nothing can overtake this."

"It's sad that some people don't understand the truth and the facts. I did not do what has been alleged."

Manning then returned to pleasant reminiscences of his NFL career, thanking teammates from the Colts and Broncos and saying he would also treasure some of the rivalries he had with opposing players.

Manning also thanked his family, which represents NFL quarterbacking royalty in his father Archie, a former New Orleans Saints standout, and brother Eli, who won two Super Bowl MVP honors in wins with the New York Giants.

"There's no way to measure or properly express what a family like mine can mean," he said, with his mother, father, older brother Cooper and Eli all in attendance.

"And (wife) Ashley, your support is as potent a motivator as any man can have."

"I'll miss recapping the game with my dad, and checking to see if the Giants won and calling Eli as we're both on our team busses," he added.

"I'll miss that handshake with Tom Brady and I'll miss the plane ride after a big win with 53 teammates standing in the aisles laughing and celebrating during the whole flight."

All that said, Manning was looking forward to his future and "a whole new world of possibilities."

Manning said he gave the NFL his all.

"There were other players who were more talented, but there was no one who could outprepare me, and because of that I have no regrets."

"I fought a good fight and finished my football race, and after 18 years it's time."

"God bless all of you, and God bless football."

Sharapova says she failed drug test, faces suspension

BY MARK LAMPORT-STOKES
REUTERS

LOS ANGELES — Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova, the highest-paid woman in sports, said on Monday that she failed a drug test at the Australian Open due to a substance she has been taking for 10 years for health issues.

The 28-year-old Sharapova, a five-time grand slam champion, will be provisionally suspended starting March 12, the International Tennis Federation said.

She is the seventh athlete in a month to test positive for meldonium, which is used to treat diabetes and low magnesium, and was only banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency as of Jan. 1.

"I made a huge mistake. I let my fans down and I let the sport down," said Sharapova, a teenage tennis prodigy who became the third-youngest Wimbledon champion. "I take full responsibility for it."

"I know that with this I face

consequences and I don't want to end my career this way. I really hope that I will be given another chance to play this game," former world No.1 Sharapova told a news conference in a downtown Los Angeles hotel.

The ITF's anti-doping program calls for a four-year suspension for a positive test, but that ban can be reduced in various circumstances, such as for first-time offenses or if the player shows no significant fault or negligence. If a player bears no fault or negligence, there is no suspension.

According to Forbes, she earned \$29.5 million in 2015, mostly from endorsements.

Sharapova said her family doctor had been giving her mildronate, which is also called meldonium, for 10 years after she frequently be-



Sharapova

came sick, had irregular EKG results, a magnesium deficiency and a family history of diabetes.

"It is very important for you to understand that for 10 years this medicine was not on WADA's banned list and I had been legally taking the medicine. But on January the first, the rules have changed and meldonium became a prohibited substance."

The World Anti-Doping Agency, or WADA, declined to comment until ITF issues a final decision.

Meldonium is used to treat chest pain and heart attacks among other conditions, but some researchers have linked it to increased athletic performance and endurance. It is listed by WADA among its prohibited metabolic modulators, along with insulin, and some researchers say it can also help recovery.

It is not approved in the United States but is available in Russia, Latvia and other countries in that region.



University of Maine basketball players huddle before the start of their America East tourney semifinal against Stony Brook on Sunday at the Events Center in Vestal, New York. Maine won 51-48 and will face Albany for the tourney title Friday.

Red Sox

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hitting with two strikes as he did in any other count. (Bradley was famously forced to take pitches until he had two strikes on him by a coach in high school).

That approach, however, has betrayed him at the major-league level, where he's bypassed hittable pitches early in the count and been beaten by big leaguers' off-speed deliveries late. His strikeout rate climbed upon entering the majors, from 17.0 percent in the minors to 28.2 percent during his time in the bigs thus far. He's accumulated nearly as many punchouts in the majors as he did in the minors in 600 fewer plate appearances.

"That's my main goal, to make more solid contact," Bradley said Friday. "Hope-

fully that turns into swinging at good pitches I can handle and hopefully hit.... That way it kind of gives me more opportunities to put the ball in play.

"Strike out less is the point I'm getting at."

Bradley also singled to center on the first pitch of his second at-bat.

"The traits of a hitter that we value are those that will work counts and see pitches," manager John Farrell said. "But at the big-league level, where you've got so many pitchers that have good command, you've got to earn that respect. So in some cases, you've got to be willing to swing the bat early in the count."

Bradley was more aggressive early in the count during his remarkable hot streak late last summer. He swung more frequently at the first pitch, he put the ball in play more frequently

Women

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this when you've got some of the best mid-major teams and players in the country, anyone who's watching and fans of women's basketball know who some of our top players are," Huchthausen said.

"They know what Maine's doing, they know what Albany's doing and so the fact that they can get on ESPN and people that are on the [NCAA] Women's Basketball Committee are watching games, that is just so much more accessible as we head into selections next weekend," she added.

Friday's championship game will be televised on ESPNU.

Cimbollek

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school coaches cannot.

— America East coaches are full-time coaches, and high school coaches are not.

— America East coaches have several full-time paid assistants that high school coaches do not have.

— America East teams get to play over 30 games before their tournament, and high school teams play 18.

— America East teams play the same conference schedule to get seeded for their tournament, but high school teams do not.

— America East coaches sign multi-year contracts and usually have buyout clauses, and most high school coaches receive one-year contracts.

After evaluating those differences, how do you now

answer the above question?

I also have been mulling some basketball questions for readers. Test your basketball knowledge:

1. What is the only basketball skill that is the same for every middle school, high school, prep school, college and professional player?
2. What is the most common error in shooting a basketball at any level?
3. Who was the first Division I college basketball player to score 100 points in a game?
4. A player in the act of shooting misses a 3-point shot but is fouled by two defensive players at the exact same time, what is the foul called?
5. How many shots does the 3-point shooter get on the 3-point shot that is missed and when the shooter is fouled by two defenders at the exact same?
6. Why has the one-hand

set shot become extinct?

7. What college team is the only one to win NCAA and NIT tourneys in the same year?
8. What year did the 3-point shot become a rule in Maine?
9. What is the correct term for the area the coach must stand during a game?
10. What is the Minnesota Rule?

Here are your answers:

1. The foul shot; 2. Not enough leg depth; 3. Bevo Francis of Rio Grande College in Ohio; 4. Multiple foul; 5. Four shots awarded; 6. Because of the worry of stepping on the 3-point line when taking the shot; 7. City College of New York; 8. 1987-88 season; 9. The coaching box; 10. Players cannot foul out, the penalty is two shots and the ball on any foul after five.

Bob Cimbollek is a retired high school basketball coach and athletic director.

Softball

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didn't work. She has been working hard to develop a curve so that she has another pitch."

Coutts is confident they can get the job done in the circle.

"I'm not worried about them. They can get the job

done. The other thing that will help is I expect us to play better team defense and have a better year offensively. That will help our pitching," said Coutts.

All three pitched in Monday's win as did junior Nikki Misner.

Umaine will play a doubleheader against the University of Pennsylvania at 11 a.m. Tuesday in Clearwater, and it will play

games in Florida through March 20.

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