

Cold weather and hot baseball at Coors Field

Colorado vs. Philadelphia easily the best series in divisional round

By RAHUL VAIDYANATH
Epoch Times Staff

DENVER—I won't soon forget my experience at Coors Field last Sunday attending Game 3 of the Colorado Rockies-Philadelphia Phillies series. That game went down in history as being tied for the coldest game in post-season baseball.

Initially the game was to be played last Saturday night. Game time temperature would have been around 26 degrees Fahrenheit had the game been played on Saturday. Snow had also fallen on the field.

In any case, it wasn't much warmer on Sunday night, but the field looked in fine shape. Official game time temperature was 35 degrees, which tied the all-time low set in Game 4 of the 1997 World Series between Cleveland and Florida. The www.weather.com site said the temperature was 30.8 degrees mid-way through the game.

Obviously some football games were played in much colder temperature but I guess baseball has its limits, perhaps somewhere below 30 degrees.

You might think the Colorado Rockies were hosting their first ever playoff game at Coors Field based on how long it took to get inside the park.



COLD FANS: Fans of the Colorado Rockies had to bundle up for last Sunday's Game 3 against the Philadelphia Phillies. DOUG PENSINGER/GETTY IMAGES

Thousands of fans were still crowded at each gate waiting to get in while home runs were being hit in the first inning. An incredible night was getting off to a miserable start.

At least being surrounded by hundreds of other fans standing to get in kept me warm. Some eager fans were screaming "CHARGE!" while others heckled the turnstile attendants. Once fans got in, they

were given the purple and white "Rocktober towels," which would be waived at every big moment in the thrilling game.

BUNDLING UP

Some locals, living in close proximity to the mountains, wisely chose to wear their ski gear and snow boots for added warmth. I kept my upper body warm by wearing three layers

of clothing and a heavy leather jacket. I also wore my long johns but still felt the need for a fleece blanket to cover my legs. My feet were doing OK with thick wooly socks and running shoes although snow boots might have been a warmer choice.

The cold weather didn't freeze out the fans' excitement for the Rockies. During their 2007 World Series run, Rockies fans became accustomed

to cheering on their team in chilly weather.

The game itself was a great advertisement for playoff baseball. The lead changed or the game got all tied up no less than seven times. The Phillies used six pitchers while the Rockies used seven. The game lasted over four hours without extra innings so fans definitely got their money's worth.

The game also had controversy. Home plate umpire Jerry Meals admitted he missed a call when he believed Philadelphia's Chase Utley's chopper was a fair ball in the top of the ninth inning. In fact, the ball bounced off Utley's leg and then went into fair territory. It should've been called a foul ball or dead ball.

I could see it clear as day from my seat about 40 rows behind home plate. The way the ball bounced before it went into fair territory seemed very strange and I just assumed it must be a foul ball.

If calling a foul ball (or dead ball) fair wasn't enough, the first base umpire called Utley safe. I thought Rockies first baseman Todd Helton kept his foot on the bag just long enough after catching Huston Street's throw to get Utley out.

The single would move Jimmy Rollins from second to third, with the score tied 5-5. He scored off a sac fly from Rockies-killer Ryan Howard.

Fans were screaming "Tu-Lo, Tu-Lo" for short-stop Troy Tulowitzki as he represented the last chance for the Rockies in the bottom of the ninth. But Philadelphia's closer Brad "Lights Out" Lidge got "Tu-Lo" to fly out to left field with two men on, preserving the 6-5 victory.

The Phils wound up eliminating the Rockies in Game 4 on Monday, again in dramatic fashion. Scoring three runs in the top of the ninth to overcome a two-run deficit is really the stuff that will keep people talking for months.

Clearly, the Rockies-Phillies series was the most exciting series of the Divisional Series round. The other three series all ended up in sweeps. I was just glad to catch one of these games, even if it had to be the coldest one.

Roddick's withdrawal highlights problem of lengthy tennis season

ATP to balance concerns of fans, players, and tournament organizers

LONDON (Reuters)—Andy Roddick's injury-enforced withdrawal from the Shanghai Masters on Tuesday graphically illustrated the American's gripes about the relentless demands placed on the world's best tennis players.

The 27-year-old, who on Monday said the governing body (ATP)

must give players a proper off-season or risk shortening the careers of its billboard names, retired against Swiss Stanislas Wawrinka citing a knee injury.

His second-round pull-out was a further blow to the tour's Asian swing that has lost some big draws this year, sparking further debate about the overcrowded schedule.

It also illustrated the dilemma faced by the ATP as it juggles the needs of the tournament organizers, sponsors, and the players.

World No. 1 Roger Federer and Andy Murray missed last week's Japan Open and Shanghai because of fatigue and a wrist injury, respectively, while world No. 2 Rafael Nadal, who missed Wimbledon this year with a knee injury, skipped the Thai Open.

Asian tennis fans, in particular, feel short-changed, especially with Federer and Murray's faces staring down at them from promotional posters splattered across Shanghai.

"Trust me, as frustrated as [the fans] are that we're not here, I promise you we're more frustrated," Roddick told reporters after lasting just seven games against Wawrinka.

Roddick said he spoke to ATP officials in Shanghai on Tuesday regarding his widely-reported comments of the day before in which he labeled the season ridiculous.

"I had a good discussion with one of the representatives today. You know, they were receptive. To be fair, there has been a kind of

a new leadership this year that's kind of stuck picking up the pieces, which is a tall task, an unenviable one at best.

"There does need to be something changed."

While the women's WTA tour concludes in Doha on Nov. 1, the men's top eight contest the ATP World Tour finals at the end of November. The Davis Cup final is in December, less than a month before the new season begins on Jan. 1.

This year the ATP reduced the amount of mandatory ATP Masters 1000 events from nine to eight, while there are further concessions to players who have either played 600 career matches, are over 31, or who have been on tour for 12 years.

However, with half of the ATP's six-man Board made up of tournament representatives, there seems little chance of events being axed. And there remains no real off-season for their most prized assets, the likes of Federer, Nadal, Roddick, Murray, Novak Djokovic, and U.S. Open champion Juan Martin Del Potro.



ALMS RACE: Gil de Ferran leads a pack of cars at the start of the Monterey Sports Car Championships last Saturday. JONATHAN FERREY/GETTY IMAGES

Dramatic finish to American Le Mans Series season

By JAMES FISH
Epoch Times Staff

The Monterey Sports Car Championships at Mazda Laguna Seca last Saturday featured flat-out fighting between class leaders right to the finish line in the final race of the 2009 American Le Mans Series.

Le Mans Prototype 2 champion Adrian Fernandez chased Le Mans Prototype 1 runner-up Gil de Ferran right to the checkered flag, losing the race by less than a second. A few cars back, GT2 champion Jörg Bergmeister bashed and banged through the final corner with Jan Magnussen to take the class win as Magnussen spun into the outside wall, wrecking his car.

The battle for the overall win was particularly poignant for the two leading drivers, because both of them knew Laguna Seca might be the final race of their careers.

Gil de Ferran announced his retirement as a driver at Mid-Ohio. He will remain as team owner. He has done everything he wanted to as a driver and now wants to exercise his expertise in team management.

Adrian Fernandez announced last month that, due to a lack of sponsorship dollars, he will be closing down his team. Fernandez has no contract for the 2010 season, despite being one of the most talented, professional, and successful team owners in the sport.

Knowing this might be their last race, the two turned in inspired performances, with Fernandez pushing his lighter, less-powerful P2 Acura to faster laps than any other car on the track. Meanwhile, de Ferran used the greater power and torque of his heavier P1 Acura to keep Fernandez behind him.

Fernandez passed once, but couldn't stay ahead of the P1 Acura. De Ferran crossed the finish line less than a second ahead of Fernandez, earning the race win with clean, hard driving.

De Ferran said he was not thinking about this being his last race.

"We were very tight on fuel and the tires were gone as well. There was no time to think about anything but staying up front."

Adrian Fernandez was not disappointed to lose to a competitor of de Ferran's caliber.

"I didn't have enough for him on the straights. We were very fast through the corners. It was a fantastic battle, and we almost made it."

The Patrón Highcroft Racing Acura driven by David Brabham and Scott Sharp finished third, winning the P1 championship by 17 points.

GT2: AN ACTUAL FIGHT TO THE FINISH

Jörg Bergmeister, who won the GT2 championship in the #45 Flying Lizard Porsche RSR early in the race when the Risi Ferrari was sidelined by a collision, had an epic battle with Jan Magnussen in the Corvette Racing Corvette C. Magnussen had the faster car but wasn't able to get past the Porsche.

As the end of the race neared, Magnussen resorted to swerving onto pit lane to pass, but the race stewards made him give back the position because he used an illegal shortcut.

More frustrated than ever, Magnussen rammed Bergmeister coming into the final turn of the final lap. While Bergmeister struggled to control his car, Magnussen pushed past on the inside.

Unwilling to be beaten by such tactics, Bergmeister responded by pushing Magnussen towards the inside wall. Magnussen turned hard right, and Bergmeister nudged him, sending him spinning across the track and headfirst into the outside wall with enough force to lift the back of the car completely off the track.

Bergmeister and Magnussen were both put on probation for two races. The Challenge Cup title went to the husband-and-wife team of Melanie and Martin Snow.



KNEE INJURY: Andy Roddick holds his knee after retiring from his match on Tuesday. FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

TENNIS RANKINGS

Women

Name	Points	Name	Points
1. (2) Serena Williams (USA)	7,945	1. (1) Roger Federer (Switzerland)	11,255
2. (1) Dinara Safina (Russia)	7,940	2. (2) Rafael Nadal (Spain)	8,945
3. (3) Venus Williams (USA)	6,445	3. (3) Andy Murray (Great Britain)	8,390
4. (6) Svetlana Kuznetsova (Russia)	5,981	4. (4) Novak Djokovic (Serbia)	7,740
5. (4) Elena Dementieva (Russia)	5,875	5. (5) Juan Martin Del Potro (Argentina)	6,555
6. (5) Caroline Wozniacki (Denmark)	5,575	6. (6) Andy Roddick (USA)	4,830
7. (7) Vera Zvonareva (Russia)	4,810	7. (7) Jo-Wilfried Tsonga (France)	4,100
8. (9) Victoria Azarenka (Belarus)	4,590	8. (8) Nikolay Davydenko (Russia)	3,710
9. (8) Jelena Jankovic (Serbia)	3,965	9. (9) Fernando Verdasco (Spain)	3,400
10. (11) Agnieszka Radwanska (Poland)	3,710	10. (10) Gilles Simon (France)	3,285
11. (10) Flavia Pennetta (Italy)	3,410	11. (11) Robin Soderling (Sweden)	3,125
12. (13) Marion Bartoli (France)	3,245	12. (12) Fernando Gonzalez (Chile)	2,700
13. (12) Ana Ivanovic (Serbia)	3,015	13. (15) Marin Cilic (Croatia)	2,495
14. (15) Maria Sharapova (Russia)	2,820	14. (13) Gael Monfils (France)	2,285
15. (14) Samantha Stosur (Australia)	2,695	15. (17) Tommy Robredo (Spain)	2,090
16. (16) Na Li (China)	2,690	16. (16) Radek Stepanek (Czech Republic)	2,055
17. (17) Nadia Petrova (Russia)	2,670	17. (14) David Nalbandian (Argentina)	1,865
18. (18) Kim Clijsters (Belgium)	2,310	18. (18) Tommy Haas (Germany)	1,780
19. (19) Virginie Razzano (France)	2,300	19. (19) David Ferrer (Spain)	1,770
20. (20) Amelie Mauresmo (France)	2,159	20. (21) Tomas Berdych (Czech Republic)	1,740

Rankings as of October 12, previous rankings in parentheses