

## SPORTS BRIEFS

### Argentteam wins world synchro title on Ajax

The Aspen World Synchro Championships concluded Sunday on Aspen Mountain, with "Argentteam," a team of Argentine skiers, winning the 2017 title. Taking second in the overall was the Aspen Demo Team, followed by the Whistler Demo Team.

Aspen Team Diva, which took fifth overall in the 14-team field, took first in the women's division, followed by the Beaver Creek Epic Chix and the Aspen Diva-Ettes.

Aspen Team Diva, which fields three teams total, has helped host the world championships on Aspen Mountain since 2003.

For more, go to [www.aspenteamdiva.com](http://www.aspenteamdiva.com).

### U.S. could gain FIFA support via Mexico, Canada joint bid

NEW YORK (AP) — A final on or around the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Modern stadiums across the United States and perhaps in Mexico and Canada, too.

A North American World Cup in 2026 with 48 nations would be far larger and played in almost all different venues than the 24-team event the U.S. hosted in 1994.

Soccer officials planned to announce details of the joint bid by the U.S., Mexico and Canada at a news conference Monday atop the Freedom Tower at the World Trade Center site in lower Manhattan. The split of games was likely to be discussed.

"Don't think for a moment that the political climate in the United States didn't impact this," former U.S. defender Alexi Lalas, now a Fox analyst, said Sunday. "A joint World Cup that includes Mexico probably garners additional support and sends a message."

### Oakley set for day in court in wake of MSG arrest

(AP) — Charles Oakley has been a beloved forward and a banned fan at Madison Square Garden.

But before Oakley, the former NBA enforcer and rebounding machine with the New York Knicks, can reconcile with his former team and return to the arena, he's trying to beat the rap stemming from the altercation that led to his ejection and arrest in February at the Garden.

Oakley told The Associated Press he had no regrets over his behavior that night that led him getting handcuffed near an arena exit as he waited for police to arrive.

"I would have done everything just the same way," Oakley said by phone. "I didn't do nothing. I was only in the arena five minutes. I didn't know you could get in that much trouble in five minutes. I'd take my chances and do the same thing again."

Oakley was charged with three counts of misdemeanor assault and one count of criminal trespass. He is accused of striking one security guard in the face with a closed fist, and when two other people tried to intervene, both were pushed and received cuts.

He is due in court Tuesday.

# Avalanche could be in for big changes after dismal season

Pat Graham  
The Associated Press

DENVER — Defenseman Erik Johnson neatly summed up the Colorado Avalanche's dreary season.

"Not fun," he said. "Don't want to go through it again."

Here's how far the Avalanche tumbled: Their 48 points were the lowest in a full season since 1999-2000, when the expansion Atlanta Thrashers had 39. Colorado was pretty much out of the playoff race by Christmas.

Now, the real work begins for Hall of Fame forward-turned-general manager Joe Sakic. Colorado will have a high draft pick — maybe even the top pick — but some big decisions to make. Namely, whether to completely overhaul this team by possibly trading captain Gabriel Landeskog or forward Matt Duchene after a third straight season of missing the playoffs.

"I want to be here and figure this thing out," Landeskog said. "From the bottom of my heart, I want to be here and build this thing, because this is truly rock bottom."

The season got off to a rough start before it even began when Patrick Roy surprisingly stepped aside in August. Taking his place was first-time NHL coach Jared Bednar.

Colorado's unraveling started in late November, when the team went 0-4-1 on a homestand. Soon after, the Avalanche endured a 2-18-1 stretch. They finished 61 points behind Central Division winner Chicago.

"It shouldn't happen, with the players we have here. It's unacceptable to have as many losses as we did," defenseman Francois Beauchemin said.

Asked about any positives he can take from such a downtrodden season, Beauchemin paused.

"I can't think of anything," he said. "There's not much positive."

Well, maybe a few things, like the development of 19-year-old Tyson Jost, who was

“It's not like we re-gutted it and took on a new team. It's just one of those years. Just have to hit the reset button and come back hungry and remember what this feels like.”



Colorado Avalanche head coach Jared Bednar, center, talks to center Nathan MacKinnon (29) and right wing Mikko Rantanen (96) during the third period in Dallas on Saturday. The Stars won, 4-3, in an overtime shootout.

taken with the 10th overall pick in 2016, signed a three-year entry contract on March 29 and scored his first NHL goal last week. Or the play of Mikko Rantanen, the Finnish

forward who earned his 20th goal in the season finale.

"We have a lot of good, young players coming up," said 21-year-old Nathan MacKinnon, who led the team with 53 points and played in all 82 games. "It's going to take some work, but I think the future is bright."

Colorado has a 17.9 percent chance of earning the No. 1 pick in the NHL draft lottery and won't finish lower than fourth. The team also has until Aug. 15 to negotiate a deal with University of Denver standout defenseman Will Butcher, who recently won the Hobey Baker Award and a national championship. He was a fifth-round selection by Colorado in 2013.

Johnson doesn't think this team is all that far from being a contender again.

"It's not like we re-gutted it and took on a new team. It's just one of those years," said Johnson, who missed 36 games with a broken leg. "Just have to hit the reset button and come back hungry and remember what this feels like."

Here are things to know about the Avalanche's worst full season since moving to the Mile High City in 1995-96:

#### RUMORS, RUMORS

Duchene's name will surface in trade speculation this offseason — just like it did at the trade deadline.

"Whatever happens, I'm grateful for the opportunity to be an Av," said the 26-year-old Duchene, who moved into the top 10 this season in franchise scoring. "We'll see what happens."

#### HARD TO FATHOM

Colorado was in contention for a playoff berth down the stretch in 2015-16, so the sudden deterioration is a surprise.

"They've got some great talent there. To me, it's a mystery why they've not had the success they should've had," Minnesota coach Bruce Boudreau said.

#### NO EASY ANSWER

One quick fix to get the Avalanche back on track? Probably not that simple.

"We've proven we can play some good hockey at times," Bednar said. "We have to get there more consistently."

#### VARLY'S RETURN

In 2013-14, goaltender Semyon Varlamov was a candidate for the Vezina Trophy after a 41-win season. This season, Varlamov was limited to 24 games before undergoing season-ending hip surgery in late January.

"I'm looking forward to getting a fresh start in September," he said. There's a chance Varlamov could be left unprotected by the team in the upcoming expansion draft with Las Vegas set to join the league.

#### FREE AGENTS

The Avalanche's most notable unrestricted free agents are John Mitchell, Rene Bourque and Fedor Tyutin. The restricted free agents include Matt Nieto, Mikhail Grigorenko, Patrick Wiercioch, Nikita Zadorov and Sven Andrighetto.



St. Louis Blues' goalie Jake Allen (34) defends against Colorado Avalanche's Mikko Rantanen (96) during the third period Sunday in St. Louis.