

NL champ Phillies extend President Dombrowski through 2027

By **DAN GELSTON**
AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The National League champion Philadelphia Phillies gave team President Dave Dombrowski a three-year contract extension that takes him through the 2027 season.

"This is a great organization and I feel so fortunate to be surrounded by such tremendous personnel. We have made significant strides in many areas of baseball operations over the last couple of years, and I am committed to building upon them to form a championship organization for the city and our incredible fan base," Dombrowski said

Tuesday.

Dombrowski made the pivotal decision to fire manager Joe Girardi with the team scuffling in June and replace him with bench coach Rob Thomson. Behind sluggers Bryce Harper, Kyle Schwarber and Rhys Hoskins, Thomson helped lead the Phillies to their first playoff appearance since 2011 and their eighth NL pennant.

The Phillies finished the regular season 87-75 and earned the third NL wild-card spot. They beat the NL Central champion St. Louis Cardinals and the NL East champion Atlanta Braves in the first two rounds of the postseason and the San Diego

Padres in the NL Championship Series.

The Houston Astros beat the Phillies in six games to win the World Series.

The 66-year-old Dombrowski was hired in December 2020 following stints in the front office with Montreal, the Florida Marlins, Boston and Detroit. His clubs have won five pennants and two World Series titles. He is the only head of a baseball operations department to lead four different franchises to the World Series and only one of five general managers to have won a World Series title with two different teams.

"We are extremely pleased that Dave has agreed to continue to

lead our baseball operations department through the 2027 season," team owner John Middleton said. "His astute knowledge of the game and keen eye for talent set us on a path to win the National League pennant. I firmly believe that under his stewardship, we will reach our ultimate goal."

Dombrowski was the youngest general manager in baseball history when he took over the Montreal Expos in 1988 at 31 years old, and he played a major role in putting the small-market club on a path to contention with its fruitful farm system.

He joined the expansion Florida Marlins in

1991, two years before their first game, and was the chief architect of their 1997 World Series championship. Then he oversaw an ownership-mandated fire sale, helping to ultimately rebuild a Marlins squad that won another title in 2003, although Dombrowski had left for Detroit by then.

Dombrowski turned a Tigers team that lost an American League-record 119 games in 2003 into a perennial winner. Detroit won four straight division titles from 2011-14 and AL pennants in 2006 and 2012 before cutting him loose after the 2015 season.

He joined the Red Sox as president of baseball

operations the following August and made a number of key acquisitions that led to Boston's 2018 World Series championship, when Dombrowski also assumed GM duties.

Dombrowski was fired by the Red Sox in September 2019 amid a disappointing follow-up to the championship run.

In his 33 years as a president or general manager, Dombrowski's teams have made the playoffs 10 times, winning seven division titles, five pennants and two World Series. In his last 11 seasons, his clubs have gone 982-768 (.561), with eight playoff appearances, three pennants and one World Series title.

Argentines shocked, saddened by loss in World Cup debut

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — It was a match Argentines had no doubt would be victorious and joyful. Instead, shock and sadness engulfed the streets of the capital Tuesday morning as the long-awaited debut of the national team in the World Cup ended in a 2-1 loss to Saudi Arabia.

"The truth is, this is a disappointment, a big disappointment," said Alejandro Pintos, a 36-year-old locksmith who was opening his shop a bit later than usual because he first wanted to watch the game. "This was the match that we had no choice but to win."

Pintos described the national team as being "very disorganized," something he found particularly frustrating given its 36-match unbeaten streak leading up to the tournament.

Led by Lionel Messi, Argentina entered the tournament as one of the favorites, but instead suffered one of the biggest World Cup upsets after Saudi Arabia rallied with two second-half goals in Lusail Stadium.

"I'm really quite bitter," Josefina Licera, a 27-year-old social worker, said as she waited for the bus to go to work. "I was really sure we were going to win and it was a big surprise."

Susana Leguizamón, 55, woke up half an hour before the match was set to start at 7 a.m. local time and put on her blue-and-white-striped Argentina jersey, ready to celebrate what she thought was going to be a fabulous debut for the national team in Qatar.

"I was very, very, very surprised," Leguizamón said. "The truth is, we underestimated our rival."

Argentines were counting on a World Cup win to bring a glimmer of a hope to a country that has been economically stagnant for years, is suffering a nearly 100% inflation rate, and where close to

4 in 10 people are living in poverty.

Oscar López, 67, was visibly upset as he reflected on the team's unexpected defeat while wiping down windows outside the building where he is the superintendent.

"If they're in the World Cup, no team is easy," López said, his eyes watering. "You always have to be careful."

But Santiago Babarro, 40, said he wasn't all that shocked by the result.

"The same thing always happens to Argentina," the retail worker said. "We say, 'This is an easy match, we can win it easily,' and then,

bam! They put us in our place. We always believe we're more than what we are."

Sebastián Fabre, 48, woke up with an uneasy feeling Tuesday, worried about what he said was overconfidence on the side of Argentina fans.

"There was way too much unfounded optimism. I didn't want to say anything but I think we were all way too overconfident," Fabre said.

Leguizamón, who walked to her job at a restaurant still wearing her Argentina jersey, said she could feel those around her were also suffering the loss.

"Everyone is very sad,

very sad," she said. "We all woke up with lots of hope."

Still, the fans said they could see a silver lining.

"Really, it's better that this happened in the first match and not in the quarter finals," Fabre said. "That's the positive side to this."

Leuizamón agreed. "A trip is not a fall, as we say here," she said, using a common Argentine expression. "I'm a big fan of the national team and I get in a really bad mood when it loses but my hope is intact."

Argentina plays Mexico on Saturday in their second match in Group C.

Three great years in golf, two of them already forgotten

By **DOUG FERGUSON**
AP Golf Writer

The PGA Tour's social media army probably meant well.

The tweet it sent Monday night celebrated big years by Rory McIlroy and Lydia Ko, and for good reason. Both delivered some of their best, most consistent golf. Both won the points race on their respective tours and the trophy for the lowest scoring average. Money can be skewed. Scores don't lie.

They won PGA Tour and LPGA Tour player of the year, the former a vote of the players, the latter based on points.

Golf royalty? Sure.

But for the PGA Tour to suggest they "ruled the golf world in '22" is to dismiss Scottie Scheffler and to ignore Cameron Smith.

It also overlooks that neither McIlroy nor Ko won a major championship. That's not a prerequisite of a great year, but it stands out — especially on the men's

side — when players who won as much or more have a green jacket or a claret jug to show for it.

Besides, the year isn't over yet.

Smith on Tuesday accepted the keys to his hometown of Brisbane, where he is playing the Australian PGA Championship. He will be going for his fifth win of the year, with the Australian Open still to come next week.

Scheffler closes out his year in the Bahamas against a 20-man field, with all but four of them among the top 20 in the world. Still to be determined is whether he has a chance to regain the No. 1 ranking he had for the majority of the year.

All three had great years.

McIlroy joined Henrik Stenson as the only players to win the points title on the PGA Tour and the European tour in the same season.

Stenson played 10

regular European tour events when he won in 2013. McIlroy played six times without winning, but it spoke to the consistently high level he played all year. Only once did he finish worse than eighth — a tie for 12th to start the year in Abu Dhabi.

In the majors, McIlroy finally left Augusta National on a happy note by holing a bunker shot for a 64 to tie for second (he was 10 back of Scheffler to start the final round). McIlroy had the 18-hole lead at the PGA Championship, was one shot out of the 36-hole lead at the U.S. Open and led after 54 holes at the British Open.

Along with his wins — CJ Cup, Canadian Open, Tour Championship — McIlroy was even more impressive by playing great golf and being such a strong voice for the PGA Tour in its fight against Saudi-funded LIV Golf.

Never mind that McIlroy seemed to ex-

tend an olive branch and then use it as a switch. He said the "us versus them" has gotten out of control, and then he said LIV leader Greg Norman needs to go because talks can only happen "with an adult in the room."

Even so, his role as the strongest voice for the PGA Tour was one he gladly accepted, and the tour needed it. And all the while, he was at his best late in the year. In his final seven starts, McIlroy had a 67.5 scoring average, never finished worse than eighth, had two wins and earned two very big trophies.

Scheffler gets forgotten because he was at his best early in the year.

In a span of six starts, he beat four of the toughest fields and formats at Phoenix and Bay Hill, at the Match Play and the Masters. So dominant was he at Augusta National that he absent-mindedly four-putted the last hole

and still won by three.

That was his last win of the year, still the most on the PGA Tour. Overlooked is the playoff loss to an unlikely birdie putt at the Colonial, Scheffler being one putt away from a playoff in the U.S. Open and one swing away from a chance to win the FedEx Cup.

He set a record for PGA Tour earnings (which undoubtedly will be broken next year given the \$20 million elevated events) and was No. 1 for 30 weeks, earning him the Mark McCormack Award.

Smith already lost his parking spot and his membership at the TPC Sawgrass, the price of turning his back on the PGA Tour to join a new league that offers few guarantees outside of money. He gave up a shot at being No. 1 in the world, along with recognition he deserves for the year he had.

On a Plantation course at Kapalua built for power, he took down

the No. 1 player (Jon Rahm) and set a record to par at 34 under. He made 10 birdies in the final round at Sawgrass to win The Players Championship against the strongest field in golf. And at the home of golf, he had one of the greatest closing rounds in British Open history with a 64 to rally past McIlroy and hold off Cameron Young.

Against the 48-man fields over 54 holes at LIV Golf, he missed a playoff by one shot in his debut and won the next event by three.

Scheffler and Smith aren't considered "golf royalty" because they've spent only one year in the palace. McIlroy — along with Ko, who reached No. 1 when she was 17 — have been around long enough for their big years to receive proper plaudits.

It just shouldn't be at the expense of two others who were just as good.

Analysis: Russell Wilson trade looks like Herschel Walker's

By **ARNIE STAPLETON**
AP Pro Football Writer

DENVER (AP) — The most lopsided trade in NFL history sent Herschel Walker to Minnesota for two fistfuls of players and draft picks that served as the pillars of the Dallas Cowboys' dynasty of the 1990s.

The Russell Wilson trade isn't quite so cockeyed, but eight months in it sure looks as one-sided as any deal since the Walker washout that Jerry Jones immediately dubbed "The Great Train Robbery."

What Denver has 33 years later might very

well go down as "The Big Bamboozle."

Walker wasn't exactly a bust in Minneapolis, scoring 25 touchdowns in 2 1/2 seasons with the Vikings. But he was long gone by the time the trade blossomed for the Cowboys after Jones and Jimmy Johnson drafted Emmitt Smith, Alexander Wright, Russell Maryland, Alvin Harper, Dixon Edwards, Robert Jones, Kevin Smith and Darren Woodson on their way to three Super Bowl parades.

Wilson hasn't been anything like the Broncos expected when GM George Paton sent first-

and second-round picks this year and next along with three players for the nine-time Pro Bowl quarterback who was supposedly still in his prime at age 33.

The \$245 million extension he gave Wilson before the season only adds to the angst of Broncos fans who have watched a string of quarterbacks fail ever since Peyton Manning walked away to do game shows and commercials with his brothers after winning Super Bowl 50.

The Seahawks selected tackle Charles Cross in the first round and edge rusher Boye Mafe

in the second with the premium picks they got from Denver. As it stands now, they'll have the No. 6 overall selection in the 2023 draft thanks to Wilson's debacle of a Denver debut.

Not only that, but Geno Smith, Wilson's successor in Seattle, is having the kind of season everyone outside of Washington figured Wilson would have in the Rocky Mountains this year.

Smith has the surprising Seahawks tied with the 49ers atop the NFC West at 6-4. He's completing a league-high 72.8% of his passes

and has 17 touchdown throws and four interceptions in his first year as a starter since 2014.

With six losses in nine starts, Wilson is completing a career-worst 59.5% of his passes, is on pace for a career-high 57 sacks and has thrown just seven touchdown passes to go with five interceptions.

The Broncos are 3-7 and sitting in the basement of the AFC West after getting swept by the lowly Raiders and coach Josh McDaniels on Sunday.

The Seahawks are averaging 25.7 points per game with Smith at

quarterback, just a tick more than the 25.3 they averaged during Wilson's tenure in Seattle.

Wilson's stunningly poor play in Denver prompted a reporter to ask him Sunday after the 22-16 overtime loss to the Raiders if the Broncos just aren't good enough to win these type of games.

Fans are starting to wonder if it's Wilson who isn't good enough anymore because the Broncos have lost six games by one score and are negating Denver's dominant defense by averaging just 14.7 points.