

Christchurch-based team seal title by moving 6 points clear of Blues

Crusaders beat Highlanders to win Super Rugby Aotearoa

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, Aug 9, (AP) — The Christchurch-based Crusaders rallied from 22-13 down to beat the Dunedin-based Highlanders 32-22 on Sunday, clinching the inaugural and probably unique Super Rugby Aotearoa title with one round remaining.

The Crusaders won the full, five-nation Super Rugby tournament in each of the last three years but were denied a fourth-straight title — their 11th overall — when the coronavirus pandemic brought the competition to an end in March.

Super Rugby Aotearoa, which involved New Zealand's five teams meeting home and away in a tight, 10-week format, was created to replace the abandoned tournament and has been played in front of large crowds, including the capacity 20,000 that watched the Crusaders clinch the title at home on Sunday.

The Crusaders came into Sunday's match two points ahead of the Auckland-based Blues and three points clear of the Wellington-based Hurricanes, who took a bonus point from a 31-18 win over the Chiefs on Saturday. In winning Sunday, the Crusaders sealed the title by moving six points clear of the Blues who they meet in next week-end's final round.

The championship trophy, a mounted "pounamu" or greenstone "mere" — a traditional weapon and symbol of status of New Zealand's indigenous Maori — represents "the coming together of the Blues, Chiefs, Hurricanes, Crusaders and Highlanders in the wake of the disruption and turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic."

RUGBY

It may also be an historic oddity. New Zealand Rugby hopes to establish a new Super Rugby tournament next year involving Australian and Pacific teams, making Super Rugby Aotearoa a one-off.

For a long time on Sunday, the Highlanders looked like denying the Crusaders the title at least for another week. They started with pace and intensity, throwing the home team off their game and scoring the first try of the match through Shannon Frizell after only two minutes.

They kept up that assertive style of play into the second half, refusing to allow the Crusaders to settle, forcing turnovers and staging counter-attacks which stressed the defense.

The match finally turned in the middle of the second spell when fullback Will Jordan and winger George Bridge combined for two tries in two minutes to give the Crusaders a 25-22 lead, their first of the match.



Crusaders Codie Taylor and injured team-mate Scott Barrett hold the Super Rugby Aotearoa trophy aloft after defeating the Highlanders in Christchurch, New Zealand, on Aug 9. (AP)

Semien hits leadoff HR as A's top Astros to win 8th straight

Meadows, Rays split with Yankees in 7-inning doubleheader

OAKLAND, California, Aug 9, (AP) — Marcus Semien homered in the first after hitting a walkoff single to end a 13-inning win as the Oakland Athletics beat the Houston Astros 3-1 on Saturday for their eighth straight victory.

Frankie Montas (2-1) pitched seven shutout innings, allowing two hits without walking a batter and striking out five for the AL West-leading A's.

The three-time reigning division champions Astros lost their fourth in a row. The last three defeats had been by a total of four runs.

Semien became the first player in A's franchise history with a game-ending hit and a leadoff homer on back-to-back days.

Matt Chapman homered in the eighth and added an RBI groundout in



San Francisco Giants starting pitcher Johnny Cueto throws during the first inning of the team's baseball game against the Los Angeles Dodgers on Aug 8, in Los Angeles. (AP)

a two-run homer, six Texas pitchers combined on a four-hitter to give the Rangers consecutive wins for the first time this season.

Edinson Volquez (1-1), the first reliever after starter Kolby Allard's five innings, worked the sixth for his first major league victory since 2017. It was his first win for the Rangers since 2007, before the former starter was traded to Cincinnati for Josh Hamilton. Rafael Montero worked a perfect ninth for his second save in two nights.

Orioles 5, Nationals 3
In Washington, Pat Valaika, Pedro Severino and Anthony Santander homered during a five-run rally in the eighth inning as Baltimore roughed up Washington's relievers.

The Orioles went into eighth with just two hits and trailing 3-0. Sean Doolittle relieved and Baltimore began the eighth with back-to-back, pinch-hit homers by Valaika and Severino.

Daniel Hudson (1-1) took over with one out and after a walk and single, Santander hit his third homer of the season into the left-field bleachers.

Shawn Armstrong (1-0) allowed just one hit and struck out two in 1½ innings of relief. Miguel Castro earned his first save of the season with a scoreless ninth.

Royals 9, Twins 6
In Kansas City, Mo, Jorge Soler homered in back-to-back innings, the second blast coming in a go-ahead six-run fourth in which Kansas City went deep three times.

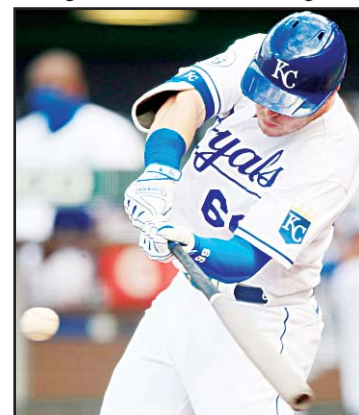
Nicky Lopez hit a two-run shot off reliever Lewis Thorpe (0-1) and Salvador Perez also went deep as the first seven Royals reached base in the fourth. Soler and Perez went back-to-back for the second time this season, and it was the first time the club had hit three homers in an inning since Aug 19, 2018, against the White Sox.

Tyler Zuber (1-1) earned the win in relief of Danny Duffy. Trevor Rosenthal got four outs for his second straight save.

Yankees 8, Rays 4, Game 1
Rays 5, Yankees 3, Game 2
In St Petersburg, Florida, Austin Meadows hit a two-run single and the Tampa Bay earned a split of seven-inning games in a doubleheader.

The Yankees won the opener as ace Gerrit Cole came within one strike of earning his 20th straight regular-season win.

Cole took a 5-0 lead into the fifth. With two outs and a runner on, he had a 1-2 count on Ji-Man Choi, who came back to hit an RBI double. Jose Martinez followed with a two-run homer on the 107th pitch from a clearly tiring Cole. Soon after, Yankees manager Aaron Boone took a slow walk to mound to replace Cole with Chad Green (2-0), who got the win after allowing one run over 1-1/3 innings.



Kansas City Royals' Ryan O'Hearn hits an RBI single during the first inning of the team's baseball game against the Minnesota Twins at Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City, Mo on Aug 8. (AP)

Aaron Judge hit his eighth home run of the season for the Yankees. Giancarlo Stanton and Mike Ford also connected for New York.

After Ford homered, a two-run double by Gio Urshela put the Yankees up 4-0 and chased Rays starter Tyler Glasnow (0-1) with two outs in the third.

In the nightcap, the Rays used six pitchers during a bullpen day. Judge flied out deep with a runner on base to end it.

Pete Fairbanks (2-1) pitched the fourth to get the win.

Mets 8, Marlins 4
In New York, J.D. Davis homered and drove in a career-high four runs, Pete Alonso and Michael Conforto also connected, and the New York Mets finally slowed down Miami.

Rookie left-hander David Peterson (2-1) allowed two runs over five innings to win his first home start for the Mets. Davis hit a three-run shot and a sacrifice fly to help New York (6-9) win for only the third time in 10 games.

Blue Jays 2, Red Sox 1
In Boston, five Toronto pitchers combined on a four-hitter and Lourdes Gurriel Jr scored the tie-breaking run in the eighth inning on a groundout to lift the Blue Jays.

Anthony Kay (1-0) pitched 3-1/3 scoreless innings for the win. Anthony Bass picked up his third save.

Gurriel drew a leadoff walk in the eighth from Marcus Walden (0-1), moved to third on Randal Grichuk's one-out single and scored on a soft grounder by Rowdy Tellez to second baseman Jose Peraza, who was playing deep and didn't have time to turn a double play.

Reds 4, Brewers 1
In Milwaukee, Anthony DeSclafani allowed two singles over six scoreless innings and Eugenio Suarez hit a

three-run homer to lift Cincinnati.

Suarez put the Reds up 3-0 in the first with his second homer of the season. The Reds added a run in the seventh and Milwaukee countered with Brock Holt's sacrifice fly in the eighth.

DeSclafani (1-0), making his second start after opening the season on the disabled list, allowed a leadoff single in the third to Holt, who was erased on a double play, and a two-out single to Eric Sogard in the sixth.

Raisel Iglesias pitched a perfect ninth for his second save of the season and 100th career save.

The Reds capitalized on shoddy defense for three runs in the first off Trevor Anderson (0-1), who lasted just 3-2/3 innings, allowing the three runs — two earned — on four hits, walking two and striking out two.

Rockies 5, Mariners 0
In Seattle, Charlie Blackmon added three more hits to his major league-leading total and drove in three runs, and four Colorado pitchers combined for a one-hitter.

Colorado won for the seventh time in eight games to keep rolling atop the NL West.

Rockies starter Ryan Castellani, making his major league debut, began with four perfect innings. He was pulled after a hit batter and walk to open the fifth. Reliever Jeff Hoffman kept the no-hitter going until J.P. Crawford lined a single to center field with two outs in the sixth inning for the Mariners' lone hit.

Phillies 5, Braves 0
In Philadelphia, Jake Arrieta tossed six strong innings for his first win in more than a year and Jay Bruce and J.T. Realmuto each homered to lead Philadelphia.

Arrieta (1-1) tossed three-hit ball and struck out five for his first win since June 30, 2019. He had help all around — right fielder Bryce Harper made an outstretched, diving catch in the fifth that earned a fist pump in appreciation from Arrieta.

Tigers 11, Pirates 5
In Pittsburgh, Niko Goodrum, Miguel Cabrera, C.J. Cron and Jeimer Candelario all hit home runs in the first inning against Pittsburgh's Derek Holland to lead Detroit.

Detroit sent four of Holland's first 11 pitches over the fence at PNC Park to propel the Tigers to another big offensive outburst against reeling Pittsburgh one night after a 17-13 win in 11 innings.

The Pirates lost for the ninth time in their last 10 games.

Cabrera got three hits, including his 481st career home run. The 37-year-old also drove in three runs.

Indians 7, White Sox 1
In Chicago, Zach Plesac tossed six strong innings and Cleveland snapped a scoring drought with a six-run fourth.

The Indians had been blanked for 13 innings before Frammil Reyes and Jordan Luplow each hit a two-run homer in the fourth. Luplow was 0 for 21 with a walk this season before homering. Domingo Santana added a solo homer in the eighth.

Plesac (1-1) allowed five hits and struck out seven in lowering his ERA to 1.29 this year.



Crusaders' Braydon Ennor breaks the tackle of Highlanders' Aaron Smith to score his team's final try during the Super Rugby Aotearoa rugby game between the Crusaders and the Highlanders in Christchurch, New Zealand on Aug 9. (AP)

MLB Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Aug 9, (AP): Results and standings from the MLB games on Saturday.			
NV Yankees	8	TB Rays (7 ins)	4
Cleveland	7	Chic W. Sox	1
Oakland	3	Houston	1
Detroit	11	Pittsburgh	5
TB Rays	5	NV Yankees (7 ins)	3
Baltimore	5	Washington	3
Texas	2	LA Angels	0
Toronto	2	Boston	1
KC Chiefs	9	Minnesota	6
Colorado	5	Seattle	0
Phillies	5	Atlanta	0
Cincinnati	4	Milwaukee	1
NY Mets	8	Miami	4
Arizona	3	SD Padres	2
SF Giants	5	LA Dodgers	4

American League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	10	5	.667	—
Baltimore	7	7	.500	2½
Tampa Bay	7	8	.467	3
Toronto	5	7	.417	3½
Boston	5	9	.357	4½

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Minnesota	10	5	.667	—
Detroit	7	5	.583	1½
Cleveland	7	7	.500	1½
Chicago	8	7	.533	2½
Kansas City	6	10	.375	4½

West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Oakland	11	4	.733	—
Houston	6	8	.429	4½
Texas	5	8	.385	5
Los Angeles	5	10	.333	6
Seattle	5	11	.313	6½

National League				
East Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	7	2	.778	—
Atlanta	9	6	.600	1
Philadelphia	6	4	.600	2½
New York	6	9	.400	4
Washington	4	7	.364	4

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Chicago	10	3	.769	—
Cincinnati	7	8	.467	4
St. Louis	2	3	.400	4
Milwaukee	5	7	.417	4½
Pittsburgh	3	12	.200	8

West Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Colorado	11	3	.786	—
Los Angeles	10	5	.667	1½
San Diego	8	7	.533	3½
San Francisco	7	7	.500	5
Arizona	6	9	.400	5½

Rangers 2, Angels 0
In Arlington, Texas, Joey Gallo hit