

## FOR DECATHLETE CHAMP EATON, JUST 2 EVENTS AT MILLROSE GAMES

**NEW YORK:** The "world's greatest athlete" could be the fourth-best hurdler at Saturday's Millrose Games. And Ashton Eaton's OK with that. Eaton is the Olympic gold medalist and world-record holder in the decathlon for the US, while his wife, Brianne Theisen-Eaton, won silver at the last two world championships in the heptathlon for Canada. Other track and field stars will compete in their specialties multiple times before this summer's Rio Games, but for the decathlon and heptathlon, that's not realistic. Eaton, 28, and Theisen-Eaton, 27, each plan to complete the exhausting full event just once before going for matching gold medals in Brazil.

Yesterday in the 109th edition of the indoor meet in New York City, Eaton took part in simply the 60-meter hurdles and the long jump, and Theisen-Eaton raced only the hurdles. "You learn by training; you get in shape by training," said their longtime coach, Harry Marra.

"But you get sharp by running against the guy next to you competing." The process of deciding which meets to enter - and which events to do at each one - can take weeks, Theisen-Eaton explained Thursday. They'll meet with their manager for hours, going over all

the different options.

Marra wants them to compete in the long jump, which requires such precise timing, at least a couple of times during the season. They also need experience in their weaker events - Theisen-Eaton is particularly committed to working on the javelin.

For the throws, they sometimes need to request a special invitation from a meet director to make the field because their personal bests wouldn't get them in otherwise. Or they may choose to go to smaller meets. Competing in the long jump and throws is especially important because decathletes and heptathletes get only three attempts in them.

Marra also would like to make sure Eaton races the 100 meters (which opens the decathlon) and Theisen-Eaton the 100 hurdles (which starts the heptathlon) as a "dress rehearsal" for how their full events will begin.

### 'OUR WORK YEAR'

At last year's Millrose Games, Eaton competed in the hurdles and long jump - and the high jump, if you count his leap over the 8-foot padded wall that stops the hurdlers' momentum beyond the finish line. Eaton had just set a personal

best in the 60 hurdles and matched the time of Jason Richardson, the 2012 Olympic silver medalist in the 110 hurdles.

"It's a sense that I rise above myself in order to just compete with them," Eaton said Thursday. "It's highly motivating - I'm very much a competitor at heart. It's extremely helpful to have somebody that I know is that much better. For some reason, I believe I can compete with them, (and) I always end up doing well."

After Eaton won gold in London, coaching great Tom Tellez reminded Marra that unfortunately American fans remember only Olympic medals, not world championships. With the focus on Rio, Eaton didn't compete in a full decathlon for more than 24 months before the 2015 worlds during what Marra called "our work year."

Eaton then went out and broke his own world record in Beijing last August.

He'll need to complete a full decathlon during the U.S. Olympic trials in early July, with about six weeks of rest before the competition in Rio. Theisen-Eaton won't need to qualify for Canada, so she'll do her one pre-Olympic heptathlon at a meet in Austria in late May.

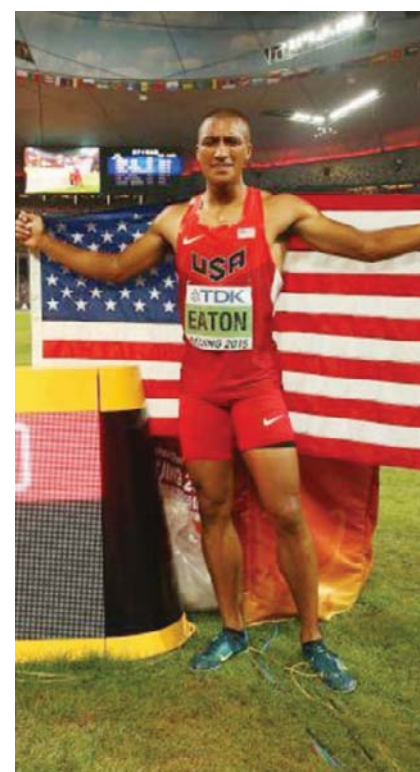
Eaton plans to compete in the heptathlon and Theisen-Eaton in the pentathlon at the world indoor championships next month in Portland, Oregon, in Eaton's home state. They train a couple of hours away in Eugene, where both attended the University of Oregon.

Theisen-Eaton figures that one hurdle race is the equivalent of three hurdles practices. "It makes everything crisp," she said. "It gets you excited. It changes your mindset." The hurdles aren't her strongest event, so racing against the specialists Saturday will help her hone her mental strategy for the starting blocks at the Olympics.

"I know there's going to be people in the hurdle race in Rio that are going to be better," she said. "How do I deal with that? How do I focus on my cues but also try to compete with them?"

For Allyson Felix, the Olympic gold medalist in the 200, Millrose also offers a chance to work on part of her own multi-event challenge. Felix will try for the 200-400 double in Rio, but she'll race the 60 and work on her start.

In Millrose's signature event, the Wanamaker Mile, American Matthew Centrowitz seeks his second straight title and third overall. —AP



Ashton Eaton

## GREEN PICKS TYSON ROSS ON OPENING DAY FOR PADRES

**PEORIA:** San Diego Padres right-hander Tyson Ross has more than a month to prepare for his opening-day start against the defending NL West champion Los Angeles Dodgers April 4 at Petco Park.

New manager Andy Green announced the decision Friday morning before pitchers and catchers went through their first workout. "Tyson is ready and eager to take that ball on Day One, and we're excited to have him as our ace," Green said. "It's definitely an affirmation of who Tyson is and a belief in him and where he's headed. I think it's just the right choice as an organization."

Ross was 10-12 with a 3.26 ERA and 212 strikeouts and 84 walks in 196 innings last year.

He's entering his fourth season with the Padres. Former manager Bud Black would usually wait until toward the end of spring training to announce his opening-day starter.

"I think in some regards, people look at the camp we're running here and think, 'Hey, everything's open for grabs,'" said Green, who inherits a team that underwhelmed after a dramatic makeover the previous offseason. "When there's decisions to be made we're not afraid to go out and make them, and we'll make those decisions at the time we think is most appropriate. In setting our rotation going into camp, we've got three guys at the top of the rotation we feel very good about."

Green said James Shields will be the No. 2 starter and Andrew Cashner No. 3, with the final two spots to be determined.

Shields was last year's opening day starter after signing a \$75 million, four-year contract as a free agent, and Ross was No. 2. Shields went 13-7 with a 3.91 ERA last year.

Ross said it caught him off-guard when pitching coach Darren Balslev told him the news "It's a true honor to be named opening day starter. I'm looking forward to not only taking it on the first day, but getting the ball rolling for the whole team," Ross

said. "We've got a new coaching staff and it's kind of a new culture we're trying to create here and I'm looking forward to taking that first step."

Ross said being picked for the honor more than a month out doesn't change anything.

"I come out here every day and put in the work. It's all about the process and just one day at a time," he said. "I may start the first game, but the second day, that's the most important person out there. Once we get into the rotation, whoever we send out there, it's going to be their day to shine. We've got some talented pitchers on this team. It's going to be a lot of fun."

Catcher Derek Norris said Ross showed impressive command during his session off the mound Friday.

"I would have taken what he did today, in three weeks," Norris said. "He was tremendous today. His location with all his pitches, not spinning any breaking balls yet, but he's got a little better feel for his change, which he didn't use a lot last year. His command with his fastball today was incredible. I literally walked up to him and said, 'Look, I've got nothing to say. That was excellent. As much as you love to hear me talk and communicate, I've got nothing for you.' He was great."

"I know it's something he wanted to make emphasis on this offseason and it already shows in freaking Day One," Norris said. "You look for that in week two and three. For him to come out and have that kind of command was incredible. It was a great first day."

Ross was a second-round pick of his hometown Oakland Athletics out of California in the 2008 draft. He went 6-18 with a 5.33 ERA in parts of three seasons with the A's before being traded to San Diego on Nov. 16, 2012. He's gone 26-34 with a 3.07 ERA in three seasons with San Diego. He was an All-Star in 2014, when he finished 13-14 with a 2.81 ERA. Overall, he's 32-52 with a 3.57 ERA. —AP



Tyson Ross

## ERRANI WINS DUBAI TITLE

**DUBAI:** Sara Errani of Italy trounced Barbora Strycova of the Czech Republic 6-0, 6-2 to win her ninth career title at the Dubai Tennis Championships yesterday. Errani was a runner-up in Dubai before, losing the 2013 final to Petra Kvitova. Strycova was trailing 6-0, 2-0 when the crowd

cheered her as she came out to serve the third game. After Strycova finally won that game with a backhand volley, she raised her hands in a victory gesture.

Errani became the first Italian to win the Dubai title on her fifth match point when Strycova netted the final shot. —AP



**DUBAI:** Italian tennis player Sara Errani kisses the winner's trophy after beating Czech player Barbora Strycova in the WTA tennis match of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships, yesterday. Sara Errani (ITA) beat Barbora Strycova (CZE) 6-0, 6-2. — AFP



**NEWARK:** John Moore #2 of the New Jersey Devils plays the puck in the first period against Matt Martin #17 of the New York Islanders at the Prudential Center on Friday in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP

## ISLANDERS START TRIP ON A HIGH WITH WIN OVER DEVILS

**NEWARK:** Casey Cizikas scored a lucky early goal, Jaroslav Halak had 27 saves and the New York Islanders opened a season-long, seven-game trip with a 1-0 win over the New Jersey Devils on Friday. Halak was outstanding and had a little help from the post while getting his third shutout. Reid Boucher's 1-on-1 chance in the first period hit iron, but Halak also made great saves in close against Sergey Kalinin, Kyle Palmieri and Lee Stempniak, the last one a pad save early in the third period when the Devils' forward had a seemingly open net. The Islanders are in third place in the Metropolitan Division, four points ahead of the fifth-place Devils with two games in hand. Cory Schneider made 23 saves and the Devils lost their second straight.

### HURRICANES 5, SHARKS 2

Jeff Skinner scored twice in the third period and Carolina beat San Jose. Chris Terry and Joakim Nordstrom also scored, and Jordan Staal added an empty-netter for Carolina. The Hurricanes bounced back from a 4-2 loss at Ottawa on Thursday night and haven't lost consecutive games in regulation in more than two months. Brent Burns and Tomas Hertl scored for San Jose, which has the league's second-best road record. The Sharks had won three straight and were 4-0-1 in their last five games. Cam Ward was back in the lineup after missing two games with a lower-body injury and made 22 saves for the Hurricanes. Martin Jones stopped 32 shots for the Sharks.

### CANADIENS 3, FLYERS 2, SO

Paul Byron scored in the fifth round of a shootout and Montreal beat Philadelphia to end a three-game losing streak. Dale Weise and Max Pacioretty scored in regulation for Montreal, and PK Subban had two assists. Mike Condon made 35 saves. The Flyers had goals from Nick Cousins and Michael Raffl, and Michal Neuvirth stopped 29 shots. The Flyers' Shayne Gostisbehere had an assist to extend his point streak to 14 games, an NHL record for a rookie defenseman. It's the league's longest active streak, and the Margate, Florida native is the first defenseman since Brian Leetch from Oct. 30 to Dec. 1, 1996 with points in 14 straight games.

### SABRES 4, BLUE JACKETS 0

Jamie McGinn scored twice and Robin Lehner stopped 38 shots for his third career shutout to lead Buffalo over Columbus. Sam Reinhart and David Legwand also scored to help Buffalo win for the third time in four games (3-0-1). Reinhart slipped a shot inside the post at 9:53 of the third for his 18th goal of the season to make it 4-0. Columbus goalie Joonas Korpi also gave up all four goals on 31 shots and was pulled with 8 1/2 minutes to go. Curtis McElhinney finished up and stopped all four shots he faced.

### FLAMES 5, CANUCKS 2

TJ Brodie stayed hot with three assists and

Calgary beat Vancouver to snap a three-game losing streak. Two of Brodie's assists came in the second period while Calgary scored three straight goals to take a 4-2 lead. The 25-year-old defenseman has 11 points in his last eight games, all assists. Joe Colborne, Mikael Backlund and Michael Frolik each had a goal and an assist

for Calgary. Mark Giordano and Josh Jooris also scored, and the Flames kept their faint playoff hopes alive. Jonas Hiller made 26 saves. Adam Cracknell and Jake Virtanen scored for Vancouver, and Jacob Markstrom made 28 saves. The Canucks have lost four in a row, each by a score of 5-2. — AP

### NHL results/standings

Montreal 3, Philadelphia 2 (SO); Calgary 5, Vancouver 2; New Jersey 0, NY Islanders 1; Carolina 5, San Jose 2; Columbus 0, Buffalo 4.

Eastern Conference						Western Conference					
Atlantic Division						Pacific Division					
	W	L	OT	GF	GA	PTS					
Florida	33	18	7	161	136	73	Chicago	38	18	5	175
Boston	31	21	6	174	160	68	Dallas	37	16	6	191
Detroit	29	20	9	149	153	67	St. Louis	34	17	9	147
Tampa Bay	31	22	4	155	144	66	Nashville	27	21	10	153
Montreal	28	27	4	162	163	60	Colorado	30	26	4	161
Ottawa	27	26	6	169	184	60	Minnesota	26	22	10	150
Buffalo	24	28	7	141	162	55	Winnipeg	25	28	4	148
Toronto	20	27	9	136	167	49					
Metropolitan Division						Central Division					
Washington	42	10	4	187	128	88	Los Angeles	33	20	4	155
NY Rangers	33	19	6	170	150	72	Anaheim	30	19	8	141
NY Islanders	31	19	7	164	144	69	San Jose	31	21	5	168
Pittsburgh	29	19	8	148	144	66	Arizona	27	24	6	157
New Jersey	29	23	7	130	137	65	Vancouver	22	24	12	137
Carolina	27	22	10	146	156	64	Calgary	26	28	3	158
Philadelphia	25	21	11	139	154	61	Edmonton	22	31	6	148
Columbus	23	29	7	149	184	53	Note: Overtime losses (OT) worth 1 pt and not included in loss column (L).				

## NADAL INTO RIO S-FINALS WITHOUT HITTING A SHOT

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Rafael Nadal advanced to the semifinals of the Rio Open on Friday without hitting a shot. The top seed moved on after his quarterfinal opponent Alexandr Dolgoplov of Ukraine withdrew before the clay-court match with a shoulder injury.

Tournament organizers said Dolgoplov hurt his shoulder in a doubles match on Thursday. Nadal's semifinal opponent will be Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay, who defeated Federico Delbonis of Argentina 6-4, 7-6 (4). The match was delayed for 2-1/2 hours with Delbonis leading 4-2 in the second set.

No. 5 Dominic Thiem upset No. 2 David Ferrer 6-3, 6-2. The 22-year-old Austrian won the Buenos Aires title last week - beating Nadal in the semifinals - and is the youngest player in the ATP's top 20 rankings. Thiem will face Guido Pella of Argentina in the semis. He defeated Daniel Gimeno-Traver of Spain 5-7, 6-1, 7-5, but Thiem will be a strong favorite to reach the final.

On the women's side of the ATP-WTA event,

Petra Martic of Croatia defeated No. 6 Lara Arruabarrena 6-4, 5-7, 7-5 to reach the semifinals. In another upset, Sorana Cirstea of Romania defeated No. 3 Danka Kovinic 6-1, 6-2 to eliminate the last seeded player from the tournament. In Marseille, top-seeded Stan Wawrinka lost to eighth-seeded Benoit Paire of France 6-4, 1-6, 7-5 in the quarterfinals of the Open 13 on Friday. Paire had 12 aces against the 2014 Australian Open champion, and next meets fourth-seeded Marin Cilic, who reached his first semifinal of the season by beating Russian Andrey Kuznetsov 6-3, 6-4.

Second-seeded Tomas Berdych also reached the last four, beating No. 6 David Goffin of Belgium 6-3, 6-4. The Czech player faces unseeded Nick Kyrgios in the last four after the Australian swept aside No. 3 Richard Gasquet of France 6-0, 6-4.

The big-serving Kyrgios had 17 aces and did not concede a single break-point chance on his serve, hitting three aces in his final service game. —Agencies