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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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McMaster: Russia should rethink Syria policy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's national security adviser is calling on Russia to re-evaluate its support for Syrian President Bashar Assad, leaving open the possibility of additional U.S. military action against Syria.

In his first televised interview, H.R. McMaster pointed to dual U.S. goals of defeating Islamic State and removing Assad from power.

As Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was making the Trump administration's first official trip this week to Russia, McMaster said Russia will have to decide whether it wanted to continue backing a "murderous regime."

Trump is weighing next steps after ordering airstrikes last week.

"It's very difficult to understand how a political solution could result from the continuation of the Assad regime," McMaster said on "Fox News Sunday."

"Now, we are not saying that we are the ones who are going to effect that change. What we are saying is, other countries have to ask themselves some hard questions. Russia should ask themselves, 'Why are we sup-

McCain: Russia cooperated in chemical attack

Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia — U.S. Sen. John McCain accused Russia on Monday of having cooperated with Syrian government forces in a chemical weapons attack that killed more than 80 people, including more than a dozen children.

The Republican senator said at a press conference in Belgrade, Serbia, that he believes "the Russians knew about chemical weapons because they were operating exactly from the same base."

"I hope that this behavior by Syria, in what clearly is cooperation with Russia and Syria together, will never happen again," he said.

McCain said the U.S. should take out Syria's air force as part of stopping Syrian President Bashar Assad from repeating such attacks in the future.

"I would prevent Bashar Assad from flying from his airfields if he doesn't renounce the use of these weapons," the former American airman said.

"The United States should first tell Russia that this kind of a war crime is unacceptable in the world today."

He said the upcoming visit by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to Moscow should "lead to an agreement on the part of the Russians that they will not allow Syria to ever again use chemical weapons."

"Remember, Russians made that commitment after they (Syrian government forces) crossed the so-called red line back in 2014. I hope that this will be the first item on the agenda," McCain said.

He also said he would "make sure that we arm and train some of those who fight against Bashar Assad."

porting this murderous regime that is committing mass murder of its own population?"

He said Russia also should be asked how it didn't know that Syria was planning a chemical attack since it had advisers at the Syrian airfield.

"Right now, I think everyone in the world sees Russia as part of the problem," McMaster

said.

After last Tuesday's chemical attack in Syria, Trump said his attitude toward Assad "has changed very much," and Tillerson said "steps are underway" to organize a coalition to remove him from power.

But as lawmakers called on Trump to consult with Congress, administration officials

sent mixed signals on the scope of future U.S. involvement. While Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, described regime change in Syria as a U.S. priority and inevitable, Tillerson suggested that last week's American airstrikes hadn't really changed U.S. priorities toward ousting Assad.

US special operators help repel ISIS attack on outpost in Syria

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. special operators helped repel an Islamic State assault over the weekend on a small outpost in southern Syria where Americans train local forces to help fight the terrorists, Pentagon officials said Monday.

Three U.S.-backed Syrian fighters were killed in the assault launched Saturday by ISIS against the al-Tanf base near

Syria's southern border with Jordan and Iraq, said Air Force Col. John Thomas, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command. No Americans were killed or injured in the fighting.

Thomas described the attack as a "complex and coordinated" effort to take the base from the coalition.

"Clearly, it was planned," Thomas told reporters at the Pentagon. "The coalition and our partner forces had the resources to repulse that attack.

A lot of them wound up being killed, and the garrison remains controlled by the people in control before being attacked."

ISIS initiated the assault with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, a tactic it has used routinely against U.S.-backed forces in Iraq and Syria. The militants followed the car bomb with a ground assault of about 20 to 30 ISIS fighters, many of them wearing suicide vests, said Eric Pahon, a Pentagon spokesman.

The Syrian fighters and American troops initially repelled the attack with direct fire on the ground. Eventually, American and coalition warplanes launched airstrikes that destroyed ISIS assault vehicles and killed most of the terrorist group's assault force, Pahon said. The coalition also supplied medical evacuation of the injured Syrian fighters, Thomas said.

It was not clear how long the ISIS assault lasted.

Philippine court affirms US Marine's homicide conviction

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — A Philippine appeals court on Monday affirmed a regional trial court's conviction of a U.S. Marine and his sentence of up to 10 years in jail for killing a transgender Filipino, whose heirs he was also ordered to compensate.

The Court of Appeals decision did not accept Lance Cpl. Joseph Scott Pemberton's claim of self-defense in the killing of Jennifer Laude in a motel room in Olongapo city after they met in a disco bar in October 2014.

The killing sparked anger in the Philippines and reignited calls by left-wing groups and nationalists for an end to the U.S. military presence.

Pemberton had claimed Laude molested him in the motel room by pretending to be a woman, and he had to defend

his dignity but he did not intend to kill her. He said Laude slapped him when he confronted her for pretending to be a woman.

The decision penned by Associate Justice Marlene Gonzales-Sison said physical evidence contradicts Pemberton's claim.

"As proven by the prosecution, Pemberton did not leave Laude merely unconscious, but ensured his death by submerging his head inside the toilet bowl," it said. "Clearly, Pemberton intended the natural consequence of his wrongful act."

The court also upheld, with slight modification, the order for Pemberton to pay Laude's heirs more than \$90,000 for loss of Laude's income, civil indemnity, moral damages and actual damages.

Rep. Harry Roque, who served as the Laude family's private lawyer, welcomed the

court's decision, saying "the fact that a member of the U.S. Marines was found guilty for breach of our criminal laws for the very first time is an affirmation of Philippine sovereignty."

Pemberton, an anti-tank missile operator from New Bedford, Mass., was one of thousands of American and Philippine military personnel who participated in joint exercises in the country in 2014. He and a group of other Marines were on leave after the exercises and met Laude and her friends at a bar in Olongapo, a city known for its nightlife outside Subic Bay, a former U.S. Navy base. At least two witnesses testified that Laude was a sex worker.

Pemberton has been detained at a compound guarded by Philippine and American security personnel at the main military camp in metropolitan Manila.

Army Reserve general dies after PT at Bragg

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — A general with the Army Reserve died Friday after collapsing during physical fitness training at Fort Bragg, N.C.

U.S. Army Reserve Command said Maj. Gen. Francisco A. Espaillat, 56, was rushed to an Army hospital and pronounced dead, according to The Fayetteville Observer.

Espaillat had been chosen to be next chief of staff for the U.S. Army Reserve Command.

Recruiter indicted on sex assault counts

ROSELLE, N.J. — A Marine Corps recruiter who allegedly tried to lure three children into his vehicle while inappropriately touching himself was indicted on sexual assault charges.

Union County prosecutors say Sgt. Wade Phillips, 27, also faces child endangerment and lewdness counts in the indictment from a county grand jury.

Authorities say Phillips was in a government vehicle in October 2016 when he passed the children in Roselle, then turned around and parked. Phillips allegedly called to the two 11-year-old girls and a 10-year-old boy while touching himself, but they walked to their school and reported the incident.

Phillips' attorney has said the Linden man may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. He was removed from his recruiting assignment after his arrest.

Lawmaker seeks to restore vets' benefits

CONCORD, N.H. — Veterans who lost their GI Bill benefits due to the closure of for-profit colleges would get help under a bill co-sponsored by Rep. Carol Shea-Porter, D-N.H.

After a number of for-profit colleges closed last year, the Education Department began discharging student loan debt for the affected students, but does not have the authority to restore GI Bill benefits for veterans.

From The Associated Press

Pricing errors found in Marine supply catalog

By JESSICA BIDWELL

Stars and Stripes

OKINAWA, Japan — A \$4,000 radio cable priced at \$64,000 was one of several wrongly valued parts discovered in the Marine Corps supply system in March, military officials said following an investigation.

The errors came to light after an Okinawa-based Marine, Cpl. Riki Clement, reverse engineered a replacement for the cable using outdated equipment.

That prompted a Marine Corps press release in October claiming he had saved the government \$15 million in annual costs.

In December, Clement told Stars and Stripes that the \$64,000 cost of defense contractor Astronics' replacement cable seemed astronomically high.

"There may be a good reason for the price, but based on us taking apart the cable and researching the individual parts, we've found no reason for this part to cost as much as it does," he said.

It turned out he was right.

Following an investigation in response to questions from Stars and Stripes, Barb Hamby, of Marine Corps Systems Command, said the cord should have been priced at about \$4,000.

The price error was one of six in the same parts catalog, she said.

"The cataloged mistakes were made nearly seven years ago," said Tony Reinhart, the command's team lead for automatic test systems. "We went through every [item] in the kit to confirm the prices and fix the errors."

The radio cords are still expensive compared with civilian equipment. There's a reason for that, Reinhart said.

"What makes this cable \$4,000 is the material that goes into it ... [and] the process to actually design, develop and manufacture the cable," he said.

There's no record of the Marines ever buying individual replacement cords. The originals were acquired as part of kits, and Marines have been using components from other kits for repairs, Reinhart said.

The kit the cable came in costs \$21,466, said Capt. Frank Allan, a project officer at Marine Corps Logistics Command.

Reports of overpriced items in the supply chain should be followed up, given the amount of wasteful military spending, said David Johnson, a former Army officer and executive director of the Center for Advanced Defense Studies, a nonprofit research group.

Fed jobs could lose appeal under Trump

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The best places to work in the federal government won't be very good very long if President Donald Trump gets his budget.

Rep. Gerald E. Connolly, D-Va., issued that warning in his opening statement to a House hearing last week. The Oversight and Government Reform subcommittee session was called to explore the annual Best Places to Work in the Federal Government report.

Generally, federal agencies were improving under the Obama administration.

But will that last under Trump?

"The administration's plans for the civil service constitute a significant threat," said Connolly, the ranking Democrat on the government operations subcommittee. "Less than half of federal employees feel they have sufficient resources to do their jobs, and ... the president's FY2018 budget request would cut those resources significantly."

While a few agencies would benefit under Trump's proposal, it would cut domestic discretion-

ary spending by \$54 billion and probably lead to personnel cuts through layoffs and furloughs. Previously, he largely froze federal hiring.

Although Trump has yet to reach his 100th day in office, the administration and congressional Republicans "already have a shameful record of attacking our federal workforce," Connolly said. "The president's hiring freeze, the latest in a series of assaults on federal employees, poses a serious threat to the criticality of the federal mission. An across-the-board federal hiring freeze is a mindless way to manage. It lacks any flexibility to quickly react and adapt to future challenges we may not be able to anticipate today, something I thought was critical to running a large enterprise."

The proposed budget has caused widespread anxiety among federal employees whose work and livelihood are at stake. Particularly worried are those at 19 small agencies that Trump would eliminate.

The anxiety is fueled by uncertainty, said Max Stier, president and chief executive of the Partnership for Public Service. It publishes the "Best Places"

reports, which are based on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey conducted by the Office of Personnel Management.

Trump's budget has been widely rebuked, so there's a good chance what emerges from Congress will differ from his plans. That only adds to the uncertainty.

But money isn't the only issue. Poor leadership in federal agencies is a big problem.

Subcommittee Chairman Mark Meadows, R-N.C., focused on the Surface Transportation Board, a small operation overseeing railroad rate and service issues. It suffered the largest decline in employee engagement scores of any agency, by far, in last year's survey — taken well before Trump's hiring freeze and budget proposal.

His interrogation of the board's managing director, Lee Gardner, revealed a management ignorant about its staff.

Meadows: "So help me explain why we went backwards ..."

Gardner: "We were very surprised."

Wrong answer. Surprised means supervisors are out of touch with staffers. With just 128 employees, getting

to know what they think about their workplace shouldn't be too hard.

Meadows: "That concerns me even more ... If you're surprised by the results, it shows that we have a lack of understanding of the rank-and-file ... Why would you be surprised?"

Gardner, citing previous good survey results: "I felt and I think most of the management at the agency felt that we were continuing to do a good job with engagement ... I think we are fair. I think, as a leader at the agency, I think we do a good job."

Wrong answer. Meadows, citing the board's 6.9 percent drop in its leadership fairness rating: "So are you surprised by that, that they think that leadership is not fair, that management is not fair?"

Gardner: "I am surprised at that, because I think we are fair. I think, as a leader at the agency, I think we do a good job."

Meadows: "... It doesn't matter what you think. ... It matters what the rank-and-file thinks. And that's the whole reason why you have an employee survey ... if you're thinking that everything is kumbaya, I mean, how do we fix the problem?"

Gorsuch sworn in as Supreme Court justice

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump praised new Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch during a White House swearing-in ceremony on Monday as a jurist who will rule "not on his personal preferences but based on a fair and objective reading of the law."

In the Rose Garden ceremony, Trump said Americans would see in Gorsuch "a man who is deeply faithful to the Constitution of the United States" and predicted greatness for the 49-year-old former appeals court judge from Colorado.

"I have no doubt you will go down as one of the truly great justices in the history of the

U.S.," Trump said.

Gorsuch, who restores the court's conservative majority, was sworn in during the ceremony by Justice Anthony Kennedy, for whom he once served as a law clerk. It was the second of two oaths — the first was conducted privately in the Justices' Conference Room by Chief Justice John Roberts.

Gorsuch promised to be a "faithful servant of the Constitution and laws of this great nation."

He fills the nearly 14-month-old vacancy created after the death of the late Justice Antonin Scalia, who anchored the court's conservative wing for nearly three decades before he died unexpectedly in February 2016. In nominating Gorsuch,

Trump said he fulfilled a campaign pledge to pick someone in the mold of Scalia.

During 11 years on the federal appeals court in Denver, Gorsuch mirrored Scalia's originalist approach to the law, interpreting the Constitution according to the meaning understood by those who drafted it. Like Scalia, Gorsuch is a gifted writer with a flair for turning legal jargon into plain language people can understand.

Gorsuch will be seated just in time to hear one of the biggest cases of the term: a religious rights dispute over a Missouri law that bars churches from receiving public funds for general aid programs.

His 66-day confirmation

process was swift, but bitterly divisive. It saw Senate Republicans trigger the "nuclear option" to eliminate the 60-vote filibuster threshold for Gorsuch and all future high court nominees. The change allowed the Senate to hold a final vote to approve Gorsuch with a simple majority.

Most Democrats refused to support Gorsuch because they were still seething over the Republican blockade last year of President Barack Obama's pick for the same seat, Merrick Garland. Senate Republicans refused to even hold a hearing for Garland, saying a high court replacement should be up to the next president.

Lawsuit seeks White House visitor logs

The Washington Post

A coalition of government watchdog groups planned to sue the Trump administration Monday with the aim of compelling the White House to continue President Barack Obama's practice of releasing logs of lobbyists and others who visit the complex.

Since President Donald Trump took office in January, the website where such records had been publicly available has gone dark, and White House officials will say only that the policy is under review.

Among the plaintiffs in the lawsuit is Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, the same group whose legal actions led to a settlement with the Obama administration

in 2009, opening up the White House visitor logs for the first time.

"It is crucial to understand who is potentially influencing the decision-making of the president, particularly when you have a White House that tends to lean toward secret decision-making," said Noah Bookbinder, the organization's executive director.

After initial resistance from the Obama administration, nearly 6 million names of White House visitors were made public under the deal crafted in 2009, released in batches roughly 90 to 120 days after the visits occurred.

The logs' existence burst back into the news last month when House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes,

R-Calif., went to the White House grounds to review intelligence reports on which he later briefed the president. Both Nunes and White House officials initially declined to say who Nunes had visited and who had cleared him onto the grounds, information that is typically contained in the logs, along with the length of the stay.

"We're only asking for the same Secret Service data that Obama published routinely," said Thomas Blanton, director of the National Security Archive, another plaintiff in the lawsuit against the government.

Also joining the lawsuit is the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, a new entity that seeks to

preserve and expand freedom of the press.

Among the legal questions at issue is whether White House visitor logs are controlled by the White House or the Secret Service. The distinction matters because White House records are not subject to freedom of information requests. Executive agencies, including the Secret Service, on the other hand, are subject to the disclosure law.

The plaintiffs say their interest in Trump visitor records extends far beyond the White House complex, given that the president often holds meetings at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida and other properties he owns in the New York and Washington areas.

Police: Fla. gunman had just been fired from gym

Associated Press

The man who shot and killed two managers at a Florida gym before turning the gun on himself had just been fired from the fitness center for workplace violence, police said Sunday.

The Miami-Dade Police Department said in a statement Sunday that Abeku Wilson, 33, of Miami, was let go Saturday as a fitness trainer at the Equinox gym in Coral Gables "due to workplace violence and was escorted off the premises."

Authorities didn't elaborate on what that violence involved.

Shortly after his dismissal, Wilson returned to the gym with a handgun and fired multiple shots at both managers before fatally shooting himself. Police said the managers were deliberately targeted and that the shooting wasn't random.

Equinox issued an email statement Sunday saying it was "deeply saddened" by the deaths of the two employees, Janine Ackerman, 35, of Miami, and Marios Hortis, 42, of Miami Beach. Ackerman was the gym's general manager and Hortis the

fitness manager.

"Our love, prayers and condolences are with both families during this terrible time. The collective Equinox community will always keep Janine and Marios in our hearts," the statement said.

The shooting happened about 1 p.m. Saturday at the upscale Shops at Merrick Park. Shoppers, diners at mall restaurants and people in workout gear ran to safety or took cover after reports of gunfire.

"Five gunshots," Ovi Viera, who was in the men's locker room, told the Miami Herald. "It was too loud for it to have been a weight dropping. Within two seconds, people just started running out."

The mall is a few miles from the University of Miami campus. Ackerman studied on a field hockey scholarship at Florida International University.

Friends and colleagues described Hortis as a beloved spinning instructor with a generous spirit and warm demeanor.

China's navy omits role of India in ship's rescue

Associated Press

BEIJING — China's navy said its forces rescued a freighter from an attack by pirates in the Gulf of Aden over the weekend. Missing from the report was any mention of the participation of the Indian navy, which said it dispatched four ships and a helicopter to provide cover for the action.

Asked about that lack of mention of India's part in the operation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying referred questions to the Defense Ministry, where no spokesman was immediately available for comment.

No casualties or damage were reported in the incident.

The Chinese navy's statement said a distress signal was received late Saturday from the captain of the Tuvalu-flagged OS35 saying it was under attack by an unknown number of pirates aboard a single boat. Steaming to the area, the missile frigate Yulin then circled the ship while its helicopter hovered above.

The statement said 16 members of the Chinese special forces were lowered onto the ship by helicopter at dawn Sunday and released the 19 crewmembers from the strong room where they had taken shelter.

India's account differed slightly but did mention China's participation.

A statement from the Indian Defense Ministry said the Indian navy ships Mumbai, Tarkash, Trishul and Aditya had been sailing toward the Mediterranean Sea when they responded to the distress call and "rapidly closed the merchant vessel" by early Sunday. After an Indian navy helicopter flew over on Sunday morning, crewmembers emerged and "ascertained that the pirates had fled the ship at night."

"Subsequently, in a show of international maritime cooperation against piracy, a boarding from the nearby Chinese navy ship went on board the merchant ship, while the Indian naval helicopter provided air cover for the operation," the statement said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man charged after son crashes car into canal

FL LEHIGH ACRES — A southwest Florida man is facing charges after authorities say he let his 13-year-old son drive his car around the neighborhood and the boy crashed the car into a canal.

According to the Florida Highway Patrol, Martin Martinez Jr. let his son drive the car while a 2-year-old also was in the car. The father was not in the car. The boy was speeding when he lost control of the car, ran through a stop sign, missed a turn and flipped several times before rolling into a canal.

The Fort Myers News-Press said the children were not seriously injured. Martinez was charged with child neglect.

Police: Teen kidnapped over drug deal gone bad

NJ HOWELL TOWNSHIP — Authorities say two teenagers allegedly ripped off by a purported drug dealer kidnapped someone they mistakenly thought was connected to the dealer.

Howell Township police said Moamem Abdelmeguid, 18, and a 16-year-old boy, both of Marlboro, met up Thursday night with township resident Joseph Arnold, 19, to buy drugs from him. But Arnold took their cash and fled without giving them anything.

The Marlboro teens went to a home where Arnold had told them he lived and subdued another male teen they found there. They drove him around the neighborhood, looking for Arnold, then took the teen home.

The victim, who authorities said had no relationship with any of the people involved, was

unharmed and notified police. Howell police arrested the two Marlboro teens after an unrelated traffic stop.

Man wrongly kept in jail 6 days can sue police

MI DETROIT — A man who spent six days in jail after being wrongly accused of a gun crime has cleared a key hurdle in his lawsuit against Detroit police.

Federal Judge Arthur Tarnow said three officers don't have immunity in the lawsuit because they had no reason to take a gun away from Leinahtan Jelks. The incident occurred at a gas station in 2010.

Jelks told the officers that he had a concealed-pistol license, but a computer check said it had been suspended. It turns out that the Michigan law enforcement network was wrong.

Funding cuts mullied for sobriety checkpoints

MO JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri lawmakers are considering a prohibition on the use of state funds for sobriety checkpoints.

The Missouri House voted Thursday in support of the ban in a budget bill. Supporters of the shift say it will free up departments to use money for other, more effective methods to deter impaired driving. Others say the sobriety checkpoints violate drivers' rights by allowing officers to stop people without probable cause.

Opponents of the ban say the checkpoints are an important tool to keep drunken drivers off the road. Local law enforcement agencies still could pay for the checkpoints with local funds.

Man jailed for biting off girlfriend's nose

SD MITCHELL — A Wagner man has been sentenced to seven years in the South Dakota State Penitentiary for biting off his girlfriend's nose.

The Daily Republic reported Judge Bruce Anderson called the January 2016 actions of John Abdo, 30, "unforgivable." He sentenced Abdo last week to 15 years but suspended eight years.

Authorities allege Abdo not only bit off his girlfriend's nose but also bit her numerous times on other parts of her body. A jury convicted him of aggravated assault in February.

Abdo also was sentenced to serve half a year for escape. He failed to return to jail following a job interview in February 2016 and was on the lam four months.

Texas taco franchise sues over catchphrase

CO FORT COLLINS — A battle over the phrase "damn good tacos" is headed to federal court in Colorado.

The Austin, Texas-based franchise Torchy's Tacos says a Fort Collins restaurant called Dam Good Tacos infringed on its trademarked catchphrase.

Torchy's registered its "Damn Good Tacos" tagline with the U.S. Patent and Trademark office in 2008, about two years after the Colorado operation launched. The Colorado taco seller uses a different spelling of the same phrase.

Torchy's sent a cease-and-desist letter to Dam Good Tacos in November and offered financial assistance with a name change. The Colorado taco restaurant declined.

Swarm of bees injures 3 people, kills dog

NV LAS VEGAS — Authorities said a swarm of bees in Las Vegas sent two people to the hospital and killed a dog.

The Clark County Fire Department said people were running down a small street in Las Vegas while being chased by bees late Friday afternoon. Several ambulances responded, and firefighters wore protective clothing to assist people during the swarm.

Officials said two people were taken to the hospital with unknown injuries and one person was treated on the scene. The fire department said a dog that was outside at the time of the attack died at the scene.

Officials on study: Don't disturb deer carcasses

PA NAZARETH — Don't disturb the carcasses.

That's the message folks at the Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center in eastern Pennsylvania had for visitors these days.

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources placed deer carcasses in the nature park in hopes of drawing out carnivores and scavengers like turkey vultures.

The agency did that because of their BioBlitz 2017 on Saturday when scientists, students and volunteers were to comb through the park for 12 hours, studying what kinds of animals are living there.

The park told visitors to its Facebook page the carcasses will be disposed of after the study.

From wire reports

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Garcia wins long-sought first major

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Eighteen years and 71 majors later, more tears for Sergio Garcia.

This time, they came with a smile.

Sunday at the Masters was a most joyous occasion, far different from when Garcia teed it up in his first major as a pro in the 1999 British Open at Carnoustie.

He was 19 and already heralded as a star and the most likely rival for Tiger Woods. Garcia was low amateur at the Masters that year. He shot 62 at the Byron Nelson Classic and tied for third in his pro debut on the PGA Tour. He won the Irish Open, and the next week he was runner-up to Colin Montgomerie at the Scottish Open.

And then he shot 79-83 at Carnoustie and sobbed on his mother's shoulder on his way out.

Garcia never would have imagined then how long it would take for him to win a major, and he had reason to believe it might never happen.

"It's been such a long time coming," Garcia said after his playoff victory over Justin Rose.

No one had ever played as many majors as Garcia before winning his first one, so those tears were equal parts joy and relief. It showed.

Phil Mickelson leaped — not very high — when he finally won his first major at Augusta National in 2004. Garcia, who only needed two putts from 12 feet on the first extra hole against Rose, crouched when his birdie putt curled in the back of the cup. He

clenched both fists and shook them repeatedly. He shouted multiple times. He blew a kiss to the gallery as it chanted his name. He crouched one more time, placing his hand on the green and then slamming his fist into the turf.

"It was just a lot of things going through my mind," he said.

Along with the happy reflections of the people around him — including Angela Akins, the former Golf Channel reporter he plans to marry in July — that final burst of emotion was thinking about "moments that unfortunately didn't go the way I wanted."

Garcia is not the first player who endured bad breaks and heartache in the majors before finally winning one.

Tom Kite won the PGA Tour money title twice and had played in 67 majors as a pro before he finally won the 1992 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach when he was 42. Corey Pavin was 36 when he hit that 4-wood onto the 18th green at Shinnecock Hills and won the 1995 U.S. Open. Mark O'Meara had 14 victories on the PGA Tour when he won the 1998 Masters at 41.

Most different about Garcia is that he made it easy to root against him, blaming everything but his own shots and missed putts.

There was that time at Bethpage Black in the 2002 U.S. Open when he complained about having to play in the rain, suggesting the USGA would have stopped play if Woods had been on the course. He lost a three-shot lead in the final round at Carnoustie in the 2007 British Open, and after losing in a

playoff to Pdraig Harrington, he said he was playing against "more than the field," intimating that somehow, the golfing gods were out to get him, too.

A year later, Harrington rallied from three down to Garcia on the back nine and beat him at Oakland Hills in the PGA Championship. When asked later if he thought he was going to get his first major, Garcia snapped, "Next question, please. Let's try to keep this as positive as we can, please."

Losing hurt, and it reached a point where Garcia acted as though he no longer cared.

That why his comments all week at the Masters that he had changed his attitude, that he was learning to accept bad bounces, was met with skepticism.

What he found on Sunday, starting with his drive to the golf course, was a calmness he had never felt in the previous three times he played in the final group. And from that calm emerged the grit that Garcia had lacked.

He salvaged par from a certain bogey on the 13th that kept him in the game. He made eagle on the par-5 15th to tie for the lead. He reached the 18th green and stood over a 5-foot putt for the victory. The last time he had a putt to win a major was at Carnoustie in 2007. He missed and had to go into a playoff.

He missed this one, too, and headed into a playoff against Rose, only this time he didn't lose hope.

"I knew what I was capable of doing, and I believed that I could do it," he said. "Thanks to that, I was able to do it."

Rose comes up just short of Masters title

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — As soon as the putt slipped past the cup on the first playoff hole, Justin Rose knew it was over.

He took off his cap and stood to the side of the green, resigned to his fate.

Not two hours earlier, it looked like the Masters was his for the taking.

Now, all Rose could do was watch as Sergio Garcia curled in a 12-foot birdie to finish off a dramatic duel at Augusta National.

"It was a wonderful battle with Sergio," Rose said Sunday evening.

He grimaced a bit, no doubt remembering the little 6-footer

that skidded by the cup on No. 13, when he had a chance to put Garcia away after the Spaniard drove one under an azalea bush.

Or perhaps he was thinking of the 7-footer at the 17th, the one he just didn't hit hard enough, resulting in a bogey that sent him to the 72nd hole tied with Garcia.

And he'll never forget that final hole of regulation, his first crack at No. 18, where another 7-footer burned the edge of the cup. It really stung when Garcia missed an even shorter putt.

But Rose isn't going to beat himself up too much.

"I would say this one probably is one that slipped by, for sure," the 36-year-old Englishman

said, quickly adding: "I can't pick holes in my performance. I felt fantastic out there."

In the end, it wasn't enough. Garcia, generally recognized as the best player never to win a major championship, finally removed that stigma against someone who knew a bit about how that felt before his breakthrough victory at the 2013 U.S. Open.

"If there's anyone I had to lose to, it's Sergio," Rose said. "He's had his fair share of heartbreak."

Indeed, Rose seemed genuinely happy for a player he considers both a rival and a friend. The sudden-death playoff was a bit anticlimactic, pretty much decided when Rose drove be-

hind a towering magnolia tree right of the fairway, forcing him to punch out and hope for par.

He had a shot, hitting his approach to about 14 feet. But the putt missed to the right this time, and Garcia made it a moot point by rolling in his birdie.

As soon as it was over, Rose walked out to embrace Garcia in the middle of the green. The runner-up said a few words, patted the new Masters champion on the chest and walked away, leaving Garcia to bask in a moment he'd been chasing for nearly two decades.

"It's always nice to be a part of history," Rose said. "I would have liked to be on the right part of it."

Pujols, Angels rally with 7 runs in ninth

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — When Albert Pujols hit his 592nd career homer leading off the ninth inning, the shot appeared to be a pleasant asterisk on a blowout loss for the Los Angeles Angels.

By the time he came up again eight batters later, the bases were loaded and the game had changed — and Pujols came through again to keep an incredible comeback rolling.

Pujols homered and hit a tying two-run single before Cliff Pennington's drive to the wall capped Los Angeles' ninth-inning rally from a six-run deficit for a 10-9 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Sunday.

Pennington's single drove in Mike Trout to end a preposterous finish by the Angels,

who trailed 8-1 in the seventh and 9-3 before Pujols homered off Casey Fien.

The Halos scored seven runs on five hits and four walks in the ninth inning, sending them to their first 5-2 start to a season since 2007. The franchise hadn't scored at least seven runs in the ninth to win a one-run game since Aug. 29, 1986.

"To come all the way back like that, that's one of those magical, magical wins," Pennington said. "It will probably only happen a few times a year, but it's a good one."

After Pujols connected and subsequently Fien walked the bases loaded, Yunel Escobar trimmed Seattle's lead with a two-out, two-run double off closer Edwin Diaz (0-1), who gave up three hits.

"It's a tough one to swallow because I put [Diaz] in a bad situation, and he tried to

battle and get himself out of it," Fien said. "They got some hits that usually aren't hits, but it was one of those games."

Diaz then walked Kole Calhoun and Trout before Pujols and Pennington delivered back-to-back singles, setting off a raucous celebration on the field and among Angels fans who didn't leave early.

"It's huge," Pennington said. "It gives you a lot of momentum. Two or three weeks from now, when we're down by three or four runs in the seventh, it's a feeling that you've had before, where you've come back and won that game. So much of this game is between the ears, that when you do this type of thing a couple of times, you start to believe you can, and then it happens more frequently."

Yankees hand O's first loss, avoid sweep

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The New York Yankees finished their season-opening trip with a feel-good victory that featured a late-inning comeback and a clutch bullpen performance.

Aaron Judge hit a tying home run, Starlin Castro's RBI single keyed a four-run ninth inning and the Yankees rallied to defeat the Baltimore Orioles 7-3 Sunday and avert a three-game sweep.

After avoiding their first 1-5 start since 1989, the Yankees headed north for Monday's game against Tampa Bay.

"It's good for us to have a game like this before going home and playing in front of our fans," manager Joe Girardi said. "We're all excited about that."

The Orioles started the day as the only unbeaten team in the majors at 4-0. After pulling off comeback victories in the first two games of the series, Baltimore blew a three-run lead in the finale.

Ronald Torreyes cut the gap to 3-2 with a two-out, two-run triple in the sixth, Judge homered in the eighth and the Yankees completed the turnaround against Darren O'Day (0-1) in the ninth.

Matt Holliday drew his career-high fifth walk and was

replaced by pinch-runner Jacoby Ellsbury, who stole second. After Chris Carter walked, Castro bounced a single up the middle. Judge added a run-scoring groundout, Austin Romine hit a sacrifice fly and the final run scored on a throwing error by second baseman Jonathan Schoop.

Dellin Betances (1-1), who took the loss Saturday, struck out two in a perfect eighth and Aroldis Chapman worked the ninth.

New York relievers combined for three hitless innings after starter CC Sabathia gave up three runs — two earned — six hits and four walks over six innings.

"It's just the first week, but I felt like this was a game we needed to win," Sabathia said. "And we came out with the win."

Twins 4, White Sox 1: Miguel Sano and Jorge Polanco homered to back Ervin Santana's six scoreless innings as visiting Minnesota beat Chicago for its best start since 2010.

Pirates 6, Braves 5 (10): Starling Marte hit a two-run homer off Jose Ramirez in the 10th inning to lift host Pittsburgh.

Red Sox 7, Tigers 5: Sandy Leon broke an eighth-inning tie with a two-run single, part of a four-run rally that lifted Boston

over host Detroit.

The Red Sox rallied four times from one-run deficits, finally taking the lead against the Detroit bullpen.

Mets 5, Marlins 2: Noah Syndergaard made a blistering return to the mound, overpowering Miami for much of the night as host New York averted a three-game sweep.

Phillies 4, Nationals 3: Cesar Hernandez hit an RBI single with two outs in the ninth inning to give host Philadelphia a victory.

Cubs 7, Brewers 4: Kyle Schwarber and Ben Zobrist homered, Jake Arrieta threw seven strong innings and visiting Chicago took the weekend series with Milwaukee.

Reds 8, Cardinals 0: Scott Feldman permitted four hits and struck out six in six-plus innings as Cincinnati beat host St. Louis to take two of three from the Cardinals.

Astros 5, Royals 4 (12): Jake Marisnick hit a tying home run off Kelvin Herrera in the ninth inning and Evan Gattis drew a bases-loaded walk from Matt Strahm in the 12th to help host Houston beat Kansas City, halting a three-game losing streak.

Rangers 8, Athletics 1: Joey Gallo homered and had a career-high five RBIs to back Martin Perez in host Texas'

victory.

Dodgers 10, Rockies 6: Corey Seager hit a two-run homer and Los Angeles scored seven runs with two outs, avoiding a sweep by beating host Colorado on a blustery afternoon.

Justin Turner added a two-run double as the Dodgers won their 98th game at Coors Field — the most of any visiting team.

Diamondbacks 3, Indians 2: Patrick Corbin pitched six scoreless innings while Chris Owings homered and had three hits as host Arizona completed a three-game sweep of Cleveland.

The win improved the Diamondbacks to 6-1, matching the best seven-game start in franchise history, set in 2000.

Giants 5, Padres 3: Hunter Pence and Buster Posey hit consecutive home runs, and Johnny Cueto struck out seven in seven strong innings as struggling San Francisco beat host San Diego to prevent a three-game sweep.

The Giants snapped a four-game losing streak. They won only twice during the season's opening week.

Rays 7, Blue Jays 2: Steven Souza Jr. hit a three-run homer and was involved in a scum after a slide during host Tampa Bay's victory over Toronto.

Hurricanes' Bickell scores in final game

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Bryan Bickell scored in the shootout of his final game before retiring because of multiple sclerosis, and the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Philadelphia Flyers 4-3 Sunday in the season finale for both teams.

During a stoppage in the first period, fans and players from both teams gave Bickell a standing ovation and stick tap. The 31-year-old three-time Stanley Cup champion was diagnosed with MS in November but returned to hockey in February.

His shootout goal was the first of his career in his second attempt and set up Brock McGinn's winner on the final shot of Carolina's season. McGinn also scored twice in regulation.

It was an emotional night for Bickell, who had his wife and daughter watching from the stands. It was an otherwise meaningless game between two teams who fell short of pre-season expectations to reach the playoffs.

Sebastian Aho sent the game into overtime when he scored a power-play goal with 5:10 remaining in regulation.

Oilers 5, Canucks 2: Connor McDavid hit the 100-point mark, Jordan Eberle recorded a hat trick and host Edmonton beat Vancouver.

McDavid had a pair of assists and ended the season with 30 goals and 70 assists in 82 games. He is the only player to reach 100 points this season.

Ducks 4, Kings 3 (OT): Nate Thompson scored his first goal of the season to tie it with 8:26 to play and Shea Theodore won it in overtime, helping host Anaheim clinch its fifth consecutive Pacific Division title.

Theodore scored on a breakaway to end the Freeway Faceoff, but the Ducks had already locked up a playoff date with Calgary by earning a point in their 14th consecutive game (11-0-3).

Blue Jackets 3, Maple Leafs 2: James van Riemsdyk scored

twice, but host Toronto dropped its regular-season finale to Columbus and will face Washington in the opening round of its first postseason since 2013.

Rangers 3, Penguins 2: Jimmy Vesey scored a tiebreaking goal in the third period and host New York beat Pittsburgh.

Red Wings 4, Devils 1: Riley Sheahan had two goals and Henrik Zetterberg scored in his 1,000th NHL game, helping Detroit beat New Jersey in a party-like atmosphere for the final game at Joe Louis Arena.

Jimmy Howard stopped 24 shots for the Red Wings, who failed to make the playoffs for the first time since 1990 to end a postseason streak that tied for the third longest in league history.

Panthers 2, Capitals 0: With several regulars resting — including John Carlson, Matt Niskanen and T.J. Oshie — playoff-bound Washington lost its regular-season finale to visiting Florida.

Islanders 4, Senators 2: Anders Lee and Brock Nelson scored in the second period and host New York closed the season with its sixth straight win by beating playoff-bound Ottawa.

Nelson also had an assist for New York, which was eliminated from playoff contention Saturday night.

Lightning 4, Sabres 2: Brayden Point scored a pair of goals, including the winner with 1:24 left, as host Tampa Bay topped Buffalo in the season finale for both teams.

The disappointing Lightning finished 42-30-10 for 94 points after being considered a pre-season favorite to win the Eastern Conference less than two years removed from playing in the Stanley Cup Finals.

Blues 3, Avalanche 2: Vladimir Tarasenko netted a go-ahead goal 79 seconds after Vladimir Sobotka scored in his first NHL game in three years, lifting host St. Louis Blues over Colorado.

The Blues have won 15 of their last 19 games.

Westbrook breaks triple-double mark

Associated Press

DENVER — First, Russell Westbrook broke Oscar Robertson's record for most triple-doubles in a season. Then, he broke the Denver Nuggets' hearts.

Westbrook's 36-foot dagger at the buzzer gave Oklahoma City a 106-105 victory, eliminating the Nuggets from playoff contention and capping an historic Sunday afternoon in which he scored 50 points to go with 16 rebounds and 10 assists.

Westbrook's 42nd triple-double is one more than the "Big O" had for the Cincinnati Royals in 1961-62, a mark that many in the NBA had considered unbreakable until Westbrook's incredible run.

The crowd gave Westbrook a standing ovation after he broke Robertson's record with his 10th assist with 4:17 remaining.

Then, those same fans stood in stunned silence after watching Westbrook score his team's final 15 points, including the game-winner after Steven Adams took the inbounds pass from Kyle Single with 2.9 seconds left and dished to Westbrook, whose long jumper ringed through the iron as the horn sounded.

"It was a good defense," lamented Nuggets guard Gary Harris. "He's had a hell of a season. I think he might have just locked up the MVP with that one right there."

Hawks shock Cavs again with late rally

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Paul Millsap scored 22 points and the Atlanta Hawks took advantage of Cleveland's fourth-quarter collapse to overcome a 26-point deficit and stun the Cavaliers 126-125 in overtime.

Kyrie Irving scored 45 points for Cleveland, and LeBron James had a triple-double with 32 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists before the four-time MVP fouled out in overtime.

Tim Hardaway Jr. added 21 points to help Atlanta beat Cleveland for the second straight time.

The defending champion Cavaliers dropped into a tie with Boston atop the Eastern Conference. Both teams have two regular-season games remaining. If the Cavs and Celtics finish with the same record, Cleveland will get the top seed for winning the season series.

Rockets 135, Kings 128: James Harden had 35 points,

15 assists and 11 rebounds for his 21st triple-double of the season, leading Houston past host Sacramento.

Harden has scored 30 or more points and had double-digit assists in 29 games.

Lakers 110, Timberwolves 109: D'Angelo Russell made a three-pointer as time expired as Los Angeles overcame a huge game by Karl-Anthony Towns to beat visiting Minnesota.

Raptors 110, Knicks 97: DeMar DeRozan scored 35 points as Toronto beat host New York to wrap up at least the No. 3 seed in the East.

Pistons 103, Grizzlies 90: Reggie Bullock and Boban Marjanovic each scored 14 points as visiting Detroit used a three-point shooting spree in the fourth quarter to beat Memphis.

Suns 124, Mavericks 111: Devin Booker and T.J. Warren each scored 21 points to help Phoenix beat Dallas in the Suns' home finale.