

STARS AND STRIPES®

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Bagram bombing victims were Marines

By CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

All three American service-members killed in a bombing outside Bagram Air Field were Marines, including a decorated New York City firefighter serving in the Marine Reserves, officials said Tuesday.

Three other Americans were wounded Monday in the blast, which Afghan officials said was a car bomb targeting a convoy. The deaths bring the number of American troops killed in Afghanistan this year to seven. Last year, 13 U.S. servicemembers were killed in combat there.

A contractor was also reported killed, but the military said Tuesday that the man, an Afghan citizen, survived with injuries.

The military has not released names of the victims, but Navy Secretary Richard Spencer told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the dead were all Marines. Committee mem-

bers bowed their heads in a moment of silence.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that one of the dead was Christopher A. Slutman, 43, a 15-year member of the New York City Fire Department and a Marine staff sergeant.

Slutman, who leaves behind a wife and three daughters, was decorated for bravery in 2014 after rescuing an unconscious woman from a burning building in the South Bronx, de Blasio said in a statement.

"Firefighter Slutman bravely wore two uniforms and committed his life to public service both as a New York City Firefighter and as a member of the United States Marine Corps," said New York Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro. "The hearts and prayers of the entire Department are with his loved ones and with the families of his fellow servicemembers who lost their lives in service to our nation."

He also served as a volunteer

fireman in Prince George's County, Md., until 2003.

"Chris served the citizens of Landover and Prince George's County, Maryland valiantly," said Oleg Pelekhaty, chief of the Kentland Volunteer Fire Department, in a statement. "During his 19-year career he [rose] through the ranks to become a Wagon Driver, Captain, but most of all — he was a fireman.

"Through this trying time, we will remember Chris for the father, husband, brother, son, and friend that he was, the moral character he displayed daily, and the courage and conviction to serve his fellow Americans, both at home and abroad," Pelekhaty said.

Five Afghan civilians were wounded in the wake of the attack, local officials told The Associated Press on Tuesday. The Americans soldiers opened fire immediately after the convoy was bombed, said Abdul Shakor Qudosi, the district administrative chief in Bagram, the

largest U.S. military base in the country.

Four of the wounded civilians were passers-by and the fifth was driving a car down the road, Abdul Raqib Kohistani, the Bagram district police chief told the AP.

The Afghans were treated for their injuries, including the contractor who was initially mistaken for a civilian.

The bombing was the deadliest incident for Americans in Afghanistan since November, when a roadside bomb blast in the country's eastern Ghazni province killed four U.S. troops.

"We feel and mourn the loss of these Americans with their families and loved ones," said Gen. Scott Miller, commanding general of the Resolute Support mission and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, said in a statement. "They volunteered to protect their country. We will continue our mission."

Stars and Stripes reporter Caitlin Kenney contributed to this report.

New Marine uniform proposals being considered

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Whether all Marines will be allowed to use umbrellas and female Marines can wear silver earrings with their uniforms are among some of the new policy recommendations being considered by the service.

The Marine Corps Uniform Board is considering eight recommendations for issues including hairstyles, jewelry and uniform items such as belt waist plates.

Active-duty and reserve Marines are being asked to

personally weigh in on these uniform policy proposals via a survey that started Monday. The responses will help the board in their recommendations, according to a Marine Corps statement.

"Marines are able to concur with the proposed changes, maintain the status quo with no changes, or skip proposals entirely," the statement said of the survey.

For umbrellas, the board is considering a recommendation that all Marines be allowed to carry and use small, black umbrellas, which only female Marines are permitted to do now.

Two of the recommendations in the survey are for hairstyles, with one for female Marines with medium or long hair to be able to wear ponytails or braids during physical training except if the activity is considered "combat training" or a safety hazard. During physical training, only women with medium-length hair can wear it in a "half-ponytail," or a style where the top half of the hair is pulled back from the face in a ponytail and the bottom half of the hair hangs loose.

The other hairstyle recommendation under consideration would require female Marines

with long hair to keep it "properly secured up" at all times when they are wearing the blouse of their combat utility uniform, even during physical training activities such as the combat fitness test. Women with medium-length hair would be able to have it in a half ponytail while wearing the blouse during physical training activities.

The commandant of the Marine Corps will make the final decision on the uniform policy recommendations. Marines can access the CAC-enabled survey at go.max.gov/UniformBoard218.

GAO: Cost of new subs underestimated

BY SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

The estimated \$115 billion price for building 12 Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarines is inaccurate because it doesn't factor in all the labor, which could cause cost overruns and production delays, a government watchdog said.

The new submarines will replace the 14 aging Ohio-class submarines that will be retired beginning in 2027.

The pace for building submarines has intensified as the Navy seeks to keep up with the Russian and Chinese navies, which have been boosting

their submarine fleets.

But the Navy, in its push to modernize its ballistic forces, is not thoroughly assessing the costs involved, and that could lead to future funding shortfalls, the Government Accountability Office said in its report issued Monday.

"The Navy's \$115 billion procurement cost estimate is not reliable partly because it is based on overly optimistic assumptions about the labor hours needed to construct the submarines," the GAO said.

Construction of the new submarines is slated to begin in 2020 with the aim of having the first boat making a maiden pa-

trol in 2031 — a schedule that GAO finds "aggressive" and not realistic.

Building the lead submarine in a new class takes additional time to design, develop new technologies and work out bugs through trial and error, the GAO said. The Navy has not included reasonable margins of error in time, labor and efficiency, essentially using a best-case scenario with little substantiation, it said.

Unforeseen labor costs in the past year have added to the project's costs, such as fixing a defective propulsion motor, it noted.

Production capacity is an-

other factor. The heightened pace of submarine construction — unprecedented since the 1980s — is putting a strain on the shipbuilder. Electric Boat, which is building Columbia-class and Virginia-class subs, is investing \$1 billion in its factories and hiring 6,000 workers but will need some time to reach full production.

Navy officials told the agency that they have calculated more detailed cost estimates based on risk factors and the history of submarine construction.

GAO said it has yet to see those updated figures.

Lincoln strike group enters European theater

BY SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

The USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group sailed into European waters Monday to train, patrol and make a show of force in regions where the Russian navy has grown more active.

The Nimitz-class Lincoln is the first U.S. aircraft carrier to enter the theater since the USS Harry S. Truman did a double deployment here last year as part of "dynamic force employment," a recently revived concept of operating in unpredictable patterns.

The Truman became the first aircraft carrier to patrol the Arctic since the Cold War. In recent years, carriers have mostly

operated from the eastern Mediterranean and Persian Gulf in support of U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

The Lincoln, which left Norfolk, Va., a week ago, will also visit various undisclosed locations. But unlike the Truman, which returned to the East Coast for a port visit during deployment, the Lincoln will circumnavigate the globe and finish up at its new San Diego homeport.

"The Abraham Lincoln Strike Group has worked tremendously hard to prepare for our operations in U.S. 6th Fleet," Rear Adm. John Wade, the strike group's commander, said in a statement.

In late January, the 2nd Fleet oversaw training for the Lincoln's crews in its East

Coast area of operations — the fleet's first tactical exercise since it was revived last year.

In 2013, the Lincoln began a refueling and overhaul that took four years to complete.

Part of the extensive work was to prepare the ship to accommodate F-35C fighters.

"We're doing the maiden deployment of the second half of the ship's life," Capt. Putnam Browne, the Lincoln's commander, told the *Virginian-Pilot* on April 2.

The carrier strike group will include the cruiser USS *Leyte Gulf* and the destroyers USS *Bainbridge*, USS *Mason* and USS *Nitze*. Carrier Air Wing 7 will be aboard the ship, and the Spanish frigate *ESPS Mendez* will join the group later.

Shooter killed at NAS Oceana in Virginia is ID'd

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A sailor killed Friday by security at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach, Va., after he shot another sailor several times has been identified by the Navy as Christopher J. Ruffier, 26.

Ruffier was an Ohio native assigned to Strike Fighter Squad-

ron 37 as an apprentice aviation ordnanceman, according to a news release Monday from Navy Region Mid-Atlantic.

In what Navy officials described Friday as a domestic dispute, Ruffier shot a female sailor of the same unit in the parking lot outside Hangar 145 about 6:45 a.m. Within five minutes, base security person-

nel arrived on scene and shot and killed Ruffier.

The victim was taken to Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital with injuries that were not life-threatening. She remains at the hospital in stable condition, the Navy said. To protect her privacy, officials declined to release her name.

Naval Criminal Investiga-

tive Service continues to investigate the incident. The base has a no-weapons policy, and how Ruffier was able to get a weapon on base is part of the investigation.

Ruffier enlisted in the Navy on Feb. 15, 2018, and was months into his first nontraining assignment, according to his releasable service information.

Wasp/F-35B deployment signals US commitment, concern in the Philippines

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

The first deployment of the USS Wasp and F-35B Lightning II fighters to the Philippines for this month's Balikatan exercise shows the value the U.S. places on military ties to the nation, according to the commander of a Navy amphibious squadron participating in the drills.

Capt. Jim McGovern, commodore of Amphibious Squadron 11, which comprises four warships including the Wasp, spoke about the importance of the mission during a call from aboard the flat-deck amphibious assault ship in the South China Sea on Monday.

"Nothing says 'you're important' like sending a ship with the capability of the Wasp," he said of the vessel, which deployed to Sasebo, Japan, in January 2018.

Navy officials won't disclose the number of servicemembers or assets aboard the Wasp due to operational security concerns. The vessel typically has a crew of about 1,000 sailors and can embark more than 1,600 Marines. The 844-foot ship employs 31 aircraft and can launch Marine amphibious craft from its well deck.

Photographs of the warship on its current mission show it's carrying at least 10 F-35Bs, four MV-22 Ospreys and two MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopters.

"We have a lot of capability on this ship," McGovern said.

Philippine military personnel have been aboard this week and seem impressed by its capabilities, he said.

"It's great to be out at sea with our Philippine navy counterparts," he said.

American sailors got a warm welcome when they made a port call in Subic Bay last week ahead of the drills, he said.

The F-35Bs are operating only from the Wasp and haven't touched down at any air bases in the Philippines, McGovern said.

"The F-35Bs bring a lot of capability no matter where we are operating," he said, but he

noted that the fifth-generation fighters are only one component of a Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force that includes a battalion landing team from the 4th Marine Regiment and a command element.

The Wasp is also carrying assault amphibious vehicles and landing craft air cushions, he said.

This week the amphibious force is focused on training for humanitarian operations and building relationships with Filipino counterparts, he said.

During Balikatan, an annual exercise that this year runs April 1-12, U.S. and Philippine forces are conducting amphibious operations, live-fire training, urban operations, aviation operations and counterterrorism response training on the islands of Luzon and Palawan, officials said.

"One thing we are doing with our allies is bilateral amphibious drills where we are doing landings," McGovern said.

The Navy and Marines are practicing ship-to-shore movement with the Filipinos and training ashore, he added.

McGovern didn't comment on recent friction between China and the Philippines over disputed island territory.

"We are just conducting routine operations in the South China Sea," he said. "We are focused on operating with our treaty allies."

However, David Johnson of the Center for Advanced Defense Studies in Washington said the deployment of the Wasp and the F-35Bs is an example of U.S. concern about rising Chinese influence and the importance of the Philippines to stability in the region.

"There is a lot of symbolism involved in these things we go forward," he said, but noted that building relationships is more important than deploying high-tech gear. "There is already so much effort in the Pacific that there is only a little more that can be done," Johnson said.

The U.S.-Philippines relationship is likely to continue on a positive trajectory, he said.

Shanahan makes argument for new space organizations

By **COREY DICKSTEIN**
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — For the United States to remain the dominant power in space, the Pentagon needs troops whose training is focused entirely on that domain and it needs a top general whose sole attention is on commanding space operations, acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan said Tuesday.

If the United States does not make those changes soon, China's military will quickly overtake American dominance in space as it creates weaponry capable of destroying or disabling the Pentagon's 100-plus military satellites that it relies on for communication and guiding forces and weapons around the globe, Shanahan said in a keynote speech delivered at the yearly Space Symposium in Colorado Springs, Colo. It marked the most clear-throated public argument from Shanahan in defense of the Defense Department's proposal to reorganize its space operations, including building three new organizations — Space Force, U.S. Space Command and the Space Development Agency.

"The threat is clear: we're in an era of great-power competition, and the next major conflict may be won or lost in space," said Shanahan, who has led the Pentagon on a temporary basis since January. "This is not a future or theoretical threat, this is today's threat. We are not going to sit back and watch — we are going to act. We are going to deter conflict from extending into space, and ensure we can respond decisively if deterrence fails."

Shanahan's contentions were delivered just two days before he and other top Pentagon officials are scheduled to testify before the Senate Armed Service Committee on the build-

ing of the Space Force, a sixth military service that would fall within the Air Force Department, much as the Marine Corps is part of the Navy Department. Shanahan on Tuesday explained the key roles each of the new organizations would have in improving the U.S. military's space operations.

■ Pentagon officials have proposed building the U.S. Space Force over the coming five years, a new military service focused on space expertise that would grow to 15,000 to 20,000 troops, Shanahan said.

On Tuesday, the acting secretary compared the need for the new service, which would require congressional authorization, to the need for the Navy. Just as the Navy ensures freedom of navigation throughout international waters worldwide, the Space Force would ensure space remained available to all international parties.

■ U.S. Space Command would command and control U.S. military space operations across the globe, headed by a four-star general or admiral who would be "a combatant commander focused on space every day," Shanahan said. Its primary roles would include coordinating the use of the individual military services' space troops and assets and providing key functions including controlling space-based missile warning, communications, navigation, weather and imagery.

■ The Space Development Agency, which was officially established last month within the Pentagon, is focused on research and design and is meant to quickly acquire new technology for space. Shanahan envisions the new organization partnering closely with the private sector to leverage existing technology for military use in an effort to speed up the Pentagon's acquisition process.

Barr: Redacted report coming within week

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General William Barr said Tuesday that he expects to release a redacted version of the special counsel's Trump-Russia investigation report "within a week" as he defended his handling of the document.

Barr told members of Congress at his first public appearance since receiving special counsel Robert Mueller's report that his earlier projection of releasing a version by mid-April still stood. The nearly 400-page report is being scoured to remove grand jury information and details relating to pending investigations.

The redactions will be color-coded and accompanied by notes explaining the deci-

sion to withhold information, he said.

Democrats scolded Barr over his handling of the report, telling him they were concerned that a summary of its main conclusions he released last month portrayed the investigation's findings in an overly favorable way for President Donald Trump.

Rep. Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., the chairwoman of the House Appropriations Committee, said she was taken aback that Barr had reduced Mueller's report to a four-page letter in just two days. The letter said that Mueller did not find a criminal conspiracy between Russia and Trump associates and that Barr did not believe the evidence in the report was sufficient to prove the president had obstructed justice.

"Even for someone who has done this job before, I would argue it's more suspicious than impressive," Lowey said.

Explaining the rapid turnaround for his letter, Barr said, "The thinking of the special counsel was not a mystery to the Department of Justice prior to the submission of the report."

Barr was summoned to Congress to talk about his department's budget request, but lawmakers still asked about the Mueller report as they waited to see it. Barr's opening remarks focused on funding requests for immigration enforcement and the fights against violent crime and opioid addiction, not mentioning the special counsel's report.

Nielsen's exit part of larger DHS shake-up

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and White House allies pressing for a harder line on immigration sped up their campaign to clean house at the Department of Homeland Security with a mission far wider than just the departure of Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen.

The dismantling of the government's immigration leadership is being orchestrated by Trump adviser Stephen Miller, the impetus behind some of the administration's most controversial policies, according to three people familiar with the matter.

Beyond changing names and faces, Trump is considering separating migrant families at the border again, resuming the

practice that drew so much outrage last year, the same people said.

The shake-up is a result of Trump's frustration with the increasing number of migrants at the border and his diminishing options for action. Court challenges, immigration laws and his own advisers have blocked several of his proposals as his reelection campaign looms.

The White House has lashed out by demanding new leadership, although a new team is likely to face the same obstacles.

The head of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, L. Francis Cissna, and Homeland Security General Counsel John M. Mitnick are expected to be pushed out of their positions, the officials said.

Nielsen submitted her resignation Sunday after meeting with Trump at the White House. Three days earlier, the administration withdrew the nomination of Ron Vitiello to lead Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Other longtime civil servants in agency posts are also on the chopping block, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Adding to the turmoil, the director of the Secret Service is being forced out of his job, but that departure is said to be unrelated to the immigration upheaval.

Leading senators from both parties were displeased.

Loughlin, husband hit with new charge in college case

Associated Press

BOSTON — "Full House" star Lori Loughlin and her fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli, and 14 other parents were hit Tuesday with a new money laundering charge in the sweeping college admissions bribery scheme.

The move comes a day after fellow actress Felicity Huffman, 12 other parents and a coach agreed to plead guilty — signaling an escalation in the case against the parents who are continuing to fight the allegations against them.

Loughlin and Giannulli were among 33 prominent parents accused of participating in a scheme that involved rigging college entrance exams and bribing coaches

at elite universities.

They were arrested last month on a single charge of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud. An indictment brought Tuesday adds a charge of money laundering conspiracy against the couple and 14 other parents.

Amy and Gregory Colburn, a California couple accused of paying \$25,000 to cheat on their son's SAT, were indicted on the money laundering and mail fraud conspiracy charges last month.

The parents are accused of paying an admissions consultant, Rick Singer, to cheat on their children's college entrance exams and get their children admitted as athletic recruits at such elite schools as George-

town and Yale.

Loughlin and Giannulli are accused of paying \$500,000 in bribes to get their daughters into the University of Southern California as crew team recruits, even though neither of them played the sport.

They appeared in Boston federal court briefly last week and were not asked to enter a plea. They have not publicly addressed the allegations against them.

Other parents indicted on the new charge Tuesday include Michelle Janavs, whose family developed the microwave snack line Hot Pockets before selling their company, and William McGlashan, who co-founded an investment fund with U2's Bono in 2017.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man drove off in empty school bus

OK TULSA — Police in Tulsa arrested a man who they said stole an empty school bus and took it for a joyride.

Police said the Tulsa Public Schools bus was stolen early Monday when the driver went into a gas station and left the bus running.

The Tulsa World reported a man told officers he decided to steal the bus after seeing an anti-texting-and-driving sign on the bus that said, “drop it and drive.”

Police said the man told officers that he “dropped what he was doing” and drove off in the bus.

The man later radioed dispatch to tell him where he would leave the bus. Police arrested him on complaints of auto theft and driving without a license.

Attempt to dry ballfield sets it on fire

CT RIDGEFIELD — Authorities said it could cost over \$50,000 to repair a baseball field in Ridgefield where somebody dumped gasoline and set it on fire to dry out the infield.

Police are investigating the incident in which 25 gallons of gasoline were poured on the field Saturday.

First Selectman Rudy Marconi told Hearst Connecticut Media that 75 to 100 people watched as it happened.

A state hazardous waste removal crew began digging up the contaminated soil Sunday, and Marconi said the spill team will transport it off site this week.

No one has been charged.

Thieves return statue, leave flowers and card

PA WEST CHESTER — Two thieves who snatched a statue of a lion from outside a home in a Philadelphia suburb had a change of heart after police posted surveillance video of the heist.

The statute was taken from the West Chester residence on Wednesday.

By Friday, police posted a video of the thieves returning it. They also left behind a bouquet of flowers and a card.

12-year-old boys rescued from mine

SD LEAD — Emergency responders rescued two 12-year-old boys who entered a surface mine in western South Dakota.

The Lead Volunteer Fire Department said the boys walked into a steep area of the Open Cut mine on Saturday night and were unable to get out. The Open Cut is approximately 1,200 feet deep and half a mile wide. It’s surrounded by a tall fence marked with “no trespassing” signs.

More than 50 emergency officials responded to the scene. Rescuers reached the boys about 3:30 a.m. Sunday and reunited them, unharmed, with their parents soon after.

After wreck, ‘a lot of well-done corned beef’

MO EUREKA — Authorities said a weekend wreck on an eastern Missouri highway turned into a corned beef roast.

The Eureka Fire Protection District says in a Facebook post that a rig carrying the meat caught fire Saturday on Interstate 44.

Fire spokesman Scott Barthelma told KMOX-AM that the rig’s brakes ignited first, then the whole trailer went up in flames. He said no one was hurt, “just a lot of well-done corned beef.”

Ponies corralled due to visitors’ conduct

VA CHINCOTEAGUE — Wild ponies living on Virginia’s Eastern Shore have been corralled because visitors ignored warnings against approaching the animals.

The Daily Times of Salisbury, Md., reported that the warnings were ignored at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. The ponies were moved to the south corral of Assateague Island.

The Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Co. owns and cares for the Virginia pony herds on Assateague Island. Spokeswoman Denise Bowden said they’ve tried numerous times to educate the public about staying clear of the ponies.

The ponies will be corralled until the spring roundup that begins Friday. That’s when the ponies get a health check and authorities see if any new foals have been born.

Legal foreign resident sues over gun laws

HI LIHUE — A foreign citizen living legally in Hawaii is suing the state over laws preventing him from obtaining a gun license, according to court documents.

United Kingdom citizen Andrew Roberts filed the federal civil lawsuit last week in U.S. District Court in Honolulu, The Garden Island reported Sunday.

Hawaii statutes restricting gun ownership on the basis of citizenship are unconstitution-

al denials of equal protection under the 14th Amendment, the lawsuit claims.

Roberts, a director for the Hawaii Firearms Coalition, moved there from England 12 years ago and established legal residency.

Man sets world record with soap bubbles

NC HUNTERSVILLE — A North Carolina man has set a Guinness World Record after creating huge soap bubbles around 13 people in 30 seconds.

The Raleigh News & Observer reported that Steven Langley was officially designated the record holder on Saturday. He achieved the feat in November in Huntersville.

Langley used a ring that’s three feet in diameter to create the bubbles. The ring surrounded each person, and he pulled it up and around them as it created a soap bubble.

The record marked Langley’s seventh Guinness World Record. Others have been for the “longest hanging chain of soap bubbles” and “most people making bubbles with garland wands simultaneously.”

Whale once rescued from stranding dies

FL ORLANDO — A pilot whale that was rescued and found a home at SeaWorld Orlando after being part of a mass stranding in the Florida Keys eight years ago has died.

Officials at SeaWorld Orlando posted on its blog that the whale known as Fredi died Saturday. A spokeswoman said in an email Sunday that Fredi had shown signs of appetite loss and was undergoing an aggressive anti-microbial treatment.

From wire reports

Your objective source for military news
updated 24/7 from bases
around the world.
Now online at www.stripes.com.

STARS AND STRIPES®

Virginia wins national title in overtime

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — It was an easy question to ask, even if the answer was tough to absorb.

“Why?”

It dogged Virginia for a year and three weeks — following the Cavaliers through sweat-soaked practices, hostile arenas up and down the East Coast, on talk radio and pundit-driven TV, and in their own, doubt-filled, uncertain minds.

The only truly satisfying answer to “Why?” came Monday night — and with the confetti falling and the nets dangling around their necks, it all seemed so clear.

That humbling, history-making loss last season to Maryland-Baltimore County happened so the Cavaliers could stand at center court and celebrate this time around.

The only top seed to fall to a No. 16 in the history of the NCAA Tournament is now the only team to come back from such a loss and win a championship the very next season. Virginia did it the hard way, squandering a 10-point lead against a tenacious Texas Tech team, only to pull away for an 85-77 victory in overtime.

And now, there are no more questions.

“We’ve all had our own battles,” said Virginia guard Kyle Guy, who was named the Final Four’s most outstanding player. “I said earlier, it’s a really special group because we all had the same ‘Why?’ among other ‘whys.’ But to share the same one, and to battle everything we battled through, and come out on top, it’s a fantastic feeling.”

It’s tempting to call Virginia a team of destiny, but that would undermine what the Cavaliers accomplished this season. It would give short shrift to the way they overcame so many close calls in this tournament, including an entertaining, back-and-forth final against an opponent that simply would not go away.

Lottery-pick-in-waiting De’Andre Hunter scored a career-high 27 points after starting the game 0-for-7 from the floor. Going mano-a-mano against another likely NBA-bound star, Jarrett Culver, Hunter saved the Cavaliers (35-3) with a game-tying three with 12 seconds left in regulation, then helped them win it with a go-ahead three with 2:07 left in the overtime.

Hunter’s game-tying shot came on a play Texas Tech doesn’t usually allow: Ty Jerome dribbled into the middle, then skipped a pass down the baseline to Hunter, who spotted up from the corner. The nation’s best defense hardly ever leaves someone that wide-open.

“With a three-point lead ... we’re trying to play really sound defense with three objectives: No three-point shots, no ‘and-ones,’ and we’ve got to secure the defensive rebounds,” Texas Tech coach Chris Beard said. “We just came up a little bit short, but give Virginia credit. They have a really, really good team. So much poise, and just have a lot of respect for them.”

The poise showed up earlier in the tournament, too.

First, when the Cavaliers, a No. 1 seed again, fell behind by 14 early to No. 16 Gardner-Webb in what seemed like a repeat of the nightmare from the year before. They won 71-56.

Next, against Purdue, when, trailing by 2, the Cavaliers intentionally missed a free throw, got the ball back and fed to Mamadi Diakite, who beat the buzzer to send the game into overtime. They won 80-75.

And then in the semifinal

Saturday against Auburn, when Guy got fouled while shooting a three with 0.6 seconds left, and calmly sank all three free throws. They won 63-62.

“I hope that it’s a message for some people out there that there can be hope and joy and resiliency,” said Virginia coach Tony Bennett, whose father Dick, the coach who wrote the book on stifling man-to-man defense, was in the crowd. “I’m thankful for what happened.”

All Virginia fans are.

This is a program that has lived a tortured existence, starting around Christmas in 1982, when 7-foot-4 Ralph Sampson — as good as they came back in his day — was headlining the top-ranked Cavaliers on a stop-over trip in Hawaii, only to get shocked by tiny, NAIA Chaminate. It still goes down as one of the greatest upsets in sports.

Thirty years later, Bennett turned the Cavaliers into contenders again, but they always underachieved once the calendar turned to March.

Then, last year.

That loss to UMBC could’ve wrecked a lesser program.

Somehow, this one got stronger.

Cavaliers may be team to beat again next season

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Kyle Guy had every reason to look toward next season the moment last season ended, a stunning and humiliating loss to Maryland-Baltimore County in the NCAA Tournament forcing him into what he called “a dark place.”

Instead, the junior guard ruminated over the loss for weeks.

Guy might want to dwell on the way this year’s tournament ended even longer, basking in an overtime victory over Texas Tech in the national championship game Monday night that was equal parts absolution and retribution. But when he finally does turn his attention toward

next season, he will face this reality: There’s a good chance Virginia could be right back in the finals again.

The bulk of their lineup will return intact, hardened by both uplifting victory and soul-crushing defeat. They’ll be joined by a pair of top-100 prospects, and they will have the confidence of winning a series of nail-biters on college basketball’s biggest stage.

“As soon as the buzzer sounded (last year) and we were done with the press conference and stuff, we knew we all had the same goal in mind for next year, and that was to win a national championship,” Guy said. “To battle everything we battled through and come out on top is

a fantastic feeling.”

In college basketball, though, every ending is a new beginning. That was the case when the Cavs were bounced by UMBC a year ago, and it was the case again Monday night.

Multicolored confetti was still swirling inside U.S. Bank Stadium, and the party still going on in the locker rooms, when oddsmakers in Las Vegas made the Cavaliers the betting favorites for next season. Caesars Palace had them at 5-1 odds, while the Westgate Las Vegas SuperBook followed suit by installing Virginia and Kentucky as co-favorites at 7-1.

The reason for that optimism? Simple. The Cavaliers return just about everybody.

Yes, sophomore standout De’Andre Hunter is almost certainly off to the NBA, especially after a career-high 27 points in the Cavaliers’ 85-77 win over the Red Raiders. Junior guard Ty Jerome could join him in declaring for the draft, though he is considered a fringe first-rounder.

Otherwise, the only loss to graduation is Jack Salt, a role player off the bench.

Guy should be back for his senior year after a starring turn at the Final Four, and so should Mamadi Diakite, the versatile shot-blocking forward. Point guard Kihei Clark will be back with a year of experience, and top reserve Braxton Key could slide into a starting job.

Rose looks to finally don green jacket

Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Justin Rose has been atop the leaderboard at the Masters after every round except the one that matters.

He is making his 14th appearance, so he has the experience.

He has been runner-up twice, most recently in a playoff that would have been more crushing if not for seeing close friend Sergio Garcia celebrate his first major.

The next step is a green jacket.

Still to be determined is whether it's a baby step or a giant leap.

"Guys talk about a course that fits their eye," Rose said Monday. "And I think this is one for me that I like all the shots out there."

Monday was the first full day of practice for the Masters, and the course was particularly full in the morning because of thunderstorms that arrived and led Augusta National to close the course about 3 p.m.

Tiger Woods arrived late Sunday afternoon and played nine holes in solitude, and then another nine Monday morning with Fred Couples and Justin Thomas. Rory McIlroy played with Dustin Johnson, two of the top betting favorites.

Woods and Couples share more than the distinction of a green jacket. They are among three players who have won the Masters while No. 1 in the world since the rankings began in 1986. The other player was Ian Woosnam in 1991. Woods last won the Masters as the No. 1 player in 2002, the year before Rose played Augusta for the first time.

For Rose, the ranking is just a number.

This is the fifth time since September he has risen to No. 1, and the last three times he got there, he didn't even play the week before.

"I think the weeks that I am No. 1, it's really cool," Rose said. "I feel like I haven't had my run yet where I've sort of separated

myself as the No. 1 player in the world. That's a goal of mine still. No one's really been that dominant right now. If think if anyone has been dominant, it's been Rory in the last couple of months. ... The ranking, it's bounced around a lot."

Golf is so crowded at the top that five players — Rose, Johnson, McIlroy, Thomas and Brooks Koepka — could leave the Masters at No. 1.

That's one reason this Masters is regarded as even more wide open than in recent years. That typically is the case, anyway, because of the short field — 87 players, nearly half the size of the other three majors — that includes six past champions at 50 or older and six amateurs.

Rose simply wants to cross the line.

He made the cut on the number in his debut in 2003, which he thought was a good start considering the experience Augusta National so often requires. The following year, he opened

with rounds of 67 and 71 to lead after each of the opening two rounds.

"And then shot 81 on the third day, which was obviously disappointing, but just really taught me a lot about this golf course," Rose said. "Gave me such great valuable experience and insights into how to play it, how not to play it and how it can kind of trick you and bully you a little bit at times."

He was a distant runner-up to Jordan Spieth in 2015, and the real crusher was the playoff against Garcia in 2017. Rose had the lead with two holes to play until missing a par putt on the 17th, and then getting into trouble off the tee on the 18th in the playoff to lose.

It stung the next day.

It hurt even more later in the year when something would trigger a memory of the day he nearly won the green jacket. Close calls at the Masters guarantee nothing, as Tom Weiskopf (four runner-up finishes) and Greg Norman can attest.

MLB roundup

Encarnacion's 2 HRs in sixth power Mariners to rout

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Edwin Encarnacion and the Seattle Mariners are off to a slugging start unlike any team in major league history.

Encarnacion homered twice during an eight-run sixth inning, two of five homers for the hot-hitting Mariners during a 13-5 victory over the Kansas City Royals on Monday night.

Seattle has 32 homers in its first 12 games, the most ever by a team a dozen games into the season. The St. Louis Cardinals had 31 in 2000, according to STATS. The Mariners have scored at least five runs 11 times already.

"What an offensive roll we're on right now," manager Scott Servais said. "Guys just don't let up. The consistency up and

down the lineup, it's contagious. The guys have all bought in."

Encarnacion is the first Mariner to homer twice in an inning since Bret Boone and Mike Cameron both did it May 2, 2002, against the White Sox. The last player with a multi-homer inning was Mark Trumbo of the Angels on April 15, 2016, at Texas.

It's the second time in his career that Encarnacion has homered twice in an inning, also accomplishing it on July 26, 2013, with Toronto.

Orioles 12, Athletics 4: Chris Davis went 0-for-5 to set a major league record for the longest hitless streak by a position player, extending his drought to 49 consecutive at-bats in host Baltimore's rout of Oakland.

Cubs 10, Pirates 0: Kyle

Schwarber hit a two-run homer and his team's beleaguered bullpen stepped up after Jon Lester departed with left hamstring tightness, leading host Chicago over Pittsburgh in its home opener.

Astros 4, Yankees 3: Jose Altuve hit a long home run and Carlos Correa's broken-bat RBI infield single in the eighth inning helped host Houston rally past New York for its fourth straight victory.

Angels 5, Brewers 2: Mike Trout made a leaping catch to steal a potential homer from Christian Yelich, and host Los Angeles beat Milwaukee for its fourth straight victory.

Phillies 4, Nationals 3: Rhys Hoskins hit two solo homers, Odubel Herrera hit a two-run shot and host Philadelphia beat Washington.

Cardinals 4, Dodgers 3: Marcell Ozuna homered to back a solid start by Miles Mikolas, and host St. Louis ended Los Angeles' five-game winning streak.

Padres 6, Giants 5: Pinch-hitter Franmil Reyes connected for a go-ahead, two-run homer in the seventh inning, and visiting San Diego rallied from five down against Madison Bumgarner to beat San Francisco.

Braves 8, Rockies 6: Ronald Acuna Jr. homered, Dansby Swanson drove in three runs and Atlanta held off Colorado for its first road win of the season.

Rays 5, White Sox 1: At Chicago, Blake Snell (2-1) struck out 11 in six innings, giving up one run and six hits as Tampa Bay improved to 8-3.

NHL playoffs have interesting matchups

Associated Press

The team expected to win it all faces an opponent that loaded up for the same thing, the defending champions go up against a playoff newcomer and the wild West is wide open in the quest for the Stanley Cup.

The NHL playoffs open Wednesday when the Presidents' Trophy-winning Tampa Bay Lightning host the Columbus Blue Jackets in Game 1 of their first-round series. Five of the eight series get underway Wednesday and the other three Thursday.

"Best time of year," Boston goaltender Tuukka Rask said.

In the other Wednesday openers, the 2016 and 2017 Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins visit the New York Islanders at the renovated Nassau Coliseum, the St. Louis Blues visit the Winnipeg Jets, the Dallas Stars visit the Central Division champion Nashville Predators and the defending Western Conference champion Vegas Golden Knights play Game 1 at

San Jose.

"The last couple months, we've been getting ourselves ready," Blues winger Alex Steen said. "We've been pretty dialed in on what we want to do."

In the Thursday openers, the Bruins host the Toronto Maple Leafs, the reigning Cup champion Washington Capitals host the Carolina Hurricanes and West-best Calgary hosts the Colorado Avalanche.

Carolina is in the playoffs for the first time in a decade but Washington can't overlook this matchup.

"They're a really good team, extremely improved, play with a ton of speed, great D corps in terms of mobile guys, depth scoring and then their goaltenders have been outstanding for them," Capitals coach Todd Reirden said. "If you look at their team from the All-Star break on or even earlier than that, they were one of the best teams in the league, so we know we've got to be on top of our game and it's going to be a

real challenge."

The Atlantic Division bracket features an intriguing showdown between the Lightning and Blue Jackets, who acquired pending free agents Matt Duchene, Ryan Dzingel and Adam McQuaid and held on to good-as-gone goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky and winger Artemi Panarin at the trade deadline to take a shot at the Cup. Columbus has never won a playoff series and has a tough task against Tampa Bay, which is led by league-leading scorer Nikita Kucherov and Vezina Trophy candidate Andrei Vasilevskiy.

The winner of that series faces the winner of Boston-Toronto, which is a rematch of last year's first-round matchup that went to the Bruins in seven.

"We've got to play a really solid, sound defensive game," Maple Leafs forward Connor Brown said.

Barry Trotz's Islanders face Mike Sullivan's Penguins in a matchup of the past two Cup-winning coaches. Whoever

gets through that coin flip of a series faces the winner of Washington-Carolina.

San Jose has defenseman Erik Karlsson back for its heavyweight bout with Vegas for the right to face the winner of Calgary-Colorado in the Pacific Division. The Flames rolled to the top seed in the West and trailed only Tampa Bay in the points race.

"You grind 82 games all year," Flames defenseman Travis Hamonic said. "Here we are at this point and we've set ourselves up to be in the playoffs, and in the dance, now we just have to go out and execute like we can."

After the Central Division got shook up in the final week of the regular season, the winner of Nashville-Dallas will face the winner of Winnipeg-St. Louis.

"A lot of excitement for what is going to be a good series," Jets captain Blake Wheeler said.

Around the NBA

As season winds down, it's time to consider MVP

Associated Press

Take a look at the five highest-scoring seasons in NBA history.

■ Wilt Chamberlain scored 4,029 points in 1961-62.

■ Chamberlain scored 3,586 in 1962-63.

■ Michael Jordan scored 3,041 points in 1986-87.

■ Chamberlain scored 3,033 in 1960-61.

■ Chamberlain scored 2,948 points in 1963-64.

There they are. The five best seasons in terms of points that the NBA has ever seen. And those five seasons all have something in common — when they were over, someone not named Chamberlain or Jordan was the MVP.

What James Harden did this season for the Houston Rockets

was scintillating. He scored 50 or more points nine times. He scored 61 twice. He scored at least 30 points in 32 consecutive games, a stretch that lasted more than two months. He will finish this season with the seventh-highest scoring average in NBA history and win the scoring title by more than 8 points per game — a ridiculous margin.

He wins Most Voluminous Points.

But maybe not the Most Valuable Player.

There are some tremendous individual races in the NBA this season, with a slew of deserving candidates for coach of the year, a rather unexpected two-person race for rookie of the year, and the annual befuddlement about who should win

defensive player of the year. The ballot that voters will agonize over most, in some cases, will be the one for MVP.

Is it Harden, for the second straight year?

Or is it Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo?

Compelling cases can be made either way.

Harden carried the Rockets and became the most unguardable player in the league.

Antetokounmpo took a team that finished seventh in the East last year and lifted it to the No. 1 overall seed in the NBA, continuing his meteoric rise toward total superstardom.

Harden is the better scorer, Antetokounmpo the more accurate shooter.

Harden is the better ball-handler and passer, Antetok-

ounmpo the better rebounder and defender.

Take Antetokounmpo off the Bucks, and they'd be lucky to make the playoffs.

Take Harden off the Rockets, and they'd be lucky to make the playoffs.

The biggest argument for Harden is the scoring. It has been sensational, without question.

But there is precedent, as Chamberlain and Jordan learned.

Even a gazillion points doesn't guarantee anyone the Maurice Podoloff Trophy.

When these playoffs are over and the trophy is finally handed out in late June, Harden will find out if scoring was enough to win the vote this time.