

Marines test skills during Okinawa drills

By MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

IE SHIMA, Okinawa — The Marine Corps on Okinawa put the commandant's island-fighting doctrine into practice in another series of military exercises this month by sending Marines, fighter jets and helicopters to rough landing sites in an austere location.

Marines on Ie Shima, just off Okinawa's northwestern coast, erected a close air support center, turned murky seawater into potable water and created an expeditionary fuel depot.

"It's about recalibrating the mindset of the typical Marine to be able to deploy to various islands, to deploy in a distributed manner and be able to survive as a standing force in the Pacific," Lt. Col. James Pryor, commander of Marine Wing Support Squadron 172, told Stars and Stripes on April 16 on Ie Shima.

"It forces us to embark our gear and equipment and deploy people out here," he

said. "It's a little bit more challenging and that's what we're looking for, to replicate what it would be like to move to other islands."

Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger made expeditionary advanced base operations a Corps doctrine in planning guidance he issued in July 2019. It complements the 2020 National Defense Strategy that identifies big power competition with Russia and China as the U.S. military's highest priorities. The Castaway exercise in March and Noble Fury in October also experimented with the concept.

Expeditionary advanced base operations mean Marines must move inside the range of an adversary's "long-range precision fires" and establish difficult-to-target forward bases, according to Berger's guidance.

That translates to seizing and holding territory, supporting naval units at sea, refueling, rearming and relaunching aircraft and denying sea lanes to the adversary.

From April 12-26, units of the Okinawa-base 1st Marine Aircraft Wing are demonstrating their ability to do some of that, Pryor said.

Reconnaissance Marines dropped onto Ie Shima and AH-1Z Vipers and UH-1Y Venom attack helicopters landed on cleared dirt patches near the beach for refueling and rearming.

A camouflaged net concealed a direct air support center, experimenting for the first time with a 12-man team, smaller than a full complement of around 20.

"We control aircraft and flights as well as make sure those aircraft and missiles do not impact each other in flight," said Capt. Tyler Madden, support center commander.

The Marines covered other tasks that fit the advanced base concept, such as short, arrested landings by F-18 Hornet jet fighters and hauling a 500-pound fuel bladder with a CH-53E Super Stallion heavy-lift helicopter to serve as a refueling station.

Secretive DOD unit activated long dormant IP addresses

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — While the world was distracted with President Donald Trump leaving office on Jan. 20, an obscure Florida company discreetly announced to the world's computer networks a startling development: It now was managing a huge unused swath of the internet that, for several decades, had been owned by the U.S. military.

What happened next was stranger still.

The company, Global Resource Systems LLC, kept adding to its zone of control. Soon it had claimed 56 million IP addresses owned by the Pentagon. Three months later, the total was nearly 175 million. That's almost 6% of a coveted traditional section of Internet real estate —

called IPv4 — where such large chunks are worth billions of dollars on the open market.

The entities controlling the largest swaths of the internet generally are telecommunications giants whose names are familiar: AT&T, China Telecom, Verizon. But now at the top of the list was Global Resource Systems — a company founded only in September that has no publicly reported federal contracts and no obvious public-facing website.

As listed in records, the company's address in Plantation, Fla., outside Fort Lauderdale, is a shared workspace in an office building that doesn't show Global Resource Systems on its lobby directory. A receptionist at the shared workspace said Friday that she could provide no infor-

mation about the company and asked a reporter to leave. The company did not respond to requests for comment.

The only announcement of Global Resource Systems' management of Pentagon addresses happened in the obscure world of Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) — the messaging system that tells internet companies how to route traffic across the world. There, messages began to arrive telling network administrators that IP addresses assigned to the Pentagon but long dormant could now accept traffic — but it should be routed to Global Resource Systems.

The change is the handiwork of an elite Pentagon unit known as the Defense Digital Service, which reports directly to the secretary of defense. The DDS bills

itself as a "SWAT team of nerds" tasked with solving emergency problems for the department and conducting experimental work to make big technological leaps for the military.

Brett Goldstein, the DDS's director, said in a statement that his unit had authorized a "pilot effort" publicizing the IP space owned by the Pentagon.

"This pilot will assess, evaluate and prevent unauthorized use of DoD IP address space," Goldstein said. "Additionally, this pilot may identify potential vulnerabilities."

Russell Goemaere, a spokesman for the Defense Department, confirmed in a statement to The Washington Post that the Pentagon still owns all the IP address space and hadn't sold any of it to a private party.

Navy IDs Seabee who died snorkeling

By ERICA EARL
Stars and Stripes

The Navy has identified a sailor who died April 18 on Tinian, an island near Guam in the Northern Marianas, as a Seabee from Port Hueneme, Calif.

CMCN Gen Sun, 35, was assigned to the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4 as a constructionman and deployed to Tinian with a Seabee construction detail for infrastructure improvement projects, according to a news release Tuesday from the 7th Fleet.

Tinian Search and Rescue found Sun un-

responsive after he was swept out to sea while snorkeling on his free time Sunday. Sun was originally from Maryland, according to the release.

“He quickly gained the friendship of those around him, and had a reputation as an exceptional Sailor,” Cmdr. Troy Brown, the battalion’s commanding officer, said in a Facebook post on the unit’s official page Tuesday. “As we all take time to grieve, we extend our deepest condolences to his wife, daughters, parents, and extended family. He made us a better team and we are very fortunate to have had him as part of our family.”

Sun completed recruit training in 2019; the construction battalion was his first duty station, Brown wrote in his post.

The cause of death is being investigated by the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands Department of Public Safety police division and Naval Criminal Investigative Service, according to the Navy’s release.

Navy projects in Tinian include road rebuilding and equipment repair. The Seabees have a long relationship with the Pacific island, deploying in support of the Defense Support to Civil Authorities following Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018.

Ex-Navy chief may be most senior openly trans in DOD

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A former Navy commander could become the highest-ranking defense official who is openly transgender, as barriers for transgender service members continue to fall.

Shawn Skelly, a retired aviator, was nominated by the White House on Friday to serve as the assistant secretary of defense for readiness, a key assignment as the Pentagon refocuses its priorities to combat adversaries such as China and Russia.

Her appointment comes as the Biden administration chips away at Trump-era bans on transgender service members that restricted open service and blocked access to relevant medical care. The Pentagon reversed those policies last month, largely returning to policies set by the Obama administration.

Brenda “Sue” Fulton, a former Army officer who in 1980 was commissioned in the first U.S. Military Academy class to admit women, was also nominated to serve in a top Pentagon post, as assistant secretary for

personnel and reserve affairs. She became the first openly gay member of the academy’s Board of Visitors after her appointment by President Barack Obama in 2011.

Advocates estimate that transgender troops number close to 15,000, with many joining the military or coming out to their comrades after the Obama administration created pathways to service in 2016.

The Trump administration’s reversal three years later, implemented after an initial announcement via tweet, crushed morale and dried up an enlistment pool of otherwise qualified candidates, advocates and studies have said.

The Pentagon has not made public any statistics on how many transgender troops may have left the military since the 2019 order took effect, but the agency is reviewing how many may have been forced out or denied re-enlistment, defense officials said last month.

Both Skelly and Fulton have for years led calls to broaden rights for gay and transgender service members.

Pentagon aims to appraise climate risks at US bases

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department announced Thursday it would complete assessments of climate-related hazards to all major installations in the continental United States within 12 months.

It set a goal of completing similar assessments at all major installations outside the U.S. within two years, the Pentagon said in a news release.

The announcement dovetailed with President Joe Biden’s Leaders Summit on Climate on Thursday, a virtual gathering during which he pledged America would cut emissions by at least half of 2005 levels by 2030.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has brought a new sense of urgency to addressing climate change as a national and global security issue.

“There is little about what the Department does to defend the American people that is not affected by climate change,” he said in a statement Jan. 27. Austin was moving at the White House’s direction to assess the

impacts of climate change on the Pentagon’s security strategies, operations and infrastructure.

Speaking at the summit Thursday, Austin said, “From coast to coast and across the world, the climate crisis has caused substantial damage and put people in danger, making it more difficult for us to carry out our mission of defending the United States and our allies.”

DOD will use its Climate Assessment Tool, which was launched in September by the undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, as a means of evaluating risks to the roughly 5,000 Defense Department sites worldwide.

The tool combines data from past extreme weather events, such as hurricanes and tornadoes, with projected future changes — for example, in sea level and average temperatures — to produce “hazard indicators,” according to DOD.

The announcement Thursday is a single step in a much longer road ahead, said John Conger, director of the Center for Climate and Security.

More action, less talk in Biden's first 100 days

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The card tucked in President Joe Biden's right jacket pocket must weigh a ton. You can see the weight of it on his face when he digs it out, squints and ever-so-slowly reads aloud the latest tally of COVID-19 dead.

Sometimes he'll stumble on a digit — after all, flubs come with the man. But the message is always clear: The toll of the virus weighs on him constantly, a millstone that helps explain why the typically garrulous politician with the megawatt smile has often seemed downright dour.

For any new leader, a lingering pandemic that has killed more than a half million citizens would be plenty for a first 100 days. But it has been far from the sole preoccupation for the now 78-year-old Biden.

The oldest person ever elected president is tugging the United States in many new directions at once, right down to its literal foundations — the concrete of its neglected bridges — as well as the racial inequities and partisan poisons tearing at the civil society. Add to that list: a call for dramatic action to combat climate change.

He's doing it without the abrasive noise of the last president or the charisma of the last two. Biden's spontaneity, once a hallmark and sometimes a headache, is rarely seen. Americans are seeing more action, less talk and something for the history books.

It's not all been smooth. Biden has struggled to change course on immigration practices he railed against in the campaign, drawing accusations from within his party

that he's "caved to the politics of fear."

Yet in 100 days he has achieved a pandemic relief package of historic breadth and taken executive actions to counter the legacy and agitations of Donald Trump.

The U.S. has pivoted on the environment and established payments that could halve child poverty in a year. It has embraced international alliances Trump shunned. It has elevated the health insurance program Republicans tried for years to kill.

"He ran as the antithesis of Trump — empathetic, decent and experienced, and he is delivering," said former Barack Obama adviser David Axelrod. "He's restored a sense of calm and equilibrium to a capital that lived on the jagged edge for four years of Trump."

Gone are the out-of-control news conferences, the sudden firings, the impulsive policy declarations, the Twitter drama. Instead Americans are getting something more methodical. Like the index card in his pocket. It shows his schedule, the key virus statistics and war casualties.

Biden has appeared in public far less than his predecessors. That's partly because of the pandemic but also because he wanted to occupy less of the American consciousness than did Trump, who spoke loudly but achieved almost nothing legislatively in his 100-day debut.

To this point, Biden enjoys healthy poll numbers. Pew Research found an approval rating of 59% this month, in league with Obama and President George W. Bush and far better than Trump's 39% in April 2017.

Oxygen explosion causes fire at Baghdad hospital

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's Interior Ministry said Sunday that 82 people died and 110 were injured in a catastrophic fire that broke out in the intensive care unit of a Baghdad hospital tending to severe coronavirus patients.

Negligence on the part of hospital authorities has been blamed for the Saturday night fire, which initial reports suggest was caused when an oxygen cylinder exploded in the ward of Ibn al-Khatib hospital. Iraq's prime minister fired key hospital officials hours after the catastrophic incident.

Among the dead were at least 28 patients on ventilators battling severe symptoms of the virus, tweeted Ali al-Bayati, a spokesman of the country's independent Human Rights Commission. The commission is a semi-official body.

Firefighters rushed to battle the flames that raged across the second floor of the hospital. Civil defense teams put out flames until the early hours of the morning.

Ambulances transported dozens of wounded. The Health Ministry said at least 200 people were rescued from the scene.

Doctors at the scene were frazzled by the chaos unfolding around them. They said numerous burned bodies were carried out by paramedics from the hospital floor.

In response to the fire, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi fired the director-general of the Baghdad Health Department in the al-Rusafa area, where the hospital is located. He also fired the director of Ibn al-Khatib Hospital and its director of engineering and maintenance, according to a statement from the Health Ministry and his office.

Coronavirus surge overwhelms India's crematoriums

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — With life-saving oxygen in short supply, family members in India are left on their own to ferry coronavirus patients from hospital to hospital in search of treatment as the country is engulfed in a devastating new surge of infections. Too often their efforts end in mourning.

For the fourth straight day, India on Sunday set a global daily

record of new coronavirus infections, spurred by an insidious new variant that emerged here. The surge has undermined the government's premature claims of victory over the pandemic.

The 349,691 confirmed infections over the past day brought India's total to more than 16.9 million cases, behind only the United States. The Health Ministry reported another 2,767 deaths in the past 24 hours, pushing

India's fatalities to 192,311.

The unfolding crisis is most visceral in India's overwhelmed graveyards and crematoriums, and in heartbreaking images of gasping patients dying on their way to hospitals due to lack of oxygen.

Burial grounds in the capital New Delhi are running out of space. In the central city of Bhopal, some crematoriums have increased their capacity from doz-

ens of pyres to more than 50. Yet officials say there are still hours-long waits.

The unprecedented rush of bodies has forced the crematorium to skip individual ceremonies and exhaustive rituals that Hindus believe release the soul from the cycle of rebirth.

"We are just burning bodies as they arrive," said Sharma. "It is as if we are in the middle of a war."

Florida resumes J&J vaccination shots

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Shots using the Johnson & Johnson vaccine resumed Sunday at federally supported mass vaccination sites throughout Florida, state emergency officials said.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management tweeted that it was resuming the Johnson & Johnson shots at the vaccination sites in Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville and Miami after reviewing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration.

The federal agencies on Friday called for the 11-day pause on the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to be lifted after federal regulators reviewed data on blood clots and assessed risks associated with the vaccine.

Out of nearly 8 million people who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, 15 women developed these blood clots. Johnson & Johnson vaccine providers will now provide information about the risk and information about symptoms to watch for after vaccination.

Each of the mass vaccination sites in Florida should be able to administer 3,000 of the one-dose Johnson & Johnson shots each day, according to the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — Additional first doses of the Pfizer and Moderna coronavirus vaccine will not be sent to 17 Arkansas counties next week, only second doses, according to the health officials.

Vaccine orders were based on requests from those who provide vaccinations, state epidemiologist Jennifer Dillaha told the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

“I would have to assume it’s because they had sufficient vaccine this time and didn’t need further shipments at this point,”

Dillaha said.

Arkansas on Thursday marked 1 million people who have received a virus vaccination.

Demand for the vaccine has dropped in other areas of the United States to the point where some counties are turning down new shipments of doses.

Massachusetts

A mobile vaccination effort that is slated to administer 500 COVID-19 immunizations per day rolled into East Boston on Saturday.

The “Mobile Vax” buses are a joint effort of Tufts Health Plan and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care to focus vaccination efforts on Black, Latino and non-English speaking communities in Massachusetts.

Saturday’s vaccinations were completed in Central Square Park in East Boston. Stops in Chelsea, Holyoke and Chicopee are planned for the next several weeks.

Appointments are required; community organizers are spreading the word by calling residents and going door-to-door in target areas.

Vermont

Vermont has more than 400 summer programs currently available for youth with more in the works as the state moves to expand opportunities using federal coronavirus relief money, Gov. Phil Scott said.

The Republican Scott, independent U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, the Vermont Agency of Education, Vermont After-school and others are working together on “our goal to make sure kids can reconnect with their friends and have some fun this summer after missing out on so much over the last year,” Scott said Friday during his bi-weekly virus briefing.

Scott said he was encouraged by what he heard about plans when he and Sanders met with

superintendents from across the state this past week. Parents can view a map of available camps online at vermontafter-school.org.

“We’re working to make these programs accessible, affordable and impactful for our youth,” Scott said.

New Hampshire

The Governor’s Economic Re-Opening Task Force created at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic marked its 77th — and last — meeting by approving a “universal best practices” document to replace previous “stay at home” guidance for businesses.

The best practices document, which would go into effect on May 7, will be reviewed by health officials and Gov. Chris Sununu.

The task force also approved guidance for amateur and youth sports; health and fitness and performing arts venues; and child care and summer day camps.

Maine

State officials are investigating after inmates at a women’s correctional facility tested positive for COVID-19.

WABI-TV reported Friday that the five women who tested positive are all residents in the same housing unit at the Maine Correctional Center’s women’s facility in Windham.

The state Department of Corrections says it is working with the Maine Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to contain the outbreak.

The Maine CDC reported Saturday that the state has been the site of nearly 60,000 cases of the virus and 772 deaths.

Connecticut

HARTFORD — More New York residents than Connecticut residents had been vaccinated at a CVS by the time state officials visited the location in

February, according to a published report.

Health officials had been warned days earlier that New York residents were lining up at the CVS in Waterford to get vaccinated, according to documents and emails obtained by the New Haven Register under freedom of information laws.

By the time officials visited the store, 318 people with New York addresses had been vaccinated there, compared to 301 Connecticut residents who had received shots, according to records reviewed by the newspaper. Residents from 10 other states also had received vaccines.

Many of the New York residents had taken advantage of a computer glitch to get appointments, and had typed in Long Island ZIP codes and were directed to the Waterford site.

State health officials instructed CVS not to honor second vaccine appointments for people who had been vaccinated in error at the Waterford site, but instead to find them doses in their state of residence, according to emails reviewed by the newspaper.

Rhode Island

PROVIDENCE — Police in Rhode Island say a man assaulted a 16-year-old Walmart worker after refusing to put a mask on his young child.

Authorities say the altercation occurred at a Walmart in North Smithfield after the teenage employee informed the man that store policy required his toddler to wear a mask. The man refused, and when the teen went to notify a manager, the man put him in a chokehold and punched him.

Police said they contacted the suspect, who turned himself in. They identified him as Michael Caro, 34, of Woonsocket. He was charged with simple assault and battery and disorderly conduct.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man dangles from crane, then surrenders

CA LOS ANGELES — A man climbed, and at times dangled from, a crane at a Los Angeles construction site for 3½ hours before being taken into custody.

The man was apparently experiencing a “behavioral emergency” when he climbed the approximately 150-foot-tall crane in East Hollywood, the Los Angeles Fire Department said.

A section of Hollywood Boulevard had to be shut down during the incident.

The man finally gave up to police and was lowered to the ground.

Police investigate drivers hit by falling concrete

GA MARIETTA — Police in an Atlanta suburb are investigating after they said about a dozen vehicles were damaged by concrete coming off a bridge on Interstate 75.

Police in Marietta said they were called to the bridge as drivers in the toll express lanes, separate from the main highway, reported being hit by chunks of concrete.

Officers and crews from the Georgia Department of Transportation found no visible structural damage to the bridge.

At least one report indicated someone may have been throwing concrete off the bridge.

Dashcam shows close call between police car, bikes

OH BRUNSWICK — Dashcam video captured a close call between two bicyclists and a police officer

responding to an emergency call in Ohio.

Brunswick police released the video on Facebook of the incident to remind people to be aware of their surroundings.

The video showed the officer rushing to a crash with multiple injuries with the police cruiser’s siren wailing. The video showed the officer had to hit the brakes as an adult and child tried to cross the intersection against the light.

The light’s sensor was activated giving the emergency vehicle the right of way and preventing the use of the crosswalk, police said.

Man charged for having pot-filled garbage bags

MA BOSTON — Police arrested a 29-year-old Fall River man after he allegedly assaulted staff at a Boston restaurant, crashed his car into another vehicle as he drove away, and was later connected to garbage bags filled with marijuana.

Police responded to a call about a fight at the Ocean Prime Restaurant in the city’s South Boston neighborhood after witnesses reported seeing Jason Wages harassing female wait staff and customers.

Staff confronted Wages after he allegedly head-butted an employee and called him a racial slur multiple times, police said. Wages allegedly head-butted a second employee and allegedly threatened to shoot “everyone in the place,” as he left, police said, the Boston Globe reported.

Wages was later found and arrested. Police found garbage bags containing what they described as 53 “large, heat-sealed bags of marijuana” and \$8,600 in cash.

New fish species named after researcher

HI HONOLULU — A new species of fish was discovered during a research study funded by the National Science Foundation and University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program that focused on deepwater snappers.

The new species was named “Etelis boweni” by the research team in recognition of Brian Bowen, a research professor from the University of Hawaii who has spent over three decades studying marine fish, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported.

Bowen called the naming “an honor of a lifetime.”

A new paper in the Journal of Fish Biology names the new type of fish, which looks similar to other deepwater snappers found in Hawaii but is genetically different.

The *Etelis boweni* grows much larger than its counterparts in Hawaii and has smaller eyes.

Bomb, shooter threats target schools, businesses

NE OMAHA — An apparently coordinated effort saw bomb and shooter threats sent to schools and businesses across Omaha, forcing some schools into lockdown and leading at least one business to evacuate its headquarters.

Omaha police spokesman Lt. Neal Bonacci said the threats did not appear to be credible. He did not have an estimate on how many schools and businesses received the threats.

Elkhorn Public Schools sent a message to parents announcing districtwide lockdowns in the

wake of the threat.

The lockdown was soon lifted after district officials determined the threat was not credible and had come from “an out-of-state source.”

Union Pacific’s high-rise headquarters in downtown Omaha was evacuated and its employees sent home for the day following the threat.

Zoo welcomes baby klipspringer antelope

FL MELBOURNE — A baby klipspringer antelope is bonding with its mother before making a public debut at a Florida zoo.

The calf was born April 15 to mother Deborah and father Ajabu at the Brevard Zoo in Melbourne. The calf weighed 27.5 ounces at birth, zoo officials said in a news release.

Zoo officials have not yet named the calf. The male calf was the ninth klipspringer born at the zoo.

The species of antelope typically gives birth to one calf, which will grow to between 18 and 40 pounds.

Evacuations ordered as brush fire grows

ID FIRTH — A brush fire prompted evacuations near the small town of Firth in eastern Idaho.

The Bureau of Land Management said on Twitter that the Lavaside Fire could be seen from Interstate 15 and was estimated at 500 acres.

BLM said firefighters were aggressively engaging the fire to protect structures. The agency also urged people to refrain from spring burning activities.

— From The Associated Press

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Usman KOs Masvidal at UFC 261

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — A packed house. A raucous crowd. Celebrity sightings. Stunning upsets. Spectacular finishes. Broken bones. Blood, sweat and tears.

UFC 261 returned to a sense of normalcy Saturday night with one of its craziest events in years. Billed as the first full-fledged sporting event since the coronavirus pandemic altered the world more than a year ago, it delivered more than even its staunchest promoter imagined.

“I don’t think it gets any better than tonight,” UFC President Dana White said. “You couldn’t have a better night. ... It was amazing. The crowd was amazing. The fights were amazing. ... There’s just a different energy you get when people are here. It was insane.”

Kamaru Usman ended the event by winning his 18th straight bout and retaining his welterweight belt. Usman knocked out Jorge Masvidal with a right punch to the jaw early in the second round, silencing a pro-Masvidal crowd.

Usman’s knockout victory was his third in his last four fights, further showcasing his impressive versatility and an ability to adjust tactics during bouts. The former NCAA Division II wrestler had only one knockout victory in his first 10 UFC fights before he stopped Colby Covington, Gilbert Burns and Masvidal with punches in the past 18 months.

“Jacksonville, Florida, you said you wanted violence. You’re welcome,” Usman said.

Usman’s 18 consecutive MMA victories include 14 straight wins since joining the UFC in 2015. Only Anderson Silva’s streak of 16 straight UFC wins is longer in the promotion’s history.

“He’s one of the best ever. He’s an absolute stud,” White said. “You’re an idiot if you think this guy is boring.”

Usman (19-1) thanked Masvidal (35-15) for scaring him and pushing him, saying it’s been a

long time since he felt nervous before a bout.

It was the last of three title bouts, but hardly the most surprising.

Rose “Thug” Namajunas (11-4) stunned Zhang Weili (21-2) to take the strawweight belt. Namajunas sent Zhang to the canvas with a left foot to the face, and the bout was stopped at the 1:18 mark of the opening round.

Namajunas broke down in tears in the octagon as she became the first woman in UFC history to recapture a championship belt. Three previous champions failed to reclaim belts they had lost, including Ronda Rousey.

Zhang erupted in anger, clearly upset with the referee’s decision to stop the fight. Replays showed how vicious the kick was, but Zhang insisted she never lost consciousness.

Flyweight champion Valentina Shevchenko (21-3) totally dominated Jessica Andrade (21-9) to retain her belt, slamming Andrade to the canvas three times in two rounds. She eventually won a TKO after a series of bludgeoning blows to Andrade’s head and ear. Shevchenko danced in the octagon after the grappling victory and exclaimed, “I can do everything.”

The sold-out event drew a star-studded crowd. There was no social distancing inside the 15,000-plus-seat arena and few masks in any direction. It was a clear sign that at least some fans are ready to return to normal after more than a year of dealing with COVID-19 changes to their routines.

“I’ve pictured this moment a million times over, so it was everything I expected it to be,” said Jeff Molina, who beat Qileng Aori in an undercard bout. “Having fans back is awesome. ... I stepped in there, I turned and looked at the crowd, raised my hand and definitely caught some good energy, good vibes from the crowd.”

Seven-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady was sitting

cage-side along with Tampa Bay teammates Mike Evans, Blaine Gabbert and Josh Wells.

Florida legend and Jacksonville native Tim Tebow was on hand with his wife. And Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Gardner Minshew and linebacker Myles Jack were in the first few rows.

Former Bucs receiver Antonio Brown dipped into a large bucket of popcorn as he sat next to YouTube sensation and celebrity boxer Jake Paul, who got into a nose-to-nose argument with former UFC fighter and current commentator Daniel Cormier before the main card. The packed house taunted Paul several times during breaks and at least twice during fights.

The main card’s first two fights ended with significant leg injuries, the second more gruesome than the first.

Chris “The All-American” Weidman snapped his right leg kicking Uriah Hall in the opening seconds of the bout. Weidman seemingly made it worse when he tried to stand on his broken bone. He crumpled to the canvas in pain and probably shock.

Medical personnel rushed to put his leg in an air cast as Hall struggled to maintain his composure on the other side of the octagon. Weidman, who was fighting UFC legend Anderson Silva when Silva broke his shin with a kick, was eventually carried out of the cage on a stretcher. He is scheduled to have surgery Sunday.

Minutes earlier, Anthony Smith connected with Jim Crute’s left leg and left him struggling to stand. Crute hobbled to his corner between rounds and tried to come back out for the second, but doctors stopped the fight after preliminary diagnosing it as a torn knee ligament.

“I couldn’t feel my leg,” Crute said. “I couldn’t stand on it.”

Altuve doing well after positive test

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Houston second baseman Jose Altuve said Saturday that he tested positive for COVID-19 but he never felt bad and hopes to return to the lineup soon.

“I felt really good all the way through, and I feel really good right now,” he said. “And I’m happy to be back here.”

The 2017 AL MVP was among five Astros who were placed on the COVID-19 list on April 14. The four other players returned to the roster within a few days, but Altuve remained on the list until Friday.

Altuve still hasn’t been added to the active roster, and it’s unclear how much time he’ll need before that happens.

Altuve said Saturday that he received the first dose of one of the two-dose COVID-19 vaccines before testing positive, and that he has no idea how he contracted the virus.

“It doesn’t matter if you got the vaccine or not, it’s not good to find out you were tested positive,” he said. “Nobody wants to get that. And on top of that, you have to stay away from the team for 10 days. So I was just ready for those 10 days to be over and to be able to get back to the field and play.”

Altuve is off to a strong start in 2021 after a down year in last season’s pandemic-shortened campaign. He is hitting .318 with one homer, three doubles and five RBIs in 11 games. He said he can’t wait to get back in the lineup after his extended absence.

“It’s been very difficult just to watch the guys play on TV and not be able to be there with them like I normally do,” he said.

He was able to do cardio and weight training while away from the team and is now working on baseball activities as he nears his return.

Astros' Emanuel is big relief in debut

Associated Press

Kent Emanuel had just sat down in the bullpen and was preparing to enjoy a leisurely cup of coffee during the first inning on Saturday.

"All of the sudden they were like: 'Hey, you better start loosening up,'" he said. "I was like ... here we go."

After toiling in the minors for seven long seasons, the Houston Astros pitcher was thrown into his major league debut at a moment's notice.

And what a moment it was.

Emanuel worked 8⅓ innings in relief, saving Houston's bullpen after Jake Odorizzi left early with an injury, and the Astros routed the Los Angeles Angels 16-2.

"It's pretty wild," Emanuel said. "But I've been expecting this moment for quite some time now. So, I was ready."

Emanuel (1-0) allowed five hits and two runs. The 28-year-old lefty became the fourth pitcher in the modern era to have a relief outing of 8⅓ innings or more in his debut, according to STATS, joining Fred Smith (1907), Maury Kent (1912) and John Montefusco (1974).

"Sometimes it's better that a young man in his first outing doesn't have to sleep on it or think about it and you just give him the ball," Houston manager Dusty Baker said.

Emanuel likely would have made the roster out of spring training but was finishing an 80-game suspension for performance-enhancing drugs.

Emanuel, who was recalled from the alternate training site on Friday, has loudly proclaimed his innocence since the suspension and crusaded against what he calls unfair testing policies. He chose to wear the jersey No. 0 for the number of games he said he believes he should have been suspended.

Alex Bregman hit a three-run homer, Yordan Alvarez had a season-high four RBIs, Carlos Correa had three hits including a homer and Michael Brantley doubled three times for Houston. The Astros had season highs in runs and hits (18) to win their third straight following a three-game skid.

Odorizzi exited with tightness in his right forearm after retiring leadoff batter David Fletcher on five pitches.

Yankees 2, Indians 1: Gerrit Cole was one pitch better than Shane Bieber in a heavy-weight matchup of aces as Rowned Odor and Aaron Hicks homered for visiting New York off Cleveland's Cy Young winner in the fifth inning.

Cole (3-1) struck out 11 and allowed three

hits in seven innings to beat Bieber (2-2) in a rematch of their meeting in last year's playoffs. Cole's 50 strikeouts in his first five starts are the most for any pitcher in the Yankees' storied history.

Bieber fanned nine — the first time he hasn't reached double digits in five starts — and tied Hall of Famer Randy Johnson's record with his 17th straight start of at least eight strikeouts.

Athletics 7, Orioles 2: Jed Lowrie hit a three-run homer and Oakland won its 13th straight game, building a big lead early and winning at Baltimore.

This is the third-longest winning streak in the team's history. The A's won 14 straight in 1988, then set an American League record with 20 consecutive victories in 2002.

Dodgers 5, Padres 4: Corey Seager's two-run single in the sixth inning provided the go-ahead runs and host Los Angeles overcame another two-homer game from Fernando Tatis Jr. to defeat San Diego.

The Padres threatened in the ninth, putting the potential tying run in scoring position with one out, but Kenley Jansen retired Tatis on a grounder and struck out Trent Grisham for his fifth save.

White Sox 2, Rangers 1: Nick Madrigal doubled home the winning run in the ninth inning after Liam Hendriks allowed a tying homer in the top half, and host Chicago recovered to beat Texas.

Luis Robert led off the White Sox ninth with an infield single. Rookie phenom Yermín Mercedes was intentionally walked before Madrigal delivered the winning hit to right field off John King (2-1) with two outs.

Nationals 7, Mets 1: Joe Ross tossed six solid innings and helped himself with an RBI single as Washington won at New York.

Yadiel Hernandez, a 33-year-old rookie who entered with six hits in 36 career at-bats, had two hits and two RBIs for the Nationals.

Cardinals 2, Reds 0: John Gant earned his first victory as a starter since 2018 by throwing six strong innings and St. Louis sent visiting Cincinnati to its sixth straight loss.

Andrew Knizner, subbing for injured catcher Yadier Molina, and Nolan Arenado each drove in a run. Dylan Carlson added three singles as the Cardinals won a series for just the second time this season.

After waiting out a rain delay of 2 hours, 20 minutes before throwing his first pitch, Gant (1-2) allowed just three hits.

Mariners 8, Red Sox 2: Kyle Seager, Sam

Haggerty and Ty France each had three hits, leading Chris Flexen and Seattle to a win at Boston.

Seager singled in a run in the first inning, tripled home two more in the second and doubled with the bases empty in the fifth. France scored three times, and Haggerty drove in two runs.

Royals 2, Tigers 1: Brady Singer pitched seven impressive innings, and Kansas City took advantage of some defensive sloppiness by host Detroit.

Willi Castro homered for Detroit in the fifth, but that wasn't enough to overcome the Royals' two runs in the top of that inning. Singer (1-2) allowed three hits and struck out eight.

Brewers 4, Cubs 3: Pinch-hitter Manny Piña connected for a tiebreaking two-run homer in the seventh inning, and Milwaukee won at Chicago.

Brent Suter (2-1) worked two scoreless innings in relief of Freddy Peralta, helping the Brewers to their fourth win in five games. Josh Hader got three outs for his fourth save in four opportunities.

Pirates 6, Twins 2: Michael Perez had three hits and three RBIs, sending Trevor Cahill and visiting Pittsburgh to the victory.

Cahill (1-2) permitted one run and two hits in six innings. It was his longest outing since he also worked six innings for the Angels at Baltimore on May 10, 2019.

Rays 5, Blue Jays 3: Tampa Bay broke an eighth-inning tie when Toronto third baseman Cavan Biggio let a grounder go between his legs and went on to win at home.

Jordan Romano (1-1) walked Brandon Lowe and Mike Brosseau to start the eighth. Manuel Margot hit a grounder that got past Biggio for an error, allowing Lowe to score and put the Rays ahead 4-3. Margot later scored on Kevin Kiermaier's grounder.

Phillies 7, Rockies 5: Rhys Hoskins homered twice and drove in five runs to back seven solid innings from Aaron Nola, sending Philadelphia to a win at Colorado.

Nola (2-1) allowed four runs and six hits but settled down after the fifth. He retired his last seven batters, added a single at the plate and was on base for both of Hoskins' homers.

Marlins 5, Giants 2: Jesus Aguilar snapped a tie with a two-run homer to spark a four-run ninth inning and Miami won at San Francisco. Aguilar lined an 0-1 pitch from Gregory Santos (0-1) into the left-center stands after Magneuris Sierra's leadoff walk to give the Marlins a 3-1 lead.

Crosby, Rust score 20th for Penguins

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Sidney Crosby and Bryan Rust each scored their 20th goal of the season, and the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the New Jersey Devils 4-2 on Saturday.

Crosby got an empty-netter with 0.1 seconds to play. His goal came following a tense net-mouth scramble in which the Devils nearly tied the game.

Crosby surpassed Evgeni Malkin and Mario Lemieux for the most 20-plus goal seasons in franchise history. He's the 36th player in NHL history to have 13 or more 20-plus goal seasons.

"It's hard to score 20 goals in this league," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said. "I don't think it's ever routine. I think guys that reach that milestone consistently are really good players."

Jeff Carter, who was acquired by Pittsburgh in an April 12 trade with the Los Angeles Kings, scored his 10th of the season and second in three games. Casey DeSmith stopped 34 shots and Jared McCann scored a power-play goal for the Penguins, who have 13 wins and points in 15 of their last 18 games overall.

Pittsburgh completed a three-game series sweep of New Jersey. The Penguins, who have points in their last nine home games, have nine wins in their last 12 games against the Devils.

New Jersey dropped its ninth straight game and 13th in 14 games overall. Miles

Wood scored his 15th goal for the Devils, and Jack Hughes got his 11th.

Blues 5, Avalanche 3: Ryan O'Reilly had three goals and an assist, and host St. Louis stopped a three-game slide.

Mike Hoffman and Ivan Barbashev also scored for the Blues, and Jordan Binnington made 28 saves.

St. Louis had lost five straight against the Avalanche since winning at Colorado on Jan. 13 in the season opener for both teams.

Nathan MacKinnon and Cale Makar each had a goal and two assists for Colorado, which had won five in a row. Gabriel Landeskog also scored and Devan Dubnyk made 25 saves.

Capitals 6, Islanders 3 (SO): Daniel Sprong scored twice in injured Alex Ovechkin's place on Washington's top line, Ilya Samsonov made 21 saves and the visiting Capitals beat New York for the second time in three nights.

Evgeny Kuznetsov had a goal and two assists, and Nic Dowd, Garnet Hathaway and T.J. Oshie also scored for Washington, which remained in first place in the tight East Division, one point ahead of second-place Pittsburgh. The Islanders are in third, two points behind the Penguins, and three ahead of Boston.

Anthony Beauvillier, Adam Pelech and Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored for the Islanders.

Panthers 4, Hurricanes 3 (OT): Aleksander Barkov scored 24 seconds into overtime

to help host Florida tighten up the Central Division standings.

After a turnover in the Panthers' end, Barkov raced the length of the ice and fired a shot that trundled in for his 22nd goal.

Stars 2, Red Wings 1 (OT): Jamie Benn scored 32 seconds into overtime, lifting visiting Dallas past Detroit.

The Stars outshot the Red Wings by more than three times and had the puck for much of the game, but trailed after Dennis Cholowski scored late in the first period until Mark Pysyk made it 1-all early in the third.

Maple Leafs 4, Jets 1: Mitch Marner scored his 100th NHL goals to help visiting Toronto beat Winnipeg.

Coyotes 4, Kings 0: Phil Kessel had a goal and an assist, Darcy Kuemper made 26 saves for his second shutout of the season, and visiting Arizona beat Los Angeles.

Wild 6, Sharks 3: Ryan Suter scored 19 seconds in, Kirill Kaprizov scored for the fifth straight game and visiting Minnesota clinched a playoff spot.

Golden Knights 5, Ducks 1: Chandler Stephenson scored two goals in the first period and visiting Vegas cruised to its franchise-record ninth consecutive victory.

Canucks 4, Senators 2: Tanner Pearson and J.T. Miller scored late in the third period and host Vancouver beat Ottawa.

Flames 5, Canadiens 2: Johnny Gaudreau scored twice and host Calgary beat Montreal for the second straight night.

Randle, Barrett lift Knicks by Raptors for 9th straight

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Julius Randle had 31 points and 10 rebounds, RJ Barrett added 25 points and 12 rebounds and New York Knicks beat the Toronto Raptors 120-103 on Saturday for their ninth straight victory.

Derrick Rose scored 19 points to help the Knicks move into fourth place in the Eastern Conference with 11 games remaining. They are on their longest winning streak since a 13-game run late in the 2012-13 season, when they won the Atlantic Division title in what was their last playoff appearance.

Fred VanVleet and OG Anunoby each scored 27 points for the Raptors, who were trying for a season-high fifth straight victory.

Mavericks 108, Lakers 93: Luka Doncic

had 18 points and 13 assists and host Dallas overcame a 17-point deficit to beat Los Angeles in Lakers star Anthony Davis' second game back from a long injury absence.

Dwight Powell scored 12 of his season-high 25 points in the fourth quarter.

The Mavericks swept a two-game home set against the defending NBA champs and moved a game ahead of Portland the all-important sixth seed in the Western Conference. The No. 7 team has to make the playoffs through a play-in format.

The Lakers are still without fellow star LeBron James and also missing Kentavious Caldwell-Pope.

Timberwolves 101, Jazz 96: Karl-Anthony Towns had 24 points and 12 rebounds to lead Minnesota to a win at NBA-leading Utah.

Bucks 132, 76ers 94: Giannis Antetoc-

kounmpo scored 24 points and moved into second place on Milwaukee's career scoring list in a romp over visiting Philadelphia.

Nuggets 129, Rockets 116: Michael Porter Jr. scored a career-high 39 points, Nikola Jokic had 24 points and host Denver beat undermanned Houston.

Pacers 115, Pistons 109: Malcolm Brogdon scored 26 points, Caris LeVert had 25 and host Indiana had a late 12-0 run to beat Detroit.

Spurs 110, Pelicans 108: DeMar DeRozan scored 11 of his team-high 32 points in the final 7:40 and made all 12 of his free throws in San Antonio's victory at New Orleans.

Heat 106, Bulls 101: Duncan Robinson made seven three-pointers and scored 23 points, Kendrick Nunn had 22 and host Miami held off a big Chicago rally.