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Ranger School to graduate first 2 women

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — They've endured four months of the Army's most physically grueling and mentally taxing training, and on Friday the first two female soldiers in history will be awarded the coveted Ranger Tab.

The Army late Monday announced that the female soldiers, along with 94 of their male classmates, had successfully completed Ranger School, the Army's premier leadership course conducted in three phases — at Fort Benning, Ga.; in the north Georgia mountains; and in the Florida swamps of Eglin

Air Force Base. The Army has not identified the two female officers who will officially graduate Ranger School on Friday morning during a ceremony at Fort Benning's Victory Pond.

Each year about 4,000 students begin Ranger School, but only about 1,600 graduate, according to Army data.

Army Secretary John McHugh congratulated the Army's newest Ranger-qualified soldiers Monday evening in a prepared statement.

"Each Ranger School graduate has shown the physical and mental toughness to successfully lead organizations at any level," he said. "This

course has proven that every soldier, regardless of gender, can achieve his or her full potential."

In April, 19 women and 165 men became the Army's first gender-integrated Ranger class, part of the Army's efforts to study how the service could effectively integrate women into traditionally male-only combat-arms jobs. A 2013 Pentagon directive mandated that each service open all jobs to qualified women by the beginning of 2016 or provide an official waiver detailing why certain positions should not be opened to female troops. The services have until Sept. 30 to provide those reports to De-

fense Secretary Ash Carter.

It remains unclear whether the Army plans to open its remaining closed positions — primarily in the infantry, armor and Special Forces fields — to women. McHugh in his Monday statement indicated he believed that soldiers should be allowed to serve regardless of gender.

"We owe soldiers the opportunity to serve successfully in any position where they are qualified and capable, and we continue to look for ways to select, train and retain the best soldiers to meet our nation's needs," McHugh said.

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Active-duty troops to battle Western wildfires

The Washington Post

With seven Western states battling devastating wildfires, the National Interagency Fire Center is mobilizing active-duty soldiers to aid thousands of firefighters in their suppression efforts.

Troops have not been used to fight wildfires since 2006, according to a news release from authorities, signifying the severity of this problem.

There are approximately 95 large wildfires burning over 1.1 million acres in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, California, Nevada and Colorado, according to the NIFC's statement.

The NIFC's Aitor Bidaburu said in the statement that they are "committed" to suppressing "the most challenging wildfires we've experienced in several years."

The Department of Defense is sending 200 active soldiers

from the Army's Joint Base Lewis-McChord air base in Washington to be trained Wednesday before they combat the massive wildfires Saturday, according to the statement.

CNN reported Monday that 25,000 firefighters are already at work to suppress the flames, having evacuated more than 1,000 people from the affected states.

Almost two dozen fires are blazing through Washington state.

"They came quick, they came hot and heavy, and then the winds kicked up and it was just unstoppable," David D'Armond, a Chelan, Wash., resident, told CNN. D'Armond's house was saved by authorities, but many residents were not as fortunate.

In Chelan, some 32 homes have been destroyed, authorities told King 5 News, with the number expected to rise to

between 50 and 75 structures, commercial and residential. And the phrase "spread like wildfire" was no cliché for residents there.

Norma Cervantes told Fox News 13 that she drove home from work in Chelan thinking "it was a little fire," but then "it started spreading and spreading, and the wind got faster and faster." She said people couldn't tell where the fire was heading as the wind shifted one way and then another.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group's website InciWeb said more than 56,500 acres in southeast Washington are ablaze. Six helicopters are providing water drops, crew shuttle and reconnaissance, while two other aircraft provide water and retardant drops when needed. Teams from the Washington Department of Natural Resources, State Fire Marshal and Army National Guard are engaging the fires,

according to the NWCG.

Wildfire has overwhelmed more than 20,900 acres of California's Sierra National Forest, the website said. The Fresno County Sheriff's Office issued evacuation notices to people in Black Rock Reservoir, east of Pine Flat Lake on the Sierra National Forest.

The authorities are concerned that strong high pressure over Southern California will bring warmer and drier conditions to the fire. They expect fire could potentially occur toward the Kings River and go east toward the Monarch Wilderness.

The fires burning more than 5,700 acres of land near California's Whiskey Snowmobile area are contained by 95 percent, Cal Fire said Monday night. The fire there continues to cool, but authorities expect some areas may produce smoke for more days.

2-star based in Germany to lead Marine Forces Europe-Africa

By STEVEN BEARDSLEY
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Command of Marine forces in Europe and Africa will fall under a two-star general stationed in Germany beginning Wednesday, a milestone in the command's 35-year history and a reflection of the corps' growing role in both theaters.

The incoming commander, Maj. Gen. Niel Nelson, said Tuesday that the streamlined force and his presence overseas will improve the corps' ability to work with U.S. commanders and allies alike.

"I think it sends a definite signal that we are serious about our commitment out here to our [combatant commanders] and our partners," he said.

Nelson replaces two general officers in the U.S. who shared command of Marine Forces Europe-Africa on top of other duties. Lt. Gen. Robert Neller, commander of Marine Corps Forces in Norfolk, Va., and the new Marine commandant, oversaw Marine Forces Europe. Maj. Gen. William Beydler, commander of II Marine Expeditionary Force out of Camp Lejeune, N.C.,

was responsible for Marine Forces Africa.

The two men shared a common staff in the Stuttgart, Germany, garrison, which will continue to work with Nelson.

The change is the latest in the evolution of a command that until six years ago existed largely to support Marines transiting to the Middle East.

Marines began working with Georgia's armed forces in 2009, training troops from the Caucasus nation for regular deployments to Afghanistan. The next year saw the beginning of the Black Sea Rotational Force, a regional training program based in Romania.

Both relationships have acquired greater significance with Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula in early 2014.

In 2011, the Corps created a rotational task force at the U.S. Navy base in Sigonella, Sicily, to consolidate training efforts in Africa.

The growth of the corps' training role in Europe and Africa has been accompanied by a new emphasis on crisis response across the region, the result of the 2012 terrorist attack on a U.S. diplomatic facility in Benghazi, Libya.

Police: Bangkok bomber appears in security video

Associated Press

BANGKOK — Thai investigators believe a man seen in security video wearing a yellow T-shirt and carrying a backpack set off the bomb at a central Bangkok shrine that killed 20 people and injured more than 100, police said Tuesday.

"The yellow-shirt guy is not just the suspect. He is the bomber," police spokesman Lt. Gen. Prawut Thavornsiri said.

The images were apparently taken from closed-circuit video at the Erawan Shrine on Monday evening before the bomb exploded.

A video posted separately on Thai media appeared to show the same man, with youthful, shaggy dark hair, sitting on a bench at the crowded shrine, then taking off the backpack and leaving it behind as he walked away.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha called Monday's explosion "the worst incident that has ever happened in Thailand."

Report: Leadership could not have anticipated soldier's 2012 rampage

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Special Forces leadership at a small outpost near Kandahar, Afghanistan, could not have anticipated the rampage a soldier under their command would go on in March 2012, according to a 600-page administrative report released Tuesday.

The Article 15-6 investigation by then-Brig. Gen. Ricky Waddell was released by the U.S. Central Command after a Freedom of Information Act request three years ago. It concluded that Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales showed signs of instability and hatred for Afghans before he left his post without authorization and killed 16 Afghan civilians.

A military jury sentenced him to life in prison without

parole, and he also pleaded guilty to charges related to illicit steroid and alcohol use. But the leadership at Village Stability Post Belambay was not aware of his prior infractions — including assaulting an Afghan truck driver, making racist comments and violating rules of personal conduct, the report said.

"These instances of conduct, however, do not rise to the level of warnings or indicators that Bales would commit the extremely violent acts he allegedly committed on 11 March 2012," Waddell wrote.

In a "healthy command climate, the command should have had much greater situational awareness of the discipline of its members," Waddell wrote, noting officers and senior non-commissioned officers had

taken a "hands-off" leadership approach and did not "overtly provide guidance on standards or expectations" about personal conduct, including the use of alcohol and drugs.

The general presented to then-Commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan Gen. John Allen — who has since retired from the Marine Corps — a series of recommendations. They include additional training for Special Operations Forces leadership to work with conventional infantry units; requiring SOF leadership to "clearly articulate specific standards of behavior" to conventional units operating on their posts; and for SOF personnel to work more closely with conventional soldiers and provide them with "the benefit of their training and experience."

America's oldest veteran dies at 110

WESTBLOOMFIELD, Mich. — A Michigan woman who was believed to be the nation's oldest veteran, at 110, has died, about a month after being invited to the White House.

Emma Didlake died Sunday in West Bloomfield, northwest of Detroit, according to the Oakland County medical examiner's office.

Didlake was a 38-year-old wife and mother of five when she signed up in 1943 for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. She served about seven months stateside during the war as a private and driver.

"Emma Didlake served her country with distinction and honor, a true trailblazer for generations of Americans who have sacrificed so much for their country," President Barack Obama said in a statement.

From The Associated Press

Buckeyes have 2 proven QBs

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The most-talked-about quarterback competition in college football even has the other Ohio State Buckeyes paying more attention than usual to preseason practices.

"It is very interesting," chatty safety Tyvis Powell said Sunday during Buckeyes media day. "You know what it does, when you're not in, you sit back and you watch. You're like, 'He's having a bad day, but he's having a really good day.' And then it flips, 'You know he's having a bad day, but he's having a really good day.'"

"I can't wait to see who's going to jog out there on Sept. 7."

J.T. Barrett or Cardale Jones?

The 2014 Big Ten player of the year or the guy who came out of nowhere to guide the Buckeyes to the national championship after Barrett was injured?

Ohio State coach Urban Meyer says he will not reveal the answer until the defending national champions open their season Labor Day night against Virginia Tech, the last team to beat the Buckeyes.

Ohio State has three days of two-a-day practices this week, starting Monday. If either Jones or Barrett is going to seize the job, this would be an excellent time to do it.

While Meyer would prefer the starter to be a game-time decision publicly, he probably needs to make a choice the week before opening night for the purposes of game-planning.

Meyer said he would meet with co-

offensive coordinators Tim Beck and Ed Warinner on Sunday to go over the data from the first week of practice. So far, Meyer likes what he sees from both players.

"I think they're both right there and you probably wouldn't expect me to say anything different, but that's what it is. They're both working they're tails off and it's one of the most refreshing competitions I've ever witnessed," Meyer said. "When I say best friends, they're unbelievable how well they get along."

The reality is Barrett and Jones have been competing with each other since the spring of 2014, when they were vying to be Braxton Miller's backup.

"I don't think it's something that will ever change in our relationship," said Barrett, who set a Big Ten record by accounting for 45 touchdowns before breaking his ankle in the season finale against Michigan.

Jones won the spring last year, but Barrett took the job in August. Then Miller re-injured his throwing shoulder late in camp and Barrett secured the starting job.

Barrett learned from last year to not try to one-up Jones in practice.

"He made a play then I got to force it and then I throw a pick and it's like why'd you do that? I didn't really have an answer," Barrett said. "What am I going to tell (former offensive coordinator Tom) Herman? 'I tried to make a play because Cardale made a play?' He would have probably move me to like, longsnapper."

"It's just focusing on myself and then what's best for the offense."

Jones said he also has a much healthier attitude than last year, when he was too concerned about being able to match Miller, the two-time Big Ten player of the year who is now moving to receiver.

"Know what you can and know what you can't do," said Jones, 9-month-old daughter Chloe Michelle on his knee working a pacifier while her now famous father did interviews during an Ohio State media day for the first time since becoming a member of the team in 2012.

In three starts last season, Jones became one of the most recognizable names in college football. The 6-foot-5, 250-pound junior passed for 742 yards and five touchdowns in Ohio State victories against Wisconsin (Big Ten title game), Alabama (national semifinal) and Oregon (College Football Playoff championship).

It was a remarkable turnaround for a player who Meyer has said had a lot of growing up to do.

Jones acknowledges he did not handle well coming out on the short end of last year's competition with Barrett.

"I kind of went to kind of a dark place," Jones said.

Jones said that will not be a problem this year. He wants to win the job, but losing it will not break him — or Barrett.

"We know we want the best for each other and most important we want the best for the team," Jones said. "It's going to be bittersweet for whoever starts."

Changes coming in future

Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — With or without a union, more rights and benefits are coming for college athletes.

Whether the NCAA schools that compete in big-time athletics can provide enough to keep at bay more ominous threats to college sports remains to be seen. Even the failed attempt to unionize the Northwestern University football players could be viewed as progress for those still pushing reform.

"I certainly don't think this is the end of this type of discussion," said David Ridpath, a professor of sports administration at Ohio University and president-elect of the Drake Group, a watchdog group for college sports. "And certainly regardless of what happens, this has energized the athletes' rights movement for years to come."

The National Labor Relations Board on Monday blocked a historic bid by Northwestern football players to form the nation's first college athletes' union.

In a unanimous decision, the board said the prospect of union and nonunion teams in college could lead to different standards at schools — from how much money players receive to how much time they practice — and create competitive imbalances on the field.

"The door's not closed," said Ramogi Huma, a former UCLA football player and executive director of the advocacy group, the National College Players Association.

Huma and former Northwestern quarterback Kain Colter, who became the face of the union movement, said the bid to unionize helped advance NCAA reforms such as extended long-term health coverage for athletes, guaranteed four-year scholarships and the removal of restrictions on meals for athletes. Starting this school year, universities can begin paying stipends worth several thousands of dollars to college athletes to cover cost-of-attendance expenses beyond tuition, books and room and board.

Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick told the AP he never felt unionization was a serious threat to college sports, especially compared to the legal challenges facing the NCAA and its member schools.

"We'll never know, but I would have thought it likely that if the ballots were ever opened we would have found out the unionization effort probably failed," he said.

Last year's ruling against the NCAA in the Ed O'Bannon case, which would allow schools to pay athletes thousands of dollars for the use of their likenesses, is in the process of being appealed. Another case working its way through the court system challenges the rights of schools to cap compensation at the cost of a scholarship. The NCAA and individual member schools are facing numerous lawsuits by former college athletes over treatment of concussions.

NLRB blocks Northwestern football union

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Labor activists vowed not to abandon their fight to organize college sports teams after the National Labor Relations Board blocked a historic bid by Northwestern University football players to become the first in the nation to unionize.

It's not clear, however, where the battle might head next.

"It's a setback, but I don't see it as a body blow," Tim Waters, of the United Steelworkers union, said about the ruling. The Steelworkers bankrolled the Wildcats' union drive and advised them on strategy.

Labor agency rules offer no avenue for an appeal of Monday's unanimous decision by the five-member board, which overturned a ruling last year by a regional NLRB director in Chicago that gave the Northwestern players the go-ahead to unionize.

The board said the prospect of having both union and nonunion teams could lead to different standards at different schools — from the amount of money players receive to the amount of time they can practice — and create competitive imbalances on the field.

Asked if one option would be for activists to file a new request to unionize on behalf of a team in another region, Waters said, "That is absolutely a possibility. ... In

no way, shape or form is this at an end."

Ronald Meisburg, a former general counsel for the NLRB and a onetime board member, said Monday's ruling would serve as precedent and likely compel regional NLRB offices nationwide to flatly reject future petitions, no matter which union activists submit them.

"This puts the nail in the coffin of organizing college players," he said.

Ramogi Huma, a former linebacker at UCLA who worked closely with former Northwestern quarterback Kain Colter — the face of the union-building effort — said he hasn't given up on bringing unions to college athletics, either.

"The door's not closed," he said.

Monday's ruling emphasized that the NLRB has jurisdiction only over private schools, such as Northwestern. All the other colleges in its Big Ten conference are public, and the board said giving individual private schools the OK to unionize would enable them to collectively bargain for advantages over state schools — such as more lucrative scholarships — potentially throwing off the delicate competitive balance in college sports.

An appeal to U.S. courts doesn't appear to be an option for the losing side. Litigation in court is typically triggered by a company's refusal to collectively bargain with a union approved by workers. That trigger won't exist now that the NLRB has ruled out unionization by the

Northwestern players.

The labor dispute goes to the heart of American college sports, where universities and conferences reap billions of dollars by relying on amateurs who are not paid. In other countries, college sports are small-time club affairs, while elite youth athletes often turn pro as teens.

Northwestern, in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, became the focal point of the labor fight in January 2014, when Colter announced plans to form the first U.S. labor union for college athletes.

Colter expressed disappointment in the ruling but said the unionization drive pressured the NCAA to take athletes' grievances more seriously.

Three months later, regional NLRB Director Peter Sung Ohr issued his decision, determining that Northwestern football players qualify as employees and thus should be able to unionize. A month later, players cast secret ballots on whether to form a union. But those ballots were sealed during the appeal and will now be destroyed without ever being counted.

Under U.S. law, an employee is regarded as someone who receives compensation for a service and is under the direct control of managers. In Northwestern's case, Ohr concluded coaches are the equivalent of business managers and scholarships are a form of pay.



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QB Ryan looks to get moving

Associated Press

FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga. — Matt Ryan has no plans to become a running quarterback. He does intend to use his legs more in the Atlanta Falcons' new offense.

After Ryan took a brutal beating the last two years sitting in the pocket, the Falcons want to get their star quarterback moving around a bit more. He'll be rolling out, looking to make plays on the edge, and even getting the green light to run if there are some yards to be had without taking a big hit.

"I think he's got some sneaky athleticism that people don't really know about," quarterback coach Matt LaFleur said Monday. "He is able to get out of the pocket and create some plays on the edge."

Ryan chuckled when told of LaFleur's assessment.

"He's nice to say that," the quarterback said, before turning serious. "I've always felt like I can move pretty well. When I get outside the pocket, I always feel like I can extend plays and make plays. We've done

that around here in the past. Maybe not so much as some other guys around the league, but certainly well enough to do it pretty effectively. I feel like it's an offense that suits my game pretty well."

At age 30, Ryan can't continue to take the sort of pounding he endured while being sacked 31 times a year ago and 44 times in 2013. Just as troubling, he took 88 hits after getting rid of the ball over than two-year period, and was hurried a 359 times.

That means he faced some sort of pressure on nearly 39 percent of his passing attempts.

Ryan and the Falcons' new coaching staff realize that must change. They're hoping a zone-blocking scheme and improved running game will also help make things a bit easier for their franchise quarterback.

"For him to be able to attack the perimeter when it's there, when there's some yards where he can get down without contact, that's what we're looking for," head coach Dan Quinn said. "We're not trying to make him into a zone-read quarterback. But when

there is room for him to run, we'll encourage him to do that."

After looking impressive during a brief appearance in the Falcons' first preseason game against Tennessee, Ryan might get a chance to show more of his mobility when the Falcons face the New York Jets in a preseason game Friday night.

Not that he feels like this is anything new.

"We did a lot of it early on in my career," Ryan said, recalling his time with former offensive coordinator Mike Mularkey. "It just wasn't a big point of emphasis for us the last couple of years. I certainly feel comfortable doing it. I feel like it adds another dimension to our offense."

Ryan is not concerned about putting himself more at risk of getting injured.

"It's a physical game," Ryan said. "I've got to be ready to go. That's what you train all offseason for, trying to get yourself in the best shape possible. For me, what it's all about is trying to make us the best offense we can be."

NHL's Briere retires after 17 seasons

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Danny Briere, the undersized center who went on to become an NHL All-Star and keyed the Philadelphia Flyers' run to the 2010 Stanley Cup Finals, has retired.

Briere ended a 17-year career on Monday that saw him play for the Phoenix Coyotes, Buffalo Sabres, Flyers, Montreal Canadiens and Colorado Avalanche. Briere spent the bulk of his career with the Sabres and Flyers and earned All-Star nods playing for both franchises.

Generously listed at 5-foot-9, Briere was MVP of the 2006 All-Star game, the same year he helped lead the Sabres to the Eastern Conference finals.

Briere shined in 2010 when he set a Flyers record with 30 points (12 goals) in 23 playoff games. Four of his goals were game-winners and he brought the Flyers all the way to Game 6 of the Stanley Cup Finals.

The native of Gatineau, Quebec, Briere was a first-round selection (24th overall) by the Coyotes in the 1996 draft. He had 307 goals and 389 assists for 696 career points. Briere had 116 points (53 goals) in 124 career playoff games.

"After taking a few weeks to think about it, it's time to hang them up and spend a little more time at home with the family," Briere said. "I've been very, very fortunate to have a chance to play with some great organizations, but at this point the family becomes a priority. The Flyers are where I played the bulk of my career. I've had a great time in Philadelphia and have been very, very fortunate to have the chance to play here."

Briere thanked Flyers owner Ed Snider, team president Paul Holmgren and former executive Peter Luukko.

The Flyers signed Briere to an eight-year, \$52 million contract in 2007. He played last season with Colorado and scored eight goals in 57 games.

He was a 30-goal scorer five times and had a career-high 95 points in 2006-07 for the Sabres.

LA stadium could produce division shifts

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Construction of an NFL stadium in the Los Angeles area could come with another change: a possible shift in division for the Oakland Raiders or the San Diego Chargers.

The teams have proposed a shared \$1.78 billion stadium in the city of Carson — one of two stadium projects being considered by the NFL near Los Angeles that could bring professional football back to the region after a two-decade absence.

Carmen Policy, a former San Francisco 49ers executive who was hired to help oversee the Carson project, said that the teams have agreed to shift divisions, if necessary, to make the project acceptable to the league.

The Chargers and Raiders are rivals in the AFC West, which could make game scheduling and other issues difficult in a shared stadium.

The teams have made clear to the league and NFL owners that "you send us to LA and you'll make the decision as to who plays in what conference or division," Policy told reporters after detailing stadium plans for business leaders and a sports group at an event in downtown Los Angeles.

"There are some very interesting scenarios, depending on how all this turns out," Policy said.

Policy detailed the possible division shift on a day when the teams unveiled the latest design update for the 65,000-seat stadium, which would rise on the site of a former landfill about 12 miles from downtown Los Angeles.

The renderings show an open-air stadium wrapped in steel bands, its seating shaded by canopies, with features that range from a nearby stage for live music performances to an authentic farmers' market. Outside, towering screens would

carry game-day highlights that could be viewed from the parking lots.

A development group that includes St. Louis Rams owner Stan Kroenke is pushing a rival project in nearby Inglewood. The \$1.8 billion venue on the site of a former horse track would be part of a sprawling development of homes, parks and office space.

League spokesman Brian McCarthy said the NFL wants franchises that are "strong and successful in their existing markets." Under current rules, the next opportunity for a team to file to relocate would be in January 2016. Any decision to move would have to clear a tangle of hurdles, including winning the support of at least 24 of the 32 teams.

The NFL owners meet again in October in New York, but no relocation vote is expected at that meeting. Policy predicted there could be a decision by the league early next year.

Yankees top Twins in 10; lose pitcher to line drive

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Long after they saw starter Bryan Mitchell suddenly exit with a bloody face and head to the hospital, the New York Yankees were greeted with a most welcome sight: The rookie pitcher was back in the locker room after a late win.

Chase Headley hit a bases-loaded grounder in the 10th inning that Minnesota's five-man infield bobbled, and the Yankees, despite losing Mitchell to a line drive that caused a nasal fracture, beat the Twins 8-7 Monday night.

"Really, really scary," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said.

"It seems like your heart just drops into your stomach and you're scared for the kid and you see blood coming out. I was really worried, but he has a small hairline fracture in his nose and we're going to monitor him pretty closely the next 24 hours," he said. "But he's in the clubhouse and that's good to see."

Mitchell, 24, was making just his third major league start.

Eduardo Nunez hit the liner that injured Mitchell in the second inning. In a game that took over 4 hours, Nunez bobbled the grounder that drove in the winning run.

Brian McCann homered, drove in five runs and sliced a double off left fielder Eddie Rosario's glove in the 10th that set up the winning misplay. The catcher also threw out three runners trying to steal.

Rookie Greg Bird doubled and the Yankees loaded the bases with no outs in the 10th against Glen Perkins (1-4). Twins manager Paul Molitor took out right fielder Torii Hunter and added an extra infielder — the strategy was good, his team's fielding wasn't.

Headley hit a hard grounder up the middle to Nunez, who had been playing shortstop. Nunez fumbled the ball and by the time he recovered, he had no chance for a forceout at the plate.

Andrew Miller (1-2) got the victory as the AL East-leading Yankees started a season-high 10-game homestand with their third win in four games.

The Twins, contending for a wild card, lost to begin a 10-game trip that also will

take them to Baltimore and Tampa Bay.

Knocked to the ground, Mitchell left with a towel over his bloody face. He was taken to a hospital and released.

The Yankees will monitor him for the possibility of concussion symptoms.

Rays 9, Astros 2: Tim Beckham hit a three-run homer in the first inning and Tampa Bay cruised past host Houston.

The Rays were up 1-0 when Beckham connected on his first home run since May 22 to give them a big early lead.

Asdrubal Cabrera added three RBIs for the Rays, who got back on track after being swept by the Rangers in a three-game series this weekend.

Cardinals 2, Giants 1: Rookie Stephen Piscotty tripled and scored the go-ahead run on Mark Reynolds' groundout in the eighth inning, and host St. Louis beat San Francisco.

Orioles 4, Athletics 2: Steve Clevenger hit a three-run homer, Chris Tillman won his seventh straight decision and host Baltimore completed a four-game sweep of Oakland.

Indians 8, Red Sox 2: Danny Salazar

pitched seven strong innings to cool off Boston's hot bats, and Lonnie Chisenhall had a solo homer and three RBIs to carry visiting Cleveland past Boston.

Rangers 4, Mariners 3: Fernando Rodney walked Adrian Beltre with one out in the ninth inning to force in winning run and give host Texas a win over the Mariners.

Diamondbacks 4, Pirates 1: Jeremy Hellickson won on the road for the first time in 2½ months and Jake Lamb homered to lead Arizona past host Pittsburgh.

Marlins 6, Brewers 2: Rookie left-hander Justin Nicolino pitched 6²/₃ solid innings and Derek Dietrich homered as Miami beat host Milwaukee.

Padres 5, Braves 3: Rookie Colin Rea won his second straight start and Will Venable hit a two-run single to help host San Diego beat Atlanta.

Angels 2, White Sox 1: C.J. Cron hit a tiebreaking home run in the seventh inning and Albert Pujols also homered, leading Los Angeles to a victory over visiting Chicago.