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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy: CBD products remain under ban

By JOSHUA KARSTEN

Stars and Stripes

Sailors and Marines could still pop positive on a drug test if they use cannabidiol, popularly known as CBD, while treating medical conditions, the Navy warned this week.

In a new policy, the Department of the Navy forbids members of the Navy and Marine Corps from putting any products made of hemp or hemp derivatives into their bodies without a valid prescription even if the goods are sold legally and despite manufacturer claims that they're free of the psychoactive chemical found in marijuana known as tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC.

Low-THC hemp was removed from the Controlled Substances Act, which bans cannabis with higher amounts of the chemical, by a 2018 farm

bill President Donald Trump signed in December allowing the cultivation and interstate transfer of the plants and permitting hemp-derived products to be sold commercially in the U.S.

But the Food and Drug Administration doesn't evaluate or certify THC concentrations in such products, meaning they could contain more than the 0.3% by dry weight that's allowed under the new legislation, the office of the Chief of Naval Personnel said Wednesday in a statement announcing the policy.

"Sailors and Marines cannot rely on the packaging and labeling of hemp products in determining whether the product contains THC concentrations that could cause a positive urinalysis result," the Navy said.

A policy message signed the same day by Navy Secretary

Richard Spencer states that the use of hemp products — either by injection, ingestion, inhalation or other means, including absorption through the skin — would interfere with Navy and Marine Corps drug testing programs and "result in the reporting of unlawful THC levels."

The other services already ban the use of such substances among their members.

Failure to comply with the Navy policy will be considered a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice Article 92, failure to obey a lawful order or regulation, and any other article that applies, the service said.

Sailors who test positive for THC or other controlled substances face mandatory administrative or disciplinary action, including a possible "other than honorable" discharge that can

affect their eligibility for veterans' benefits and employment opportunities.

The policy does not ban the use of topical products containing hemp or its derivatives, including shampoos, conditioners, lotions or soaps, the message states.

In an attempt to cut through the haze around the products and policies, the Navy has produced fact sheets on the use of hemp or CBD that emphasize its "zero tolerance" on drug abuse, stating that even accidental exposure to the banned substances is not a legitimate excuse for a positive urinalysis.

"Unless you have a valid prescription to justify a positive result, you are subject to the full range of consequences from any drug positive urinalysis result," the fact sheets state.

Guam-based rescue squad makes 16th save this year

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

Just two weeks after its last save, Guam-based Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 rescued a Chinese mariner suffering a medical emergency at sea on Tuesday.

It was the Island Knights squadron's 16th save this year.

It happened during stormy weather after U.S. Coast Guard Sector Guam alerted the squadron to a "distressed mariner" aboard the Chinese-flagged oil tanker CSC Brave, according to a Navy statement. Within two hours, a squadron search and rescue crew left Andersen Air Force Base aboard an SH-60 Seahawk to rescue the person from the tanker.

Two crew members were lowered onto the Chinese vessel to check on the patient and prepare him to be hoisted into the Navy helicopter amid 15-foot waves, Lt. Michael Sipah, the Seahawk's co-pilot, told Stars and Stripes in an email Thursday.

"The 15-foot sea state, less than ideal weather, as well as the moving ship, required precision work between the crew chief [Petty Officer 1st Class] Joshua Teague and myself at the controls to maintain the aircraft over the hoisting spot," Sipah said.

The crew then lifted the mariner into the aircraft hovering above and gave lifesaving medical care, aircraft commander Lt. Cmdr. Philip Pretizinger

said in the Navy's statement.

"Lt. Erik Kumetz and Petty Officer (2nd Class) Kyle Bowen performed a harrowing in-flight blood transfusion, ultimately saving the patient's life," he said.

A tropical storm moved through the region Tuesday, and small craft and high surf advisories were in effect, according to U.S. National Weather Service Guam. Wind gusts on Guam reached about 40 mph.

The crew ultimately brought the mariner to Guam Memorial Hospital for more help, according to the statement. Information about where the rescue took place was not immediately available.

It was the 18th time the Coast

Guard has called Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 to help and the 16th recovery during search and rescue or medical evacuations this year, according to the statement.

By this time last year, the squadron had made 10 survivor recoveries and received 22 emergency calls, according to a July 26 Navy statement.

"HSC-25's ability to launch our aircraft on a moment's notice for a SAR or MEDEVAC is astounding," HSC-25 commanding officer Cmdr. Frank Loforti said in the Navy statement. "Every Sailor should be proud of the lives we are able to save and the support we provide to Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

Ex-attorney for SEAL says he's owed up to \$1M

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — A former attorney for a San Diego-based Navy SEAL acquitted of war crimes is trying to force his former client into arbitration to get paid, according to a complaint obtained by The San Diego Union-Tribune.

In the complaint, Texas-based attorney Colby Vokey says Navy SEAL Petty Officer 1st Class Edward Gallagher is in breach of a contract he signed in October and Vokey is seeking \$200,000 to \$1 million in damages. In that contract, also obtained by the Union-Tribune as part of the complaint, Gallagher apparently agreed to

go into arbitration should any attorney-client disputes emerge.

Gallagher signed the document Oct. 11.

Vokey represented Gallagher until mid-March, when another civilian defense attorney, Timothy Parlatore, joined the case.

Parlatore called Vokey's move "grotesque" in comments to the Union-Tribune on Wednesday.

"The Gallagher family has been through hell, and it is grotesque that Colby Vokey has decided to go after them when the case isn't even over," Parlatore said when reached by phone.

Gallagher is waiting on the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. John Richardson,

to finalize the case. Richardson can confirm, vacate or alter the sentence imposed by a San Diego military jury in July.

Gallagher was found not guilty of the most serious charges against him, which included premeditated murder and shooting at civilians while in Iraq in 2017. He was found guilty of posing with the body of an Islamic State fighter, and he was sentenced to a reduction in rank and four months confinement, which Gallagher served before trial.

Richardson took over as convening authority in Gallagher's case last week. It is unknown when he might make a final decision in the case.

Naval Academy appealing professor's reinstatement

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The U.S. Naval Academy is appealing a judge's decision to reinstate a fired English professor who has been a longtime critic of the academy, officials said Wednesday.

Bruce Fleming, a civilian who is a tenured professor, was fired last year after the academy alleged "conduct unbecoming a federal employee" in the classroom.

Andrew Phillips, the academy's academic dean and provost, wrote to Fleming on Wednesday that he had been reinstated with all pay and benefits to which he is entitled. Phillips wrote for Fleming to report to the academy Monday to receive assignments "such as scholarly research and

writing and service to the school."

Phillips wrote that Fleming's duties will not include teaching or advising students because the Navy has determined "your presence in the classroom and engaging with midshipmen in any advisory role would be an undue disruption to the academic environment."

Accusations against him included allowing students to tell jokes of a sexual nature in class, discussing sexual matters in class, emailing a partially clothed photo of himself to his students and touching students on the neck, shoulders and back in class without their consent.

But Mark Syska, an administrative judge with the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, wrote in his order for reinstatement

last month that a student who was a primary witness in the case "had severe credulity issues." He also wrote the purported victims in the case, who were students, "did not generally take offense or have any actual issue with the appellant."

"The appellant appears to be a rather unique professor at the academy," Syska wrote in his order, noting that he is "irreverent, theatrical, fashion-conscious, outspoken in his criticism" of the academy both in the classroom and his writings.

Fleming and his attorney, Jason Ehrenberg, have contended the academy is simply trying to punish him for criticizing the academy and for his teaching style in an affront to the academic freedom that is supposed to come with tenure.

Marines' mascot Chesty XV promoted to lance corporal

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

Obedying commands in the Marine Corps can lead to promotion. It did for Chesty XV.

After nearly one year serving as the Marines' mascot, Chesty was promoted from private first class to lance corporal during a ceremony last week at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C.

"He was happy to get promoted. It was a long time coming," said Staff Sgt. Alexander Spence, the assistant drill master and noncommissioned officer in charge of Chesty's handlers at the barracks.

Chesty barked as his new chevron was

placed onto his uniform, Spence said, noting the nearly 2-year-old pedigreed English bulldog reached lance corporal more quickly than most privates first class.

Chesty celebrated his achievements with a nice meal Thursday evening that included an extra treat — a diversion from his strict diet that ensures Chesty, like all Marines, maintains his weight.

Named to honor Lt. Gen. Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller Jr., the most decorated Marine in history, the mascot has been a mainstay at the Marines' oldest active post since July 5, 1957. Chesty's main duties include participating in the Friday evening parades held during summer at the base, greeting visitors who tour the base, and going to special

events to represent the Marines.

"He's on a strict training schedule," Spence said. Remaining focused on that schedule helped in Chesty's promotion. "He's very disciplined. He obeys commands very well. He's learning how to salute," Spence said.

Chesty is in his second parade season at the barracks. In his first year, Chesty disobeyed orders and instead of sitting when he was told, he rolled over and often refused to walk on his leash.

"He needs to sit in the parades when we want him to sit, and interact with the crowd, so that he's friendly and approachable," Spence said.

"He's on the right path right now."

New technology further shrinks rations

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

Soldiers of the future may be eating bacon and egg breakfasts via tiny food bars due to a new technology that shrinks meals to a fraction of their normal size.

Think sous vide, but for tactical quiches that may end up in your next Meal, Ready to Eat.

One dish begins with bacon, egg, cheese and heavy cream. The ingredients are inserted into a vacuum microwave dryer for 80 minutes of shrinkage. The result: a bar that's smaller than a Snicker's candy bar but with twice as many calories — and much more nutrition.

"A complete meal in a bar, that's my goal," said Tom Yang, senior food technologist at the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Research, Development, and Engineering

Center in Massachusetts.

Yang and other food scientists at Natick are researching the Army's new generation of portable rations. On the menu of the future are MRE pizzas, portable fruit and a light-weight ration for soldiers on the go.

Yang's bars may soon be found in the new ration, the Close Combat Assault Ration, which is supposed to contain three times the nutrition of a normal MRE while being lighter and smaller. Prototypes for the new ration are about one-third the weight of similar MREs, an Army statement said.

The military is trying to figure out how to feed small, isolated units who may go up to a week without resupply, Yang said. Currently, a soldier would need 21 MREs to survive that week.

"No one wants to carry that much MREs," Yang said. "The number one feedback from the field: We need to be able to

reduce the weight."

The secret for losing weight — for food, if not the people who eat it — may be a technology known as vacuum-microwave drying. The method involves placing food into a dryer, sucking all the air out of the container, then dehydrating the food until it shrinks. In a vacuum, water boils at a much lower temperature than normal.

While different in many ways from the increasingly popular sous vide method of cooking, the two techniques both use vacuum sealing to give cooks more control over the process and cook at lower temperatures. In vacuum-microwave drying, the food is cooked at 30 degrees Celsius, or essentially room temperature, which means less exposure to harsh temperatures that could make everything tough or powdery. The mildness of the drying also means the food does not lose as much nutrition.

Esper visits democratic ally Mongolia to strengthen bonds

Associated Press

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia — With one hand resting on the mane of a sturdy Mongolian horse, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper invoked the name of one of America's great soldiers as he sought to strengthen the military bonds between the U.S. and this landlocked democracy sandwiched between Russia and China.

"I'd like to name this fine-looking horse Marshall, after Gen. George Marshall," Esper said Thursday as he was presented with a 7-year-old buckskin during a time-honored traditional ceremony at Mongolia's Ministry of Defense.

Esper's stop in Ulaanbaatar — the third U.S. engagement with Mongolia in recent weeks — underscored its key role in America's new defense strategy that lists China and Russia as priority competitors.

With just over 3 million people spread over an area twice the size of Texas, Mongolia has worked to maintain its independence from Beijing and Moscow by increasing its ties to other world powers, including the U.S. It describes the U.S. as a "third neighbor."

Esper has made it clear

throughout his weeklong travel across the Asia Pacific that countering China's aggressive and destabilizing activities in the region is a top administration priority. The activities, he said, include Beijing's militarization of manmade islands in the South China Sea, efforts to use predatory economics and debt for sovereignty deals, and a campaign to promote the state-sponsored theft of other nations' intellectual property.

"We've got to be conscious of the toeholds that they're trying to get into many of these countries," Esper told reporters traveling with him to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea and Mongolia this week.

He said the U.S. is working to build relationships with key countries in the Indo-Pacific that share values and respect for each other's sovereignty, "whether it's Mongolia this trip, Vietnam, a future trip, Indonesia, other countries who I think are key."

His stop in Mongolia was less than 24 hours long, but Esper told his defense counterpart, Nyamaagiin Enkhbold, that it gives him the "opportunity to look at different ways we can further strengthen the ties" between the two nations.

Army eyes tokens for communications in field

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army hopes to outfit soldiers with small, wearable tokens that will allow them simple, noncontact access to secure battlefield networks for communications while serving in the field.

Army Futures Command is working to develop the technology that would produce a wireless signal to sign into mission command systems, communications networks, handheld devices and other tactical platforms almost instantly while serving in a war zone or similar location, officials said in a news release published Tuesday. Simply approaching their laptops or other devices and entering a personal identification number to ensure their identity would grant them access to computerized platforms needed in combat. Just walking away would log them out.

The idea is to allow soldiers, constantly on the move in an area threatened by an enemy, a simpler solution to electronics access than can be provided by even their Common Access Cards, the chip-enabled identification cards that grant

servicemembers and Pentagon civilians access to physical locations and many electronic applications. It would also standardize access for secure, tactical platforms soldiers use in the field, which do not use CAC cards and now use various authentication methods.

The new technology under development at the Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland would be largely an adaptation of commercially developed wireless payment products — Apple Pay, for example — and flexible hybrid electronics, said Ogedi Okwudishu, the Army engineer leading the project, known as the Tactical Identity and Access Management, or TIDAM, program. The tokens could be placed in a soldier's pocket or worn on the wrist similar to a Fitbit fitness bracelet.

"Soldiers should not have to take out a smart-card, insert it into a card reader and then remember to remove the card from the reader when they are done," Okwudishu said in the Army statement. "Contact-less identity tokens are not only easy to use, they provide a significant cost savings for the Army."

Texas governor: Suspect had no 'red flags'

Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas — Gov. Greg Abbott said Wednesday he's not aware of any "red flags" in the suspected El Paso gunman's past and made no mention of taking major gun control measures in Texas, where three mass shootings since 2017 have killed more than 50 people.

Abbott, a Republican, said racism needs to be confronted and a crackdown initiated on internet sites used by violent extremists after the weekend attack that left 22 people dead in the mostly Latino border city.

"The people of Texas have been victimized by several mass shootings. It must be

stopped," said Abbott, who met with legislators Wednesday in El Paso and said the state will act swiftly to address his calls for action.

The lawmakers in the meeting with him, all Democrats from El Paso, have unsuccessfully pushed for tighter firearms restrictions in the state Legislature. They gathered for a discussion hours before Abbott welcomed President Donald Trump to El Paso amid protests blaming Trump for inflaming racial and political tensions.

In the El Paso shooting Saturday, authorities believe the suspected gunman, Patrick Crusius, 21, posted a racist screed online before opening

fire at a Walmart. Hours later in Dayton, Ohio, another gunman killed nine people in an entertainment district.

An attorney for Crusius' family said Wednesday that the suspect's mother contacted police weeks before the rampage out of concern that her son had a rifle.

Dallas attorney Chris Ayres confirmed to The Associated Press that the call was made to police in Allen, a Dallas suburb. He declined to give details, but he and fellow attorney R. Jack Ayres told CNN that Crusius' mother contacted the Allen Police Department to ask about an "AK" type firearm Crusius owned.

The attorneys said the moth-

er was only seeking information and wasn't motivated by a concern that her son was a threat to anybody.

They also said the mother didn't identify herself or her son in the call.

Sgt. Jon Felty, Allen police spokesman, said there was no record of such a call and he wasn't aware of it.

Crusius has been charged with capital murder in state court and may face federal hate crime charges that could also come with a death sentence if he's convicted. Mark Stevens, Crusius' court-appointed attorney, said he "will use every legal tool available to me to prevent" Crusius from being put to death.

Stabbing rampage by man in southern Calif. kills 4

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A man "full of anger" stabbed, slashed and robbed his way across two Southern California cities in a bloody rampage that killed four people and wounded two others who were apparently targeted at random, authorities said.

The 33-year-old man from Garden Grove, Calif., robbed more than half a dozen businesses and killed two men at his own apartment complex during the two-hour wave of violence Wednesday, police alleged.

He was arrested as he walked out of a convenience store in the neighboring city of Santa Ana, dropping a knife and a gun he had taken from a security guard he had just allegedly killed, police said. Authorities did not immediately identify the suspect.

The violence appeared to be random, and the only known motives seem to be "robbery, hate, homicide," Garden Grove police Lt. Carl Whitney told reporters.

"We know this guy was full of anger and he harmed a lot of people tonight," Whitney said

Wednesday.

The attacker and all the victims are Hispanic, police said.

The two people who were wounded were listed in stable condition Wednesday night and were expected to survive.

Surveillance cameras caught some of the carnage.

"We have video showing him attacking these people and conducting these murders," he said.

Whitney said the man lived in an apartment building where two men were stabbed during some kind of confrontation. One man died inside an apartment and another was found wounded on a balcony and died at a hospital.

Whitney said a bakery also was robbed.

The man also robbed an insurance business, where a 54-year-old employee was stabbed several times and was expected to survive.

Undercover detectives tracked the suspect to the parking lot of the 7-Eleven store in Santa Ana.

Police ordered the man to drop his weapons and he complied and was arrested.

Latest governor of Puerto Rico facing more protests

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Puerto Ricans braced for more political turmoil Thursday as the third governor in a week took charge of this U.S. territory still divided over who should lead the economically struggling island of 3.2 million people.

The swearing-in of Justice Secretary Wanda Vazquez as governor was expected to spur renewed protests since many Puerto Ricans see her as an extension of Ricardo Rossello, who resigned the governorship after weeks of street demonstrations demanding his removal.

Vazquez sought to calm the anger in a televised statement late Wednesday, saying she feels the pain Puerto Ricans have experienced in recent weeks and vowing to unify the island and bring much-needed stability.

"We have all felt the anxiety provoked by the instability and uncertainty," she said. "Faced with this enormous challenge and with God ahead, I take a step forward with no interest

other than serving the people as I have done my whole life."

Vazquez, who has worked in the government for more than 30 years, stepped into the position Wednesday when Puerto Rico's Supreme Court declared that the assumption of the office on Friday by Rossello's pick, Pedro Pierluisi, was unconstitutional.

Vazquez, 59, a former prosecutor, is the second woman to be governor and is to serve out the remainder of Rossello's term until elections in November 2020, but at least some of those involved in the anti-Rossello protests are calling for her ouster too.

Critics of Vazquez say that she was not aggressive enough as justice secretary in pursuing corruption investigations involving members of her New Progressive Party and that she did not prioritize gender violence cases.

A small group of protesters gathered earlier outside the governor's mansion in San Juan's colonial district calling for Vazquez to resign and yelling, "There'll be no peace as long as there's impunity!"

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Crash scatters wine bottles on freeway

IL CHICAGO — A crash involving two semi-trucks scattered hundreds of bottles of wine on a freeway in Chicago.

The crash happened along a stretch of Interstate 94 named the Bishop Ford Freeway on the city's South Side. One of the trailers carrying cases of wine was ripped open.

The Chicago Sun-Times reported one person had minor injuries from the crash.

Jurors sought who won't judge tattoos

LA BATON ROUGE — A defense attorney for a man charged with murder wants jurors who won't judge his client because of his face and neck tattoos, which include devil horns and skull teeth.

The Advocate reported that most of the potential jurors attorney Jarvis Antwine spoke with said they don't have a problem with William Bottoms Jr.'s tattoos.

Bottoms is charged with second-degree murder in the 2017 deaths of two men.

Liquor sale celebrates new tax-free status

NH CONCORD — To highlight New Hampshire's tax-free status and to thank out-of-state customers, the state liquor commission is offering them discounts at its liquor and wine outlet stores.

The "No Taxation on Our Liberties" sale is providing customers from Massachusetts a 13 percent discount, Vermont a 12 percent discount and Maine an 11 percent discount, double each state's sales tax rate.

Customers from New Hampshire and all other states will

be eligible for a 13 percent discount.

Worker charged after toddlers' legs broken

FL PANAMA CITY — A worker at a Florida day care center faces child neglect charges after four toddlers suffered broken legs on the same day.

The Panama City News Herald reported that Christina Marie Curtis, 25, was arrested recently after the May 21 incident at Kids Discovery Learning Center in Valparaiso.

An arrest report said all four young boys were fine the morning of the incident. Later that day, they were having difficulty standing or walking and medical personnel determined they had all suffered leg fractures.

Visitors stranded by strike paint fence

AK KODIAK — Visitors stranded by an Alaska ferry strike kept busy by painting a church fence.

The Kodiak Daily Mirror reported that David and Joanne Witiak, of Anacortes, Wash., helped repaint the fence at the Holy Resurrection Cathedral.

The couple had to extend their RV camping trip to Kodiak due to the Alaska Marine Highway strike by the Inland Boatmen's Union of the Pacific, which ended Aug. 2.

They offered their services to the cathedral and took up an invitation to paint.

Town's wood chipper stolen, old one left

PA WEST PITTSTON — Police in Pennsylvania said someone swapped their old wood chipper for the town's wood chipper.

West Pittston police posted photos of the chipper that was left behind at the public works department. Police said someone dropped it off and stole the town's wood chipper.

Chief apologizes after cops lead man by rope

TX GALVESTON — Galveston's police chief apologized after two white officers mounted on horseback led a handcuffed black trespassing suspect by a rope through downtown streets.

Photos of the incident went viral on social media. The two officers linked the rope to handcuffs worn by criminal trespass suspect Donald Neely, 43, and led him around the block to a mounted patrol staging area.

In a statement, Police Chief Vernon Hale said "this is a trained technique and best practice in some scenarios," such as with crowd control. However, he said he believes his officers "showed poor judgment in this instance and could have waited for a transport unit at the location of arrest."

2 arrested in burning of dog at beach

CT WEST HAVEN — Police in Connecticut arrested the owner of a dog whose remains were found after a fire in the parking lot of a West Haven beach on Independence Day.

Authorities found the dog's charred carcass after they were called to Sandy Point Beach on July 4 and put out a small fire.

Police on Monday arrested the dog's owner, Latrice Moody, 35, of West Haven and issued a warrant for another town resident, Maurice Jackson, 41.

They face charges of breach of peace, illegal dumping and open burning. Moody also is

charged with animal cruelty.

Police say they believe her dog, an older terrier, was dead before it was set on fire.

Van mysteriously returned to center

MD BALTIMORE — A van that was stolen from a Baltimore center that donates free books to children was returned nearly two weeks after it went missing, covered in spray paint, adorned with reproductions of Vincent van Gogh's artwork and needing thousands of dollars in repairs.

Last month, Kimberly Crout, of the Maryland Book Bank, said the van disappeared from outside its warehouse and workers suspected a thief was to blame.

The van reappeared at the center almost unrecognizable. Photos taken by WJZ show it was covered in gold spray paint, with copies of van Gogh's art pasted to its sides and the phrase "van go" written on the hood. It also had a shattered window and no keys.

Thief crashes into store, steals tickets

CA MISSION VIEJO — Southern California authorities were looking for a thief who used a stolen car to smash through the doors of a liquor store and make off with trays of lottery tickets.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department said the crimes occurred in Mission Viejo.

Video shows the silver Mercedes crash through the store's doors and security gates, then back out and park.

A figure clad in dark clothing crawled through the mangled entryway, disappeared from view and then emerged with trays and fled.

From wire reports

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Is Parsons next big LB for Penn State?

Associated Press

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — Micah Parsons could hardly wait to see his face on the massive video board atop Beaver Stadium. He imagined how cool it would be to hear 107,000 fans roar when he was announced as a starting linebacker for Penn State — as a freshman.

Parsons rolled into Happy Valley last year with much fanfare and no shortage of confidence. A five-star prospect whose roller-coaster recruitment was laid bare on social media, he had much to prove as a player and a person. Parsons won over the skeptics, coming off the bench in 12 of 13 games and still putting together the greatest freshman season by a linebacker at the school that proudly touts itself as Linebacker U.

It has been 19 years since Penn State had a linebacker selected in the first round of the NFL Draft. Parsons has all the attributes to end that drought.

“He’s a generational player,” said LaVar Arrington, the last Penn State linebacker to be a first-rounder.

Parsons is still waiting for that first home start, though. Despite being the first player to lead the team in tackles as a freshman, Parsons had a lot to learn. It was not enough to prac-

tice hard. He needed to focus when he was not participating. Parsons could make plays because of his freaky athleticism, but after playing defensive end in high school he was taking introductory courses at linebacker. Penn State defensive coordinator Brent Pry said Parsons was at the 100-level last year and is now working on 200.

Parsons disagrees.

“Oh, yeah, I’m definitely 200-level. I would say I’m pushing 300-level. I’m probably 300-level, to be honest with you,” Parsons said.

Definitely no shortage of confidence. Parsons’ father, Terrence, said his son needed to be humbled last year.

“And he was a little bit, you know, not happy at first because again this kid has always been the star. Always been on the forefront,” Terrence Parsons said. “Now it was like, hey, everybody’s a star here. You got to work now and that’s what I was worried about because you know he really never had to work. He was playing with God’s gift.”

Pry said not starting Parsons was not an attempt to teach him humility. It was about getting Parsons to understand what is expected of those at the top of the depth chart.

“It’s an approach. It’s the

in-betweens. When we’re not doing a rep (in practice), what’s the behavior? It’s not the rep. It’s the other times. It’s trying to get the most out of every opportunity to learn and to grow as a player and recognize that you need that time,” Pry said. “You have to take advantage of that.”

Parsons was offered a scholarship by Penn State when he was in the ninth grade. The Harrisburg native wanted to commit right then, but Penn State coaches told him he needn’t rush. That was the start of a long and winding road to Happy Valley. When Parsons finally signed in December 2017, Penn State coach James Franklin said the book of his career “will probably be five chapters on my career and then 15 chapters on the ups and downs and twists and turns, and the journey of Micah Parsons.”

Parsons verbally committed to Penn State in February 2016. He decommitted in April 2017. There was a serious flirtation with Ohio State. Parsons named his dog Brutus (like OSU mascot Brutus Buckeye). The Ohio State courtship ended awkwardly after Parsons tweeted, while on a visit to Columbus, that the Buckeyes should make a quarterback change from senior starter J.T. Barrett to Dwayne Haskins.

Then Parsons visited both Oklahoma and Georgia in December 2017, just days before signing with Penn State.

Parsons said he was not ready for the attention that came with being a high-profile football recruit in the social media age.

“The more success you have the quicker you got to grow up and the quicker you realize that the better you’re off,” Micah Parsons said.

Terrence Parsons said Micah would lament about not being able to act like a kid.

“I said, ‘Yeah, you’re right,’” Terrence Parsons said. “You’ve got two ways to look at this: You could be a kid now and you might have to work a couple of jobs like me and your mom do or become an adult right now and then your dreams can become reality and you can be the biggest kid in the world.”

Franklin said he never thought about cutting off Micah Parsons.

“I mean obviously there’s frustrations and there’s ups and downs and all those types of things,” Franklin said. “But we felt like between myself and coach Pry we had a really strong relationship with the kid, with the family, with the high school coach. That if we didn’t overreact that we’d have a chance to get him back.”

Dillon aiming to take Boston College to bigger things

Associated Press

BOSTON — Boston College running back AJ Dillon was the talk of the Atlantic Coast Conference before last season.

Named the preseason player of the year after winning the league’s rookie of the year in 2017, Dillon was ready to take off in his second season with the Eagles.

An ankle injury taught him a lot more about himself than he could have imagined.

“Honestly, it’s weird to say, but I do feel like the injury was a blessing in disguise,” Dillon said Tuesday. “I felt like it

taught me a lot about, obviously I’m not invincible. You’ve got to protect your body.”

It even brought him back to reality, a bit.

“I would say last year was a humbling experience,” he said. “I came onto the scene freshman year. I ended up with the ACC rookie of the year, those kinds of accolades, things like that going into last season.”

Before last season, the hype was building around BC’s campus. The 6-foot, 250-pound Dillon was being touted as a potential Heisman Trophy candidate.

The talk was a lot for him to handle.

“Just being 100 percent truthful,” he said. “Those kinds of things, to be a sophomore at the time, those kinds of things you hear them all: the Heisman this, the Heisman that. Those kinds of things — not that they got to me or changed anything mentally — I felt like I kind of just consumed it a little bit too much and felt invincible.”

Then, after rushing for 652 yards, Dillon hurt his left ankle early in the second half of the fifth game of the season, missed the next two and finished with

1,108 yards.

He never felt the same. The power was there, at times. The speed was diminished.

“This camp I’ve been trying to go 100 percent every day,” he said. “I honestly couldn’t play my kind of football at all during the regular season after the injury.”

Boston College coach Steve Addazio knows how important Dillon is to the team’s success and figures to watch his workload. If he’s healthy, Addazio’s team may finally get past seven wins, its total in six of his seven seasons at the school.

Aussie rugby star tackling NFL dream

Associated Press

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Valentine Holmes was as massive a star in Australia as he could have ever imagined.

The standout winger and full-back for the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks of the National Rugby League was recognized wherever he went, with die-hard fans donning his team's jersey and wide-eyed youngsters wanting to play just like him.

And then, Holmes stunningly left it all behind.

He headed to the United States for a chance to play American football in the NFL, a decision that angered some of those same fans who once cheered him. But Holmes needed to tackle his dream — no matter what everyone else thought.

"I just felt like I wanted to test myself as a person and an athlete," the 24-year-old Holmes told The Associated Press. "I wasn't really thinking about what I was giving up, I guess. It was just that I wanted to chase more."

Holmes is in training camp with the New York Jets compet-

ing for a roster spot as a running back, wide receiver and return specialist.

He's here — 10,000 miles from home — as part of the NFL's International Player Pathway program. This summer, all four AFC East teams — the Jets, Buffalo, Miami and New England — can carry an international player in camp. It's a long shot, but players can earn a place on the 53-man active roster. If they don't, they are eligible for a practice squad exemption. They wouldn't count against the team's allotment of 10 non-active roster players.

Holmes first worked out for NFL scouts in Los Angeles in 2016, and spent three months early this year learning the game at IMG Academy in Florida before joining the Jets in the spring.

"I'd say it's been kind of like a roller-coaster," Holmes said. "Obviously, I've had some ups and downs. Learning the playbook and getting stuff wrong is not always good, just making mistakes on the field or even in the classroom. And then, also making good plays and making good stops is also a good thing, as well."

"So, yeah, I'm just excited to be here."

The 6-foot-1, 200-pound Holmes has been working in the backfield with the likes of Le'Veon Bell, Ty Montgomery and Bilal Powell, catching passes and also returning punts — doing whatever he can to stand out.

Holmes has shown flashes in recent days after a back ailment limited him early in camp. He had a 50-yard touchdown catch in a drill Monday that had his teammates fired up.

"He's picking up the offense," Jets coach Adam Gase said. "That hasn't really been his issue. It's just when everything starts moving super-fast, he's trying to get used to that and I think it's starting to work for him. It's slowing down for him and I think it just keeps slowing down."

"I'm excited to see him get to play in some games and just kind of see how he reacts to all that."

Holmes might get that chance Thursday night in the Jets' preseason opener against the Giants.

"It'll be cool just to be on the

sideline and interact with the guys," he said, "and watch with them rather than just watch on the TV, you know?"

Holmes was fascinated by the NFL as a kid, checking out highlights of games and reading about the league's biggest stars.

That stuck with him, even when he was 17 and moved out of his family's home in Townsville on the northeastern coast of Queensland to Sydney to begin a career in rugby league. Holmes quickly discovered he was good — really good — and racked up 369 points in five seasons with the Sharks. He represented Australia in the 2017 Rugby League World Cup, where he set a record with 12 tries — the equivalent of touchdowns — in the tournament.

"I was a big fish in Townsville, but then when I went over to Sydney, it was 10 times bigger and a lot more competitive because they had a lot more people," he said. "I worked my way up there."

Holmes had one year left on his contract with the Sharks, but instead had the team release him, passing up about \$720,000, to pursue the NFL.

Vikings have big plans for rookie tight end Smith

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — When the Minnesota Vikings take the field against New Orleans in their preseason opener, Irv Smith Jr. will be the latest but nowhere close to the last person in the country to commemorate his 21st birthday with a visit to the Big Easy.

For Smith, though, this Friday night awaits as a truly unforgettable occasion.

The rookie tight end will not only celebrate another year of life but make his NFL debut in the same stadium where his father spent most of his professional career in front of a host of family and friends in the city he calls home.

"It's crazy how everything worked out," Smith said.

Selected in the second round of the draft out of Alabama, the 6-foot-2, 242-pound Smith was born after his dad, Irv Smith Sr., left the Saints after five seasons. Smith Sr. played his last two years in the league with San Francisco and Cleveland, respectively.

The future football player son was just an infant then, so the memories of having a father in the NFL have been shaped largely by household memorabilia and internet searches. That doesn't make him any less proud, of course. He's determined, too, to establish a longer and better career than his pops.

Long before the statistics are added up, well, there are training camp stories to tell.

"When he was with the Saints, they had to go all the way to Wisconsin," Smith said, alluding to the annual trip the Saints made from 1988-1999 to escape steamy Louisiana for the bluff-lined college town of La Crosse. "I was like, 'Why would you all go to Wisconsin?' He was like, 'You don't ask. You just go.' I thought that was funny."

After developing at a pro-caliber college program, Smith has advanced to an organization with sparkling facilities as state-of-the-art as any in the league. His dad?

"He said that he used to get an IV between practices, all kind of stuff," Smith said. "It's good that we don't have to do that now."

The Vikings have been es-

entially filling Smith full of their offensive plays instead.

With a desire to employ more "12" personnel packages, with one running back and two tight ends, Smith's field-stretching, pass-catching ability presents a wealth of potential for quarterback Kirk Cousins. Smith could line up in the backfield as a hybrid fullback, in the slot in a bunch or stack formation, out wide to create a mismatch elsewhere in the formation, or simply in a standard stance next to the tackle.

Without a proven third wide receiver beyond stars Adam Thielen and Stefon Diggs, the new scheme directed by offensive coordinator Kevin Stefanski will carry a lot of responsibility for the tight ends.

Martin, Dodgers rally past Cardinals

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — As the Los Angeles Dodgers' oldest player, Russell Martin figures he has an extra appreciation for this club's remarkable string of impossibly dramatic victories at Chavez Ravine.

When the veteran backup catcher got a chance to contribute to this season of walk-off wonders, he didn't waste it.

"Let the old guys get hot, too, you know?" Martin said with a grin.

Martin drove a two-run, two-out single up the middle for the Dodgers' 10th walk-off win of the season, and Los Angeles swept the St. Louis Cardinals with a 2-1 victory Wednesday.

The 36-year-old Martin delivered after a frustrating offensive day for the Dodgers, who have won five straight despite the best efforts of Jack Flaherty. Los Angeles couldn't score during seven brilliant innings of four-hit ball by the Cardinals starter in his hometown ballpark, but the Dodgers still came through against St. Louis' bullpen.

Andrew Miller hit Corey Seager with a pitch with one out in the ninth, and Carlos Martinez (2-2) gave up pinch hitter Will Smith's single. After Martinez threw a wild pitch to move up both runners, Martin bounced a two-strike single through the middle, and Smith sprinted home with the winning run.

"You just shorten up your swing, try to touch the ball, and let destiny happen," Martin said.

Martin hadn't had a walk-off hit since May 2016 in Toronto, and he hadn't delivered a walk-off hit for the Dodgers since April 2007. He's batting .219 this season, but he still helped Los Angeles post its major league-high 77th win.

Casey Sadler (2-0) pitched the ninth for Los Angeles, which avoided its first shutout loss since May 18 with its final swing.

Los Angeles improved to 46-15 at home while hitting double digits in walk-off wins and matching the total walk-offs by last season's pennant-winning Dodgers.

When asked if the Dodgers are just expecting to win close home games these

days, manager Dave Roberts replied: "Yeah. It's something that I think the other dugout feels it as well. ... Seems like every day, someone else gets the Gatorade."

Marcell Ozuna homered off Dodgers rookie Dustin May in the sixth inning for the Cardinals, who went 0-5 on their California road trip after scoring just two runs in three games at Dodger Stadium.

"The lack of execution in the ninth, that's what stands out," Cards manager Mike Shildt said. "We had a heck of a game from Jack. We executed for 8½ innings, but they made us pay."

St. Louis' clubhouse was somnolent after this game, but Flaherty saw positives.

"They've been the best team in baseball for a little bit now," Flaherty said. "But we've played them really, really well these last two games, and we know what happened earlier in this season (a four-game Cardinals sweep in St. Louis in April). So we know we're going to see them again. Everybody in here is confident about that. It's something that we're looking forward to."

MLB roundup

Yanks rout O's, extend winning streak to 8

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Gio Urshela and Kyle Higashioka each hit two home runs, and the Yankees' long-ball outburst against the Baltimore Orioles reached historical proportions Wednesday night in a 14-2 blowout that extended New York's winning streak to eight games.

Urshela had a pair of two-run drives, and Higashioka totaled five RBIs with his two shots. It was the first career multihomer game for both players.

The Yankees have 11 players with multihomer games against Baltimore this season, breaking the record of 10 set by San Francisco against the Dodgers in 1958.

Cameron Maybin also went deep for the Yankees, who tied a major league record with 16 home runs in a three-game series. New York has hit 52 homers against the Orioles this season, breaking its own major league mark of 48 against the

Kansas City Athletics in 1956.

The frustration of being dominated in this lopsided three-game series reached a boiling point for the last-place Orioles in the middle of the fifth inning. After manager Brandon Hyde leaned over and said something to Chris Davis, the first baseman lurched in Hyde's direction and had to be restrained by teammate Mark Trumbo and hitting coach Don Long.

James Paxton (7-6) allowed one run (a homer by Trey Mancini) over 6⅔ innings to help the Yankees roll to their 15th straight victory at Camden Yards and 12th in a row overall against the Orioles.

Mets 7, Marlins 2: Michael Conforto homered twice, Pete Alonso and Jeff McNeil hit two-run shots and host New York completed a four-game sweep of Miami.

Braves 11, Twins 7: Ozzie Albies homered twice in his second straight four-hit game, Ronald Acuna Jr. and Fred-

die Freeman both went deep, and visiting Atlanta beat Minnesota.

White Sox 8, Tigers 1: Ivan Nova pitched eight scoreless innings, and visiting Chicago beat Detroit.

Blue Jays 4, Rays 3: Reliever Brock Stewart allowed two hits over four scoreless innings in his debut with his new team and visiting Toronto beat Tampa Bay.

Astros 14, Rockies 3: Yuli Gurriel drove in a team record-tying eight runs, Gerrit Cole (14-5) won his 10th straight decision and host Houston routed Colorado.

Brewers 8, Pirates 3: Keston Hiura hit two home runs and drove in three runs, powering visiting Milwaukee to a three-game sweep of Pittsburgh.

Cubs 10, Athletics 1: Ian Happ hit his second career grand slam, Jose Quintana (10-7) tossed two-hit ball through seven innings to win his sixth straight and host Chicago rout-

ed Oakland.

Mariners 3, Padres 2: Mallex Smith doubled leading off the eighth inning and scored when Daniel Vogelbach beat out a potential inning-ending double play, and host Seattle snapped a five-game losing streak.

Indians 2-5, Rangers 0-1: Jose Ramirez homered, his team's bullpen combined on a four-hitter and host Cleveland swept a doubleheader against Texas.

Nationals 4, Giants 1: Gerardo Parra hit a three-run homer against his former team, Joe Ross pitched six shutout innings of three-hit ball and visiting Washington completed a three-game sweep of San Francisco.

Diamondbacks 6, Phillies 1: Zac Gallen threw five scoreless innings and helped himself with a run-scoring sacrifice bunt in his debut with his new team and host Arizona beat Philadelphia.