

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Calif. blaze bears down; many evacuate

The Washington Post

Wildfires touched off by a barrage of lightning strikes in central and northern California continue to expand.

The massive blazes are sending plumes of smoke and ash into the skies surrounding San Francisco, fouling air quality for hundreds of miles and endangering public health. Evacuations expanded overnight Wednesday into the early morning hours on Thursday, including portions of Travis Air Force Base, an Air Force logistics hub.

On Thursday morning, one grouping of fires had more than doubled in area since Wednes-

day, to 124,100 acres. The fast-spreading fire — known as the LNU Lightning Complex in Napa and Sonoma counties — threatens 25,000 structures, according to Cal Fire, the state firefighting agency.

Late Wednesday, officials shut down Interstate 80 west of Vacaville, located southwest of San Francisco, as flames jumped the highway.

In central California, a pilot on a firefighting flight near Fresno died when his helicopter crashed, according to The Associated Press, and the National Transportation Safety Board is investigating.

Tens of thousands have been instructed to evacuate from ad-

vancing flames, with more told to be ready to flee if necessary.

The fires come as California has been enduring a record-breaking heat wave that has prompted rolling blackouts due to high electricity demands for air conditioning and other uses, as well as the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 10,000 in the state.

In Solano County, southwest of Sacramento, officials ordered the evacuation of about 8,000 residents near the Russian River on Wednesday, and the SCU Lightning Complex in eastern San Francisco Bay is threatening nearly 3,800 homes and businesses in five counties.

In San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties south of San Francisco, about 20,000 people were ordered to evacuate because of a fire threatening communities there, part of the CZU Lightning Complex. Nearly two-dozen homes had burned as of Wednesday night, fire officials reported.

The state's fire-fighting resources are overextended, according to Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom and fire officials, given the number of large fires burning simultaneously. Cal Fire spokesman Jonathan Cox told the AP that some firefighters are working grueling 72-hour shifts instead of the typical 24-hour rotations.

IG: General belittled staff, clashed with peers

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Maj. Gen. Dawn Dunlop, one of the Air Force's highest-ranking female fighter pilots, regularly belittled subordinates and clashed with peers before her removal as the leader of a Pentagon office responsible for some of the military's most secret programs, an Air Force inspector general probe found.

Investigators substantiated allegations that Dunlop publicly chastised and disrespected military and civilian workers during her time as director of the Defense Department's Special Access Programs Central Office, or SAPCO, which she ran from August 2018 until her firing in May 2019. Her actions created a toxic work environment, investigators wrote in the January 2020 investigation report obtained Wednesday by Stars and Stripes.

Witnesses said morale in the SAPCO office, which is charged with oversight of highly classified projects that require security and safeguards beyond the scope of typical secret information, dropped almost immediately after Dunlop's arrival and quickly rose after her removal on May 31,

2019. They told investigators the general routinely talked down to others and treated them like children she needed to parent. In at least one case, Dunlop called a subordinate's work "crap," and in another incident, a subordinate accused the general of angrily grabbing her hand without permission.

"In isolation, each of these instances may be viewed as Maj. Gen. Dunlop having an occasional bad day, having infrequent difficulties communicating her intent with her staff, or reacting badly in a time-stressed situation," the IG investigators wrote. "However, cumulatively, and given the totality of the facts and circumstances, the preponderance of evidence supports Maj. Gen. Dunlop engaged in a pattern of disrespectful behavior toward her staff ... in a way that was pervasive, personal, public and disproportional."

Through more than 30 years in the Air Force, Dunlop — who remains on active duty — has proven herself a trailblazing fighter pilot. She was the first woman to become a fighter test pilot and the first to fly the F-22 Raptor stealth fighter jet. In 2010, she became the Air Force's first woman to command a test wing.

But some witnesses said her leadership style did not mesh with her role at SAPCO. Dunlop told investigators she entered the Pentagon office intent on making changes to improve its work and to align it better with the vision of then-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. She described her leadership style to them as "purpose-driven, data-driven, open, and very transparent."

Investigators found 21 of the 26 witnesses whom they interviewed during their probe held a negative opinion of Dunlop. They highlighted "weekly, sometimes daily" incidents in which she berated workers in Pentagon hallways over small mistakes or "just snapped" at a senior officer from another service during a meeting.

Other witnesses said they believed she meant well and might not have realized she was treating people poorly.

"I think she's a good fighter pilot. I think she's a good general officer," one unnamed staff member said. "I think she lacked communications skills."

The IG investigators shared their findings with the Air Force's criminal investigative service, the Office of Special Investigations, which declined to pursue an assault charge.

Dems pound message: Democracy at stake

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — Former President Barack Obama warned that American democracy could falter if President Donald Trump is reelected, a stunning rebuke of his successor that was echoed by Kamala Harris at the Democratic Convention as she embraced her role as the first Black woman on a national political ticket.

Obama, himself a barrier breaker as the nation's first Black president, pleaded with voters Wednesday night to "embrace your own responsibility as citizens — to make sure that the basic tenets of our democracy endure. Because that's what is at stake right now. Our democracy."

Throughout their convention, the Democrats have summoned a collective urgency about the dangers of Trump as president. In 2016, they dismissed and sometimes trivial-

ized him. Now they are casting him as an existential threat to the country. The tone signals anew that the fall campaign between Trump and Joe Biden, already expected to be among the most negative of the past half-century, will be filled with rancor and recrimination.

Yet on the third night of the Democrats' four-day convention, party leaders also sought to put forward a cohesive vision of their values and policy priorities, highlighting efforts to combat climate change and tighten gun laws. They drew a sharp contrast with Trump, portraying him as cruel in his treatment of immigrants, disinterested in the nation's climate crisis and in over his head on virtually all of the nation's most pressing challenges.

Democrats also demonstrated a hope that Biden, a 77-year-old white man, can revive the coalition that helped put

Obama into office, with minorities, younger voters and college-educated women blunting Trump's lock on many white and rural voters.

The evening marked a celebration of the party's leading women, including remarks from Hillary Clinton, the first woman to become a major ticket presidential nominee, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who challenged Biden during the primary and is now supporting his campaign.

Harris, a 55-year-old California senator and the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, addressed race and equality in a personal way Biden cannot when he formally accepts his party's presidential nomination.

"There is no vaccine for racism. We have got to do the work," Harris said, her words emphatic though she was

speaking in a largely empty arena near Biden's Delaware home.

"We've got to do the work to fulfill the promise of equal justice under law," she added. "None of us are free until all of us are free."

Just 75 days before the election, Biden must energize the disparate factions that make up the modern Democratic Party — a coalition that spans generation, race and ideology. And this fall, voters must deal with concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic that has created health risks for those who want to vote in person — and postal slowdowns for mail-in ballots, which Democrats blame on Trump.

Democrats hope that Harris and Obama in particular can help bridge the divide between those reassured by Biden's establishment credentials and those craving bolder change.

DOD investigates soldiers who appeared in uniform at DNC

BY STEVE BEYNON

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon is investigating two junior enlisted soldiers who violated an Army regulation when they appeared in uniform during the Democratic National Convention broadcast Tuesday night, a Defense Department spokesman said.

During a roll call of all the states and territories pledging their convention delegates to former Vice President Joe Biden to formalize his nomination as the Democratic candidate for president, American Samoa used two Army Reserve specialists from the 9th Mission Support Command as a backdrop behind two delegates.

"Wearing a uniform to a partisan political event like this is prohibited," Lt. Col. Emanuel Ortiz, a Defense Department spokesman, said Wednesday in

a statement. "The Army follows the Department of Defense's longstanding and well-defined policy regarding political campaigns and elections to avoid the perception of DoD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of any political candidate, campaign or cause."

The two uniformed reservists' participation in the convention came after the Democratic Party's message to troops earlier in the evening that promised to end the politicization of the military.

Defense Department Directive 1344.10 forbids service members from participating in any partisan political campaign, elections, candidate, cause or issue while in uniform. Service members are allowed to engage in virtually any political activity out of uniform, but the activity cannot be perceived as being endorsed by the military.

"Military personnel should abide by DOD regulations regarding political conduct while in uniform," said Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., who is an Iraq War veteran. "If you are in uniform, do not get involved in political events."

The soldiers stood at the position of attention as Aliitama Sotoa, the chairman of the American Samoa Democratic Party, cast the territory's 11 votes to Biden in a brief segment. Standing next to Sotoa was Petti Matila, who serves as an executive assistant at the American Samoa Department of Commerce. The soldiers did not speak and were not acknowledged.

"Members on active duty may not participate in partisan activities such as soliciting or engaging in partisan fundraiser activities, serving as the sponsor of a partisan club or speaking before a par-

tisan gathering," the Defense Department policy states. "In addition, all military members, including National Guard and Reserve forces, are prohibited from wearing military uniforms at political campaign events."

An official with the Democratic Party told ABC News that the inclusion of the soldiers was an oversight.

"Each state was asked to highlight issues and values that matter most and the American Samoa delegation wanted to highlight their commitment to military service when they filmed their segment," the unnamed official said.

Paul Rieckhoff, who founded Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, a nonprofit veterans-advocacy group, called using troops as a backdrop a "failure of leadership," and the soldiers are likely to face serious consequences.

Reservist dies from virus, 5th in military

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A 46-year-old Army reservist from Memphis, Tenn., died Monday of complications caused by the coronavirus, becoming the fifth American service member to succumb to the disease, military officials said Thursday.

Army Master Sgt. Brian K. Tolliver died in a Largo, Fla., hospital more than a month after first testing positive for the virus on July 10, according to an Army statement. Tolliver was the command paralegal for U.S. Army Reserve Command's headquarters in Pinellas Park near Largo.

Tolliver was the third Army Reserve soldier to die of the virus. His death was the 75th reported by the Pentagon within the Defense Department community, which includes troops, their family members, defense contractors and DOD civilian workers.

Tolliver was a father of three who served 25 years in the Army, including 13 as a reservist, the service said.

"We feel a tremendous loss in our military family with the passing of Master Sgt. Tolliver," said Maj. Gen. Jonathan Woodson, commander of Army Reserve Medical Command. The coronavirus "has taken a dedicated soldier from our formation, and our thoughts and prayers go out to his family."

Worldwide, nearly 35,000 troops have tested positive for the virus since the beginning of the outbreak, according to Pentagon data released Wednesday. More than 19,000 of those service members have since recovered and 538 are now hospitalized, according to the Defense Department.

The Army has reported the most cases among the Pentagon's military services with 11,915.

Unemployment claims bounce back above 1 million in US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of laid-off workers seeking U.S. unemployment benefits rose to 1.1 million last week after two weeks of declines, evidence that many employers are still slashing jobs as the coronavirus bedevils the U.S. economy.

The latest figures, released Thursday by the Labor Department, suggest that more than five months after the viral outbreak erupted the economy is still weak, despite recent gains as some businesses reopen and some sectors like housing and manufacturing have rebounded. Jobless claims had fallen last week below 1 million for the first time since March, to 971,000. A rising number of people who have lost jobs say they consider their loss to be permanent.

The total number of people receiving unemployment aid

declined last week from 15.5 million to 14.8 million, the government said Thursday. Those recipients are now receiving far less aid because a \$600-a-week federal benefit has expired, which means the unemployed must now get by solely on much smaller aid from their states. The loss of the federal benefit has deepened the struggles for many, including a higher risk of eviction from their homes.

President Donald Trump has signed an executive order to provide \$300 a week in federal unemployment aid, with money drawn from a disaster relief fund. Twenty-five states have said they will apply for the federal money, though they would need to revamp their computer systems to do so. Other states are still considering whether to take that step; two have said they won't.

Some states may be hesitating to overhaul their unemployment systems because they

expect Congress to eventually pass a new rescue package with an enhanced jobless benefit that might not require any changes.

In states that decide to pay out the \$300, the government estimates it would take three weeks, on average, for the states to send the money to the unemployed. And initially, only enough money is being allotted to cover three weeks of payments. Even with subsequent grants, analysts estimate that there would be enough money to last only five or six weeks.

The continuing stream of layoffs comes against the backdrop of a modest recovery from a deep recession and a virus that is still paralyzing much of the economy. Home construction and sales have bounced back. So have auto purchases. But spending on travel, entertainment and many other services remains weak. Small businesses are struggling.

Bases in S. Korea restricting travel

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — All U.S. military installations and garrisons in South Korea have reinstated travel restrictions for service members and their families as the country reports increases in coronavirus cases, a Defense Department official said Wednesday.

The travel restrictions come after U.S. Forces Korea on Monday raised its health protection condition to "Charlie," meaning there is a substantial risk, after a spike in new coronavirus cases in South Korea, according to a command statement. Only mission-essential personnel are to report to duty while everyone else must telework.

Because the entire country is now designated as "Charlie," all military installations and garrisons are now in a "red" status, said Col. Lee Peters, a spokesman for U.S. Forces Korea. Service members and their families will now need an exception to the policy in order to travel to and from South Korea.

On Wednesday, the Pentagon released the latest travel restriction statuses for 231 military in-

stallations around the world. Seven installations in South Korea are listed and all had their travel restrictions reinstated.

Those installations are Camp Casey, Camp Henry, Camp Humphreys, Yongsan Garrison, Fleet Activities Chinhae, Kunsan Air Base and Osan Air Base, according to the Pentagon.

Travel restrictions were put in place in March to try to prevent the spread of the virus within the Defense Department. Defense Secretary Mark Esper signed a memorandum May 22 that laid out the conditions needed for locations to allow for travel to and from bases.

"If installation conditions are subsequently not met, the approval authority decides if travel restrictions should be reinstated," the Pentagon document states.

Installations have to meet specific criteria in order to have the travel restrictions lifted, including their health protection condition to be below "Charlie," and availability of essential services, according to the Pentagon document.

U.S. Forces Korea also mandated this week that personnel must wear masks when they are off-installation to protect themselves.

Pompeo pledges continued support for Iraq

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pledged that the Trump administration will continue to support Iraq as it confronts the threat posed by Islamic State, but he also called for the Baghdad government to redouble efforts to rein in pro-Iran militias.

Pompeo, who spoke Wednesday after talks with senior Iraqi officials, said the United States was committed to helping Iraq regain and maintain security, despite President Donald Trump's oft-stated desire to reduce and then eliminate the American troop presence there.

Trump and Iraq's prime minister, Mustafa al-Kadhimi, were to meet at the White House on Thursday morning.

"There is still work to do," Pompeo told reporters at a State Department news conference with Iraq's Foreign Minister Fuad

Hussein. "Armed groups not under the full control of the prime minister have impeded our progress. Those groups need to be replaced by local police as soon as possible. I assured Dr. Fuad that we could help and we would help."

Pompeo declined to discuss possible future American troop withdrawals. But he said the U.S. will not stop supporting Iraq's security forces in their bid to defeat Islamic State, which is also known as ISIS, and "to curb the power of militias that have for far long terrorized the Iraqi people and undermined Iraq's national sovereignty."

The foreign minister called the talks "good and important" and said the Iraqi government believes in the importance of its partnership with the United States.

"We are both in the same trench of fighting ISIS and we are still in the same trench and we will work together to defeat the ter-

rorist elements," he said. "We see that the United States of America is a strong ally and a strong ally of Iraq and we will continue to protect that alliance."

Both men expressed hope that as the security situation improves, there will be greater economic cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the energy sector. Pompeo said he expected several U.S.-Iraqi energy agreements to be concluded in the near future.

"We want an Iraq that is corruption free, prosperous and fully integrated into the global economy," Pompeo said. Before leaving for Washington, al-Kadhimi told The Associated Press that his country still needs U.S. assistance to counter ISIS and that his government is committed to introducing security sector changes as militia groups stage near-daily attacks in Baghdad.

Ex-Trump adviser Bannon charged in with fraud

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former White House adviser Steve Bannon was arrested Thursday on charges that he and three others ripped off donors to an online fundraising scheme "We Build The Wall."

The charges were contained in an indictment unsealed in Manhattan federal court that alleged Bannon received over \$1 million himself, using some to secretly pay a co-defendant, Brian Kolfage, and to cover hundreds of thousands of dollars of Bannon's personal expenses.

Federal prosecutors alleged that Bannon and three others "orchestrated a scheme to

defraud hundreds of thousands of donors" in connection with an online crowdfunding campaign that raised more than \$25 million to build a wall along the southern border of the United States.

According to the indictment, Bannon promised that 100% of the donated money would be used for the project, but the defendants collectively used hundreds of thousands of dollars in a manner inconsistent with the organization's public representations.

The indictment said they faked invoices and sham "vendor" arrangements, among other ways, to hide what was really happening.

Bannon is among numerous former Trump associates who have found themselves under indictment or in jail, including his former campaign chair, Paul Manafort, his longtime lawyer, Michael Cohen, and his former national security adviser, Michael Flynn.

The defendants learned last October from a financial institution that the "We Build the Wall" campaign might be under federal criminal investigation and took additional steps to conceal the fraud, according to the indictment.

Charges included conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Russian politician in a coma after alleged poisoning

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny is in a coma and on a ventilator in a hospital intensive care unit after falling ill from suspected poisoning that his allies believe is linked to his political activity.

The 44-year-old foe of Russia's President Vladimir Putin felt unwell on a flight back to Moscow from Tomsk, a city in Siberia, and was taken to a hospital after the plane made an emergency landing in Omsk, Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said on Twitter.

"He is in a coma in grave condition," she

said on Twitter.

She told the Echo Moskvyy radio station that he must have consumed poison in tea he drank at an airport cafe before boarding the plane early Thursday. During the flight, Navalny started sweating and asked her to talk to him so that he could "focus on the sound of a voice." He then went to the bathroom and lost consciousness, and has been in a coma in grave condition ever since.

"Doctors are saying the toxin was absorbed quicker with hot liquid," she tweeted, adding that Navalny's team called police to the hospital.

Anatoliy Kalinichenko, deputy chief doctor of the Omsk hospital where the politician is being treated, told reporters that Navalny was in grave, yet stable condition. Kalinichenko said doctors are considering a variety of diagnoses, including poisoning, but refused to give details, citing a law preventing doctors from disclosing confidential patient information.

State news agency Tass reported that police were not considering deliberate poisoning, citing an anonymous source in law enforcement who said "it is not unlikely that he drank or consumed something yesterday himself."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Board votes to change Tomahawk mascots

CT GLASTONBURY — Glastonbury High School's athletic teams will no longer be known as the Tomahawks.

The Glastonbury Board of Education voted 7-1 Monday night to eliminate the nickname, citing racial insensitivity. There are currently 17 Connecticut schools that still use mascots or images associated with Native Americans or other Indigenous peoples.

Glastonbury High principal Nancy Bean said a student committee will be formed to find a new mascot.

Signs suggest panda is bearing a healthy fetus

DC WASHINGTON — New signs emerged Monday suggesting that giant panda Mei Xiang is bearing a healthy fetus, as an ultrasound showed "exciting movements," according to the National Zoo.

Her fetus was kicking and swimming in the amniotic fluid, the zoo said in a tweet. In addition, the tweet said, its spine and blood flow were visible.

Last Friday, the zoo said an ultrasound that morning showed what looked like a fetus. Officials said then they were hopeful that a healthy cub could soon be born.

Police: Men broke into home wearing monitors

FL HOLLYWOOD — A group of men on pre-trial release are behind a string of burglaries carried out while they were wearing ankle monitors that track their locations, police said.

Authorities seized more than \$150,000 in cash, an AK-47, a Smith & Wesson handgun,

cellphones, iPads, jewelry, designer handbags, ammunition, blank checks, fraudulent debit and credit cards, and a stolen vehicle, the South Florida Sun Sentinel reported.

Zion Odain Denvor Hall, 21, Tyrek Davontae Williams, 19, and Tremaine Raekwon Hill, 18, were arrested last Friday. They are accused of being part of a criminal organization committing burglaries, armed burglaries, fraud, gun thefts and other criminal acts, Hollywood police said Tuesday.

They were taken into custody while under house arrest awaiting trial on unrelated charges.

Man arrested in theft of 24 guns from shop

MI BROWN CITY — A man has been arrested in connection with the theft of more than 24 firearms from an outdoors sports shop.

The man's name was not released. He faces federal charges, according to the Lapeer County sheriff's office.

Detectives believe three men broke into the store late last week in Brown City, 73 miles north of Detroit. Sheriff's deputies and agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives recovered 22 of the stolen guns after a search warrant was executed in Saginaw, The Detroit News reported Tuesday.

Officials: Man sought to extort money from dad

MS TUPELO — A man has been accused of faking his own kidnapping in Mississippi to extort money from his father who lives in Virginia.

The investigation into the case began last week when Andrew Blake Hawks' father told deputies he had received a video call that showed his son

tied against a tree with a gun pointed to his head, the Lee County Sheriff's Office said in a statement Monday.

Hawks' father told investigators that the alleged kidnappers had demanded money in exchange for his son's life. When they did not receive the money by the deadline that same day, deputies said the alleged kidnappers threatened to cut off Hawks' fingers and fired gunshots that led his father to believe Hawks was killed.

Later that evening, the suspects were told the money had been transferred through Western Union. Police did not disclose how much money Hawks was trying to receive. When investigators arrived at the store where the money would be picked up, deputies said they saw Hawks, 24, attempting to get the money. He was arrested at the scene.

Man injured at track meet files a lawsuit

SD SIOUX FALLS — A man who was seriously injured when he was hit by a discus at a South Dakota high school track meet has filed a lawsuit seeking damages.

Michael Moses was watching the South Dakota State High School Track Meet with his family in Sioux Falls last year and was standing in the spectator area when a competitor threw a discus that struck the Tea man in the face.

Moses collapsed and lost consciousness. His lawsuit against the South Dakota High School Activities Association and the Sioux Falls School District says his nose was broken, teeth were knocked out, his jaw had to be reset and he underwent a bone and gum graft.

The lawsuit filed in Minnehaha County alleges negligence in setting up the discus spectator area.

South Dakota High School

Activities Association director Dan Swartos told the Argus Leader that insurance companies are still working on the case. The Sioux Falls School District did not comment.

Authorities rescue child locked in gun safe

MD ELLICOTT CITY — Authorities in Maryland freed a 5-year-old who became locked inside a large gun safe.

The child's mother called 911 around noon Tuesday to report that the 5-year-old had gotten trapped inside the safe, WRC-TV quoted Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services spokesman Brad Tanner as saying. Crews managed to break a hole in the back wall of the safe to save the child, according to photos posted by the department on social media.

Rescuers performed air monitoring during the process, authorities said. The child spent at least 40 minutes in the safe, which did not contain guns at the time, according to the news outlet. The child was evaluated and released by medics.

Unmarked graves of slaves found on campus

SC CLEMSON — The possible locations of hundreds of unmarked graves have been discovered in a Clemson University cemetery, including those of slaves and Black men whose hard forced labor built the campus long after the Civil War.

The graves are thought to be of those enslaved at John C. Calhoun's Fort Hill Plantation from about 1830 to 1865, as well as sharecroppers and convicts leased from the state to construct campus buildings from 1890 to 1915, the university said in a statement Monday.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Andretti digs deep for family at Indy 500

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Fresh off one of the biggest moments of his career, Marco Andretti headed to St. Elmo's Steakhouse for a modest celebration.

Bryan Herta, the consigliere in his ears on race days, sat on his right. Marta, his wife of nearly three years, was on his left. Andretti was quiet, as he generally is in public, soaking up his time in the spotlight. It's never been his turn. He is always at someone else's party.

This one was clearly for him. Another diner at the Indianapolis landmark said, "Go get 'em Marco" as he passed by the table. Sage Karam, like Andretti a Pennsylvania-raised racer, led guests as they raised a glass to Andretti for "laying down a fat one." That's what the late Dan Wheldon said, according to Andretti, to describe a huge lap around Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Andretti had done just that, seizing the first Indianapolis 500 pole in 33 years for motorsports' most famous family by bumping five-time series champion Scott Dixon on the final run of the day.

It was a glorious moment and a nail-biting test of Andretti's ability to close the deal. His car was consistently the best in buildup to qualifying, but Andretti needed to summon the nerve to push his car to its very limit Sunday. At stake was the first Andretti pole since his grandfather Mario won his last in 1987, when Marco was just two months old.

He's still got to actually win the race. But earning the right to lead the field to green in "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing" is a résumé highlight all by itself — and for Andretti, it is a defining moment. He is under constant scrutiny for his failure to find success — in the IndyCar Series and, even worse, at the speedway itself.

This is the only race that really matters to the Andretti family and the organiza-

tion is loaded this year. Four Andretti cars made the fast nine shootout Sunday and they were the clear contenders to win the pole. One by one, they failed to replicate the speed the team knows is there in the cars and then suddenly there was Dixon atop the leaderboard.

Andretti was the final driver on the track. It was hot and a slight wind swirled around the empty speedway, conditions that should have slowed his effort.

With a confidence he has struggled to show in recent years, Andretti ripped four laps around the 2.5-mile oval — wide-open on the gas, fast and fearless in pursuit of his own moment of glory at Indy.

"On the last lap, I knew it was either all or nothing," Andretti told The Associated Press on Monday at the speedway in the shadow of its Pagoda. "I was either not going to finish or the run was going to be very good. I had to dig deep for that, reach for the next level."

His run was wildly celebrated by his fellow competitors; even Dixon said he was rooting for Andretti.

"He's such a great guy and a good friend," Dixon said. "To see him get a pole position at Indianapolis — I know what that means to him and especially his family."

The speedway is the Andretti family playground. Mario Andretti won the Indy 500 only once, in 1969, and five Andrettis are a combined 1-for-74 when it comes to winning the most famous race on the IndyCar calendar, leading to the notorious "Andretti Curse" label.

"We don't believe in it as a family," he told AP. "We've been really blessed around here and we are unscathed as far as being in race cars. This is a dangerous thing we do and we are all healthy. It's hard to say we're cursed. This place can bury your confidence and it can also make you."

Now 33, Marco has been at Indy his whole life and his favorite memories, he said, were days spent at the old Speedway

Motel turning laps on the balcony on a toy car as his grandfather, father, uncle and cousin fine-tuned their race cars.

He wants nothing more than to break that so-called curse, which began for him as a rookie in 2006 when Sam Hornish Jr. passed him right before the finish line. Marco finished second, his father Michael finished third and it was the first of 14 consecutive years of Indy 500 heartbreak for Marco.

He said the race that hurts the most was actually last year when he ran a tribute 50th anniversary paint scheme of his grandfather's win, a time-consuming effort that his sister tirelessly put together. Radical changes made to his car were a disaster and he finished 26th, his worst finish in 10 years.

"It was totally embarrassing," Andretti said. "It's one of those times where I just wanted to crawl under a rock."

Andretti recognizes that his statistics — two wins in 240 starts over 15 seasons, his last victory way back in 2011 — open him to criticism. Fans have accused him of keeping his job only because his dad owns the team and suggested he's not worthy of his seat.

It used to bother him. But Andretti has grown up in this series; he was just 19 his rookie year and teammates with series greats Dario Franchitti, Tony Kanaan and Herta, who now calls his races. He has settled into the Pennsylvania home where he grew up, next door to his beloved grandfather. He's content being Marco Andretti and has stopped worrying about the chatter.

Being a favorite to win the race that means everything to his family is an enormous amount of pressure. But that can wait for now. He was the toast of the town Sunday — his family always is when the race is in Indy — and the moment, for once, was all his.

Broadcaster Brennaman suspended for on-air slur

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Reds broadcaster Thom Brennaman has been suspended from working Cincinnati's games after using an anti-gay slur on air Wednesday night, prompting the team to apologize for the "horrific, homophobic remark."

Brennaman used the slur moments after the Fox Sports

Ohio feed returned from a commercial break before the top of the seventh inning in the first game of a doubleheader at Kansas City. Brennaman did not seem to realize he was already on air. He later apologized.

The Reds took the 56-year-old Brennaman off the broadcast in the fifth inning of the second game.

"The Cincinnati Reds organization is devastated by the hor-

rific, homophobic remark made this evening by broadcaster Thom Brennaman," the team said in a statement. "He was pulled off the air, and effective immediately was suspended from doing Reds broadcasts."

"In no way does this incident represent our players, coaches, organization, or our fans. We share our sincerest apologies to the LGBTQ+ community in Cincinnati, Kansas City, all

across this country, and beyond. The Reds embrace a zero-tolerance policy for bias or discrimination of any kind, and we are truly sorry to anyone who has been offended," it said.

Brennaman opened the fifth inning with an apology spoken directly to camera before handing off play-by-play duties.

Alternate play-by-play man Jim Day took over the broadcast.

NBA playoffs roundup

Doncic helps lead Mavs over Clippers

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Luka Doncic has his first NBA postseason victory, though probably not the way he expected.

Instead of leading the Dallas Mavericks on the court, he was helping lead cheers from the sideline as his teammates pulled away while he sat.

Doncic scored 28 points and the Mavericks put together the pivotal run when he was out to beat the Los Angeles Clippers 127-114 on Wednesday night and even the Western Conference playoff series at a game apiece.

"This is how we're going to have to win games," Mavs coach Rick Carlisle said. "Our depth is going to be a big part of it."

Two nights after scoring 42 points in the highest-scoring debut in postseason history, Doncic played just nine minutes in the second half because of foul trouble. He finished with eight rebounds and seven

assists.

The 21-year-old picked up his fourth foul less than a minute into the third quarter, shaking his finger toward the Dallas bench that he didn't want to come out.

He stayed on then and, when he did come out toward the end of the period, Dallas put together a strong stretch of basketball. A finishing 14-4 spurt made it 98-85 entering the fourth.

And even after Doncic picked up his fifth less than a minute into the final period and had to go out again, the Mavs pushed the lead to 18 in the final 12 minutes.

Kristaps Porzingis added 23 points for the Mavericks. They beat the Clippers for the first time in five meetings this season and earned their first playoff victory since 2016.

Kawhi Leonard had 35 points and 10 rebounds, but Paul George had a mostly miserable performance for the second-seeded Clippers. They played without starting guard

Patrick Beverley because of a calf injury.

Celtics 128, 76ers 101: Jayson Tatum scored 33 points and Boston beat Philadelphia to take a 2-0 series lead.

Tatum scored a career playoff high for the second straight game after scoring 32 points in the opener Monday. Kemba Walker added 22 points and Jaylen Brown had 20 for the Celtics. Boston shot 51% from the field and committed just seven turnovers, including two in the first three quarters.

Joel Embiid had 34 points and 10 rebounds for the 76ers, and Josh Richardson added 18 points.

Jazz 124, Nuggets 105: Donovan Mitchell scored 21 of his 30 points in a big third quarter and Utah beat Denver to even the series at a game apiece.

Mitchell was 10-for-14 from the floor. He helped the Jazz break open the game in the third quarter and increase the lead to 31 in the fourth.

His performance was on the heels of scoring a Jazz playoff-record 57 points in a 135-125 overtime loss in Game 1. Mitchell was the focus of Denver's defense, which helped open up other avenues for teammates.

Jordan Clarkson scored a personal playoff-best 26 points on a day the Jazz shot 51.7% from the floor. They also had 32 assists and hit 20 three-pointers.

Nuggets rookie Michael Porter Jr. had 28 points, and Nikola Jokic added 28 points and 11 rebounds.

Raptors 104, Nets 99: Fred VanVleet had 24 points and 10 assists, Norman Powell had a big game off the bench with 24 points and defending NBA champion Toronto beat Brooklyn to take a 2-0 series lead.

Kyle Lowry had 21 points, nine rebounds and forced a big turnover in the closing seconds for the second-seeded Raptors. Garrett Temple led the Nets with 21 points, and Caris LeVert had 16 points and 11 rebounds.

NHL playoffs roundup

Lightning, Avalanche, Bruins advance to 2nd round

Associated Press

TORONTO — The Tampa Bay Lightning eliminated Columbus from the Stanley Cup playoffs in five games Wednesday, overcoming a late two-goal deficit and beating the Blue Jackets 5-4 on Brayden Point's goal 5:12 into overtime.

Point also delivered the winner in Game 1 of the best-of-seven series, a five-overtime thriller that wound up being the fourth-longest game in NHL history.

Kevin Shattenkirk and Anthony Cirelli scored in the final eight minutes of regulation to wipe out a 4-2 deficit. Columbus scored four consecutive times to overcome an early two-goal

deficit of its own.

Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 37 shots for Tampa Bay, which was swept from the first round by the Blue Jackets last season.

Joonas Korpisalo had 20 saves for Columbus. Point took a pass from Nikita Kucherov in the slot before backhanding the winner past the goaltender.

Bruins 2, Hurricanes 1: At Toronto, Patrice Bergeron broke a tie with 3.5 seconds left in the second period, David Pastrnak returned with two assists and Boston beat Carolina to win the first-round playoff series in five games.

Jaroslav Halak had 23 saves for the Bruins, who swept the Hurricanes in the Eastern Con-

ference finals last season.

Avalanche 7, Coyotes 1: At Edmonton, Alberta, Nathan MacKinnon had two goals and two assists, Nazem Kadri also scored twice and Colorado routed Arizona to close out the series in five games.

J.T. Compher had a goal and an assist, Nikita Zadorov also scored and Philipp Grubauer stopped 23 shots.

Canadiens 5, Flyers 3: At Toronto, Nick Suzuki buried the winner 22 seconds after Philadelphia tied it in the third period, Brendan Gallagher snapped a goal drought and Montreal staved off elimination in Game 5.

Joel Armia scored twice for

the Canadiens, Phillip Danault sealed it into an empty net, and Carey Price made 26 saves.

Jakub Voracek scored twice for the Flyers — both on a five-minute power play in the second period — and added an assist. Joel Farabee had the other goal. Carter Hart made 28 saves.

Canucks 4, Blues 3: At Edmonton, Alberta, fourth-line grinder Tyler Motte scored two breakaway goals to rally Vancouver past St. Louis.

J.T. Miller and Jake Virtanen, with his first career playoff goal, also scored for the Canucks. Goaltender Jacob Markstrom made 36 saves.

Machado's slam in 10th lifts Padres

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Manny Machado and the San Diego Padres are having a grand-slamming good time.

Machado left no doubt when he squared up on a full-count, 94 mph sinker from Rafael Montero with one out in the 10th inning, driving it off the facade of the upper deck in left-center field to give the Padres a 6-3 win against the Texas Rangers on Wednesday night.

Machado took a few steps while admiring the drive, tossed his bat aside, thumped his chest three times while looking at the Padres' dugout and then started his trot. He was welcomed with a wild celebration at the plate.

It was Machado's 11th career grand slam and sixth walkoff

homer. San Diego has hit a grand slam in three straight games for the first time, all against the Rangers.

"We're doing special things here and we're going to continue to do that," Machado said. "We're having a lot of fun doing it. We have a special group of guys."

Fernando Tatis Jr., who hit his MLB-leading 12th homer earlier, drew a nine-pitch walk off Montero to load the bases ahead of Machado, who hit his sixth homer of the season.

Also aboard were Jurickson Profar, who started the inning on second base, and Trent Grisham, who walked after pinch-hitter Greg Garcia sacrificed Profar.

"The pitcher on the mound is the one in trouble and he has

to come to you, so you're just waiting there just trying to get a pitch you can handle," Machado said about his eight-pitch at-bat. "Honestly, you're just trying to get a pitch just to get one run, so you're trying to hit a fly ball in that situation. Getting late into the count, I was able to see some of those pitches, lay off some of those. Getting into a 3-2 count I finally got a pitch I could drive."

Manager Jayce Tingler said it was encouraging for Machado, "because the work he's been putting in, just truly grinding, fighting for a feeling, working. You can tell the last couple of days it's starting to come. To top it off with that at-bat, that's as hard of a ball that he hit. Super impressive. More just thrilled for him."

Tingler said Grisham, Tatis and Machado had three of the best at-bats he's seen this year.

"The takes Grisham had to battle to get on, then the Tatis battle. Montero's out there making pitches, those guys are fighting, fighting, just battling pitches in the zone to draw the walk and Manny's at-bat, just continue to grind, to fight pitches off, and then to finish it off like that.

"These guys keep fighting. I feel like we're never out of it just because our guys keep coming. That was a huge win tonight."

Texas had gone ahead 3-2 in the top of the inning when Willie Calhoun's dribbler in front of the plate off Tim Hill (1-0) scored Nick Solak with two outs.

MLB roundup

Indians' Civale stymies Pirates with complete game

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Cleveland Indians catcher Roberto Perez challenged starter Aaron Civale to get through eight innings against the Pittsburgh Pirates on Wednesday night to give the team's hard-working bullpen a break.

Civale did Perez one better, throwing the first complete game of his young career as the Indians rolled to a 6-1 victory. Civale (3-2) allowed just five hits against six strikeouts without issuing a walk, narrowly missing a shutout when Pittsburgh pushed across a run on Josh Bell's sacrifice fly in the ninth.

"Bebo asked for eight innings before the game, so I gave him one more," Civale said.

Civale kept the floundering Pirates off balance with a series of changeups and cutters mixed in with a fastball the National League's worst offense couldn't seem to figure out. Pittsburgh mustered just three hits — all of them singles

— and didn't even get a runner in scoring position through the first eight innings.

Mets 5, Marlins 3: Michael Conforto hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the ninth inning, and New York won at Miami for the third night in a row.

Jacob deGrom pitched six shutout innings and left with a lead, but the Marlins scored against the Mets' bullpen on a wild pitch and two bases-loaded walks for a 3-all tie going into the ninth.

Rays 4, Yankees 2: Pinch-hitter Mike Brosseau singled home the tiebreaking run in the eighth inning and streaking Tampa Bay won at New York, taking advantage of a costly error by reliever Zack Britton.

Jalen Beeks pitched out of a ninth-inning jam and the Rays got home runs from slumping hitters Ji-Man Choi and Mike Zunino off Gerrit Cole, who struck out 10 in a no-decision.

Athletics 4, Diamondbacks 1: Mark Canha hit a two-run homer, Robbie Grossman got

things going with a two-run double in the first to back Jesus Luzardo, and Oakland beat visiting Arizona.

Luzardo (2-0) struck out a career-best seven batters over 6 1/3 sharp innings in his third start.

Mariners 6, Dodgers 4: Austin Nola hit a three-run home run and had four RBIs, Taijuan Walker overcame early long-ball issues to throw seven strong innings, and host Seattle snapped Los Angeles' seven-game winning streak.

Giants 7, Angels 2: Johnny Cueto struck out eight and pitched into the sixth inning, and host San Francisco beat Los Angeles.

Astros 13, Rockies 6: Kyle Tucker homered, hit two triples and drove in four runs, and Houston won at Colorado for its seventh straight victory.

Blue Jays 5, Orioles 2: Randal Grichuk hit two home runs, and Toronto completed a three-game sweep at Baltimore.

Red Sox 6, Phillies 3: Boston ended its nine-game los-

ing streak, with Rafael Devers homering and driving in three runs in a win over visiting Philadelphia.

Cardinals 9-2, Cubs 3-4: David Bote hit a tiebreaking two-run single in the seventh and final inning and Adbert Alzolay pitched five solid innings in his season debut as host Chicago earned a split with St. Louis.

In the opener, Matt Carpenter belted a grand slam and St. Louis held Chicago to two hits.

Royals 4-0, Reds 0-5: Trevor Bauer pitched seven innings of one-hit ball, and Cincinnati earned a doubleheader split at Kansas City.

White Sox 5, Tigers 3: Jose Abreu hit a tie-breaking homer in the eighth inning and Edwin Encarnacion followed with his second solo shot of the game to lift host Chicago over Detroit.

Brewers 9, Twins 3: Christian Yelich hit one of Milwaukee's four homers, Brett Anderson pitched six strong innings and Milwaukee won at Minnesota.