

Navy accuses SEAL dropout in ship fire

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The sailor charged with setting the blaze and destroying the USS Bonhomme Richard last summer had previously dropped out of training to become a Navy SEAL after only five days and held a grudge against the service, according to an affidavit filed by an investigator seeking a search warrant in the case.

Seaman Apprentice Ryan Sawyer Mays, 20, became an arson suspect soon after the blaze was extinguished four days after it began on July 12, 2020, while the amphibious assault ship was docked in San Diego, according to the 33-page affidavit filed in U.S. District Court in the Southern District of California on Sept. 3, 2020.

In the affidavit, which had remained sealed until Tuesday,

investigators asked the court for access to Mays' social media accounts.

The Navy announced last week that a sailor had been charged with setting the fire, but did not identify him.

The contents of the affidavit were first reported by the Daily Beast and San Diego Union-Tribune.

The Bonhomme Richard was undergoing maintenance at Naval Base San Diego when the blaze seared through 11 of the ship's 14 decks, destroyed its forward mast and damaged the superstructure before being put out. The Navy said in December that the ship would be scrapped.

Investigators with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives determined soon after the blaze was extinguished that it had originated below deck in a section called

Lower V, where they found a container that had held a petroleum distillate believed to have been used to start the fire.

Agents with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service began questioning sailors associated with Lower V, and those interviews led quickly to suspicion of Mays.

They found a social media message posted publicly by Mays about a month before the fire that said, "I love the smell of napalm in the morning" — a quote from the 1979 film "Apocalypse Now."

Seaman Kenji Velasco told agents he had seen a masked sailor carrying a bucket down to Lower V, and that he saw no other person go down there before the fire started. Velasco later told them he believed that sailor was Mays.

Command Master Chief Jose

Hernandez told NCIS agents that Mays was "a person who showed disdain toward authority and the U.S. Navy," the affidavit said.

Mays joined the Navy in 2019 with an eye toward the advanced electronics computer fields, the affidavit said. He changed his mind on that career choice at some point and began Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training in October 2019.

He dropped out after five days and was reassigned to the Bonhomme Richard as an "undesignated Seaman," the affidavit said.

"According to Navy leadership, the morale and behavior of sailors who had aspired to become a SEAL, and then find themselves serving in a more traditional role on a Navy ship, are frequently very challenging," the affidavit said.

1st Coast Guardsman in Olympics talks mental stress

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

ENOSHIMA, Japan — The first U.S. Coast Guardsman to compete in the Olympics said athletes in Tokyo face a tougher mental challenge than recruits in boot camp.

Lt. j.g. Nikki Barnes, 27, became the first Coast Guardsman to represent the United States at the Olympics in any sport when she and crewmate Lara Dallman-Weiss, 32, of Shoreview, Minn., began sailing in the Women's 470 class last week.

Reflecting on the Olympic experience after missing out on a medal, the native of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands said she'll apply the lessons she learned in Japan in her Coast Guard career.

"It's my first Games," she said, shortly before the men's 470 race Wednesday. "People tell you there are so many distractions, but I didn't believe them until I came

here."

The stress faced by Olympic athletes was highlighted last week when U.S. gymnast Simone Biles withdrew from several events, later attributing the decision to a mental health issue.

The biggest challenge for Barnes was the mental fatigue from filtering others' thoughts and comments to concentrate on racing, she said.

Sailing at the games involved myriad tasks, from preparing the boat to logistics and funding. It's costing the donor-funded team almost \$18,000 to ship the vessel back to the U.S., she said.

Out on the water, crews had to deal with choppy conditions and could see sharks surfing on waves, she said.

"This is one of the hardest things I've done in my life," Barnes said. "I was thinking about boot camp, which I thought was the hardest before, but this was tougher

than boot camp."

After their final race Wednesday, the American women were ranked 12th out of 21 crews who sailed multiple races in 15½-foot-long dinghies over a course near Enoshima Island, Kanagawa prefecture. Hannah Mills and Eilidh McIntyre claimed gold for Great Britain.

That afternoon, Barnes joined a crowd of flag-waving athletes, officials and support staff on the island's breakwater to watch the men race. Australian duo Matthew Belcher and Will Ryan won the gold medal.

The dinghies, with sails featuring the flags of competing nations, provided a spectacle that played out in front of a Japan Coast Guard patrol vessel providing security for the event.

"Just seeing [the Japanese ship] was really cool," said Barnes, who planned to drop in on a U.S. Coast Guard detachment at Yokota Air Base in Tokyo on Thursday.

USMC to replace PFT crunches with planks

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The Marines are changing how they'll work the core.

Over the next two years, the Marine Corps physical fitness test will undergo two important changes related to abdominal strength tests, eventually replacing crunches with the plank, a new administrative message said.

The plank reduces the risk of injury and engages almost twice the abdominal muscles that the crunch does, making for a good test of midsection endurance, the message said.

"With increased core strength, Marines are less likely to experience injury or fatigue during functional tasks like hiking, lifting and low crawling," the service said in a statement.

The Corps is announcing the changes now to allow Marines time to train.

"You will see updated infographics and the plank workout plan on Fitness.Marines.mil very shortly," said Capt. Sam Stephenson, a spokesman for Marine Corps Training and Education Command.

The isometric plank became an optional event in 2020, and will

remain so in 2022, though the minimum and maximum times will change. In 2023, the exercise will become mandatory.

"Research has shown that sit-ups and crunches with the feet restrained require significant hip flexor activation," the statement said. "This has been linked to an increased risk of injury, including lower back pain."

The maximum time for the plank will decrease from 4 minutes, 20 seconds to 3 minutes, 45 seconds. The minimum time will increase by seven seconds to 1 minute, 10 seconds.

Earlier this month, the Air

Force also announced that the plank would be an option in its annual fitness assessment test starting next year.

The Navy replaced curl-ups in its physical readiness test with a forearm plank in March after determining the "repeated spinal flexion movement of the curl-up is not operationally relevant," that it might aggravate back injuries and wasn't challenging enough.

The Marine Corps is expected to change the scoring tables for the PFT in changes made to its standing fitness test order before the end of this year.

Records: Pentagon slaying suspect had troubled past

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As officials seek clues about what prompted a Georgia man to fatally stab a Pentagon police officer, details of the suspect's troubled past emerged Wednesday through interviews and court records.

Austin William Lanz, 27, was arrested last April for a break-in at a neighbor's home and drew police attention months earlier for an ongoing harassment campaign involving sexually explicit photos and messages, according to interviews and records obtained by The Associated Press.

Investigators have not revealed a motive in the ambush-style killing of Pentagon police officer George Gonzalez. But Lanz's past brushes with the law, as well as neighbors' accounts of recent menacing behavior, appear to suggest the violence was more likely the act of a troubled, violence-prone individual than part of a broader conspiracy.

"I wish there was a better way to address those mental health issues that people have," said Phillip Brent, who shared a backyard fence with Lanz in Georgia and describes repeated harassment directed at himself and his then-fiancee. "It feels like it was just a clear failure of our system to help someone out who needed that help."

The FBI on Wednesday said the burst of violence at the Pentagon began at about 10:40 a.m. Tuesday when Lanz exited a bus at the Pentagon Transit Center and immediately stabbed Gonzalez without provocation. The two struggled and Lanz shot himself with Gonzalez's weapon. Other "officers engaged the subject, who ultimately died at the scene," the FBI said.

Investigators were examining Lanz's background, including his criminal history, jail records, financial information and any online accounts, in search of a motive, a law enforcement official said.

Services work together to help save critically injured soldier

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

A joint effort by four service branches ended with a critically injured U.S. soldier successfully retrieved from an Army vessel in the Pacific on July 26, according to the Air Force.

The soldier was injured aboard the vessel off the coast of Angaur, Palau, during the Forager exercise. With severe weather conditions and significant distances involved, members of the Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Army organized an emergency medical evacuation for the soldier, according to an Air Force news release on Aug. 2.

The Air Force did not identify the soldier, the nature of the injuries or the vessel involved. An Army spokesperson did not respond to emails or phone calls from Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

Facing uncertain conditions, the rescue team made two plans. The first was to deploy a helicopter from Sea Combat Squadron 25 on Guam to land on the

ship and evacuate the soldier.

If that proved unworkable, the next plan was to airdrop medical supplies to the ship, according to the Air Force.

Hudak coordinated with Air Force Lt. Col. Steven Massie, commander of the 36th Airlift Squadron at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, to organize airdrops from a C-130J Super Hercules.

The Navy and Air Force teams worked with soldiers from the 1st Special Forces Group and 82nd Airborne Division, as well as sailors from the Navy Special Warfare Command, to organize the drops, according to the Air Force. Plans were in place and ready to go within 90 minutes.

Just as two C-130s were prepared to take off, the Navy MH-60S Seahawk helicopter found a break in the weather and managed to land on the vessel.

The soldier was taken aboard and flown to Naval Hospital Guam, according to the news release.

Lawmakers give Cuomo deadline on evidence

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — State lawmakers told Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Thursday that their ongoing impeachment investigation is almost done and gave him a deadline of Aug. 13 to provide additional evidence.

Since March, the Assembly's judiciary committee has been investigating whether there are grounds to impeach the Democratic governor over sexual harassment allegations, misleading the public about COVID-19 outbreaks at nursing homes and using state resources and staff for his \$5 million book deal.

In a letter sent Thursday, the law firm leading the investigation, Davis Polk & Wardwell, reminded Cuomo's legal team that it has subpoenaed certain documents and expects "full compliance from the governor," but that his time to respond was almost up.

"We write to inform you that the Committee's investigation is

nearing completion and the Assembly will soon consider potential articles of impeachment against your client," they wrote. "Accordingly, we invite you to provide any additional evidence or written submissions that you would like the Committee to consider before its work concludes."

The letter was released publicly by Assembly Judiciary Committee Chair Charles Lavine, a Long Island Democrat.

The committee has scheduled its next meeting on the matter for Monday.

Findings from an independent investigation overseen by state Attorney General Letitia James released earlier this week said Cuomo sexually harassed at least 11 women, and that his administration retaliated against at least one of them for going public with her allegations.

Cuomo has denied making any inappropriate sexual advances and insists the findings

don't reflect the facts.

He's resisted numerous calls for his resignation from most of New York's top Democrats and from national figures like President Joe Biden.

The governor had no public events planned Thursday, and has not made himself available to reporters since the report's release Tuesday.

District attorneys in Manhattan, suburban Westchester, Oswego, and Nassau counties and the state capital of Albany said they asked for investigative materials from the inquiry to see if any of the allegations could result in criminal charges.

Oswego County District Attorney Greg Oakes told WSYR-TV that he will begin investigating an incident involving a woman who testified that Cuomo ran two fingers across her chest and grazed the area between her shoulder and breasts at an upstate conservation event in May 2017.

One of Cuomo's accusers said he groped her breast. Others have said he gave them unwanted kisses or touched parts of their bodies in ways that made them uncomfortable.

Nearly 60% — at least 89 — of the Assembly's 150 members said they would impeach Cuomo if he doesn't resign, according to a tally by The Associated Press based on interviews and public statements.

That's more than the simple majority needed for an impeachment vote.

Assemblymember Sarah Clark, a Democrat from Rochester, said colleagues who were once hesitant to call for Cuomo to leave office are now all calling for his resignation or impeachment.

"There are not that many more questions in anyone's mind that he has truly broken state laws, and the state sexual harassment laws he signed into law," Clark said.

Wildfire destroys much of California Gold Rush town

Associated Press

GREENVILLE — A wind-driven wildfire tore through a Northern California mountain town, leaving much of the downtown in ashes as crews braced for another explosive run of flames in the midst of dangerous weather.

The Dixie Fire, swollen by bone-dry vegetation and 40 mph gusts, raged through the northern Sierra Nevada town of Greenville on Wednesday evening. A gas station, hotel and bar were among structures gutted in the town, which dates to California's Gold Rush era and has some buildings more than a century old.

"We did everything we could," fire spokesman Mitch Matlow said. "Sometimes it's just not enough."

As the fire's north and eastern sides exploded, the Plumas Coun-

ty Sheriff's Office issued a Facebook posting warning the town's approximately 800 residents: "You are in imminent danger and you MUST leave now!"

The 3-week-old blaze was the state's largest wildfire and had blackened well over 435 square miles, burning dozens of homes before making its new run.

Early in the week, some 5,000 firefighters had made progress on the blaze. On Wednesday, the fire grew by thousands of acres and an additional 4,000 people were ordered to evacuate, bringing nearly 26,500 people in several counties under evacuation orders, Matlow said.

More than 20,000 firefighters and support personnel were battling 97 large, active wildfires in 13 states, the National Interagency Fire Center said.

US immigrant detention center population doubles since Feb.

Associated Press

WINNFIELD, La. — Alexander Martinez says he fled from homophobia, government persecution and the MS-13 gang in El Salvador only to run into abuse and harassment in America's immigration detention system.

Since crossing the border illegally in April, the 28-year-old has bounced between six different facilities in three states. He said he faced racist taunts and abuse from guards, contracted COVID-19 and was harassed by fellow detainees for being gay.

"I find myself emotionally unstable because I have suffered a lot in detention," Martinez said last week at Winn Correctional Center in Louisiana.

He's among a growing number of people in immigration detention centers nationwide, many of whom, like Martinez, have clear-

ed their initial screening to seek asylum in the U.S. The number of detainees has more than doubled since the end of February, to nearly 27,000 as of July 22, according to the most recent data from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. That's above the roughly 22,000 detained last July under then-President Donald Trump, though it's nowhere close to the record in August 2019, when the number of detainees exceeded 55,000, ICE data shows.

In May, the Biden administration terminated contracts with two controversial ICE detention centers, getting praise from advocates who hoped it would be the start of a broader rollback. But President Joe Biden has proposed funding for 32,500 immigrant detention beds in his budget, a modest decrease from 34,000 funded by Trump.

US jobless claims total falls to 385,000

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell last week by 14,000 to 385,000, more evidence that the economy and the job market are rebounding briskly from the coronavirus recession.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that unemployment claims — a proxy for layoffs — dropped last week from a revised 399,000 the week before. The applications have more or less fallen steadily since topping 900,000 in early January. Still, they remain high by historic levels: Before the pandemic slammed the United States in March 2020, they were coming in at around 220,000 a week.

Since cratering in the spring of 2020, the U.S. economy has bounded back as the rollout of vaccines encourages businesses to

reopen or return to normal operating hours and consumers to return to shops, restaurants and bars. The United States has been adding more than 540,000 jobs a month this year, and the Labor Department's July jobs report out Friday is expected to show it tacked on nearly 863,000 more last month, according to a survey of economists by the data firm FactSet.

The U.S. economy is still 6.8 million jobs short of where it stood in February 2020.

Companies are posting job openings — a record 9.2 million in May — faster than applicants are showing up to fill them. Many states have responded to business complaints of a labor shortage by ending expanded federal unemployment benefits meant to ease financial strains from the health crisis, including an extra \$300 a week on top of traditional state benefits. The fed-

eral benefits are scheduled to expire nationwide Sept. 6.

Altogether, 13 million Americans were receiving some type of unemployment aid the week of July 17, down from 13.2 million the previous week and 32 million a year earlier.

The health crisis isn't over. COVID-19 cases are rising as the highly contagious delta variant spreads, largely among the unvaccinated. The United States is reporting an average of more than 70,000 new cases a day, up from fewer than 12,000 a day in late June.

So far, the uptick in cases hasn't had noticeable economic consequences. "The surge in Covid cases related to the delta variant is unlikely to cause a renewed spike in joblessness as there have been few shutdowns so far," Contingent Macro Advisors said in a research note.

US to require foreign visitors be vaccinated

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is taking the first steps toward requiring nearly all foreign visitors to the U.S. to be vaccinated for the coronavirus, a White House official said.

The requirement would come as part of the administration's phased approach to easing travel restrictions for foreign citizens to the country. No timeline has yet been determined, as interagency working groups study how and when to safely move toward resuming normal travel. Eventually all foreign citizens entering the country, with some limited exceptions, are expected to need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter the U.S.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The Biden administration has kept in place travel restrictions that have severely curtailed international trips to the U.S., citing the spread of the delta variant of the virus. Under the rules, non-U.S. residents who have been to China, the European Schengen area, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Brazil, South Africa and India in the prior 14 days can't enter the U.S.

All travelers to the U.S., regardless of vaccination status, are required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within three days of air travel to the country.

Delta variant tests China's lockdown

Associated Press

BEIJING — The delta variant is challenging China's costly strategy of isolating cities, prompting warnings that Chinese leaders who were confident they could keep the coronavirus out of the country need a less disruptive approach.

As the highly contagious variant pushes leaders in the United States, Australia and elsewhere to renew restrictions, President Xi Jinping's government is fighting the most serious outbreak since last year's peak in Wuhan. The ruling Communist Party is reviving tactics that shut down China: Access to a city of 1.5 million people has been cut off, flights canceled and mass testing ordered in some areas.

That "zero tolerance" strategy of quarantining every case and trying to block new infections from abroad helped to contain last year's outbreak and has kept China largely virus-free. But its impact on work and life for millions of people is prompting warnings that China needs to learn to control the virus without repeatedly shutting down the economy and society.

Zhang Wenhong, a Shanghai doctor who became prominent during the Wuhan outbreak said in a social media post that the latest outbreak suggests China's strategy may change since the virus isn't going away.

"The world needs to learn how to

coexist with this virus," wrote Zhang, who has 3 million followers on the widely used Weibo platform.

China's controls will be tested when thousands of athletes, reporters and others arrive for the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February. And the ruling party faces a politically sensitive change of leadership in late 2022, for which leaders want upbeat economic conditions.

Last year, China shut down much of the world's second-biggest economy and cut off almost all access to cities with a total of 60 million people — tactics imitated on a smaller scale by governments from Asia to the Americas. That caused China's most painful economic contraction in five decades, but Beijing was able to allow business and domestic travel to resume in March 2020.

The new infections, many in people who have already been vaccinated, have jolted global financial markets, which worry Beijing's response might disrupt manufacturing and supply chains. The main stock indexes in Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong sank Tuesday but were rising again Thursday.

China needs to shift to creating barriers to infection within communities by stepping up vaccinations and quickly treating infected people while allowing business and travel to go ahead, said Xi Chen, a health economist at the Yale School of Public Health.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bear cub rescued from wildfire escapes center

CA SOUTH LAKE TAHOE — A bear cub known for being rescued after his paws were burned in a Sierra wildfire escaped from the center where he was recovering.

Wildlife officials at Lake Tahoe asked for help finding the 6-month-old black bear — nicknamed “Tamarack” after the fire that burned his paws. The bear escaped his enclosure and managed to tunnel under an electric fence at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care in South Lake Tahoe, the center said in a statement on Tuesday.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife and local law enforcement were assisting in the search. The center was urging people around South Tahoe to be on the lookout.

The 25-pound cub might have bandages on his front paws. He likely climbed a tree or hid in a small space.

Police: Driver charged after crash, trooper assault

DE MILTON — A man was arrested after his truck crashed into a tree and he assaulted two state troopers as emergency workers tried to take him for treatment, Delaware State Police said.

A truck driven by Dylan L. Martin, 23, of Felton, crashed early Sunday, and he was knocked unconscious, officials said in a news release on Monday. Emergency medical workers managed to awaken Martin inside the ambulance, but state police said he became disorderly in the ambulance and struck an EMS worker in the chest.

The ambulance crew left the vehicle and called state troopers for assistance, police said. One trooper who responded couldn't

control Martin, and a second trooper was kicked in the chest and fell through the open back door of the ambulance, police said. The trooper sustained minor injuries.

Multiple officers then got Martin under control.

Man claiming to be Jesus stabs 3 in home

PA CARRICK — A man claiming to be Jesus stabbed three people at an apartment on Monday and then hid until he was taken into custody by Pittsburgh police.

The man is being charged with three counts of attempted homicide and aggravated assault, the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reported.

One of the injured victims told officers he offered the man a place to stay at the apartment in Carrick because he was homeless. He said they were talking in the early morning when the suspect said he was Jesus and began stabbing people.

One of the stabbing victims was in stable condition, another in critical condition and the third in serious condition.

Officers responding to a 911 call heard noises coming from the apartment basement and found the suspect hiding in the rafters there, police reports said.

Man arrested after chase in stolen squad car

MN VIRGINIA — Authorities say a Minnesota man stole a squad car that was left parked with the engine running outside a courthouse in the city of Virginia and led police on a chase before he was caught.

The 21-year-old Hibbing man took off in the car about 10:30 p.m. outside the St. Louis County Courthouse. The sheriff's office located the stolen vehicle using

GPS technology and tracked it through the city of Virginia, authorities said.

The suspect refused to stop for a Virginia officer and led police and sheriff's patrol on a chase. The man was taken into custody in Pike Township.

Monthslong drug bust nets up to \$2.5M in meth

SD RAPID CITY — Pennington County authorities said Tuesday that a monthslong investigation has turned up large quantities of drugs, including about 72 pounds of methamphetamine worth as much as \$2.5 million.

Narcotics task force officials said three search warrants also turned up approximately 10 pounds of cocaine, 6 pounds of heroin, 6,000 counterfeit fentanyl pills, \$150,000 in cash and 13 guns.

“This is a big bust — a big win for Pennington County,” said Sgt. Casey Kenrick of the Unified Narcotics Task Force.

Longtime sheriff convicted on theft, ethics charges

AL ATHENS — A longtime Alabama sheriff has been removed from office, the attorney general's office said, after jurors on Monday found him guilty of charges of theft and using his office for personal gain.

News outlets report that jurors convicted Limestone County Sheriff Mike Blakely of two counts but found him not guilty of eight others. After nearly 40 years in office, Blakely was escorted out of the courtroom by one of his own deputies and taken to the same jail that he oversaw as sheriff. He was not placed in handcuffs as he left the courtroom, news outlets reported.

Chief Deputy Attorney General Clay Crenshaw said Blakely will be immediately removed

from office because of the felony convictions.

The two convictions relate to accusations that Blakely borrowed money from a jail safe used to hold inmates' money and that he deposited \$4,000 in campaign funds into his personal account.

Blakely, 70, took the stand during the trial to deny any wrongdoing.

Initially elected in 1982, Blakely told jurors he sometimes put campaign funds into his personal account because his campaign treasurer lived hours away and encouraged him to deposit the money as reimbursement for campaign expenses.

Town displays Civil War tablets after decades

MA AMHERST — Civil War tablets inscribed with the names of Black soldiers of the famed 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment and 5th Cavalry are on display in Amherst after 30 years in storage.

Debora Bridges, the daughter of late World War II veteran Dudley Bridges Sr., returned to Amherst a year ago and began advocating for the tablets' return. Bridges and her daughter wrote to Town Hall and urged for the tablets to be displayed after they were removed from Town Hall during renovations decades ago, the Daily Hampshire Gazette reported.

Bridges' great-great-grandfather, Christopher Thompson, is one of the Black soldiers whose name is inscribed on the tablets. Also, Thompson and his brother Charles Thompson were among the soldiers that arrived in Texas in 1865, notifying people that the Civil War had ended — and with it, slavery.

— From wire reports

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USA men's hoops in position for gold

Associated Press

SAITAMA, Japan — The U.S. men's basketball team has owned gold for three straight Olympics, making the middle of the medals platform property of the Americans.

The Australians tried everything they could to shove them off.

"They hit us with a nice punch," Kevin Durant said after their men's Olympic semifinals matchup. "We knew that team was going to get us down early and see how we'd respond."

The response was not what Australia had hoped.

Durant scored 23 points, Devin Booker had 20 and the U.S. blew past and eventually blew away the Aussies 97-78 on Thursday after falling into a 15-point hole.

With their gold-medal streak looking in jeopardy midway through the second quarter, the Americans overwhelmed the

Australians with a 48-14 stretch that gave them a 74-55 lead after three periods.

The U.S. missed its first 10 three-point attempts and didn't hit one until late in the second quarter. Then it felt as if the Americans hardly missed again, with Booker making three three-pointers.

"Obviously, getting down 15 points, you know you've got to bring it up a notch and that's what we did," Booker said.

Jrue Holiday had 11 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the U.S., which will play France for a fourth straight gold medal Saturday. The French beat the Americans 83-76 in their Olympic opener.

That was part of a 2-3 start to the summer for the U.S., which included a loss to the Australians in an exhibition game in Las Vegas.

The Americans don't look like

that team anymore.

They look like the best team in the world, like those that used to win gold with ease.

It's clear the Americans still have their grip on gold and it's going to take more than a few bad minutes for anyone to take it away from them.

Patty Mills scored 15 points for Australia, which still needs a win for its first Olympic basketball medal.

The Australians have finished fourth four times at the Olympics, including in 2016, but believed this time they could bring home gold.

For 1½ quarters, it looked as if they would get a chance.

They dropped the Americans into their second double-digit deficit in two games, outplaying the world's No. 1-ranked team and looking capable of forcing the U.S. to settle for anything other than Olympic gold for the first

time since the Americans stumbled home with bronze in 2004.

But the U.S. recovered and romped after halftime, improving to 9-0 against Australia at the Olympics.

"In the locker room, it basically was, 'How bad do you want it?' And we came out with the same intent we had in the first half," Australia's Nic Kay said. "We didn't do it at the level we needed to. It's unfortunate."

The Australians opened an eight-point lead while the Americans managed only one basket over a span of more than four minutes. Australia took a 24-18 lead into the second quarter after Chris Goulding made a three-pointer in the closing seconds.

The U.S. kept misfiring from behind the arc and even had some shaky moments at the rim — Khristian Middleton had an open dunk attempt but slammed the ball into the front of the rim.

Crouser honors grandpa with shot put gold medal

Associated Press

TOKYO — Ryan Crouser wrote the note and brought it to the stadium just in case.

"Grandpa. We did it. 2020 Olympic champion!" it said.

The world's best shot putter had a feeling he'd win. After he did just that on Thursday, he pulled out that piece of paper and showed it to the world. Crouser's second straight Olympic gold medal was a tribute to his grandfather, Larry, who died shortly before Crouser left for Tokyo.

"To lose him the week before the Olympics was obviously sad," Crouser said. "But I feel like he was able to be here in spirit."

It was years ago in Larry Crouser's backyard that Ryan attempted his first toss with the heavy metal ball that

would shape his life. What a journey it produced.

Crouser has seen the world thanks to that shot put. Dominated it, too. He set the world record earlier this summer at the Olympic trials. On Thursday, he raised his own Olympic record as well, to 23.30 meters (76 feet, 5½ inches).

He earned the first track and field gold medal for the American men at the Tokyo Games, coming later than anyone expected — on Day 7 of the meet. It was too late for his grandpa to see it, though Crouser and his family have a feeling he knows.

On Crouser's big day, U.S. teammate Joe Kovacs finished second and Tomas Walsh of New Zealand was third.

It's another rocky day for USA on the track

Associated Press

TOKYO — A five-minute burst of action near the backstretch of the Olympic track served up the perfect snapshot of what is going right, and all that is going wrong, for the U.S. track and field team in Tokyo.

At one moment in the pole vault pit Thursday night, Katie Nageotte cleared 4.90 meters (16 feet, 1 inch) and went running up to the stands to celebrate a gold medal that had looked like a lost cause only an hour earlier.

At the next, just as the 400-meter sprinters approached the halfway point, America's best chance in the race, Michael Norman, was steaming so far ahead of the competition, it became clear he could not sustain the pace.

He didn't. Norman finished fourth to cap Day 7 of the nine-day meet at the Olympic Stadium. The U.S. men's sprinters left the stadium not having won a single final.

But Nageotte's gold, won in a tense back-and-forth with Russian athlete Anzhelika Sidorova, was the third field victory for the U.S., two of which have been won by women.

The U.S. overall is doing well in field events.

It is struggling on the track.

There have been exceptions — namely Athing Mu and Sydney McLaughlin, who have the country's only two golds from the track. And Ryan Crouser, who gutted out an emotion-drenched victory earlier in the day to defend his Olympic shot put title.

US teen Harrison takes gold in canoe

Associated Press

TOKYO — Nevin Harrison saved her tears for the finish line, where they came pouring out over a golden smile.

The American teenager made women's Olympic history on Thursday when she surged over the back half of the first canoe 200 sprint final to overtake Laurence Vincent Lapointe of Canada for the gold medal. The Olympics added the event at the Tokyo Games as part of a push for gender equity.

"It's exciting to be part of history, to see how awesome we all were," Harrison said. "I knew it was going to be the hardest race of my life. It's the Olympics, and that's what it all about."

The 19-year-old from Seattle who will soon start college at San Diego State is the first American woman to win a canoe sprint gold medal, and the first to win any kind of medal since 1964.

Harrison burst into tears after

the finish and held her hand to her mouth before paddling to the dock. She fought back tears again during the medal ceremony, then cradled the gold next to her cheek.

She had been known to cry before races earlier in her career as part of a pressure release method. That didn't happen this time, and she had all the energy and composure needed to rally from Vincent Lapointe's early lead. Harrison not only won, she beat one of greatest canoe paddlers in history.

Vincent Lapointe had been the standard-bearer in the event with six world championships since 2010, and she had lobbied hard to get the race into the Olympics. The Tokyo Games was the first time the two best paddlers in the world had met on the water.

They raced practically side-by-side. Vincent Lapointe was in Lane 2 and Harrison in Lane

4. Harrison paddles on the right side of her canoe. Vincent Lapointe favors the left.

And quickly in front, they could see each other the entire race.

"I grew up watching her and hoping to one day be at that level," Harrison said. "They say your idols eventually become your rivals."

Harrison won the 2019 world championship at age 17 when Vincent Lapointe was serving a provisional doping suspension that was later overturned. After the layoff from international competition, Lapointe surprisingly didn't qualify for the canoe 200 at the Olympic trials.

Canada put her on the team anyway and entered her in a kayak event she doesn't race. She then switched to her specialty race.

The Canadian's quick start suggested a strategy to break the young American early. Har-

ison stayed patient, and her sheer power and steady but furious stroke rallied her to the lead by the halfway point. Harrison was too strong to catch and won by half a canoe length.

Liudmyla Luzan of Ukraine finished third for bronze.

"I'm so relieved. It hit me on the podium that I've done it," Lapointe said. "I might not have won a gold, but this silver tastes amazing."

Vincent Lapointe could still win a gold medal. She is scheduled to race the canoe double 500, where she and teammate Katie Vincent are favorites to win.

Lisa Carrington of New Zealand took her third gold medal in three days, winning the women's kayak 500 with another dominant start-to-finish victory. Carrington won the 200 and double 500 earlier this week and is still scheduled to race the 500 fours.

US' Taylor scores late takedown to grab gold

Associated Press

CHIBA, Japan — David Taylor seized the most important moment of his wrestling life.

The American scored a double-leg takedown with 17 seconds remaining to beat Iran's Hassan Yazdani 4-3 on Thursday night and claim the gold medal in the freestyle 86-kilogram class.

"There was no way I wasn't going to find a way," he said. "It's the gold medal, man. I was going to rip my arms off if I had to."

Taylor expected a tough match from the man nicknamed "The Greatest." Yazdani, the No. 1 seed, won the 74-kilogram class at the 2016 Olympics.

"I like to win 10-0, but getting it done in the last seconds feels pretty good, too," Taylor said.

He took advantage of Yazdani's decision to be cautious.

"I think he only tried three times to score," Taylor said. "I always say that if you want to be the best in the world, you need to take people down twice. You need to get two takedowns. Tonight was a good example of that. I needed two takedowns."

There might be more gold coming for the United States.

National champion Gable Steveson reached the 125-kilogram final with a 5-0 semifinal win over Lkhagvagserel Munkhtur of Mongolia.

Steveson beat his first opponent, Aiaal Lazarev of Kyrgyzstan, 10-0 by technical superiority in just 2:04. He then blitzed 2016 Olympic champion Taha Akgul 8-0 in the quarterfinals.

US women take soccer bronze, beat Australia

Associated Press

KASHIMA, Japan — Although the color of their medal wasn't what they wanted, the spirit of their mettle was just what they expected.

The United States salvaged a rocky tournament by winning bronze in women's soccer at the Tokyo Olympics on Thursday. Megan Rapinoe and Carli Lloyd scored two goals each in a 4-3 win over Australia after opening the Tokyo Games with an uncharacteristic 3-0 loss to Sweden.

"It's very satisfying. I think we all realized we didn't play the best this entire tournament," U.S. captain Becky Sauerbrunn said. "So to have the response that we did after a very disappointing semifinal, to show the USA mentality and the resiliency, to put the performance in that

we wanted to be playing the entire time, and to finally find it in a game like that — very satisfying."

The loss spoiled the Australians' first trip to the medal round at the Olympics. No Australian soccer team, men or women, has ever won a medal.

The Matildas were the underdogs against the United States, the top-ranked team in the world and the defending World Cup champion which came to Japan vying for gold. But the Americans struggled at times, including in a 1-0 loss to Canada in the semifinals. The Canadians hadn't defeated their North American counterparts since 2001.

The U.S. team that came out against Australia looked completely different.

American A team looking for beach gold vs. Aussies

Associated Press

TOKYO — When Stanford indoor volleyball star Alix Klineman moved over to the beach to team up with two-time Olympic medalist April Ross, she knew she was signing up for a lot of extra work.

And a lot of extra pressure.

“There’s been a big feeling of not wanting to let her down, because she took a huge risk on me,” Klineman said Thursday after the American “A-Team” beat Switzerland 21-12, 21-11 to advance to the beach volleyball gold medal match. “The fact that everything is falling into place just feels so magical.”

After winning a silver medal in London and bronze in Rio de Janeiro, Ross was hoping to upgrade to the top step of the podium in Tokyo. Her plan involved a 6-

foot-5, four-time indoor volleyball All-American who had played in just a handful of domestic AVP tour events.

The decision would mean extra work for Ross, too.

Not just the usual effort to connect as teammates. Not just helping Klineman figure out the overlapping but still different skills to succeed on the beach. Picking a teammate with zero international points meant Ross, who also has a world championship gold and two silvers on her résumé, would essentially be a rookie herself and forced to play her way into many tournaments on the FIVB tour.

“I was committed. This was going to be my partner. However we started, that was just going to be how we started; we’re going to work through it,” Ross said.

Alvarez will add summer medal to his winter one

Associated Press

YOKOHAMA, Japan — Eddy Alvarez became only the third American to earn medals at both the Summer and Winter Olympics when the United States beat defending champion South Korea 7-2 Thursday night to gain a berth in this weekend’s gold medal game against host Japan.

The former U.S. speedskater-turned-infielder wept in the dugout after the final out as teammates patted him on the back and offered handshakes and hugs.

After earning a silver in 2014 at Sochi as part of the U.S. four-man short track team, he’ll get at least a silver in baseball.

The other Americans with summer and winter medals are Eddie Eagen (boxing in 1920, bobsled in 1932) and Lauryn Williams (track and field in 2004 and 2012, bobsled in 2014).

Rizzo homers again to lead Yankees’ rout of Orioles

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Recently acquired Anthony Rizzo homered again, DJ LeMahieu drove in four runs and the New York Yankees beat the Baltimore Orioles 10-3 on Wednesday night.

Rizzo’s solo homer in the fourth inning made him the first player in Yankees history with at least one RBI in each of his first six games with the club.

Rizzo became just the fourth player in the majors over the last 70 years to do it — Bobby Murcer drove in a run in his first seven games with the Chicago Cubs in 1977 and Jimmy Wynn (Dodgers, 1974) and Jim Spencer (Texas, 1973) did it six times in a row, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Sent from the Cubs to New York last Thursday, a day before the trade deadline, Rizzo hit his 17th home run of the season and third for the Yankees. He has six homers in his last 10 games overall.

Dodgers 7, Astros 5: Max Scherzer struck out 10 in his Los

Angeles debut and got plenty of offensive support as the Dodgers hit four home runs to defeat visiting Houston.

Mookie Betts homered twice, while Will Smith and AJ Pollock also went deep off Astros starter Jake Odorizzi (4-6).

Mets 5, Marlins 3: Javier Báez hit a tiebreaking homer in the eighth inning after scoring on a nifty slide in the second, and New York won at Miami to snap a three-game losing streak.

The Mets, who had lost five of six, let an early 3-0 lead slip away but recovered to maintain their 1½-game lead in the NL East over surging Philadelphia.

Athletics 5, Padres 4 (10): Matt Olson hit a two-run, walk-off double in the 10th inning and host Oakland rallied to beat San Diego.

The A’s scored twice in the ninth with two outs off closer Mark Melancon to tie it at 3.

Giants 7, Diamondbacks 1: Kevin Gausman threw six stellar innings, Alex Dickerson added a three-run homer and

San Francisco won at Arizona.

Gausman (10-5) gave up five hits, walked none and struck out eight. He cruised through the first five innings before running into trouble in the sixth. Asdrúbal Cabrera tagged Gausman for an RBI single.

Angels 2, Rangers 1: Shohei Ohtani pitched six solid innings, Juan Lagares raced home from second base on a wild pitch for the lead with the two-way stand-out at the plate, and Los Angeles won at Texas.

Rays 4, Mariners 3: Randy Arozarena had a two-run triple during a three-run third and AL East-leading Tampa Bay beat visiting Seattle to avoid a season series sweep.

Red Sox 4, Tigers 1: Eduardo Rodríguez struck out 10 in five shutout innings and Boston won at Detroit to snap a five-game losing streak.

Brewers 4, Pirates 2: Pinch-hitter Rowdy Tellez launched a three-run homer with two outs in the seventh inning to help host Milwaukee beat Pittsburgh.

Royals 9, White Sox 1: Salvador Pérez hit a two-run homer and Kansas City went deep four times to win at Chicago.

Blue Jays 8, Indians 6: George Springer hit his 42nd career leadoff home run for the first of his four hits, Steven Matz pitched six shutout innings and host Toronto beat Cleveland.

Phillies 9, Nationals 4: Rhys Hoskins homered and drove in three runs, Didi Gregorius hit a two-run homer and Philadelphia won at Washington for its fourth straight victory.

Reds 6, Twins 5: Luis Castillo pitched six effective innings, Tyler Stephenson homered and host Cincinnati held on to beat Minnesota.

Braves 7, Cardinals 4: Adam Duvall and Jorge Soler homered, and Stephen Vogt drove in the eventual winning run with a sacrifice fly in Atlanta’s victory at St. Louis.

Cubs 3, Rockies 2: Patrick Wisdom hit a three-run double to back a solid outing from Alec Mills and lead Chicago to a win at Colorado.