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N. Korea caps tense week with rocket test

By KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Sunday that it successfully conducted a “very important test” at a long-range rocket launch site, prompting President Donald Trump to warn that Kim Jong Un could lose “everything” if he acts aggressively.

The statements were the latest sign that hopes for diplomacy are unraveling ahead of a year-end deadline set by the North for Washington to offer concessions to restart stalled nuclear talks.

They capped a week of warnings as the communist state suggests it is increasingly impatient over the diplomatic deadlock and might be leaning toward a “new way” mentioned by Kim earlier this year.

On Tuesday, a North Korean diplomat said it is “entirely” up to the U.S. what “Christmas gift” it wants to get as the year draws to a close, prompting speculation the North may be preparing for a long-range missile test.

Trump, who is eager for foreign policy success in North Korea and has consistently maintained his friendship with Kim, adopt-

ed a more threatening tone on Sunday.

“Kim Jong Un is too smart and has far too much to lose, everything actually, if he acts in a hostile way,” Trump wrote on Twitter after the North Korean test was announced.

“He does not want to voice his special relationship with the President of the United States or interfere with the U.S. Presidential Election in November,” he added.

The renewed saber-rattling has raised concern that the North may lift its self-imposed moratorium on long-range missile and nuclear tests, leading to new tensions in 2020.

Sunday’s announcement referred to the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground, which experts say has been used to develop technology for the North’s intercontinental ballistic missile program.

“A very important test took place at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground” on Saturday, the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported, adding that it had been “successful.”

KCNA didn’t provide more details, but experts said it was probably a rocket engine. The South Korean military said noth-

ing was fired from the complex, which sits near the North’s border with China.

Trump spoke on the phone with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Friday to discuss ways to maintain diplomacy with the North, according to Moon’s office.

Last week, Trump warned the U.S. would use military force against the North if necessary, prompting an angry reaction from the communist state.

The two sides also hinted the name-calling from 2017 may resume, with Trump referring to Kim as “rocket man” and the North saying his remarks may be a sign of “the relapse of the dotage of a dotard.”

North Korea’s ambassador to the United Nations, Kim Song, then said denuclearization was off the table and called the dialogue sought by Washington a “time-saving trick” to promote its domestic political agenda.

“We do not need to have lengthy talks with the U.S. now,” he said Saturday in the clearest indication of the widening gap between the two sides.

Kim Jong Un, meanwhile, is due to convene the ruling party’s central committee later this month, which usually signals a major policy shift.

FBI is probing Fla. base shooting as terrorist act

Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. — The FBI is working under the presumption that a fatal shooting at a Florida naval base carried out by an aviation student from Saudi Arabia was an act of terrorism, the agency said Sunday.

“We are, as we do in most active-shooter investigations, working with the presumption that this was an act of terrorism,” said Rachel L. Rojas, FBI agent in charge of the investigation.

All international students at the Pensacola base have been accounted for, there have been no arrests, and the community is under no immediate threat, Rojas said at a news conference.

A Saudi commanding officer has ordered all students from the country to remain at one location at the base, officials also said at the news conference.

Additionally, authorities believe the gunman made social media posts in which he talked about U.S. support for Israel and charged that Americans are anti-Muslim, a U.S. official told The Associated Press on Sunday. Investigators also believe the gunman visited New York City, including Rockefeller Center, days before the shooting and they are working to determine the purpose of the trip, said the official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The FBI and others had said

they were trying to determine whether the gunman, 2nd Lt. Mohammed Alshamrani, 21, of the Royal Saudi Air Force, acted alone. Alshamrani was a flight student at Pensacola, where members of foreign militaries are routinely trained by the U.S.

Earlier in the week of the shooting, Alshamrani hosted a dinner party where he and three others watched videos of mass shootings, another U.S. official told the AP on Saturday.

The official who spoke Saturday said one of the three students who attended the dinner party hosted by the attacker recorded video outside the classroom building while the shooting was taking place. Two other Saudi students watched

from a car, the official said.

President Donald Trump declined to say whether the shooting was terrorism-related but said Saturday that he would review policies governing foreign military training in the U.S.

Family members and others identified the three dead as Joshua Kaleb Watson, 23, a recent graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy; Airman Mohammed Sameh Haitham, 19, of St. Petersburg, Fla., who joined the Navy after graduating from high school last year; and Airman Apprentice Cameron Scott Walters, 21, of Richmond Hill, Ga. All three were students at Naval Aviation Schools Command.

Survivors mark Pearl Harbor anniversary

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

PEARL HARBOR NATIONAL MEMORIAL, Hawaii — An ever-thinning number of veterans who survived the attack on Oahu by the Japanese on Dec. 7, 1941, attended Saturday's ceremony marking the 78th anniversary of the event that led America to enter World War II.

The veterans occupy a rarified position in our nation, but in past years they sat among the audience of hundreds who flock to the early morning observance.

This year, the roughly dozen survivors attending were so few they were seated on a

raised platform in front of the audience, becoming more the objects of high esteem than observers.

"As each year passes, we lose more of our friends who served here on Dec. 7, 1941, or who witnessed the attack," Jacqueline Ashwell, superintendent of the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, said during the ceremony, craning her neck to gaze at the aged veterans seated behind the speaker's podium, all in their 90s or older and many in wheelchairs.

Among them was Lou Conter, the only survivor of the USS Arizona to attend. The remaining two Arizona survivors, Donald Stratton and Ken Potts, are no

longer able to travel to Hawaii for the annual event.

"I talked to Don Stratton just a couple of weeks ago before I came out here," Conter said shortly before the ceremony began. "Ken's in bed and we couldn't even get hold of him to talk to him."

Two Arizona survivors, Lonnie Cook and Lauren Bruner, died this year.

On Saturday evening, Bruner's remains were slated to be entombed in the hull of the battleship, which sank to the bottom of Pearl Harbor during the attack. It serves as a tomb for the hundreds of crew members who went down with the ship.

Bruner's will be the last re-

mains to be encased in the ship, a place of honor reserved only for survivors of the ship's sinking, which killed 1,177 of the sailors and Marines aboard. The other three survivors have said they will not have their ashes placed in the ship.

"The horrific events that occurred here caught America, her Navy, her Army, her Air Corps, her Marines and the territory of Hawaii by surprise," Harry Harris, U.S. ambassador to South Korea, said during a speech. "It fell upon the shoulders of the Pearl Harbor survivors and World War II veterans behind me to respond on that fateful day."

Esper to shift military focus to Russia, China

Associated Press

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Saturday he still plans to shift the American military's focus to competing with China and Russia, even as security threats pile up in the Middle East.

Esper outlined his strategic goals and priorities in a speech at the Reagan National Defense Forum, an annual gathering of government, defense industry and military officials.

Esper, who became Pentagon chief in late July, said he is sticking to the national defense priorities set by his predecessor, Jim Mattis, who was sitting in his audience at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

Since Mattis resigned one year ago in protest of President Donald Trump's push to withdraw from Syria, the Middle East has become even more volatile. At least 14,000 additional U.S. troops have been sent to the Persian Gulf area since May out of concern about Iranian actions.

In his speech Saturday, Esper made only a passing reference to Iran, citing Tehran's "efforts to destabilize" the region.

He focused instead on shifting the U.S. military's focus toward China and Russia — "today's revisionist powers." He accused Moscow and Beijing of seeking "veto power" over the economic and security decisions of smaller nations.

On Friday, Esper said he realizes that it will be difficult to move resources out of the Middle East to increase the focus on China and Russia.

He said he has been studying the force and resource requirements for every area of the globe to determine how to rebalance those resources.

"My ambition is and remains to look at how do we pull resources — resources being troops and equipment and you name it" — from some regions and either return them to the U.S. or shift them to the Asia-Pacific region, he said Friday.

Nearly 75K Tricare users are overcharged in glitch

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

About 75,000 Tricare customers were overcharged for monthly premiums on Thursday, in some cases 100 times more than the actual amount owed.

The Defense Health Agency, which manages the Tricare system, said in a statement Friday that it was working closely with Humana Military, the Defense Department contractor that administers the Tricare health program for the East Region, the area affected by the overcharges. The region includes 32 states and the District of Columbia.

Tricare provides civilian health benefits for service members, military retirees and their families.

"While this is an unfortunate error, I am confident this will be resolved quickly," Army Lt. Gen. Ron Place, director of the Defense Health Agency, said in the statement.

The root cause of the processing error is still under in-

vestigation, the statement said.

Health care coverage for affected Tricare customers will be uninterrupted, the statement said.

A recorded message on Humana Military's customer service line promises callers that their credit cards will be credited "within 24 to 48 hours."

The overcharges were an unwelcome surprise as Americans gearing up for holiday spending.

"So @Humana," tweeted a former Coast Guard member in Virginia with the Twitter handle Devin's Cyberz Cow on Thursday, "my wife and I are two of the vets that got TriCare charges multiplied by 100 times their normal amount this month. How soon will you be reversing them? For now, you've effectively bricked my credit card during Christmas shopping season ..."

In a post on its website, Humana Military said the glitch was affecting recurring credit and debit card premiums and that the company was working to correct the problem.

USS America at home in Japan

By JAMES BOLINGER
Stars and Stripes

SASEBO NAVAL BASE, Japan — The USS America, the Navy's newest, most advanced flat-deck amphibious assault ship, dropped anchor Friday at its new homeport in southwestern Japan.

The 844-foot America came from San Diego to serve as flagship of the 7th Fleet's Amphibious Squadron 11 and replace the USS Wasp, which spent 1½ years home-ported in Sasebo. It departed for Naval Station Norfolk, Va., in September.

"The extraordinary capability of the USS America and our Navy and Marine Corps team will provide 7th Fleet great flexibility and lethality in our forward deployed naval force as we operate in this vital region in the world with our allies and partners," Rear Adm. Fred Kacher, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 7, told reporters Friday aboard the ship.

The America's arrival brings the number of amphibious ships in Sasebo to five. Others include the transport dock USS Green Bay, the dock landing ships USS Ashland and USS Germantown, and the USS New Orleans, a transport dock ship that arrived Dec. 1.

The America, which was commissioned in 2014, has a crew of nearly 1,000 sailors and can embark about 1,700 Marines. Instead of a well deck to carry landing craft, it has a large hangar

bay that provides 30% more storage space and can carry 250% more aviation fuel than a traditional flat-deck.

It was designed to maximize the capabilities of the Marine Corps' F-35B Lightning II. The stealth fighter is capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings, allowing flat-deck amphibious assault ships like the America to act as small aircraft carriers.

The ship will embark Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, an F-35B squadron based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni near Hiroshima.

Other aircraft that will deploy aboard the America include the tiltrotor MV-22 Osprey and MH-60S Knighthawk, CH-53K Super Stallion and AH-1Z Viper helicopters.

Capt. Luke Frost, the ship's commander, told reporters that sending the America, the New Orleans and F-35Bs to areas that matter most to the prosperity and security of the Indo-Pacific region sends a clear signal of the United States' commitment to its allies.

Amphibious Squadron 11 is one of 7th Fleet's busiest units, often deploying multiple times per year. The squadron, with embarked Marines from the Okinawa-based 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, is often the first to respond when natural disasters strike the region.

The ships also support multiple international exercises every year.

Kennedy christens aircraft carrier

(Newport News, Va.) Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. — With the crash of a bottle against its hull, the aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy was christened Saturday at Newport News Shipbuilding.

Caroline Kennedy, the late president's daughter, did the honors as ship's sponsor.

It marked the second time she christened an aircraft carrier in her father's name. The first aircraft carrier named for JFK served through Vietnam and into the post-9/11 era. Caroline Kennedy, then a child, launched that ship in 1967.

The ceremony marked an important milestone for the Newport News shipyard, the sole designer and builder of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers for the Navy. It comes three months ahead of schedule, reflecting the company's push for efficiency in the multibillion-dollar Gerald R. Ford-class carrier program.

The Kennedy is the second Ford-class carrier to be launched at Newport News and will cost \$11.4 billion, a drop from the \$12.9 billion first-in-class Gerald R. Ford that reflects thousands of lessons learned from one ship to the next, company leaders say.

In one way, the John F. Kennedy is a fitting name for CVN-79. Just as the young president called upon a new generation to lead the country, the shipyard has hired hundreds of tech-savvy workers who grew up in the digital age.

After the christening, the ship will be moved from the dock to an outfitting pier. It is about 67% complete, so much work remains before it can be declared ready for combat.

The Navy plans to take delivery of the ship in 2022.

Watchdog is expected to find Russia probe valid despite flaws

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department's internal watchdog will release a highly anticipated report Monday that is expected to reject President Donald Trump's claims that the Russia investigation was illegitimate and tainted by political bias from FBI leaders. But it is also expected to document errors during the investigation that may animate Trump supporters.

The report, as described by people familiar with its findings, is expected to conclude there was an adequate basis for opening one of the most politically sensitive investigations in FBI history and one that Trump has denounced as a "witch hunt." It began in secret during Trump's 2016 presidential run and was

ultimately taken over by special counsel Robert Mueller.

The report comes as Trump faces an impeachment inquiry in Congress centered on his efforts to press Ukraine to investigate a political rival, Democrat Joe Biden — a probe the president also claims is politically biased.

Still, the release of Inspector General Michael Horowitz's review is unlikely to quell the partisan battles that have surrounded the Russia investigation for years.

It's also not the last word. A separate internal investigation continues, overseen by Trump's attorney general, William Barr and led by a U.S. attorney, John Durham.

Trump told reporters Saturday he was waiting to see Horowitz's report and that he

looked forward "very much to seeing what happens with the Durham report, maybe even more importantly, because it's a horrible thing that took place and it should never happen to another president."

Horowitz's report is expected to identify errors and misjudgments by some law enforcement officials, including by an FBI lawyer suspected of altering a document related to the surveillance of a former Trump campaign aide.

But the report will not endorse some of the president's theories on the investigation, including that it was a baseless "witch hunt" or that he was targeted by an Obama administration Justice Department desperate to see Republican Trump lose to Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016.

SpaceX sends holiday gift delivery to Space Station

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX made an early holiday delivery to the International Space Station on Sunday, taking muscle-bound “mighty mice,” pest-killing worms and a smart, empathetic robot.

The station commander, Luca Parmitano, of Italy, used a large robot arm to grab onto the Dragon three days after its launch from Cape Canaveral. The two spacecraft soared 260 miles above the South Pacific at the time of capture.

“Whenever we welcome a new vehicle on board, we take on board also a little bit of the soul of everybody that contributed to the project, so welcome on board,” Parmitano told Mission Control.

It marks the third visit for this recycled Dragon. Flight controllers quickly secured the capsule to the orbiting lab, paving the way for the hatch to open and the unloading to begin.

The capsule holds 3 tons of supplies, including 40 mice for a muscle and bone experiment. Eight of them are genetically engineered with twice the normal muscle mass — and so are considered “mighty mice.”

There also are 120,000 roundworms or nematodes of a beneficial variety that are part of an agricultural study aimed at controlling pests on Earth.

The capsule also has a large, round robot head with artificial intelligence and the ability to sense astronauts’ emotions. Named Cimon, it’s an improved version of what flew up last year to be tested as an astronaut’s helper.

NASA has tucked some Christmas presents in the shipment for the station’s six-person crew as well.

The astronauts have another shipment coming Monday — this one launched by Russia from Kazakhstan on Friday.

Impeachment report lays out legal argument against Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Previewing potential articles of impeachment, the House Democrats on Saturday issued a lengthy report drawing on history and the Founding Fathers to lay out the legal argument over the case against President Donald Trump’s actions toward Ukraine.

The findings from the House Judiciary Committee do not spell out the formal charges against the president, which are being drafted ahead of votes, possibly as soon as this week.

Instead, the report refutes Trump’s criticism of the impeachment proceedings, arguing that the Constitution created impeachment as a “safety valve” so Americans would not have to wait for the next election to remove a president. It

refers to the writings of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and others to link Trump’s actions in his July phone call with Ukraine’s president seeking political investigations of his rivals to the kind of behavior that would “horrify” the framers.

“Where the President uses his foreign affairs power in ways that betray the national interest for his own benefit, or harm national security for equally corrupt reasons, he is subject to impeachment by the House,” the Democrats wrote. “Indeed, foreign interference in the American political system was among the gravest dangers feared by the Founders of our Nation and the Framers of our Constitution.”

Democrats are working through the weekend as articles are being drafted and committee members are pre-

paring for a hearing Monday. Democrats say Trump abused his power in the July 25 phone call when he asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for a favor and engaged in bribery by withholding nearly \$400 million in military aid that Ukraine depends on to counter Russian aggression.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi says it’s part of a troubling pattern of behavior from Trump that benefits Russia and not the U.S.

Trump has insisted he did nothing wrong. “Witch Hunt!” the president tweeted Saturday morning.

The articles of impeachment are likely to encompass two major themes — abuse of office and obstruction — as Democrats strive to reach the Constitution’s bar of “treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors.”

Banana art piece sold for \$120K is eaten

Miami Herald

MIAMI — Someone ate a really expensive snack at Art Basel on Saturday afternoon — to the tune of \$120,000.

For one banana.

By now you have probably heard of the world-famous banana duct-taped to Emmanuel Perrotin’s outer gallery wall at Art Basel Miami Beach. The piece that sold to an art collector for \$120,000.

The \$120,000 banana — a real, rather ripe and edible one — is the work of Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan and titled “Comedian.” The work comes with a Certificate of Authenticity, and owners are told that they can replace the banana, as needed.

Instructions on how to replace the banana are not included.

But New York-based performance artist David Datuna ate

the banana around 1:45 p.m. in front of a convention center full of art lovers, according to gallery representatives.

While the banana was indeed consumed, apparently that doesn’t diminish the integrity of the six-figure artwork, said Lucien Terras, director of museum relations for Galerie Perrotin.

“He did not destroy the artwork. The banana is the idea,” Terras said.

Confused?

We were, too, but that’s where the Certificate of Authenticity comes in. Collectors are buying the certificate. The banana is not made to last.

According to Peggy Leboeuf, a partner at Perrotin Gallery, a startled and bemused woman in the crowd thought the original artist — Cattelan — was eating his own banana off the wall. But that wasn’t the case. When she saw Datuna eating

the banana, which still had some duct tape on it, she asked him what he was doing.

Datuna allegedly responded he was a performance artist.

“But you’re not supposed to touch the art!” Leboeuf told Datuna

“That banana has been more photographed than the Mona Lisa,” Terras said.

“This has been interesting,” said Miami Beach police Capt. Steven Feldman.

When asked if he had ever heard of someone deliberately destroying artwork at the fair, he said, “Not that I can remember.”

For what Cattelan’s banana fetches, Datuna could have bought 631,579 bananas at Trader Joe’s, which sells bananas for 19 cents each.

The gallery reported the incident to security, but Datuna was not arrested.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Officials: Home value nearly \$1B after typo

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Officials said a possible dropped phone resulted in a typo that overvalued a home at almost \$1 billion, and taxpayers may have to pay for the mistake.

The Deseret News reported a house built in 1978 in an unincorporated area of the county was recorded in 2019 tax rolls with a value of more than \$987 million. That's an overestimate of about \$543 million in taxable value.

Wasatch County Assessor Maureen "Buff" Griffiths told officials a staff member may have dropped a phone on a keyboard. Griffiths said the accident has resulted in a county-wide overvaluation of more than \$6 million.

County officials said residents will likely see an increased tax rate to make up for the lower amount collected in 2019.

Tractor-trailers seized over unpaid tolls

ME POLAND — State Troopers on Friday seized five tractor-trailers belonging to a Rhode Island trucking company accused of amassing \$75,000 in unpaid tolls.

The trucking company, Commodity Haulers Express, of North Kingstown, R.I., is facing felony theft-of-service charges for the unpaid Maine Turnpike tolls over the past three years, Maine State Police said. The trucking company hauls water for Maine's Poland Spring, which was not aware of the unpaid tolls, officials said.

The Maine Turnpike Authority asked state police last month to investigate after repeatedly notifying the company of the

debt. The company's right to operate vehicles in Maine was suspended by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Police: Woman faked lease, moved in

AZ PRESCOTT — A woman is facing charges after authorities said she faked a lease agreement and moved into a home without the homeowner's permission.

KPHO-TV reported Stephanie Heinrich was arrested last month after Yavapai County sheriff's deputies found her moving into a home without permission. Deputies said they found Heinrich, 45, and her boyfriend unloading a moving truck outside a Prescott home. Heinrich showed deputies an 11-year lease agreement.

Heinrich later admitted she forged and downloaded all of the forms off of the internet.

She was booked at the Camp Verde Detention Center on fraud charges and ordered held on a \$75,000 bond.

'Lawnmower Man' memorial reappears

NM ROSWELL — A mysterious memorial dedicated to a homeless man who mowed laws has reappeared after a similar one was stolen.

KRQE-TV reported a lawn mower memorial dedicated to Carlos Ramirez was installed last week in Roswell.

Ramirez died last month in Lubbock, Texas. He was known around town as Roswell's "Lawnmower Man" because he sat outside the city's Saint Andrews Church for nearly 50 years and offered to mow lawns to make money.

After he died, a white lawn mower memorial suddenly sprang up near the church in

his honor. A day later, it was stolen.

Police: Man concealed body of dead mother

NE OMAHA — Police arrested a man Thursday on charges that he concealed the death of his mother, whose body was found in a bedroom months after her death.

Police arrested Shawn P. Snoza, 47, on a misdemeanor charge of concealing the death of another person after going to a house to inquire about his mother, Geraldine Snoza, 76.

Police said he told officers his mother wasn't home but later acknowledged she'd been dead since early July.

Hunter fatally shoots himself with crossbow

PA ALSACE TOWNSHIP — A man fatally shot himself with a crossbow while he was hunting on his property, officials said.

The Berks County coroner's office said James Jacobs, 75, died Wednesday, the Reading Eagle reported.

Jacobs and his son were deer hunting when troopers said he lost his footing, fell and discharged a crossbow into his left side and abdomen.

The son, who has not been identified, found his father around noon. The man died at a hospital, according to Chief Deputy Coroner John M. Hollenbach.

The death was ruled an accident, Hollenbach said.

Reward offered after projectile attacks

CA PRUNDALE — Authorities have offered a reward for information leading to whoever launched pro-

jectiles at nearly 50 vehicles along a busy highway in Northern California.

In the latest attack, a car was hit Thursday along a stretch of Highway 101 in Monterey County.

The local sheriff's office, California Highway Patrol and county supervisors offered \$8,500 for information on the attacks in Prundale, KSBW-TV reported.

At least 47 cases of projectiles being fired at vehicles have been reported since February.

Man arrested after rescue from chimney

AZ TUCSON — A man is facing charges after authorities said he tried to climb down the chimney in a vacant house and got stuck.

KGUN-TV reported firefighters in Tucson rescued the man Friday after finding his legs dangling from inside the chimney.

Authorities said rescue workers were called to the scene following reports from neighbors who said they heard a man calling for help.

Tucson Police say the home was vacant and the man was charged with trespassing and possession of a dangerous drug.

2 Salvation Army kettles are stolen

MI OWOSSO — Two Salvation Army red kettles, a fundraising tradition in December, have disappeared in Shiawassee County.

The Argus-Press reported the kettles were on counters inside a Big Boy restaurant in Caledonia Township and Rollin' Smokes in Owosso and probably had a few hundred dollars.

From wire reports

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No surprises: LSU leads 4 into playoff

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

LSU will play Oklahoma and Ohio State will face defending national champion Clemson in the College Football Playoff.

The selection committee revealed the pairings Sunday for the national semifinals and the final four was no surprise. The only mystery involved which team would be the No. 1 seed. The 13-member committee went with Southeastern Conference champion LSU. The top-seeded Tigers (13-0) will head back to Atlanta for its playoff game to face the Big 12 champion Sooners (12-1) in the Peach Bowl on Dec. 28.

LSU used a convincing victory against Georgia at Mercedes-Benz Stadium on Saturday to move up to No. 1. Ohio State had been atop the committee's rankings last week, but the slipped to No. 2 after coming from behind against Wisconsin to win the Big Ten title.

"Anytime, anywhere, anybody, we ready to play," LSU coach Ed Orgeron said in an interview with ESPN.

The Buckeyes (13-0) will

face Atlantic Coast Conference champion Clemson (13-0) in the Fiesta Bowl in Glendale, Ariz., on Dec. 28. The national championship game is Jan. 13 in New Orleans.

Pairings for the other New Year's Six bowls were to be released later Sunday.

The final four fell into place thanks to the favorites winning their conference championship games and Utah losing the Pac-12 title game to Oregon. The Utes had been No. 5. That left three undefeated Power Five champions, one with one loss, and nobody else with a legitimate case.

The intrigue was about the top seed, knowing Clemson was likely locked into No. 3. The Tigers have been mauling their opponents for the last two months, but the ACC has not provided Clemson any top-flight competition, either. Ohio State has five victories against CFP-ranked teams, including Wisconsin twice. Clemson's only win against those teams was its 62-17 victory Saturday against Virginia.

Still, drawing Clemson, which has the core of a team

that has won 28 straight games, rather than an Oklahoma team that has five victories by a touchdown or less certainly seems like a tougher task for the Buckeyes. Clemson is making its fifth straight playoff appearance, tying Alabama for the most. The Crimson Tide missed out for the first time. Coach Dabo Swinney's Tigers have won two of the last three championships.

LSU is in the playoff for the first time, the only newbie in the field. The Tigers will likely bring the Heisman Trophy winner with them. Quarterback Joe Burrow capped a record-breaking season by throwing four more touchdown passes against Georgia in the SEC championship.

Ohio State is making its third playoff appearance and first since 2016 after just missing out the previous two seasons. The Buckeyes won the first playoff championship in 2014. Their last appearance came after the 2016 season, when they were shut out by Clemson in the semifinals at the Fiesta Bowl. That was all under coach Urban Meyer. Now Ryan Day

leads the Buckeyes, and in his first season as Meyer's successor has the Buckeyes unbeaten.

The Tigers are 3-0 all-time against Ohio State, all in the postseason.

Oklahoma is in the playoff for the fourth time, but has yet to win a game. This will be the third consecutive year the Sooners face an SEC team.

Oklahoma and LSU have split two previous meetings: The Sooners won the 1950 Sugar Bowl and the Tigers won the BCS championship game at the Sugar Bowl in 2004.

Former Alabama quarterback Jalen Hurts is back in the playoff for the fourth straight year, this time with the Sooners, after going three times with the Crimson Tide. Hurts follows Heisman winners Baker Mayfield and Kyler Murray as quarterback transfers in coach Lincoln Riley's offense.

LSU and Ohio State are also led by transfer quarterbacks. Burrow started his career at Ohio State before switching schools in 2018. Buckeyes quarterback Justin Fields was at Georgia last season.

No. 16 Memphis edges No. 21 Cincinnati for AAC title

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Memphis coach Mike Norvell made his final home game at Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium memorable.

Norvell and the Tigers captured the American Athletic Conference championship — after failing the previous two years — as Brady White's 6-yard pass to Antonio Gibson for a touchdown with 1:14 left gave No. 16 Memphis a 29-24 victory over No. 21 Cincinnati on Saturday.

Florida State will introduce Norvell as its new coach Sunday, two people with direct knowledge of the decision told The Associated Press. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

As for Norvell, he wasn't tipping his hand regarding his future. Instead, the Memphis coach directed all of his postgame comments to his team.

"We knew this was going to be a game

that was going to come down to responses," Norvell said. "How we responded to adversity. How we responded to success at times. But that's the character and the heart of these kids."

On the game-winning scoring drive, Norvell leaned on Gibson, who capped the march corraling the TD pass. Gibson was the workhorse during the drive, carrying the ball five straight times for 23 yards, giving the Tigers (12-1) third-and goal from the Bearcat 6.

On the play, Gibson split right instead of lining up in the backfield. He came in motion, caught the screen pass from quarterback Brady White and with three blockers in front of him, skirted in for the winning touchdown.

Gibson ran for 130 yards, including a 65-yard TD dash.

Cincinnati (10-3) had taken a 24-23 lead with 4:23 left on Sam Crosa's 33-yard field goal. That gave Memphis the ball back with

plenty of time.

They used most of it before Gibson's score.

"We were excited it was our turn to get the ball," White said, adding, "That last drive, we knew without a doubt we were going to execute the way we know how to. We were going to own the football and do what we did. We were able to move the ball."

It was closer than the season-finale between these eight days ago, which the Tigers won 34-24, earning the right to host this game. This time, the Bearcats had starting quarterback Desmond Ridder available. Ridder, who was nursing a sore shoulder the first game, brought stability to the Cincinnati offense and the ability to scramble out of trouble — a trait not shown by Memphis' White. Ridder threw for 233 yards and ran for 113 more, including a 15-yard touchdown in the first half as the Bearcats took a 14-10.

NHL roundup

Miller's OT goal powers Canucks past Sabres

Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — J.T. Miller scored a power-play goal 3:21 into overtime and the Vancouver Canucks beat the Buffalo Sabres 6-5 Saturday.

Buffalo's Marcus Johansson scored with 59 seconds left and his team's goalie pulled in the third period to tie it at 5, but Miller scored his 13th of the season off a pass from rookie defenseman Quinn Hughes in OT.

The Sabres thought they had scored in overtime, but the goal was disallowed because of a delayed interference penalty to Henri Jokiharau. Miller scored on the ensuing power play.

Flyers 4, Senators 3: Scott Laughton had a goal, an assist and a hard check in a chippy contest to lead host Philadelphia.

Ivan Provorov, Travis Konecny and Shayne Gostisbhere also scored for the Flyers, who have won six of seven. Carter Hart stopped 27 shots.

Flames 4, Kings 3: Dillon Dube had a goal and an assist for his first career mul-

tipoint game, and host Calgary won its fourth straight.

Avalanche 4, Bruins 1: Ian Cole scored his first goal of season in his 500th career NHL game, backup goalie Pavel Francouz stopped all 16 shots he faced in relief and Colorado earned its season-high sixth straight victory.

Andre Burakovsky, Valeri Nichushkin and Gabriel Landeskog also scored for the Avalanche, who have won 11 of its last 14 games.

Panthers 4, Blue Jackets 1: Sergei Bobrovsky made 33 saves against his former team and Josh Brown scored the winning goal in Florida's win over visiting Columbus.

Hurricanes 6, Wild 2: Sebastian Aho had three goals and two assists for his first career five-point game as host Carolina ended Minnesota's five-game winning streak.

Maple Leafs 5, Blues 2: Auston Matthews broke out of a slump with two goals,

Zach Hyman also scored twice and Toronto won at St. Louis.

Penguins 5, Red Wings 3: Evgeni Malkin and Jake Guentzel each had a goal and two assists to help visiting Pittsburgh win its third straight.

Predators 6, Devils 4: Nick Bonino, Dante Fabbro and Rocco Grimaldi each had a goal and an assist to help host Nashville end a two-game skid.

Lightning 7, Sharks 1: Andrei Vasilevskiy made 37 saves, Steven Stamkos had two power-play goals and an assist, and host Tampa Bay cruised past San Jose. The Lightning also got two goals from Tyler Johnson. Alex Killorn, Victor Hedman and Carter Verhaeghe had the other goals, and Killorn added three assists.

Stars 3, Islanders 1: Alexander Radulov returned with a goal and an assist on a revitalized power play, and host Dallas beat the New York Islanders.

College basketball roundup

No. 3 Maryland roars back to beat Illinois

Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — No. 3 Maryland couldn't help but like the way its Big Ten opener against Illinois ended.

How the Terrapins got there — not so great.

Anthony Cowan Jr. hit a tying three-pointer in the final 20 seconds and a go-ahead free throw with 2.1 seconds left as Maryland rallied from a 15-point deficit for a 59-58 victory Saturday.

Cowan had 20 points, seven rebounds and six assists, and Jalen Smith (14 points, 13 rebounds) recorded his sixth double-double of the season for Maryland (10-0, 1-0 Big Ten), which is off to its best start since it won 10 in a row to open the 1998-99 season.

No. 2 Kansas 72, No. 20 Colorado 58: Ochai Agbaji scored 20 points and Devon Dotson added 18 points to lead the host Jayhawks over the

Buffaloes, snapping Colorado's seven-game winning streak.

Ten days after claiming the Maui Invitational title, Kansas (7-1) built an early lead. David McCormack fueled the hot start, contributing six of the Jayhawks' opening eight points.

No. 6 Ohio State 106, Penn State 74: Kaleb Wesson scored 28 points and had 10 rebounds for his ninth career double-double, and the host Buckeyes scored 100 points against a Big Ten rival for the first time since 1991.

No. 8 Kentucky 83, Fairleigh Dickinson 52: EJ Montgomery scored a career-high 25 points, Keion Brooks added 15 off the bench and the Wildcats dominated for their 600th victory at Rupp Arena.

No. 18 Baylor 63, No. 12 Arizona 58: MaCio Teague scored 19 points, Freddie Gillespie had 17 points and 13 re-

bounds, and the Bears handed the Wildcats their first loss.

No. 13 Oregon 89, Hawaii 64: Payton Pritchard had 20 points and a season-high 11 assists, and the host Ducks snapped a two-game losing streak.

No. 15 Memphis 65, UAB 57: Precious Achiuwa scored eight of his 14 points in the final 4 minutes to rally the visiting Tigers.

No. 23 Villanova 78, Saint Joseph's 66: At Philadelphia, Saddiq Bey scored 22 points, Collin Gillespie had 20 and the Wildcats held off a second-half comeback from Saint Joseph's.

No. 24 Butler 76, Florida 62: Sean McDermott and Aaron Thompson each scored 16 points to lead the host Bulldogs over the Gators.

No. 25 Utah State 77, Fresno State 70 (OT): Sam Merrill had 24 points and eight rebounds, and Abel Porter

scored seven of his 13 points in overtime to propel the host Aggies. Justin Bean added 14 points and Neemias Queta chipped in six in 10 minutes in his first action of the season for Utah State (9-1, 2-0 Mountain West).

Navy 53, Marist 51 (OT): Evan Wieck scored 11 points and grabbed six rebounds and the host Midshipmen beat the Red Foxes.

Long Island 85, Army 72: Jermaine Jackson Jr. scored 29 points and the visiting Sharks defeated the Black Knights.

Nevada 100, Air Force 85: Jalen Harris scored a career-high 31 points and the Wolf Pack scored their most points of the season in a victory over the host Falcons in its Mountain West Conference opener (4-6, 1-1). A.J. Walker scored a career-high 21 points and Caleb Morris had 12 points.

NBA roundup

Knicks drop first game after Fizdale firing

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The New York Knicks didn't have any close games in David Fizdale's final days, then got one right away under interim coach Mike Miller.

Julius Randle's missed free throw ended their chance to win it, but just being competitive again was a good start after a rough couple of days.

"You get in those games, you've got to make another play and we just didn't make another play," Miller said. "Loved the effort. That was fun."

Randle missed a free throw with 0.1 seconds left, sending New York to a 104-103 loss to the Indiana Pacers on Saturday night in the Knicks' first game since firing Fizdale.

New York was much more competitive under Miller than it had been in recent games under Fizdale, who was fired Friday. The Knicks chased after rebounds and loose balls throughout the fourth quarter, erasing an 11-point deficit and giving themselves a shot at overtime when Randle was fouled while trying to put back the rebound of a scramble.

He calmly made the first free throw but the second was well long, sending New York to a ninth straight loss and a 4-19 record.

"It was tough. Very difficult, but we played really hard," Randle said. "We gave everything that we had. Came up short, but keep doing that and we're going to win a lot of games."

T.J. Warren scored 25 points and Domantas Sabonis had 19 points and 15 rebounds for the Pacers. They bounced back from a

loss at Detroit on Friday.

"We knew it was going to be a tough game, whether with the coach or without the coach," Sabonis said. "They are a dangerous team because they play with a lot of energy and the crowd is into it."

The Knicks lost by 44 to Milwaukee and 37 to Denver in their last two games under Fizdale and he was fired Friday after running practice. The Knicks offered no details about the decision in their press release announcing the firing, and team executives didn't speak Saturday.

Players had held a team meeting Friday to discuss their outlook going forward, even before learning it would be without Fizdale. They responded with a good effort in the first game since the change but couldn't overcome their 40.6% shooting.

Marcus Morris scored 25 points for the Knicks and Randle finished with 16 points and 12 rebounds.

Mavericks 130, Pelicans 84: Luka Dončić scored 28 points in 26 minutes, leading host Dallas in a rout of New Orleans.

The Mavs (18-8) have won five in a row and 10 of 11 for the first time since winning is their only NBA championship in 2010-11.

The Pelicans are on an eight-game skid.

Tim Hardaway Jr. and Kristaps Porziņģis scored 14 and 13 points, respectively.

Boban Marjanović had season highs of 15 points and 16 rebounds off the bench. Jalen Brunson scored 14.

J.J. Redick led New Orleans with 15 points. Brandon Ingram and Jrue Holiday scored 14 each and Jaxson Hayes had 11.

76ers 141, Cavaliers 94: Ben Simmons hit his second career three-pointer and scored a career-high 34 points, and Philadelphia didn't need Joel Embiid's help to rout visiting Cleveland.

Simmons made 12 of 14 field goals, including his only three-point attempt, and hit 9 of 12 free throws to help the 76ers improve to 11-0 at home.

Embiid sat out with a left hip contusion.

Darius Garland had 17 points for the Cavaliers, who have lost six in a row and 12 of 13.

Rockets 115, Suns 109: James Harden scored 18 of his 34 points in the fourth quarter and Ben McLemore added 27 points to help host Houston outlast Phoenix.

Harden had a tough shooting night through three quarters and was 5 of 19 overall and 1 of 10 on threes with 16 points before getting going in the fourth. The game was tied with about 7 minutes left, and he scored all of the Rockets' points in a 13-6 run that made it 102-95. Russell Westbrook had 24 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists for his third straight triple-double and sixth this season.

Jazz 126, Grizzlies 112: Donovan Mitchell scored 22 points and Jeff Green matched his season high with 19 points off the bench, leading Utah over visiting Memphis.

Rudy Gobert had 19 points, 11 rebounds and a season-high five assists, and Joe Ingles had a season-high 10 assists and 12 points.

Joshua avenges loss to Ruiz, plots path to new reign

Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — It's not all about the devastating knockout for Anthony Joshua anymore.

He's not going to go desperately chasing Deontay Wilder for the elusive belt in his heavyweight collection, either.

This is Joshua 2.0.

After what he describes as a "roller-coaster" year, the British boxing star is back as the multiple world heavyweight champion after beating Andy Ruiz Jr. in a unanimous points decision in their rematch in Saudi Arabia on Saturday.

Listening to Joshua after the fight, there's a sense he is about to embark on a new path to domination of the marquee division. The drastic change to his fighting style and mindset is an indication of that.

Against Ruiz, Joshua overhauled his approach — "I took it back to the old school, '70s style," he said — and used dancing feet instead of his traditional power-punching to break down his opponent.

"Boxing's a sweet science," Joshua said with a grin. "Hit and don't get hit. That's the name of the game."

For a heavyweight who made his name as a knockout merchant, Joshua has only won one of his past five fights by knocking his opponent to the canvas, in a period stretching back 2½ years. He is becoming more cautious, more of a student of boxing.

Expect that to continue in his second reign as champ after regaining the WBA, WBO and IBF belts.

Joshua said he has learned his lesson after not preparing properly for his first fight against Ruiz in June, which went badly when he was

knocked down four times before being stopped in the seventh round at Madison Square Garden.

When asked if his fans might have expected more from Joshua in the controversial rematch in the Middle East, where avoiding Ruiz played as big a part in the game plan as punching him, the Briton said: "If I box for the crowd and people's opinion, I might not have been victorious. I trusted my own process and now I am the champion. I'm going to follow my own instincts while I'm boxing."