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Trump, Kim get 2nd chance at deal

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

HANOI, Vietnam — President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will get a second chance to make a deal when they meet for the second time Wednesday in the Vietnamese capital.

But the two-day summit will take place against a backdrop of warnings from intelligence officials and experts that the North is unwilling to relinquish its nuclear weapons, which it sees as key to regime survival.

That leaves little chance for a breakthrough. Even the Trump administration has sought to manage expectations, with the president saying he won't lift sanctions and is in no rush to reach a deal.

China's Foreign Ministry urged the two sides to "meet each other halfway."

The third-generation North Korean leader rode into Hanoi

on Tuesday in an armored limousine surrounded by motorcycle police as crowds lined up behind barricades and cheered.

He transferred to the limo after a nearly three-day, 2,500-mile train journey from Pyongyang through China to the Vietnamese border town of Dong Dang. His entourage included North Korean lead nuclear negotiator Kim Yong Chol; Kim Jong Un's powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong; and other high-ranking officials, according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency. Trump arrived by plane later Tuesday.

The summit was expected to begin Wednesday evening with a private dinner, followed by a series of official meetings on Thursday.

The pomp surrounding the summit also provides Trump an escape from Washington as his former attorney and confidant Michael Cohen was scheduled to testify at a closed-door hearing of the Senate Intelligence Committee on Tuesday in Washington.

Cohen will answer questions

about his involvement in plans to develop a Trump Tower in Moscow as well as whether the president directed him to lie to Congress.

In Hanoi, Trump faces pressure to wrest concrete commitments from Kim after their first summit on June 12 ended with a vaguely worded agreement to work toward the "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula."

North Korea argues that it already has taken steps by suspending nuclear and missile tests and blowing up its main nuclear testing facility. Kim also offered to dismantle the nuclear material production facility of Yongbyon if the United States takes "corresponding measures."

The U.S. special envoy for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, said earlier this month that Pyongyang pledged to destroy all its plutonium and uranium enrichment facilities in exchange for reciprocal moves. Biegun also said that Pyongyang must provide a complete list of its nuclear assets before

any deal can be reached.

Any such deal would raise questions about verification. Past talks have collapsed over the issue of inspections.

Also, The 1950-53 Korean War, which pitted the U.S. and South Korea against the China-backed North, ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty. The North wants an end-of-war declaration, which would be the first step toward a formal peace treaty. The actual treaty would have to be signed by China, the U.S.-led United Nations Command and North Korea. But Washington has long said it wouldn't begin the process until final, irreversible denuclearization is achieved.

Meanwhile, the United States and the U.N. Security Council have imposed punishing economic sanctions against the North for banned nuclear weapons development. Nobody expects Trump to agree to lift the measures, but experts say the U.S. could allow more exemptions for humanitarian needs and inter-Korean economic projects.

Pair of Navy ships again pass through Taiwan Strait

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A pair of Navy ships passed through the Taiwan Strait on Sunday, a contentious passage that has become almost routine in the past half-year.

The destroyer USS Stethem and cargo ship USNS Cesar Chavez sailed through the strait that separates Taiwan and mainland China to demonstrate "the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the Navy said in a statement.

China regards Taiwan as a

renegade province that must, at some point, be reunified with the mainland. The United States normalized diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1979 and has agreed that under the "One China" policy Taiwan is part of the mainland.

But the U.S. has continued informal support for the island under the United States Taiwan Relations Act, under which it sells arms and provides military training to Taiwan.

Those sales have been a source of persistent irritation for Beijing — as are the Navy's

transits through the strait, which were once rare but are becoming commonplace.

Late last month, the destroyer USS McCampbell and fleet replenishment oiler USNS Walter S. Diehl passed through the strait.

In late November, a destroyer and a fleet replenishment vessel sailed through those waters.

The Navy has also stepped up the rate of freedom-of-navigation transits near islands in the South China Sea that China has expanded and militarized. China, Vietnam, the Philippines

and several other nations have ongoing claims of sovereignty over islands in the sea.

While the U.S. does not claim ownership of any of the islands and does not officially take positions on the multinational disputes, American officials have reiterated the right for all nations to transit international waters.

"The U.S. Navy will continue to fly, sail and operate anywhere international law allows," the Navy said Monday of its most recent transit of the Taiwan Strait.

US blocked troll factory during midterms

The Washington Post

The U.S. military blocked internet access to an infamous Russian entity seeking to sow discord among Americans during the 2018 midterms, several U.S. officials said, a warning that the group's operations against the United States are not cost-free.

The strike on the Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg, a company underwritten by an oligarch close to President Vladimir Putin, was part of the first offensive cyber-campaign against Russia designed to thwart attempts to interfere with a U.S. election, the officials said.

"They basically took the IRA offline," according to one individual familiar with the matter who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss classified information. "They shut 'em down."

The operation marked the first muscle-flexing by U.S. Cyber Command, with intelligence from the National Security Agency, under new authorities it was granted by President Donald Trump and Congress last year to bolster offensive capabilities.

Whether the impact of the St. Peters-

burg action will be long-lasting remains to be seen. Russia's tactics are evolving, and some analysts were skeptical of the deterrent value on the Russian troll factory or on Putin, who, according to U.S. intelligence officials, ordered an "influence" campaign in 2016 to undermine faith in U.S. democracy. U.S. officials also have assessed that the Internet Research Agency works on behalf of the Kremlin.

The action has been hailed as a success by Pentagon officials, and some U.S. senators credited CYBERCOM with averting Russian interference in the midterms.

"The fact that the 2018 election process moved forward without successful Russian intervention was not a coincidence," said Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., who did not discuss specifics of the operation targeting the Russian group. Without CYBERCOM's efforts, there "would have been some very serious cyberincursions."

Cyber Command and the NSA declined to comment.

The disruption to the Internet Research Agency's networks took place as Americans went to the polls and a day or so afterward

— as the votes were tallied, to prevent the Russians from mounting a disinformation campaign that casts doubt on the results, according to officials. The blockage was so frustrating to the trolls that they complained to their system administrators about the disruption, the officials said.

The Internet Research Agency as early as 2014 and continuing through the 2016 presidential election sought to undermine the U.S. political system, according to the Justice Department. Posing as Americans and operating social media pages and groups, Russian trolls sought to exacerbate tensions over issues such as race, sexual identity and guns.

The agency, according to federal prosecutors, is financed by Yevgeniy Prigozhin, a tycoon from St. Petersburg and an ally of Putin.

In a response to questions from *The Washington Post*, Prigozhin said in a statement on the Russian version of Facebook, "I cannot comment on the work of the Internet Research Agency in any way because I have no relation to it." Concord Management declined to comment, citing the ongoing litigation in the U.S.

NCIS probes racist tweets posted to Marine's account

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

A Marine stationed at Marine Corps Base Hawaii is under investigation after allegedly tweeting racist and pro-Nazi messages that included a photo of a swastika formed by blocks of TNT.

Twitter users took to social media Sunday to report Mason Edward Mead to his command after a series of tweets posted to an account linked to his name espoused support for Nazis and included photos of Adolf Hitler.

The Marine Corps "is aware of derogatory online comments attributed to a Marine," the Okinawa-based III Marine Expeditionary Force said in a statement Tuesday. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service "is thoroughly investigating this situation and the command will address any misconduct at the appropriate judicial or ad-

ministrative level."

In an email to Stars and Stripes, III MEF officials declined to confirm Mead's identity, rank and rate, stating that "no additional details on the subject of the investigation may be released before referral of charges."

In one photo among those tweeted by Mead's account, a Marine is seen arranging eight high-explosive charges into the shape of a swastika.

It is unclear if Mead was the Marine in uniform forming the swastika. The Twitter account has since been made private.

According to a Twitter post attributed to Mead, he considers himself politically "to the right" of fascism and "natsoc," an American neo-Nazi party. He also said he "would have fought in the Waffen SS if possible," referring to the combat arm of the Nazis' most fanatical organization.

First responders sound alarm on Sept. 11 fund

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 17 years after the 9/11 attacks, first responders and their advocates were back on Capitol Hill in Washington on Monday urging Congress to ensure that a victims' compensation fund does not run out of money.

Members of the New York delegation, joined by first responders, survivors and family members, lamented an announcement by the Justice Department that the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund is running low on money and future payments may be cut by up to 70 percent.

Comedian Jon Stewart, a longtime advocate for 9/11 responders, called the Feb. 15 announcement by the fund's special master "unconscionable" and said Congress has a moral obligation to step in.

At a news conference at the

Capitol, Stewart said it was "nonsense" that first responders and their families again have to "beg" Congress for money nearly 18 years after the attacks.

"This is nonsense. This is theater. You know it and I know it," Stewart said. "If the American people in their busy lives had any sense that these shenanigans were going on, they would be outraged."

He and other speakers urged Congress to act quickly to restore the fund and ensure it has enough money to pay benefits for the next 70 years — or as long as victims need it.

Nearly 40,000 people have applied to the federal fund for people with illnesses potentially related to being at the World Trade Center site, the Pentagon or Shanksville, Pa., after the attacks. About 19,000 claims are pending. Nearly \$5 billion in benefits have been awarded out of the \$7.3 billion fund.

Judge: Bump stock ban can stand

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A federal judge in Washington ruled late Monday that the Trump administration's ban on rapid-fire rifle attachments known as bump stocks can move forward, stymieing efforts by gun rights groups that sought to block the new policy.

In a 64-page decision, U.S. District Judge Dabney L. Friedrich found that the Firearms Policy Coalition and other groups did not put forth any convincing legal arguments in favor of stopping the Trump administration from carrying out the ban, which targets a device used in the 2017 Las Vegas massacre.

Friedrich, a 2017 appointee of President Donald Trump to the District of Columbia, ruled it was "reasonable" of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to conclude that a bump stock, which uses the recoil energy from a rifle to automatically fire the next round, performs the same function as a machine gun and should, therefore, be banned just like machine guns under federal law.

Trump moved to ban bump stocks in the wake of the Las Vegas shooting with loud bipartisan support from Congress and anti-gun-violence advocates.

The October 2017 shooting left 58 people dead and hundreds wounded after a man rained gunfire on concertgoers at the Route 91 Harvest Festival, firing from the 32nd floor of his Vegas hotel. Affixed to a dozen of the 23 rifles found in his room were bump stock devices, which allowed him to fire multiple rounds more quickly.

The Firearms Policy Coalition sued the Trump administration in December after the ATF changed federal rules to ban the devices at Trump's request. The group argued that the agency had flouted numerous procedures when it made the rule change, building its case mostly on procedural law rather than invoking the Second Amendment.

NORTHCOM: Don't use drug interdiction funds for wall

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The top general for U.S. Northern Command told a Senate panel Tuesday that its Defense Department drug interdiction funds shouldn't be diverted to help pay for the \$1 billion construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Air Force Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy's comments come amid reports that the Pentagon's counterdrug account is woefully short of the \$2.5 billion sought under the Feb. 15 national emergency declaration by President Donald Trump to allow his administration the authority to use some federal government funds to build a southern border wall. Instead, the drug program has closer to \$85 million available, which could mean a scramble to find the money elsewhere in the defense budget.

O'Shaughnessy, who also leads the North American Aerospace Defense Command, told lawmakers that NORTHCOM uses the money for its Joint Task Force North, which operates out of Biggs Army Airfield at Fort Bliss, Texas, to stop transnational threats, including drug trafficking.

"We have JTF North, for ex-

ample, that is dedicated to the counternarcotics mission. ... We want to preserve that ability," O'Shaughnessy told the Senate Armed Services Committee during questioning at a Tuesday morning hearing.

The concerns were raised amid a wide-ranging hearing before the Senate panel that hosted the chiefs for NORTHCOM and U.S. Strategic Command and touched on issues from national emergency concerns to efforts to modernize the country's nuclear triad.

Under Trump's national emergency declaration, Pentagon officials are scrambling to figure out how to shift \$6 billion in the Pentagon budget to wall construction in the face of growing legal and political challenges. The declaration seeks to move \$3.5 billion from military construction projects and another \$2.5 billion from the counterdrug account to the project.

"We all agree that border security is important. ... The question is how do you do that in the most effective way ... respectful of taxpayer monies as well?" said Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich. "I understand National Guard troops use Department of Defense drug interdiction program money to go down there and yet now hear that that drug interdiction money may be diverted to something else?"

Later Tuesday, the Democrat-controlled House was slated to approve a resolution by Rep. Joaquin Castro, D-Texas, to terminate Trump's emergency declaration. However, the resolution's chances of passing a Senate vote remain uncertain, and it could face a Trump veto even if approved in the upper chamber.

The vote and hearing come on the heels of a letter issued Monday by 58 former national security officials, including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, to Trump stating there is no national emergency to justify the diversion of Pentagon funds for wall construction.

On Tuesday, O'Shaughnessy avoided questions on whether he agreed with Trump's national emergency declaration, though the general said there is no threat to the military from the southern border. Instead, one of the biggest threats facing the country is Russia, O'Shaughnessy said.

Meanwhile, O'Shaughnessy said it is "premature" to detail which military construction and drug interdiction projects could be affected by wall construction plans. Instead, he said work is ongoing to decide what projects can or can't be cut, reduced or delayed.

"That's the process ongoing this week," he said.

Taliban hopeful for deal amid new talks with US

Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar — The Taliban and Washington's peace envoy are close to reaching an agreement on U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, a spokesman for the Islamic insurgents said Tuesday amid a new round of talks with the United States.

Suhail Shaheen, the spokesman, said the deal will also include guarantees that Afghanistan will not be used again as a staging arena for

anti-American attacks.

His remarks came during the second day of talks in the Qatari capital of Doha with U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been trying to negotiate a resolution of the 17-year war in Afghanistan, America's longest.

"If we do not reach a solution in this round of talks, then we will in the next round of talks, but that is our target," Shaheen told The Associated Press.

He said the sides in the talks are for now sticking to the two-

point agenda: U.S. withdrawal and no-attacks guarantees.

The Taliban, who refuse to talk with the government in Kabul and describe it as a U.S. puppet, have long demanded direct talks with the United States, but until Khalilzad's appointment last September, Washington had shied away from opening face-to-face negotiations.

Khalilzad arrived Monday for the talks in Doha and tweeted that this could be "a significant moment" in the process.

Vatican: Cardinal Pell conviction 'painful'

Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican on Tuesday described as “painful” the news of the conviction of Australian Cardinal George Pell, one of Pope Francis’ top aides, by an Australian court for molesting two choirboys in the 1990s but insisted the prelate has the right to defend himself until the appeals process is completed.

Acting Vatican spokesman Alessandro Gisotti on Tuesday read a brief statement but took no questions about the conviction, which was delivered unanimously in Victoria state County Court in December. Due to a strict court order, news of the verdict couldn’t be published until Tuesday.

The pontiff, “to guarantee the course

of justice,” has confirmed precautionary measures he already had taken against Pell, including banning him from publicly celebrating Mass, and “as is the rule, contact in any way and form with minors,” Gisotti said.

Francis had tapped Pell as his economy minister in 2014 as part of Vatican determination to reform its scandal-plagued financial system, even though some allegations against the Australian were known at that time.

Pell’s conviction likely further stains Francis’ record on cracking down on credibly abused clergy.

The court verdict represented “painful news that, we are well aware, has shocked

very many people, not only in Australia,” Gisotti said. “As we have affirmed on other occasions, we restate the utmost respect for Australian judiciary authorities,” he said.

“In the name of this respect, we now await the outcome of the appeals trial, recalling that Cardinal Pell has reiterated his innocence and has the right to defend himself until the final level” of Australia’s justice system, the spokesman said.

“While awaiting the definitive judgment, we unite ourselves to the Australian bishops in praying for all the victims of abuse, reiterating our commitment to do everything possible so that the church is a safe home for all, especially for children and the most vulnerable,” Gisotti said.

May hands control of Brexit to Parliament

Associated Press

LONDON — British Prime Minister Theresa May bowed to intense political pressure Tuesday and handed control of Brexit to Parliament, telling lawmakers they will get to choose between leaving the European Union on schedule — with or without a divorce deal — and asking the EU to postpone departure day.

May said that if Parliament rejects her deal with the EU in a vote due by March 12, lawmakers will vote the next day on whether to leave the bloc without an agreement. If that is defeated, as seems likely, they will vote on whether to ask the EU to delay Brexit by up to three months.

May said the promises were “commitments I am making as prime minister and

I will stick by them.”

Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, but so far the government has not been able to win Parliament’s backing for its divorce deal with the bloc. That leaves the U.K. facing a chaotic “no-deal” Brexit that could cause disruption for businesses and people in both Britain and the EU.

May shifted position after members of her own government joined calls for her to rule out a “no-deal” departure.

Three government ministers wrote in Tuesday’s Daily Mail that they would vote with opposition lawmakers to stop a no-deal departure unless May agreed to delay Brexit and guarantee “we are not swept over the precipice on March 29.”

May said her goal remains to lead Britain out of the EU on schedule and with a deal.

“I don’t want to see an extension,” she said, adding that any delay to Brexit should be “as short as possible.”

Delaying Brexit would require approval from all 27 other EU countries. The bloc has said it is likely to agree, but only if Britain has a good reason for the pause.

Businesses warn that without a deal Britain risks a chaotic departure that could disrupt trade between the U.K. and the EU, its biggest trading partner. The uncertainty has already led many British firms to shift some operations abroad, stockpile goods or defer investment decisions.

Businesses and the markets breathed a sigh of relief at May’s statement, which did not rule out “no deal” but at least pushed it a bit farther away. The pound rose above \$1.32, its highest level for a month.

Train stuck in Ore. for more than day is moving again

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — Passengers stranded on an Amtrak train for more than a day in a remote and snowed-in part of Oregon said the train was moving again Tuesday after it got stuck when it hit a tree that fell on the tracks.

“It’s just like relief. I’m just excited to get off of here,” Abbie Jeffrey, 16, told the KGW television station.

The Coast Starlight train left Seattle for Los Angeles early Sunday and hit the tree in Oakridge on Sunday evening. Crews tried to clear a path but their work was complicated by a heavy snowstorm that struck the region.

The 183 passengers were kept on the train because the snow had knocked out power in the town of Oakridge, the closest populated place to the train, Amtrak said in a statement.

There was enough food on the train for the passengers, the statement said. More than a foot of snow had fallen in the area by Monday.

Rebekah Dodson boarded the train Sunday afternoon in the small Oregon city of Albany and had expected to be in Klamath Falls by 9:50 p.m.

About 6:20 p.m. Sunday the train “came to a sudden halt and the conductor said that they had some damage from some low-hanging limbs because of the sudden

snowstorm and they were going to stop and fix it,” Dodson said.

Amtrak Executive Vice President Scot Naparstek apologized in a statement. “With more than a foot of heavy snow and numerous trees blocking the track, we made every decision in the best interest of the safety of our customers during the unfortunate sequence of events,” he said.

Officials decided that the train was the safest place for passengers to stay because it had food, heat electricity and functioning toilets, Naparstek said.

He said Amtrak will contact customers “to provide refunds and other compensation as appropriate.”

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman finds snake curled up in dryer

FL SAFETY HARBOR — A Florida woman said she “about had a near death experience” when she opened her dryer and saw a snake curled up in her laundry.

Tampa’s Fox 13 News reported Amanda Wise was almost finished unloading the dryer in her garage Sunday when she saw what appeared to be a corn snake.

She described the startling discovery in a Facebook post. She said her husband used a broom to coax the snake out of the dryer and outside.

Officials seize nearly 1K pounds of khat

MD BALTIMORE — U.S. Customs and Border Protection said agents seized around 1,000 pounds of khat in the Washington area during one week in February.

Khat is a flowering shrub native to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration characterized as a stimulant abused for its euphoric effects when chewed or made into tea. The three shipments seized Feb. 12, 13 and 16 came from Nigeria.

A news release said the khat in the first two shipments was disguised as green tea. Another news release said the Feb. 16 shipment was disguised as around 268 pounds of “green tea leave.”

Balloon artists head to Dubai for show

NY ROCHESTER — Some upstate New York sculptors whose medium of choice is balloons were heading to the United Arab Emirates for their next creation.

Rochester’s Airigami artists said they’ll build a 13-foot-tall balloon version of the Maker Faire mascot at the Maker Faire in Dubai. They also plan to get the public involved in a project.

Maker Faires celebrate showcase invention and creativity. The Airigami team has displayed at 15 of them around the U.S. and beyond.

Woman accused of living in vacant house

LA PINEVILLE — A Louisiana woman is accused of living in a vacant house and selling its furniture and appliances.

The Rapides Parish Sheriff’s Office said the homeowner told investigators he went to clean out the house in Pineville and found a woman living there. Deputies found numerous pieces of furniture and appliances missing.

The Town Talk reported that deputies arrested Jerica Gros, 30, of Alexandria on trespassing and simple burglary charges.

A police news release said she apparently had been living in the house since early January and allegedly had scrapped or sold the missing items.

Police: Drunken driver left child after crash

MA REVERE — Massachusetts State Police said a drunken driver who rolled over her car left a child behind at the scene of the crash.

Authorities said the 37-year-old Revere woman faces nine charges, including one count of operating under the influence of alcohol and two counts of child endangerment.

Witnesses told police the vehicle had three occupants: the

driver and two children. Police said the driver left the scene in a bystander’s vehicle with one of the children, leaving the other child behind. The woman was later arrested at an area hospital.

State police said both children suffered severe, but not life-threatening injuries.

Man looking through peephole shot in eye

NY NEW YORK — New York City police said a man was shot in the eye as he looked through the peephole in his apartment door.

Police said the 56-year-old victim was awakened by a knock at the door at his apartment in the Bronx early Saturday morning. Authorities said the unidentified gunman opened fire as the victim was looking through the peephole.

Responding medics rushed the victim to an area hospital, where he was listed in stable condition.

2 arrested in news crew theft, shooting

CA OAKLAND — Two men have been arrested in the shooting of the security guard for a news crew that was covering the Oakland teachers’ strike, authorities said Monday.

KPIX said a reporter and a photographer were gathering interviews Sunday afternoon at the Oakland Library when a car pulled up and two men got out and of them pointed a gun and demanded their camera. The crew surrendered the equipment.

One of the suspects then shot the guard, Matt Meredith, in the leg, the news station said. KPIX said on Twitter that the guard returned gunfire.

Alameda County Sheriff spokesman Sgt. Ray Kelly said

a 21-year-old man with several gunshot wounds went to a hospital after the incident. Oakland police arrested the man on suspicion of shooting the guard.

Oakland police confirmed Monday two people were detained and the stolen camera was recovered. The guard was treated at a hospital and released.

No injuries reported in food cart explosion

OR EUGENE — Residents in Eugene’s Whiteaker neighborhood were jolted by an explosion of a food cart in the area Sunday morning.

The Register-Guard reported no injuries were reported from the explosion that occurred at Buck Buck Food Cart just before 8 a.m.

The cart was just outside Oakshire Brewing Public House on Madison Street. The food cart and brew pub were both closed at the time of the explosion.

Giant wooden troll is returning to ski town

CO BRECKENRIDGE — A huge wooden troll will be reincarnated in a Colorado ski town, although it’s unclear what it will look like or where it will sit.

The Summit Daily reported that Breckenridge officials have a deal with Danish artist Thomas Dambo to rebuild his troll this spring. It was erected beside a trail last summer for a festival, but it was so popular that nearby homeowners complained about all the foot traffic. It was taken down in November. The troll, named Isak Heartstone, was 15 feet high.

Rebuilding is expected to take about a week sometime in May.

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Mariners ace Kikuchi makes MLB debut

Associated Press

PEORIA, Ariz. — Yusei Kikuchi felt the nerves Monday that would normally accompany taking the mound in front of tens of thousands of fans in a major ballpark, not the few thousand who showed up for a spring training game in the desert.

“I’ve been pitching in Japan for the last nine years and I wanted to test what I was doing in Japan against major league hitters and I wanted to see how they reacted,” Kikuchi said through an interpreter. “So I was really kind of excited and also nervous about that.”

Kikuchi made his debut for the Seattle Mariners throwing two innings against the Cincinnati Reds in a start that featured a little bit of everything, from moments of dominance to Kikuchi working out of a jam.

The Mariners were pleased with what they saw.

“He had a little nerves, no doubt about it, but fastball was really good, he was up to 95 (mph), the breaking pitches we know are outstanding. Thought he handled it really, really well,” Seattle manager Scott Servais said. “He’s going to take a little time to get his routine. You saw him throwing outside the dugout before, there’s a few adjustments there, but really happy for him getting that first outing under his belt.”

Kikuchi’s most notable at-bat was his

lone strikeout, when he tied up Joey Votto on a deceptive 2-2 curveball that left the veteran slugger waving unsuccessfully. While Kikuchi has a fastball in the mid-90s, his breaking pitches and the ability to hide the ball in his windup add to the challenges of facing the lefty.

“It’s spring training and I’m sure he’s tuning up his swing as well but to strike out someone the caliber of Joey Votto, a hitter of that caliber, I’m really happy about the result of today,” Kikuchi said.

The rest of the outing forced Kikuchi to do a little bit of everything. He had to scamper off the mound to cover first base on a groundout by Yasiel Puig. He faced the challenge of traffic on the bases after a rough second inning that featured a lead-off walk, two errors and giving up two runs — although both were unearned.

Kikuchi threw 29 pitches with 19 strikes, the first step in a transitional season.

“Obviously, when you’re up on the mound you want to shut them down one, two, three when you’re up there but after I let some guys on today I think I was able to keep my pitch count low and get some double play balls so I’m happy with what I did,” Kikuchi said.

One of the biggest adjustments will be Kikuchi’s pregame routine. Servais noted Kikuchi was on the field nearly an hour

before first pitch and still figuring out the timing led to Kikuchi playing catch in front of the dugout several minutes before the team took the field.

“What we wanted to do is let him go through his normal routine,” Servais said. “He was out here probably 50, 55 minutes before the game started. That’s what he normally does and over time, that’s why we’ve got the four, five outings through spring to tighten up that routine and as the season goes on it will be a learning curve for him as well.”

The first outing for Kikuchi was documented from all angles by Asian photographers following his every move, from his warmup in the bullpen to the scrum after his outing with dozens of reporters.

Seattle wants to limit Kikuchi’s innings during the regular season and make the first-year transition from pitching in Japan less arduous. But the Mariners also need to build up Kikuchi so he is ready to take on a starter’s load when his innings won’t be limited.

Kikuchi said he hadn’t been told what comes next, but he’s likely to get his second start sometime this weekend.

“It’s my first start and I felt really good throwing the ball. Going into the game I was a little nervous, obviously, but it ended up well,” Kikuchi said.

Authorities: Kraft at parlor on AFC title day

Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft visited a Florida massage parlor for sex acts the night before and the morning of last month’s AFC championship game, authorities said Monday in documents charging him with two misdemeanor counts of soliciting prostitution.

Kraft is one of hundreds of men charged in recent days as part of a crackdown on prostitution allegedly occurring in massage parlors between Palm Beach and Orlando. Ten spas have been closed and several people, most of them women originally from China, have been charged with running the operation.

The 77-year-old Kraft was chauffeured to the Orchids of Asia Day Spa in a 2014 white

Bentley on the evening of Jan. 19, where police say they videotaped him engaging in a sex act and then handing over an undetermined amount of cash, Jupiter, Fla., police said in charging documents released by the Palm Beach State Attorney’s Office.

Investigators said Kraft returned 17 hours later, arriving at the upper-middle class shopping center where the spa was located in a chauffeured 2015 blue Bentley, the documents said. Kraft, who is worth \$6 billion, was videotaped engaging in sex acts before paying with a \$100 bill and another bill, police said. He then flew to Kansas City to watch his Patriots defeat the Chiefs in overtime hours later.

Kraft, whose team won the Super Bowl earlier this month in Atlanta, denied wrongdoing Friday, shortly after Jupiter

police announced he was being charged. The NFL said Monday in a statement that its personal conduct policy “applies equally to everyone in the NFL” and it will handle “this allegation in the same way we would handle any issue under the policy.” Kraft’s wife, Myra Hiatt Kraft, died in 2011. He has been dating 39-year-old actress Ricki Noel Lander since 2012.

Another high-profile businessman, former Citigroup President John Havens, 62, is also charged with paying for sex at the Orchids of Asia spa. He, too, has denied wrongdoing. He was Citigroup president in 2011 and 2012. He now runs a hedge fund that was spun off from Citigroup. Twenty-three other men are also charged in Palm Beach County, with others charged in a string of counties spanning more than 150 miles.

Palm Beach State Attorney Dave Aronberg said Kraft will be issued a summons that is similar to a traffic ticket and assigned a day to appear in court. Most people charged for the first time with soliciting are eligible for a diversion program where they pay a fine, perform 100 hours of community service and attend a class where they learn about the dangers of prostitution and how it is often tied to human trafficking. Fines can be up to \$5,000.

Authorities investigated the parlors for months, gathering evidence through observation, interviews with men stopped leaving the spas, trash bin searches and surveillance of their owners. Judges then issued warrants allowing them to secretly install cameras inside the spas to record what transpired.

College basketball roundup

Kansas bounces back, wallops K-State

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Kansas got exactly what it needed after a humiliating loss at Texas Tech when the schedule produced a high-profile showdown with Big 12-leading Kansas State inside raucous Allen Fieldhouse.

The Jayhawks took advantage of the opportunity, too.

Playing with a newfound sense of urgency, Dedric Lawson and the rest of the Jayhawks roared to a 64-49 victory over their biggest rival Monday night, flushing the memory of that lopsided loss to the Red Raiders while keeping alive their hopes of a 15th consecutive conference championship.

“It’s just handling business,”

said Lawson, whose 18 points and 14 rebounds likely cemented his front-runner status as the league’s player of the year.

Devon Dotson added 16 points and fellow freshman Quentin Grimes had 12 for the Jayhawks (21-7, 10-5), who moved within a game of the Wildcats (21-7, 11-4) with three to play.

Texas Tech, which has played one fewer game, is a half-game back in second place.

“If you get beat the way we got beat Saturday,” Jayhawks coach Bill Self said, “it’s bad in some ways that we played so quick but it’s also good in some ways that you have a way to redeem yourself a little bit. So yeah, it was a good way to bounce back.”

There was clearly a sense of desperation inside the Phog, where Kansas — despite all the injuries and unrest this season — had not lost in 19 games. And it manifested itself in the kind of cutthroat D that has become a hallmark of Self’s teams over the years.

No. 18 Florida State 68, Notre Dame 61: Freshman Devin Vassell scored 13 points, sparking his team’s second-half charge with a dunk and a three-pointer on consecutive possessions, and the host Seminoles held off the Fighting Irish.

Trent Forrest made four of six six free-throw attempts in the final minute to help Florida State (22-6, 10-5 Atlantic Coast Conference) hang on.

D.J. Harvey scored 18

points and Prentiss Hubb had 17 for Notre Dame (13-15, 3-12), which has dropped four straight games.

The Fighting Irish went scoreless for nearly five minutes late in the game.

Iowa State 78, Oklahoma 61: Marial Shayok scored 21 points and the host Cyclones rolled past the Sooners, snapping a two-game losing skid.

Talen Horton-Tucker had 18 for Iowa State (20-8, 9-6 Big 12), which reached 20 wins for the seventh time in eight years thanks largely to a 13-0 run midway through the second half.

The Cyclones needed this one after dropping both of their games last week and dropping out of the Top 25 on Monday.

NBA roundup

Hawks lose, but end Harden’s 30-point scoring streak

Associated Press

HOUSTON — James Harden isn’t exactly lamenting the end of his impressive scoring run.

Harden had 28 points, snapping his 32-game streak with at least 30 while the Houston Rockets beat the Atlanta Hawks 119-111 on Monday night.

He’s glad it’s over, too — especially since he had no expectation of matching Wilt Chamberlain’s 65-game streak, the longest in NBA history. Harden’s stretch with 30 or more points ranks second.

“Yeah, I am. It was cool but I knew I wasn’t going to get to No. 1,” Harden said before walking away chuckling.

Houston overcame a scoring outburst from Hawks rookie Trae Young, who set career highs with eight three-pointers and 36 points.

Harden returned after missing Saturday’s win over Golden State with a neck injury and missed all 10 three-pointers he

attempted.

“This was the first time I was able to move it since a few days,” he said. “So it kind of felt good to go out there and just move it and run around. I hadn’t really done any movement or working out. I’ve been in bed, really.”

He got to 28 points with 23.3 seconds left and had the ball on Houston’s last possession but did not attempt a shot from half court with the game in hand. When asked if the injury affected his shot he said: “I don’t care. Made shots, missed shots, we won the game.”

Harden last came up short of 30 points in a Dec. 11 win over Portland, when he had 29. During the streak, he scored 50 or more points four times.

Suns 124, Heat 121: Devin Booker scored 20 points to lead six of his teammates in double figures, and visiting Phoenix snapped a club-record 17-game losing streak.

Warriors 121, Hornets 110: Klay Thompson scored

26 points, DeMarcus Cousins had 24 points and 11 rebounds, and visiting Golden State dealt Charlotte its second straight loss.

Nets 101, Spurs 85: D’Angelo Russell had 23 points, eight assists and seven rebounds, and host Brooklyn forced San Antonio into perhaps its worst offensive performance of the season.

Pistons 113, Pacers 109: Andre Drummond had 26 points and 16 rebounds, Blake Griffin had a triple-double and resurgent host Detroit won for the seventh time in eight games.

Trail Blazers 123, Cavaliers 110: CJ McCollum scored 35 points and visiting Portland hung on after nearly squandering a 23-point halftime lead.

Bucks 117, Bulls 106: Khris Middleton and Malcolm Brogdon scored 22 points apiece, and NBA-leading Milwaukee beat host Chicago with All-Star Giannis Antetok-

ounmpo sidelined with a sore right knee.

Grizzlies 110, Lakers 105: Mike Conley had 30 points, including key free throws in the final minute, Jonas Valanciunas finished with 20 points and 13 rebounds, and host Memphis put another dent in Los Angeles’ playoff hopes.

Timberwolves 112, Kings 105: Karl-Anthony Towns had 34 points and 21 rebounds in his return from the concussion protocol, helping host Minnesota hold off Sacramento.

76ers 111, Pelicans 110: Tobias Harris scored 29 points, Ben Simmons had 14 points and 12 assists, and Philadelphia narrowly held off host New Orleans.

Clippers 121, Mavericks 112: Montrezl Harrell scored a career-high 32 points, Lou Williams added 21 and host Los Angeles defeated Dallas to move into the seventh spot in the Western Conference playoff picture.

NHL roundup

Lightning prevail in SO, win 9th straight

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Nikita Kucherov, Steven Stamkos and Victor Hedman scored in the shootout and the NHL-leading Tampa Bay Lightning beat the Los Angeles Kings 4-3 for their ninth straight victory Monday night, matching the longest winning streak in franchise history.

J.T. Miller's third-period goal forced overtime, and Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 30 shots for the Lightning, who improved the league's best record to 48-11-4 and became the fourth team to reach 100 points

in 63 games or less.

Alex Iafallo, Jonny Brodzinski and Austin Wagner scored in the third period, helping Los Angeles turn a two-goal deficit into a short-lived 3-2 lead that goalie Jack Campbell couldn't protect. The Kings have lost eight straight, their longest skid since December 2007.

Braden Point and Anthony Cirelli had first-period goals for the Lightning, who fell behind when Brodzinski and Wagner scored in a 36-second span. Miller countered less than a minute later to make it 3-all.

Kucherov got his 71st assist

on Tampa Bay's first goal, giving him a league-leading and career-best 101 points.

Predators 3, Oilers 2: Brian Boyle scored in the fourth round of a shootout to lift host Nashville over Edmonton.

P.K. Subban had a goal and an assist, and Colton Sissons also scored as Nashville won for the third time in four games.

Maple Leafs 5, Sabres 3: John Tavares, Auston Matthews and Frederik Gauthier scored three quick goals in the second period and host Toronto held off Buffalo.

Devils 2, Canadiens 1: Na-

than Bastian scored his first NHL goal, Kurtis Gabriel got his second and last-place New Jersey continued to be a thorn in visiting Montreal's playoff hopes.

Panthers 4, Avalanche 3 (OT): Aaron Ekblad scored 26 seconds into overtime, Roberto Luongo stopped 36 shots to earn career win No. 485 and visiting Florida beat Colorado.

Canucks 4, Ducks 0: Jacob Markstrom made 29 saves for his first shutout of the season and Bo Horvat scored twice to lead host Vancouver past Anaheim.

Knights make biggest splash at NHL trade deadline

Associated Press

Mark Stone was considered the best player available as the NHL trade deadline approached, a 26-year-old forward for Ottawa who consistently has 60 points a season.

The Vegas Golden Knights made a calculated gamble to acquire him Monday in the boldest move around the league simply because of the steep price paid in their bid to win the Stanley Cup. Vegas gave up 19-year-old defenseman Erik Brannstrom, a prized prospect, a 2020 second-round pick and seldom-used forward Oscar Lindberg.

"This type of player doesn't come available very often," Golden Knights general manager George McPhee said. "We believe he is one of the best all-around players in the NHL."

Columbus, meanwhile, bolstered depth by adding defenseman Adam McQuaid from the New York Rangers and goaltender Keith Kinkaid from New Jersey after previously picking up forwards Ryan Dzingel and Matt Duchene.

The Central Division-leading Winnipeg Jets made one big deal, acquiring forward Kevin Hayes, and a series of smaller

ones to keep pace with Western Conference contenders such as Pacific Division-leading Calgary, San Jose, Nashville and Vegas.

"It's an exciting time for lots of franchises around the league that were able to add players," said Detroit Red Wings general manager Ken Holland, who traded forward Gustav Nyquist and defenseman Nick Jensen to San Jose and Washington. "Lots of teams added lots of good players, so it's shaping up for an exciting Stanley Cup playoff."

Eastern Conference

Columbus Blue Jackets: Columbus chose not to deal star forward Artemi Panarin and goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky along with their expiring contracts for high picks and promising prospects. The 26-year-old Dzingel is perhaps the most significant addition, putting a player with a career-high 44 points in the lineup.

Boston Bruins: In a subtle move for a team with solid playoff positioning, forward Marcus Johansson was acquired from the New Jersey Devils for a second-round pick this year and a fourth-round pick next year. Johansson has 27 points

this season and is capable of more, producing a career-high 58 points with Washington two years ago.

Standing pat: The NHL-leading Tampa Bay Lightning stood pat, appearing to be content with a double-digit lead over the rest of the league with a stacked team from front to back. And the Metropolitan Division-leading New York Islanders did not make a trade in the NHL's only division that has five teams with 70-plus points.

Western Conference

Vegas Golden Knights: The slumping team should get a quick return on its investment in Stone. He has 62 points — two short of his career high this season — and 311 points in 366 career games.

"You hope it brings something," Vegas coach Gerard Gallant said. "Obviously the players know who Mark Stone is, they know he's a great player. One of the top players in the league and he should definitely bring a lot of energy to our room."

It appears to be a move for short- and long-term goals, because Stone said on Canada's TSN he agreed to a long-term contract extension with the

second-year franchise.

Nashville Predators: Nashville got stronger up front, acquiring wingers Mikael Granlund (Minnesota) and Wayne Simmonds (Philadelphia). Granlund, who has 49 points, averaged 68 points the previous two years. If he can do that again, it may be enough to help the Predators outlast the Jets in the division.

Winnipeg Jets: Hayes was perhaps the second-best player available, averaging 43-plus points over five seasons with the New York Rangers, and it cost a package that included a first-round pick to get him.

Winnipeg advanced in the playoffs last year for the first time since moving from Atlanta in 2011 and knows it needs all the help it can get to top last year's run that ended against Vegas in the conference finals. The Jets made six trades on deadline day.

Calgary Flames: The Western Conference leaders added only Oscar Fantenberg from the Los Angeles Kings because they don't need much help. Fantenberg, a defenseman with three points in 46 games this season, does provide insurance on the blue line in case of injuries.