

Navy ship to be renamed after ex-slave

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A U.S. Navy ship originally named for a Confederate victory will soon be known by the name of a former slave who hijacked a Confederate vessel.

The USS Chancellorsville, named for an 1863 battle in Virginia remembered as a major victory for Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, will be renamed for Robert Smalls, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced Tuesday in a news release.

Smalls, born into slavery in South Carolina in 1839, was conscripted into the Confederate States Navy in 1862 to serve as a pilot for the Planter, an

ammunitions transport ship, according to his biography on the U.S. House of Representatives' website. He rose to fame that year when he hijacked the ship and turned it over to the Union Navy.

He went on to pilot the Planter and another ship, the ironclad Keokuk, on behalf of the Union in numerous battles. Later, Smalls accepted a commission as brigadier general of his home state before being elected as a South Carolina state representative from 1870 to 1874.

Between 1875 and 1887, Smalls represented South Carolina for five terms in the House of Representatives, then returned to local government in

Beaufort, S.C., before dying of natural causes in 1915, according to his biography.

"Robert Smalls is a man who deserves a namesake ship and with this renaming, his story will continue to be retold and highlighted," Del Toro said in the release.

The Chancellorsville, which was at its homeport in Yokosuka on Tuesday, is one of two Navy vessels set to be renamed this year due to their Confederate ties; the oceanographic survey ship USNS Maury is the other, following a 2021 congressional mandate.

"The renaming of these assets is not about rewriting history, but to remove the focus on the parts of our history that

don't align with the tenets of this country, and instead allows us to highlight the events and people in history who may have been overlooked," Del Toro said in the release.

It will not be the first military vessel named after Smalls. The logistics support vessel Major General Robert Smalls, which was inducted into the Army's watercraft fleet in 2007, was the first Army vessel named for an African American.

The Navy did not identify a date for unveiling the USS Robert Smalls, but assets under the congressional mandate have until the end of 2023 to be renamed, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said in September.

White House: TikTok banned from government devices

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House is giving all federal agencies 30 days to wipe TikTok off all government devices, as the Chinese-owned social media app comes under increasing scrutiny in Washington over security concerns.

The Office of Management and Budget called the guidance, issued Monday, a "critical step forward in addressing the risks presented by the app to sensitive government data." Some agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security and State, already have restrictions in place; the guidance calls on the rest of the federal government to follow suit within 30 days.

The White House already does not allow TikTok on its devices.

"The Biden-Harris administration has invested heavily in defending our nation's digital infrastructure and curbing foreign adversaries' access to Americans' data," said Chris DeRusha, the federal chief information security officer. "This guidance is part of the administration's ongoing commitment to securing our digital infras-

tructure and protecting the American people's security and privacy."

The guidance was first reported by Reuters.

Congress passed the "No TikTok on Government Devices Act" in December as part of a sweeping government funding package. The legislation does allow for TikTok use in certain cases, including for national security, law enforcement and research purposes.

TikTok spokesperson Brooke Oberwetter said Monday: "The ban of TikTok on federal devices passed in December without any deliberation, and unfortunately that approach has served as a blueprint for other world governments. These bans are little more than political theater.

"We hope that when it comes to addressing national security concerns about TikTok beyond government devices, Congress will explore solutions that won't have the effect of censoring the voices of millions of Americans."

House Republicans are expected to move forward Tuesday with a bill that would give Biden the power to ban TikTok

nationwide. The legislation, proposed by Rep. Mike McCaul, looks to circumvent the challenges the administration would face in court if it moved forward with sanctions against the social media company.

If passed, the proposal would allow the administration to ban not only TikTok, but any software applications that threaten national security. McCaul, the chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, has been a vocal critic of the app, saying it is being used by the Chinese Communist Party to "manipulate and monitor its users while it gobbles up Americans' data to be used for their malign activities."

"Anyone with TikTok downloaded on their device has given the CCP a backdoor to all their personal information. It's a spy balloon into your phone," the Texas Republican said in a statement Monday.

TikTok, owned by ByteDance Ltd., remains extremely popular and is used by two-thirds of teenagers in the United States. But there is increasing concern that Beijing could obtain control of American user data that the app has obtained.

Study: Army needs to adapt efforts to prevent assaults

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Sexual assault prevention programs in the military rely too heavily on college date-rape scenarios that differ from the way many troops experience such attacks, according to a new study that suggests the Army must adapt prevention efforts to its own social reality.

The Rand Corp., in a U.S. Army-commissioned study released Monday, found that reported assaults by male soldiers on women were unsurprisingly the most common form of sexual violence. But the study also revealed statistically significant numbers of sexual assaults in which a man was the victim, either in hazing situations or in cases of assault by a woman.

“Some of the types of sexual assault and sexual harassment identified in this report do not closely align with popular stereotypes about victims, perpetrators, and contexts of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Army,” the Rand report said.

In the military, sexual assault prevention programs are heavily drawn from material geared toward college students. Assault scenarios typically revolve around dating and an alcohol-infused campus life where male

perpetrators target women, Rand said.

“However, such prevention programs may fail to address the unique features of sexual assault in the Army, and focusing primarily on this one type may fail to address the majority of assaults,” Rand said.

A male soldier attacking a female soldier accounts for 46% of sexual assaults, according to the study. The remaining 54% differ in important ways, the report said.

Among the differences in the Army: “a much larger fraction of assaults have male victims; are done with the intent to abuse, bully, or haze the victim; involve multiple perpetrators; do not involve alcohol; or occur in the workplace,” Rand said.

After male soldier assaults on female soldiers, the next most common type was unwanted sexual touching in the workplace at 22%, followed by bullying/hazing sexual assaults at 15% and female assaults on male soldiers at 10%.

Meanwhile, the most reported sexual harassment scenario involved men offended by sexual talk and jokes at work, at 24% of cases, according to Rand. That was followed by gender discrimination against women at 18% and harassment on duty by an individual perpetrator at 14%.

Philippine leader urges focus on South China Sea

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine president said the main mission of his country’s military has changed to ensure the protection of its territory as disputes with China and the U.S.-China rivalry intensify.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. stressed the urgency of shifting the military’s focus to external defense in a speech before troops Monday afternoon.

He spoke two weeks after summoning China’s ambassador to protest the use of a military-grade laser by the Chinese coast guard that briefly blinded some of the crew of a Philippine patrol vessel in the South China Sea.

The Philippines condemned the Feb. 6 incident in one of the more than 200 diplomatic protests it has filed against Beijing’s increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed waterway since last year.

China has accused the Philippines of intruding into its territory and said its coast guard used a harmless laser to track the Philippine vessel. China claims the South China Sea virtually in its entirety.

“I’m saying that your mission in the AFP has changed,” Marcos told the troops, referring to the Armed Forces of the Philippines. “For many, many years, we were able to maintain that peace and maintain that understanding with all of our neighbors. Now things have begun to change and we must adjust accordingly.”

He said that the country’s boundaries were being put into question, “and there are many things that are happening so the air force has a very big mission to fully secure the Philippines.” He also cited “the intensification of the competition between the superpowers.”

Marcos did not offer specifics nor did he mention China in his speech in central Cebu province, but underscored that Philippine foreign policy remains committed to peace.

Despite being a relatively small country, “we still have to fight for the rights of every Filipino because the Philippines is a sovereign nation and the Philippines has a functioning government,” he said.

After decades of combating Muslim and communist insurgencies, the military has begun to focus on defending the country’s sea borders.

Air Force dismisses 2 commanders overseeing nuclear support units

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

Two commanders and four others have been fired from units at Minot Air Force Base, a strategic nuclear installation in North Dakota, Air Force Global Strike Command officials said.

Col. Gregory Mayer, commander of the 5th Mission Support Group, and Maj. Jonathan Welch, the 5th Logistics Readiness Squadron commander, were dismissed along with four of their subordinates, a base spokesperson told Stars and Stripes on Monday.

They were dismissed due to “a loss of confidence in their ability to complete their assigned duties,” an Air Force state-

ment said.

Mayer took command of the 5th Mission Support Group in June last year.

Further details about the firings or related reprimands were not made available Tuesday.

The 5th Bomb Wing maintains a fleet of nuclear-capable B-52H Stratofortress bombers. The 91st Missile Wing, also located at Minot, oversees 150 Minuteman III missiles in underground launch facilities spread across an 8,500 square-mile missile complex.

Mayer was responsible for \$4.3 billion in base and missile field assets, according to his biography, which has since been removed from the unit’s website.

Putin orders tighter border measures

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday ordered officials to tighten control of the border with Ukraine after a spate of drone attacks that Russian authorities blamed on Kyiv delivered a new challenge to Moscow more than a year after its full-scale invasion of its neighbor.

One drone crashed just 60 miles away from Moscow in an alarming development for Russian defenses.

While Putin didn't refer to any specific attacks in a speech in the Russian capital, his comments came hours after drone attacks targeted several areas in southern and western Russia and authorities closed the airspace over St. Petersburg in response to what some reports said was a drone.

Also Tuesday, several Russian television stations aired a missile attack warning that officials blamed on a hacking attack.

The drone attacks caused no casualties but provoked a security stir. Ukrainian officials didn't immediately claim responsibility for the attacks, but they similarly avoid-

ed directly acknowledging responsibility for previous strikes and sabotage while emphasizing Ukraine's right to hit any target in Russia following the full-scale invasion that began last year.

A flurry of drone attacks on Monday night and Tuesday morning targeted regions inside Russia along the border with Ukraine and deeper into the country, according to local Russian authorities.

A drone fell near the village of Gubastovo, 60 miles from Moscow, Andrei Vorobyov, governor of the region surrounding the Russian capital, said in an online statement.

The drone didn't inflict any damage, Vorobyov said.

He didn't specifically describe the drone as Ukrainian, but said that it likely targeted "a civilian infrastructure object."

Pictures of the drone showed it was a Ukrainian-made type. It reportedly has a range of nearly 500 miles, but isn't capable of carrying a large load of explosives.

Russian forces early Tuesday shot down a Ukrainian drone over the Bryansk region,

local Gov. Aleksandr Bogomaz said in a Telegram post. He said there were no casualties.

Three drones also targeted Russia's Belgorod region on Monday night, with one flying through an apartment window in its namesake capital, local authorities reported. Regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said the drones caused minor damage to buildings and cars but no casualties.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that Ukraine used drones to attack facilities in the Krasnodar region and neighboring Adygea. It said the drones were brought down by electronic warfare assets, adding that one of them crashed into a field and another diverted from its designated flight path and missed an infrastructure facility it was supposed to attack.

While Ukrainian drone strikes on the Russian border regions of Bryansk and Belgorod that lie north of Ukraine's Sumy region aren't unusual, the hits on the Krasnodar and Adygea regions further south are noteworthy.

Blinken warns Asia on dangers of Ukraine war

Associated Press

The Biden administration on Tuesday pledged to support the independence of the five Central Asian nations in a not-so-subtle warning to the former Soviet states that Russia's value as a partner has been badly compromised by its year-old war against Ukraine.

In Kazakhstan for a series of meetings with top Central Asian diplomats, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said no country, particularly those that have traditionally been in Moscow's orbit, can afford to ignore the threats posed by Russian aggression to the international rules-based order and the global economy.

In all of his discussions, Blinken stressed the importance of respect for "sovereignty, territorial integrity

and independence."

The Central Asian states have hewed to a studied position of neutrality on Ukraine, neither supporting Russia's invasion nor U.S. and Western condemnations of the war.

"Ever since being the first nation to recognize Kazakhstan in December of 1991, the United States has been firmly committed to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Kazakhstan and countries across the region," Blinken said. "In our discussions today, I reaffirmed the United States' unwavering support for Kazakhstan, like all nations, to freely determine its future, especially as we mark one year since Russia lost its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in a failed attempt to deny its people that very freedom."

NATO leader pushes for Nordic nations' admission

Associated Press

HELSINKI — NATO membership for Finland and Sweden is "a top priority," the military alliance's chief Jens Stoltenberg said Tuesday, urging members Turkey and Hungary to urgently ratify the Nordic countries' accession.

Stoltenberg told a news conference with Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin in Helsinki that progress is being made on securing membership for the two countries, but didn't disclose details. "I am absolutely confident that both Finland and Sweden will become members of NATO," he added.

"My message has been for a long time ... that time has come to finalize the ratification process. The time is now to ratify in both Budapest and in Ankara," Stoltenberg said.

Stoltenberg repeated that both Finland and Sweden fully meet NATO's entry criteria and "have delivered on what they were supposed to do" after they applied to join the alliance in May. Marin hinted that slowing down the accession process for the two countries risked eroding NATO's credibility and its open door policy for new members.

NATO requires unanimous approval from its existing members to admit new ones. Turkey and Hungary are the only nations in the 30-member military alliance that haven't formally endorsed Sweden and Finland's accession.

Stoltenberg said Turkey has agreed to resume talks with Finland and Sweden on their membership bids in Brussels this month to iron out obstacles.

Snowstorms flanking US as residents recover

Associated Press

BOSTON — Heavy snow booted the United States on Tuesday, with a late-season storm bringing a messy morning commute to the Northeast and leaving California residents to dig out, or in some cases simply wait for help, after yet another storm.

Hundreds of schools across southern New England either closed for the day or delayed opening as the most significant snowfall of what has been a mild winter hit overnight. As much as 7 or 8 inches of snow blanketed some communities by sunrise.

“We’ve had no winter until now,” said Harry Craven, the owner of Highland True Value Hardware and Bike Shop in Holyoke, Mass. “But we’ve had people coming in the last couple days for ice melt and shovels, some people this morning looking for parts to do repairs on snowblowers. By our standards this hasn’t been a blockbuster storm, but I’m happy with it.”

Most flight cancellations or delays were concentrated in the Northeast. There were over 470 flight cancellations in the U.S. and more than 900 delays by midmorning, according to

FlightAware.com.

A winter storm warning covered parts of the Northeast, including Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island, with heavy snow forecast through Tuesday afternoon.

The snow complicated the morning commute on Boston-area highways and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority reported power losses that affected signals on multiple lines and stations. Even after power was restored, residual delays were expected, the MBTA tweeted.

A crash involving tractor-trailers on Interstate 91 in Connecticut caused minor injuries.

“I strongly encourage everyone in Connecticut to stay off the roads on Tuesday morning unless absolutely necessary,” Gov. Ned Lamont said in a statement. Three special elections for the Connecticut House went on as scheduled.

Two to 5 inches of snow fell across New York City, depending on the borough. Parts of Manhattan barely got any, and instead of sticking on heavily trafficked streets and sidewalks, it turned into a mushy mess during

the morning commute. In the Bronx and Brooklyn, there was enough snow that residents had to brush off cars and shovel sidewalks.

The Albany, N.Y., area saw less snow than expected — 2 to 5 inches — but enough to close schools.

Michigan again fought a battle with ice after a new storm that hit Monday left thousands of customers without power in the central part of the state. To the southeast, around Detroit, some customers still lacked power for a sixth day after a previous ice storm.

At the other end of the country, California dug out yet again.

San Bernardino County, east of Los Angeles, declared a state of emergency amid the latest snow event after many mountain residents were trapped in their homes over the weekend. Heavy snow stranded hundreds of motorists at higher elevations, KTLA-TV reported.

Dozens of elementary school children were stranded at a science camp in Crestline for nearly a week, but buses escorted by the state highway patrol eventually evacuated them, the TV station reported. The county fire de-

partment used “specialized snow vehicles” to reach people who need critical medical care.

The new series of storms arrived even as parts of California were still digging out from last week’s powerful storm, which added to a massive snowpack left by a siege of “atmospheric rivers” in December and January.

A cold weather alert was declared for valley and mountain areas north of Los Angeles as overnight temperatures were expected to plunge below freezing for much of the week. Shelters were opened for residents without access to warmth.

While the mountainous areas around Los Angeles tried to dig out, rain fell on lower elevations of California, near the Pacific Coast. Storms were to continue moving through the state until the end of Wednesday. Blizzard warnings were in effect in the Sierra Nevada range in California and Nevada.

The northbound side of Interstate 5, the West Coast’s major north-south highway, closed amid the weather and was littered with disabled vehicles about 90 miles south of the Oregon line. Interstate 80 was closed due to blizzard conditions.

Conservative justices question student loan forgiveness plan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Conservative justices holding the Supreme Court’s majority pressed skeptical questions Tuesday about President Joe Biden’s plan to wipe away or reduce student loans held by millions of Americans.

The high court, with its 6-3 conservative majority, heard arguments on two challenges to the plan, which has so far been blocked by Republican-appointed judges on lower courts.

Arguments were scheduled to last two hours but were expected to go much longer. The public could listen in on the AP YouTube channel or the court’s website.

Several conservative justices spent time grilling the Biden administration’s top Supreme Court lawyer, Elizabeth Prelogar, and suggested that the administration had

exceeded its authority with the program.

Chief Justice John Roberts pointed to the wide impact and expense of the program, which is estimated to cost \$400 billion over 30 years.

“If you’re talking about this in the abstract, I think most casual observers would say if you’re going to give up that much ... money. If you’re going to affect the obligations of that many Americans on a subject that’s of great controversy, they would think that’s something for Congress to act on,” Roberts said.

Roberts’ fellow conservative, Justice Brett Kavanaugh, suggested that the administration was using an “old law” to unilaterally implement a debt relief program that Congress had rejected. He said the situation was familiar: “In the wake of Congress not authorizing the action, the exec-

utive nonetheless doing a massive new program.”

That, he said, “seems problematic.” Kavanaugh noted that the administration was citing the national emergency created by the coronavirus pandemic as authority for the debt relief program. But he argued that some of the “finest moments in the court’s history” have been “pushing back against presidential assertions of emergency power.”

The administration has said 26 million people have applied to have up to \$20,000 in federal student loans forgiven under the plan.

“I’m confident the legal authority to carry that plan is there,” Biden said on Monday, at an event to mark Black History Month.

A decision is expected by late June.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Thieves stealing Apple headphones off heads

NY NEW YORK — Listen up! At least 21 people in New York City have had their fancy Apple headphones stolen right off their heads by a roving team of moped-riding bandits, police said.

The thefts started on Jan. 28 and have typically involved four people on two mopeds riding up to victims from behind, snatching their Apple AirPods Max headphones and then speeding off. The noise-canceling devices currently retail for \$549 a piece.

The sonic swipers have struck all over Manhattan, including one incident in Central Park, with victims ranging in age from 18 to 41, police said. The bulk of the thefts happened in mid-to-late afternoon.

The thieves remain at large, and no arrests have been made.

Unlike AirPods and AirPods Pro, which are small and fit inside the ear, AirPods Max headphones rest over the ears and have an adjustable headband connecting the right and left sides.

3 jailed for scamming over a dozen seniors

RI PROVIDENCE — Three men have been sent to prison for their roles in a so-called grandparent scam that cheated more than a dozen Rhode Island residents between the ages of 79 and 94 out of more than \$300,000 combined, federal prosecutors said.

The defendants contacted the victims and pretended to be a relative or an attorney who needed cash to make bail pay-

ments for a family member, often a grandchild, who had been arrested, U.S. Attorney for Rhode Island Zachary Cunha said in a statement.

The victims were told to provide the cash to a courier who would be sent to their home. At least 14 Rhode Island residents were victimized.

Diego Alarcon, 22, of Union City, N.J., was sentenced to 2½ years in prison. Bryan Valdez-Espinosa, 22, of Union City, N.J., was sentenced to the same term. Jason Hatcher, 40, of New York, was sentenced to 2 years and 9 months in prison.

All three pleaded guilty to wire fraud charges. In addition, Hatcher pleaded guilty to aggravated identity theft. The men were also ordered to pay restitution.

University sent 169 seized baby tarantulas

IA AMES — Baby tarantulas have invaded Iowa State University.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service donated 169 confiscated tarantulas and offered them to the school in Ames.

The tarantulas, some not much bigger than a fingernail, arrived on Valentine's Day and were carefully unboxed by the university's Insect Zoo staff and student workers.

The school said 10 of the tarantulas went to its 17-acre property, called Reiman Gardens. The rest will be raised in the Insect Zoo until they get bigger.

Ginny Mitchell, Insect Zoo education program coordinator, said she hopes to keep half of the tarantulas at Iowa State, where they'll join other venomous spe-

cies of spiders and scorpions as permanent zoo residents. The other half will be offered to other zoos when they are big enough.

Man jailed in crash that killed 2 cyclists, hurt 11

AZ GOODYEAR — A suspect has been arrested in connection with a crash that killed two bicyclists and injured 11 others in a Phoenix suburb, authorities said.

Goodyear police announced that Pedro Quintana-Lujan, 26, was jailed on suspicion of two counts of manslaughter, three counts of aggravated assault, 18 counts of endangerment and two counts of causing serious injury or death by a moving violation.

Police said the suspect was driving a pickup truck hauling a trailer when the vehicle crashed into a group of bicyclists on the Cotton Lane Bridge, a busy highway in Goodyear which is located about 19 miles west of Phoenix.

Quintana-Lujan stayed at the scene of the crash and was cooperating with authorities in their investigation, according to police spokeswoman Lisa Berry.

2 backcountry skiers killed in avalanche

CO DURANGO — Two backcountry skiers died after being caught in an avalanche in southwestern Colorado, officials said.

The skiers had been reported overdue from a trip near Vallecito Reservoir, about 24 miles northeast of Durango. Just before midnight, a helicopter found an avalanche with tracks leading into it but not out of it,

the Colorado Avalanche Information Center said. The two skiers were later found buried in about 4 feet of avalanche debris, the center said in its preliminary report.

A total of six people have now been killed in avalanches in Colorado this snow season. Seven people died late last year, according to the avalanche center.

Damaged rope caused water park copter fall

NJ EAST RUTHERFORD — A damaged rope led to the plunge of a decorative helicopter into a swimming pool at a New Jersey water park, injuring four people, state investigators said.

Just outside New York City, the DreamWorks Water Park at the American Dream complex in East Rutherford reopened after being closed for four days after the decoration fell from the ceiling. One person was taken to a hospital and three others were treated at the park, all for injuries that were not life-threatening, officials said.

The state Department of Community Affairs, which oversees New Jersey amusement parks, investigated with an engineering firm, which said "damage found on the wire rope used to suspend the helicopter was a direct contributing factor to the cause of the wire rope's failure," department spokesperson Lisa Ryan said.

The helicopter was permanently removed, all other remaining park features were deemed safe and the cease-operations order issued by the Amusement Ride Safety unit was lifted, officials said.

— From wire reports



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Catchers wary of coming robo umpires

Associated Press

Seattle Mariners manager Scott Servais spent parts of 11 seasons and nearly 800 games behind home plate as a catcher with four franchises, mostly in the 1990s.

During that era — one dominated by Hall of Famers Mike Piazza and Ivan Rodriguez — the skills needed at backstop were clearly defined.

“Could you throw guys out, how did you do blocking the ball and could you hit with power?” Servais said. “That’s how the position was evaluated.”

A generation later, those attributes have been joined by a more subtle but equally significant skill: pitch framing. During baseball’s data revolution, the fine art of making borderline pitches look like strikes was found to be a game-changing craft — one that could have as much of an impact as Piazza’s power or Rodriguez’s arm.

The calculus, though, could be about to change, along with an equation that’s included the human element for nearly 150 years.

While pitch clocks, bigger bases and other rules changes debut this year at the major league level, the Automated Ball-Strike System will receive its biggest experiment yet at Triple-A. ABS will be used four days per week to call every

pitch at baseball’s highest minor league level. On the other three days, umpires will traditionally call balls and strikes with a challenge system in place — teams will be able to appeal a handful of calls to the so-called robo-zone each game.

To many, ABS has begun to feel inevitable. Umpires have already agreed to allow it at the major league level when it is ready. So within a season or two, everything around home plate could change.

“It’s going to be here,” Servais said.

Others think Major League Baseball, and specifically Commissioner Rob Manfred, don’t recognize how seismically such a shift could alter the sport.

“I don’t see it happening,” said Yankees All-Star and distinguished pitch-framer Jose Trevino. “I don’t think Manfred has any idea what’s going on whenever he talks about that kind of stuff. He’s obviously never put the gear on, so he doesn’t know.”

Manfred, who last summer told ESPN that ABS could reach the majors by 2024, has cautioned this spring that the robo umps still remain in “the evaluation phase.” In order to be officially adopted in the big leagues, ABS would need to be approved by an 11-member competition committee that in-

cludes four players.

“There are issues that are still the topic of really considerable discussion within the ownership group and even more that are going to have to be resolved in the joint committee process with the players,” Manfred said. “The framing issue is one of those. I mean it’s a legitimate concern on the part of at least a subset of players.”

The subset includes some coaches, too, including New York Yankees director of catching Tanner Swanson — a pioneer of sorts in teaching backstops to steal strikes.

An appreciation for pitch framing had been underway for nearly a decade when Swanson jumped from college coaching to join the Minnesota Twins organization before the start of the 2018 season.

Among his ideas that have had the most impact: If catchers received pitches while down on one knee as opposed to a traditional squat, they’d be better positioned to steal strikes near the bottom of the zone. Within just a couple seasons, the one-knee approach he coached with Minnesota was being used across the majors.

“When I got into pro ball, I think it really kind of opened the curtain to like, ‘OK, now this is not only extremely valuable, but this is something that we

should be prioritizing just in terms of the frequency in which it happens relative to all the other skills.” Swanson said.

Swanson preaches subtle movements with the glove on every borderline pitch — just enough trickery to sway even the most well-trained umpire. Even if it came at the expense of blocking pitches or throwing out runners, the data showed framing trumped all other skills.

Swanson has had several notable successes, starting with Mitch Garver in Minnesota and most recently Trevino, who was an All-Star and Gold Glove winner last season. Trevino converted 53.8% of non-swinging strikes on the edges of the zone into strikes — best in the majors, according to MLB’s Statcast.

The knee-down catching technique is already being taught to youth catchers on up, and there’s now an entire generation of big league catchers trained to put pitch presentation first.

“Framing’s always been big,” said Baltimore catcher Adley Rutschman, last year’s AL Rookie of the Year runner-up. “Since probably my junior year in high school, it’s been a big point of emphasis. Got to college, same thing, and in the pros, same thing.”

Cryer, Bonner help No. 7 Bears hold off Oklahoma St.

Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — LJ Cryer and Dale Bonner each scored 15 points, and No. 7 Baylor held off Oklahoma State for a 74-68 victory on Monday night.

Jalen Bridges had 14 points and Adam Flagler added 13 for Baylor (22-8, 11-6 Big 12), which earned its second straight win since dropping consecutive games at Kansas State and Kansas.

The Bears played without

leading scorer Keyonte George, who sprained his right ankle during Saturday’s 81-72 victory over Texas.

John-Michael Wright scored 17 points for Oklahoma State (16-14, 7-10). Caleb Asberry and Quion Williams finished with 12 apiece. The Cowboys also lost 74-58 to the Bears on Jan. 14.

Oklahoma State trailed 67-50 after Bonner made two foul shots with 4:01 left in the rematch. But Moussa Cisse re-

sponded with two free throws, sparking a 15-2 run for the Cowboys.

Bonner made three more from the line and Flagler also made two foul shots to help Baylor close it out in the final seconds.

Baylor coach Scott Drew credited his veteran backcourt for helping his team hold off Oklahoma State’s furious last-minute run.

“With Adam and LJ, it makes

it easy to sleep at night. Dale was tremendous down the stretch,” Drew said. “It starts with your backcourt, they’ve got experience, they made free throws, they take care of the basketball, so you really trust them.”

The Bears got off to a solid start, taking a 41-30 halftime lead. Baylor shot 56% (15-for-27) from the field in the first half, including 8-for-16 from three-point range.

Source: James could miss multiple weeks

Associated Press

LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers may miss multiple weeks with an injury to his right foot, a person familiar with the situation said Monday night.

The full extent of the injury is not yet known and more test results were pending, said the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because neither James nor the Lakers announced anything about a long-term absence.

The Lakers had already ruled James — the NBA's all-

time leading scorer — out for Tuesday's game at Memphis with what they called right foot soreness.

James played 37 minutes in the Lakers' 111-108 win at Dallas on Sunday, helping Los Angeles rally from a 27-point deficit. But he left the arena with a pronounced limp, with video from The Dallas Morning News showing how much the foot was bothering him.

He got hurt in the third quarter, grabbing at the ankle after spending some time on the floor in obvious pain. But he stayed in to finish the game,

noting how important it was to the Lakers' playoff hopes.

"It's been better," James said. "But I definitely wasn't going to the locker room to not finish the game. The importance of this game and then the momentum that we had, I felt like we could steal one after being down."

James leads the Lakers in scoring at 29.5 points per game, and said at the All-Star break last month that the team's closing stretch this season would be some of the most important games he has played — noting he didn't want to miss

the postseason for a second consecutive year.

The Lakers (29-32) started Monday 12th in the Western Conference, a game from 10th and the final spot in the play-in tournament, and only 2½ games behind Dallas in the race for sixth.

The top six teams in each conference are guaranteed playoff berths.

If James — a 19-time All-Star, playing in his 20th NBA season — misses extended time, the Lakers' task of getting into the playoffs figures to become significantly tougher.

Hornets' Ball breaks ankle in win over Pistons

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — LaMelo Ball made six three-pointers before breaking his right ankle in the third quarter, and the Charlotte Hornets held on to beat the Detroit Pistons 117-106 on Monday night for their fifth straight victory.

Terry Rozier scored 22 points, Gordon Hayward had 19 points and rookie Mark Williams added 15 points and 11 rebounds for Charlotte, which is still second-to-last in the Eastern Conference standings — ahead of only Detroit.

Ball finished with 18 points on 6-for-7 shooting from three-point range, his fifth straight game making at least five threes. He was hurt on a non-contact play in the third, and the Hornets announced after the game that X-rays revealed a fracture to his right ankle.

Hayward said Charlotte's players didn't find out about the severity of the injury until after the game, with most of them figuring Ball had just tweaked something.

"It's certainly disappointing because he's a major part of our team and we felt like we were rounding the corner," Hayward said.

Ball's other ankle has been bothersome this season — he's sprained his left ankle three times, limiting him to 36 games.

This time, he hurt his right ankle as he was he was dribbling and attempting to make a move near half court. He fell down, but managed to prevent the ball from going out of bounds. He left the game and did not return.

Hornets coach Steve Clifford didn't say

how long Ball would be out. Charlotte has 19 games left and isn't in playoff contention, so it would be hard to imagine the team rushing him back.

"It's just a basketball ankle, and there is nothing that you can do about that," Clifford said.

Hamidou Diallo scored 23 points, and James Wiseman had his best game since coming to Detroit from Golden State as part of a four-team trade, finishing with 23 points on 9-of-11 shooting. Marvin Bagley added 21 points and 12 rebounds off the bench for Detroit, which has lost five straight.

Knicks 109, Celtics 94: Julius Randle and Immanuel Quickley each scored 23 points, and surging New York won its sixth straight and knocked visiting Boston from the top spot in the NBA.

Celtics All-Star Jayson Tatum struggled through a 6-for-18 shooting performance and was ejected in the fourth quarter after picking up his second technical foul. He finished with 14 points, nine assists and seven rebounds.

Jalen Brunson added 17 points for the Knicks (36-27), who inched ahead of Brooklyn into fifth place in the Eastern Conference.

Malcolm Brogdon scored 22 for the Celtics (44-18). They slipped percentage points behind Milwaukee (43-17), which has won 14 straight games and now owns the NBA's best record.

Marcus Smart added 19 points but Boston missed 20 of its first 22 attempts from three-point range and had its three-game winning

streak snapped.

Heat 101, 76ers 99: Jimmy Butler hit an acrobatic reverse layup in the final minutes and finished with 23 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists as visiting Miami edged Philadelphia.

Butler's spinning move and finishing layup while driving between the Sixers' Joel Embiid and P.J. Tucker gave the Heat a 100-99 lead with 1:28 to play.

Philadelphia rallied from an 11-point deficit in the fourth quarter. Butler added a free throw with 8.1 seconds left.

James Harden had a chance to win the game for the 76ers, but his three-point try at the buzzer bounced off the back of the rim.

Gabe Vincent scored 14 points and Bam Adebayo added 13 as the Heat snapped a four-game skid.

Magic 101, Pelicans 93: Paolo Banchero capped a 29-point performance with three clutch mid-range jumpers in the closing minutes, and visiting Orlando beat New Orleans.

The first two of Banchero's big shots broke ties before he hit another to make it 97-93. Franz Wagner, who had 11 points, added a 10-foot floater from the baseline with 25 seconds left and Orlando held on from there. New Orleans lost its fourth straight.

Markelle Fultz and Moritz Wagner each scored 14 points for Orlando.

Brandon Ingram scored 25 points for New Orleans, which is clinging to the 10th and final Western Conference play-in spot by percentage points over Portland.

Leafs make move to keep pace in East

Associated Press

Kyle Dubas made it clear he was not reacting to trades by division rivals in making the Toronto Maple Leafs' latest move.

They certainly all go hand in hand in a competitive Eastern Conference.

The Leafs acquired forward Sam Lafferty and defenseman Jake McCabe from Chicago on Monday, in the aftermath of division-rival Tampa Bay making another pre-deadline splash and not long after NHL-leading Boston added size and toughness to bulk up for the playoffs.

Toronto sent a conditional 2025 first-round pick, a second-round pick in 2026, prospect Pavel Gogolev and forward Joey Anderson to the Blackhawks for Lafferty, McCabe and conditional fifth-round picks in 2024 and '25. Chicago is retaining half of McCabe's salary.

Dubas, in his fifth season as Leafs general manager, said talks with Chicago counterpart Kyle Davidson predated trades by the Lightning and Bruins, but isn't downplaying the value of keeping up knowing how diffi-

cult the first couple of rounds will be this spring.

"We have to focus on ourselves and worry about ourselves and know it's going to be really tough," Dubas told reporters in Seattle. "We've been through it before, and we know that these are elite, elite competitors."

The Leafs look to again be on a collision course to face the Lightning in the first round of the playoffs, after losing to them in a seven-game series last year. Tampa Bay on Sunday paid a hefty price for forward Tanner Jeannot, sending young defenseman Cal Foote and five draft picks — including a first in 2025 — to Nashville.

The Lightning won the Stanley Cup back to back in 2020 and '21 and went to the final in 2022.

"The reality at the trade deadline is you're going to have to overpay," Lightning GM Julien BriseBois said at a news conference Monday in Tampa. "A lot had to go our way for us to accumulate such a critical mass of good players all at once. My job, my responsibility as the custo-

dian for this group is to sometimes take risks to maximize our return for this era."

Lafferty and McCabe to Toronto continued the flow of talent from sellers in the Western Conference to contenders in the East.

"Everybody wants to put all the really good players in the East on trades," Devils general manager Tom Fitzgerald said with a chuckle. "It's amazing."

The Leafs already traded for Blues captain Ryan O'Reilly and depth forward Noel Acciari to boost their chances of winning a playoff series for the first time in nearly two decades.

But getting through the Atlantic Division with the Lightning and first-place Bruins and the East-at-large with one of the Carolina Hurricanes, Devils or Rangers likely waiting in the conference finals won't be easy.

"The East, it's a powerhouse," Fitzgerald said Sunday night. "It's really a powerhouse."

And that's even before the Rangers get Patrick Kane from Chicago, the last highly anticipated trade before the deadline

Friday that is hinging on New York's salary cap situation. But Fitzgerald also pointed out the Lightning are still the best of the East until someone beats them.

The Leafs would like to do that, and McCabe — signed for two more seasons after this one — certainly strengthens the blue line that has been one of their weaknesses. Lafferty, also under contract beyond this year, gives Toronto more forward depth.

The same goes for Jeannot with Tampa Bay in a trade similar to BriseBois getting Brandon Hagel from Chicago at the deadline a year ago. BriseBois in previous years acquired defenseman David Savard (2021) and forwards Barclay Goodrow and Blake Coleman (2020) and lifted the Cup each time.

Tampa Bay might not be done.

"The focus has been on this trade the last little while," BriseBois said. "Now that we're able to bring that to the final line, we're going to reconvene today and look at whether there are other opportunities out there worth exploring."

Bruins overcome McDavid's 50th for 7th straight win

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Pavel Zacha scored the tiebreaking goal late in the second period and the league-leading Boston Bruins beat the Edmonton Oilers 3-2 Monday night for their seventh straight win.

Nick Foligno and Tomas Nosek also scored for the Bruins, and Dmitry Orlov had two assists for his first points since being acquired from Washington last week. Jeremy Swayman stopped 22 shots to win his eighth in his last 10.

The Bruins became the fastest team to record 46 wins in NHL history, needing just 59 games to do so.

"We have a lot of guys in our

locker room that know how to play the right way and know how to end games," Bruins coach Jim Montgomery said after his team improved to 32-0-2 when leading after 40 minutes.

Boston has its third winning streak of at least seven games this season.

"I think we're proud of our process and what it's allowed us to do and be, but I still think there's room to grow," Foligno said.

Connor McDavid scored twice to reach the 50-goal mark for the first time in his career for the Oilers, who have lost two straight in regulation after a five-game point streak (2-0-3). Still, Edmonton is 11-4-6 in its

last 21 games.

Canucks 5, Stars 4 (OT): Andrei Kuzmenko scored 48 seconds into overtime to lift visiting Vancouver.

Anthony Beauvillier had two goals and Sheldon Dries and Vasily Podkolzin also scored in regulation for the Canucks.

Ducks 4, Blackhawks 2: Max Jones scored the go-ahead goal, Troy Terry had a goal and an assist, and host Anaheim snapped Chicago's five-game winning streak.

Isac Lundestrom and Jakob Silfverberg also scored, and the Ducks won their third straight.

Avalanche 3, Golden Knights 0: Mikko Rantanen scored twice, including 14 seconds into

the game, and Alexandar Georgiev stopped 31 shots to help host Colorado get its sixth straight win.

Rantanen reached the 40-goal mark in a season for the first time in his career.

Senators 6, Red Wings 2: Claude Giroux scored the tiebreaking goal and had three assists, Thomas Chabot had a goal and two assists and host Ottawa beat Detroit.

David Perron and Tyler Bertuzzi scored goals for the Red Wings, who have lost two straight after winning seven of eight. They remained three points behind Pittsburgh for the Eastern Conference's second wild card.