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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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FBI: NAS Pensacola shooting 'act of terrorism'

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The shooting in December at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., that left three sailors dead and eight other personnel wounded was an act of terrorism, according to results of federal investigation released Monday.

Evidence showed when 2nd Lt. Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, a member of the Royal Saudi Air Force, entered a classroom facility on base Dec. 6 and opened fire, he was motivated by jihadist ideology, Attorney General William Barr said during a news conference in Washington to announce the findings of an investigation conducted by the FBI and other state and federal law enforcement agencies.

The investigation revealed Alshamrani, who was at the naval base for pilot training, posted a message on social media on Sept. 11 that said, "the countdown has begun," Barr said. The gunman also posted

other anti-American, anti-Israeli and jihadist messages on social media, and he did so two hours before his attack at the naval base. During Thanksgiving weekend, he visited the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York City.

Concerns that other Saudi students assisted in the attack or held similar ideology led the FBI to investigate all Saudi students in the program. While there is no evidence of assistance or knowledge of the attack by other members of the Saudi military who are training in the United States, 21 students will be sent back home for anti-American social media posts or child pornography, according to Monday's announcement.

The Defense Department worked with Saudi Arabia to withdraw the students from training and coordinated with the Saudi Embassy in the United States to return these students to Saudi Arabia, Pentagon press secretary Alyssa Farah said in a statement.

Barr also said early reports

that other Saudi cadets accompanied Alshamrani and took video of the attack were not true.

"The shooter arrived by himself," he said. "Other Saudi cadets happened to be in the area and, after the attack began, they took some videos of the resulting commotion. They fully cooperated in the investigation, as did the other Saudi cadets who were interviewed by the FBI at Pensacola and at additional bases across the country."

After entering the building Dec. 6, Alshamrani cased the facility before shooting unarmed personnel. He was shot and killed by an Escambia County sheriff's deputy.

During Monday's announcement, Barr took a moment to highlight "acts of courage" by three service members during the shooting spree.

Two Marines, Gunnery Sgt. Ryan Maisel and Staff Sgt. Samuel Mullins, were outside the building when gunfire erupted and ran unarmed into the building to confront

Alshamrani, Barr said. They pulled a fire extinguisher from the wall as they ran toward the gunfire.

"Although they were unable to engage the shooter, they helped save many lives by performing CPR and other medical aid on the victims," Barr said.

He also said Navy Airman Ryan Blackwell was shot five times, yet still managed to cover a fellow sailor with his body to keep her from being shot. He then helped others escape, all while taking additional fire from Alshamrani.

"Airman Blackwell's heroic acts also saved countless lives that day," Barr said.

Barr said investigators still have not been able to access Alshamrani's two cellphones. During the gunfight with first responders, the shooter shot one of the phones. The other phone also was damaged when collected by the FBI. Experts at the FBI were able to make both phones operational, but are still seeking the passwords.

Trump to divert \$7.2B from Pentagon for border wall

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is preparing to divert an additional \$7.2 billion in Pentagon funding for border wall construction this year, five times what Congress authorized him to spend on the project in the 2020 budget, according to internal planning figures obtained by The Washington Post.

The Pentagon funds would be extracted, for the second year in a row, from military construction projects and counter-narcotics funding. According to the plans, the funding would give the government enough

money to complete about 885 miles of new fencing by Spring 2022, far more than the 509 miles the administration has slated for the U.S. border with Mexico.

Trump took \$2.5 billion from military counterdrug programs for border barrier construction in 2019, but this year his administration is planning to take significantly more — \$3.5 billion. Trump administration officials also are planning to take \$3.7 billion in military construction funding, slightly more than the \$3.6 billion diverted in 2019.

The move would bring the total amount of federal funds allocated to border fencing to

\$18.4 billion under Trump, who made the border barrier a priority during his campaign for the presidency in 2016.

He also pledged to make Mexico pay for the barrier, delighting crowds at his rallies.

The Trump administration has completed 101 miles of new barriers so far, according to the latest figures, far less than the 450 miles the president has promised to erect by the end of the year. But construction along the border — largely on land the federal government already owns — has been continuing even as legal challenges have aimed to disrupt it.

During an event at the bor-

der in Yuma, Ariz., last week marking the completion of the 100th mile of barrier, acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said the administration has not fallen behind.

"I can tell you that we remain confident that we are on track to 400, 450 miles that are either completed or under construction by the end of 2020," Wolf told reporters.

It was the first time an administration official had counted barriers "under construction" toward the president's pledge to complete 450 miles by Election Day.

Rust is a \$6B problem for Navy, others

Los Angeles Times

It's a \$6 billion scourge that afflicts Navy destroyers, cruise ships and historic vessels like the Queen Mary without fear or favor.

It's such a problem that professional organizations and conferences are dedicated to its existence — and its suppression.

It's also on your showerhead.

The orange stain of metal corrosion may be a nuisance in the bathroom, but on ships, it can be catastrophic. Hulls can collapse, ballast tanks weaken and motors fail, all because of rust. There's no way to fully eradicate it.

The only option: constant vigilance.

"Ships are full of saltwater systems, they're full of salty ocean air," said Scott Tait, a retired Navy captain who most recently was at the helm of the guided-missile destroyer Zumwalt. "Corrosion through the entire ship is a huge, huge issue."

Coating the metal with a substance — effectively separating it from the water and air — is one way to slow its progress.

An annual conference called MegaRust brings together hundreds of professionals who want to see the latest corrosion-fighting techniques and tech. Live demonstrations of sandblasters are a highlight. People still talk about the year an exhibitor showed off a laser.

But rust prevention itself has consequences. For regular maintenance, a ship must be brought to a dry dock.

Navy ships typically go to a dry dock every five to seven years for repairs and maintenance, including paint restoration, and ships used for freight transport usually go five years between dry dock sessions. For ships that carry commercial cargo, every day spent in dry dock is a day not spent bringing in revenue.

"If it's not dealt with, the cost of going back and trying to correct things that should have been dealt with early can become exorbitant," said Bradley Martin, senior policy researcher at Rand Corp. and a retired Navy captain.

To tackle this never-ending cycle, the Navy uses paints designed to discourage rust on parts of the ship exposed to the

water, including the hull and tanks. Corrosion typically forms where paint gets damaged. When anchors bump against the hulls, that often creates an opportunity for rust.

"The saying down here is: 'Paint is what holds the fleet together,'" said Bill Young, a San Diego-based business unit leader for International Marine and Industrial Applicators, which repairs and primes ship surfaces.

On the bottom of ship hulls, the Navy uses a special epoxy-based red paint to prevent rust and limit barnacle growth. The color is easier for divers to see and indicates to maintenance crews where the underwater hull ends and the upper part begins. But like all things, over time, its luster fades.

This fall, the guided-missile destroyers Stethem and Decatur sailed into a San Diego port to undergo regular maintenance. When the ships were lifted out of the water and settled into a dry dock, the weathering of the hulls was obvious.

The redness on the Decatur's hull was still visible, but the bottom of the Stethem looked more like sand art, with ripples of

faded red, green-gray and black. Brown barnacles marched up its side. Dashes of orange rust formed a stripe, like a lane line on a freeway.

Dealing with rust isn't cheap. According to a 2014 report, the Defense Department has pegged the cost for Navy ships and vessels at \$3 billion, close to a quarter of their overall maintenance expenses. (Recent examples: BAE Systems won two Defense Department contracts totaling \$170 million for two Navy ships in San Diego.) In an email, the Navy bluntly described corrosion control as a "never-ending challenge."

Sailors know the feeling firsthand. Traditionally, they don life vests and protective gear, stand on a "paint float" suspended by ropes over the edge of the ship and chip away at rust with hand scrapers or a high-pressure needle gun.

Elsewhere, sailors will look for rust inside the ship.

"It's necessary, but it's pretty miserable," said Tait, the retired Zumwalt captain. "Busting rust is nobody's favorite thing to do."

Divers find unexploded shell near Yokosuka Naval Base

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Contractors diving near the base docks on Monday found an unexploded artillery shell during a site survey, base spokesman Randall Baucom said.

Yokosuka security responded to the area near Berth 5 to secure a perimeter around the area where the 5-inch munition rested about 22 yards from the shore, Baucom said.

It is unclear whether the shell — believed to be a naval artillery round — is American or Japanese or how old it is because of corrosion, he said.

The dredging company divers found the shell beneath about 43 feet of water.

An explosive ordnance disposal team this week will use small explosives to destroy the munition where it lies "so it is no longer a danger to any future dredging operations," Baucom said.

"There is no threat to personnel and watercraft operating in the area," he added.

Base officials coordinated with the city of Yokosuka, Yokosuka District of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the South Kanto Defense Bureau during the response, he said.

Navy helo crew airlifts ailing fisherman to Guam

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The crew of a Navy helicopter flew an ailing 61-year-old crew member from a fishing boat to a hospital on Guam on Saturday, the Coast Guard said.

The MH-60 Seahawk crew, from Navy Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 on Guam, hoisted the fisherman from the Sheng Hong, a 252-foot Taiwanese-flagged fishing boat, which was about 150 miles south of the U.S. territory, the Coast Guard said in a news release Monday.

The man was found uncon-

scious in his room by other crew members, the Coast Guard said.

He was flown to U.S. Naval Hospital Guam in stable condition. Emergency medical personnel then transported him to Guam Memorial Hospital.

Coast Guard watch-standers in Honolulu received word of the man's condition from the Rescue Coordination Center Taipei at about 2:30 p.m. Hawaii time.

A duty flight surgeon with Squadron 25 recommended the crewmember be medically evacuated as soon as possible, the Coast Guard said.

Iran: Arrests made in downing of airplane

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran said Tuesday that authorities have made arrests for the accidental shootdown of a Ukrainian passenger plane, which killed all 176 people on board and set off protests in the country demanding accountability after officials initially concealed the cause of the crash.

Iran's Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said "some individuals" were arrested after "extensive investigations." His statement on the judiciary's website did not say how many people had been detained or name those arrested.

Iran at first dismissed allegations that a missile had brought down the plane, but in the face of mounting evidence officials acknowledged on Saturday — three days after — that its Revolutionary Guard had shot down the plane by mistake as the force braced for a possible military confrontation with the United States.

The plane, en route from Tehran to the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, was carrying 167 passengers and nine crew members from several countries, including 82 Iranians and 57 Canadians, many of whom were Iranians with dual citizenship. There were several children

US warns of threats in Persian Gulf

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The United States on Tuesday warned of threats to commercial vessels in and around the Persian Gulf in the wake of its confrontation with Iran.

"Heightened military activity and increased political tensions in this region continue to pose serious threats to commercial vessels," the U.S. said in a maritime warning.

"Associated with these threats is a potential for miscalculation or misidentification that could lead to aggressive actions."

It said vessels transiting the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz — through which one-third of all oil traded by sea passes — could encounter GPS interference or communications jamming.

It said some vessels have reported communications from "unknown entities falsely claiming to be U.S. or coalition warships."

among the passengers, including an infant.

Iran's president on Tuesday called for a special court with "a ranking judge and dozens of experts" to be set up to probe the incident.

"The responsibility falls on more than just one person," President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised speech, adding that those found culpable "should be punished."

"There are others, too, and I want that this issue is expressed honestly," he said, without elaborating.

Rouhani called the incident "a painful and unforgivable" mistake and promised that his administration would pursue the case "by all means."

"This is not an ordinary case. The entire the world will be watching this court," he said.

Tensions have been escalating since President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, then reimposed sanctions that had been lifted under the accord.

The deal has quickly unraveled since then, with Iran steadily breaking away from limits on its nuclear program and Europe unable to find ways to keep Tehran committed.

The U.S. sanctions have devastated Iran's economy.

Tensions sharply escalated further on Jan. 3, when a U.S. air strike killed Iran's most powerful commander, Revolutionary

Guard Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, in Baghdad.

In response, Iran launched ballistic missiles on military bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq to avenge Soleimani's killing. The Ukrainian plane was shot down in Tehran as Iranian forces were on alert for possible U.S. retaliation.

While Rouhani pointed to mistakes and negligence, he also repeated the government's line that the plane tragedy was ultimately rooted in U.S. aggression.

"It was the U.S. that made for an agitated environment. It was the U.S. that created an unusual situation. It was the U.S. that threatened and took our beloved (Soleimani)," he said.

House to vote Wednesday to send impeachment articles

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced that the House will vote Wednesday on a resolution appointing House impeachment managers and transmitting the articles of impeachment to the Senate, allowing the trial of President Donald Trump to begin this week.

The speaker initially made the announcement during a closed-door meeting Tuesday morning of House Democrats, according to three officials who requested anonymity to share details of a private meeting. Pelosi later confirmed the move publicly in a statement.

In her statement, Pelosi, D-Calif., said the House had "upheld its Constitutional duty to defend democracy For The People: passing two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump — abuse

of power and obstruction of Congress."

"The President and the Senators will be held accountable," she said.

Pelosi knocked Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., for becoming a co-sponsor of a resolution to dismiss the charges, which she said is the equivalent of "a cover-up."

"The American people will fully understand the Senate's move to begin the trial without witnesses and documents as a pure political cover-up," she said. "Leader McConnell and the President are afraid of more facts coming to light. The American people deserve the truth, and the Constitution demands a trial."

The House impeached Trump on two charges on Dec. 18. Pelosi had held the charges as she sought assurances that the Senate would call witnesses, but decided

late last week to transmit them without an agreement.

The crux of the Democrats' case is the allegation that Trump tried to leverage a White House meeting and military aid, sought by Ukraine to combat Russian military aggression, to pressure Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to launch an investigation of former vice president Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden, as well as a probe of an unfounded theory that Kyiv conspired with Democrats to interfere in the 2016 presidential election.

In anticipation of the historic event, senators in the chamber controlled by McConnell have been maneuvering behind the scenes about whether the trial should include witnesses and who might be summoned to testify.

Judge refuses to reconsider border family separations

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A U.S. judge ruled Monday that the Trump administration is operating within its authority when separating families stopped at the Mexico border, rejecting arguments that it was quietly returning to widespread practices that drew international condemnation.

The American Civil Liberties Union argued that the administration was splitting families over dubious allegations and minor transgressions, including traffic offenses.

It had asked the judge in July to rule on whether the government was justified in separating 911 children during the first year after the judge halted the general practice in June 2018.

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw indicated he was uncomfortable second-guessing

government decisions to separate children on the grounds that parents were considered unfit or dangerous, or in other limited circumstances like criminal history, communicable diseases and doubts about parentage. He found no evidence that the government was abusing its discretion.

“It is an invitation that is potentially massive in scope, invades an area that is particularly within the province of the executive branch to secure the nation’s border and goes beyond this court’s class certification and preliminary injunction orders, which were focused on the administration’s practice of separating families at the border for the purpose of deterring immigration, and failing to reunify those families,” Sabraw wrote in a 26-page decision.

In a partial victory for the ACLU, Sabraw said the government must settle any doubts

about parentage before separating families by using DNA tests that deliver results in about 90 minutes.

The ruling was a rare instance of the San Diego judge siding with the administration. In June 2018, he halted the practice of separating families under a “zero tolerance” policy to deter illegal immigration and ordered that about 2,800 children be quickly reunited with family. Lack of adequate tracking systems at the time made reunification a monumental task.

Sabraw later ordered the administration to identify more than 1,500 additional children who were separated earlier in Trump’s presidency, starting in July 2017. The government is providing information to the ACLU, which, in some cases, has volunteers going door to door in Guatemala.

Pentagon mulls cuts to forces in Africa

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — The Pentagon is considering plans to reduce the number of troops it has in Africa so they can be redeployed to other missions, including a larger role in the Pacific, the military’s top officer said.

“We’re developing options for the secretary to consider, and we are developing those options in coordination with our allies and partners,” Gen. Mark Milley told Agence France-Presse on Monday as he traveled to Brussels to meet with fellow NATO military chiefs.

The topic of a possible U.S. cutback in Africa is likely to come up during closed-door talks with ally France, which uses American logistical and intelligence support for counterterrorism missions in West Africa.

Military assets “could be reduced and then shifted, either to increase readiness of the force in the continental U.S. or shifted to” the Pacific, Milley was quoted as saying.

During the past couple of years, the Pentagon has gone back and forth over what size its force in Africa should be.

Militant groups in Africa pose a threat to U.S. interests on the continent, AFRICOM has said. But so far no group has shown a capacity to pose a serious threat in the West.

That could change, however, AFRICOM has warned. The leaders of some extremist groups, such as al-Shabab in Somalia, have ambitions to strike outside Africa, AFRICOM has said.

There are about 6,000 American military personnel in Africa at any given time, and the U.S. isn’t looking to pull all of them out, Milley said.

“Economy of forces does not mean zero,” he told AFP.

Former naval base set for redevelopment

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Japan will help the Philippines redevelop the former U.S. naval base at Subic Bay, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced.

Philippines finance secretary Carlos Dominguez and Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Toshimitsu Motegi confirmed the plans after they met in Manila on Thursday.

The pair agreed to cooperate in “drawing up a master plan, which would bring out potential for economic development in the Subic Bay area,” according to a Japanese government statement.

Subic Bay was once home to thousands of U.S. sailors and their families before the Navy vacated its bases there in 1992.

It’s still a regular port call for U.S. warships and for Marines who practice beach landings nearby in Zambales province.

The strategic harbor’s importance has grown amid Chinese efforts to build military facilities on artificial islands and claim sovereignty over territory to the west in the South China Sea.

Last June, the U.S. Navy announced it was “exploring the viability of a shipyard in Subic Bay for use as a potential repair and maintenance facility.”

The shipyard’s owner, Hanjin Philippines, declared bankruptcy earlier in 2019 owing \$900 million to South Korean creditors.

A pair of Chinese firms subsequently expressed an interest in buying the facility, sparking alarm in some quarters.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency will help develop the Subic Bay plan, which aims to develop knowledge-based industries, logistics terminals, public utilities and roads to grow the local economy, Bloomberg reported Jan. 9.

Meanwhile, China has financed a \$987 million, 44-mile freight rail line connecting Subic Bay to Clark Freeport, on land once occupied by the U.S. Air Force’s Clark Air Base, the agency reported.

Japan’s interest in Subic Bay was expected, according to Patricio Abinales, a Philippines expert at the University of Hawaii.

“Pundits in Japan have been pushing for Japan to ... aggressively counter Chinese advances in Southeast Asia with their own initiatives,” he said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Sign welcoming people to community found

ME KENNEBUNKPORT — A sign welcoming people to the community of Kennebunkport has been found, police said Monday.

In a Facebook post, police said the sign “was, unfortunately, taken by those who would rather take that which is not their own.”

On Friday police posted that the “Welcome to Kennebunkport” sign posted off the side of the Lanigan Bridge had gone missing. The bridge is a popular spot for visitors and tourists to take photos, often with the sign in the background.

Police did not say if anyone would be facing charges for taking it.

Reports: Man rams cockpit, hits officers

NJ NEWARK — A passenger who sprinted at a plane’s cockpit during a flight, pounding on the door before attacking a flight attendant and fighting with officers at the Newark airport, has been charged with aggravated assault and other crimes, according to media reports.

Matthew Dingley, 28, of New York, was arrested Thursday for injuring the flight attendant and six officers, including one who was hospitalized with four broken ribs.

A passenger on the United Airlines flight from Washington to Newark told NBC that it started when Dingley sprinted at the cockpit and began to pound on the door. The passenger, Mike Egbert, said Dingley then attacked a flight attendant who tried to intervene. Other passengers on the plane brought the situation under control, Egbert said.

The man charged at officers

when the plane landed in Newark, sending them falling down the boarding stairs leading up to the plane, Port Authority spokesman Scott Ladd told NJ.com.

Family: Dirty diapers in Amazon package

NJ JERSEY CITY — A New Jersey family said they received used diapers from Amazon’s delivery service.

Nassly Sales said she was shocked to see diapers covered in what appeared to be fecal matter when she opened her Amazon package, WPIX-TV reported on Friday.

Sales said she purchases diapers for her two daughters each month from the online retail giant’s Amazon Warehouse section, which sells returned items at a discounted rate.

An Amazon spokesperson said the company worked with the family to resolve the issue.

2 children safe after escaping stolen car

ID POCATELLO — Two young children are safe after police say they escaped from the back seat of a stolen car in Idaho.

Idaho State Police said the two kids were under 12 years old and sitting in the back seat of a 2007 Pontiac sedan as their father drove southbound on Interstate 15 near Pocatello on Saturday night, the Idaho State Journal reported. As the father got out of the car to try to help an apparent stranded vehicle in the snow-covered median, state police said, Raymond Aguirre, 24, and Bobbe Jo Torres, 29, jumped into the Pontiac and sped away with the children still inside.

Within an hour, Pocatello police found the car parked at a home. Authorities said Aguirre and Torres were inside

the home, without the children; they were arrested but were uncooperative.

Soon after, a family member of the children called police to report that the kids had escaped and walked to a relative’s home nearby. Police checked on them and returned them to their father unharmed.

Girl, 10, suffers head injury in fall during hike

MD FREDERICK — A 10-year-old girl fell off rocks and suffered a head injury Sunday afternoon while on a hike with her family, according to officials in Maryland.

A medevac helicopter took the girl from Sugarloaf Mountain in Frederick County to Children’s National Hospital in Washington for treatment, news outlets reported. The girl’s injuries weren’t considered life threatening, news outlets reported.

The trail was crowded because the weather was unusually warm for January, according to Carroll Manor Fire Company Chief Mike Smallwood. Rocks on the mountain were slippery from recent rains and fallen leaves, Smallwood said.

Police seek man who hit woman with luggage

NY NEW YORK — The New York Police Department is searching for a man who used luggage in an attack on a woman, leaving her with facial injuries.

Authorities say the 63-year-old woman was walking around 10th Avenue and 51st Street in Manhattan just after the start of the new year, at 12:01 a.m. on Jan. 1. Police say a man with a piece of rolling luggage punched her and knocked her down. He then hit her with the bag before leaving the scene.

Authorities released a photo

and video of the incident, showing the man punching the woman before heading off.

Man said to have taken golf balls, hit golfer

FL OCALA — A Florida man is in jail on charges he beat an elderly golfer after trying to steal his golf balls at a course, officials said.

The Marion County Sheriff’s Office said Tyler Dearden, 22, was taking golf balls from a golfer’s bucket at a club in Ocala.

News outlets said the golfer told him not to do that, and went to report him. An affidavit says that when he returned, Dearden came up to him and stated he wanted to apologize, but he punched him and knocked him to the ground.

Dearden told deputies he was defending himself because the golfer threatened him by pointing a golf club at him.

The golfer suffered from a broken rib, bruises and cuts that required stitches. Dearden was charged with aggravated battery on a person 65 years or older for the Jan. 8 incident.

2 stabbed at Christmas tree burning event

AZ FOUNTAIN HILLS — Authorities say two men were taken to the hospital after a stabbing at a Christmas tree burning event near Fountain Hills.

Rural Metro Fire officials say a group was having a Christmas tree burning event in the area of Bush Highway and State Route 87 when a fight broke out Sunday morning. Two men sustained stab wounds during the altercation, but the severity of their injuries is unclear.

The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office will be investigating the incident.

From wire reports

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LSU caps perfect season with title

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — From small-town Ohio kid to Louisiana Legend, Joe Burrow capped his record-breaking, Heisman-winning season by bringing a national championship to LSU.

Burrow threw five touchdown passes, ran for another score and finished off one of the most accomplished seasons in college football history by leading the top-ranked Tigers to a 42-25 victory against No. 3 Clemson on Monday night in the playoff final.

“He’s one of the greatest players in LSU history,” Tigers coach Ed Orgeron said of Burrow. “He’s done so much for the state of Louisiana and LSU. We are so grateful to Joe Burrow.”

The senior quarterback from The Plains, Ohio, led the Tigers (15-0) to their first national title since 2007 and fourth overall, breaking a few more records along the way in what was already a historic season. The five TD passes and 463 yards

passing are the most for a BCS or College Football Playoff title game, as are his six total touchdowns.

“This is what I wanted to do from the time I was 5 years old, was hoist this trophy, and bringing it back to Louisiana,” Burrow said, then caught himself. “I guess we’re in Louisiana, but staying in Louisiana, we weren’t going to let someone come in here and steal this from us in our home state.

“We have a great fan base that came out and supported us. We were going to keep this thing right here.”

Under a shower of sparkling white, gold and purple confetti, Burrow raised the CFP championship trophy toward the Superdome roof.

The party was on — no doubt already raging on nearby Bourbon Street.

Burrow became the first major college quarterback to throw 60 touchdown passes in a season as LSU snapped defending national champion Clemson’s 29-game winning streak.

For the first time in his college career, Clemson star quarterback Trevor Lawrence was on the losing team. The Tigers (14-1) had won his first 25 starts.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve stood in front of a team after a loss,” Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said.

But on this night, Lawrence (18-for-37 for 234 yards) was no match for Burrow — the Ohio State transfer who threw all of 16 TD passes last season with LSU.

His ascent has been dizzying and unprecedented. Running a version of the New Orleans Saints’ offense that was brought to LSU by 30-year-old assistant coach Joe Brady, Burrow and an array of talented receivers transformed these Tigers into one of the most prolific offenses college football has ever seen.

The Saints’ Drew Brees, Burrow’s idol growing up, could not have done it better.

It was Orgeron’s vision for LSU when he was promoted from interim coach in 2016. There was plenty of skepti-

cism when LSU tabbed the Cajun who had failed in his first crack as a head coach with Mississippi.

Orgeron has proven to be the perfect fit for LSU. Just like Burrow.

After tossing his fifth touchdown pass of the night, a perfectly placed jumped ball to Terrace Marshall Jr. from 24 yards out to make it 42-25 with 12:08 left in the fourth, Burrow signaled TD and strolled to the sideline.

The Superdome is LSU’s dome away from home, about 80 miles from the Tigers’ Baton Rouge campus, and it was rocking.

The LSU band broke out its unofficial anthem, “Neck,” and as the Tigers bounced and waved towels on the sideline, Burrow just sat on the bench, bobbing his head and waving one arm.

Joe Cool. Just doing his thing. Next stop: The NFL Draft, where he will likely be the first pick in April.

Lawrence, vaunted defense let Clemson down

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Clemson relied all year on a strong defense and quarterback Trevor Lawrence to give itself a shot at a second straight national title.

Both let them down against LSU and Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Joe Burrow.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve stood in front a team with a loss,” Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said after LSU’s 42-25 win Monday night.

Things started Clemson’s way as Lawrence led the Tigers to a 17-7 lead the first 20 minutes. Then Burrow and his collection of offensive playmakers ran past the country’s best defense — just like they did to everyone else all season.

Clemson’s bid for a repeat — and a dynasty of three titles in four seasons — ended in a flur-

ry of pitch-perfect touchdown passes from Burrow to Ja’Marr Chase and Thaddeus Moss.

“We could’ve played better,” said Clemson linebacker Isaiah Simmons, the Butkus Award winner. “Obviously, we didn’t play as good as we wanted to. Too many big plays.”

And those plays came in a hurry.

The secondary for Clemson (14-1) surrendered just nine touchdown passes in its first 14 games. It gave up three to LSU in the opening half, including a pair as the Southeastern Conference champions went from 10 points down (its biggest deficit of the year) early in the second quarter to being up 28-17 at halftime.

In the end, Clemson gave up 1,144 yards in its two playoff games, including a semifinal win over Ohio State. It had al-

lowed just 245 per game its first 13.

Burrow picked on what was the strength of Clemson’s defense, its back seven.

Clemson cornerback A.J. Terrell, among the team’s most consistent and talented defenders, was shredded by Burrow and the LSU receivers.

Terrell was outrun by Chase on his first score, a 52-yard touchdown that tied things at 7-all. Then he was the victim once more as Burrow practically placed the ball in Chase’s hands just a few feet over Terrell’s shoulder for a 14-yard scoring pass as LSU went ahead for good, 21-17.

Clemson’s confusion on the back end was evident on LSU’s final first-half TD as Moss was standing by himself in the end zone awaiting Burrow’s simple 6-yard flip to make it 28-17.

“You can’t hold us down forever,” Burrow said.

Clemson did, for a while.

LSU had only 6 yards its first two possessions and punted four times as the Atlantic Coast Conference champs built that 17-7 lead.

Coordinator Brent Venables had gotten the most he could out of versatile defenders like Simmons, safeties Tanner Muse and Nolan Turner and cornerback K’Von Wallace. After losing four linemen to the NFL from last year’s national champions, Clemson used Simmons and Wallace to speed rush from further back.

Clemson’s offense didn’t help much, either. Lawrence was just 18-for-37 for 234 yards and no touchdowns, repeatedly overthrowing receivers. He was also sacked twice and hit hard on several other occasions.

Astros fire GM, manager after scandal

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Houston Astros' sign-stealing scandal cost manager AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow their jobs, and Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora could be next.

Hinch and Luhnow were fired Monday after being suspended by Major League Baseball for the team's illicit use of electronics to steal signs during Houston's run to the 2017 World Series title and again in the 2018 season.

In U.S. sports' largest scandal since the New England Patriots' "Spygate," MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred announced the discipline and strongly hinted that Cora — the Astros bench coach in 2017 — will face equal or more severe punishment. Manfred said Cora developed the sign-stealing system used by the Astros. The Red Sox are under investigation for stealing signs in Cora's first season as manager in 2018, when Boston won the World Series.

Houston was fined \$5 million, the maximum allowed under

the Major League Constitution, as punishment. The Astros will also forfeit their next two first- and second-round amateur draft picks.

The investigation found that the Astros used the video feed from a center field camera to see and decode the opposing catcher's signs. Players banged on a trash can to signal to batters what was coming, believing it would improve the batter's odds of getting a hit.

Sign stealing is a legal and time-honored part of baseball as long as it is done with the naked eye — say, by a baserunner standing on second. Using technology is prohibited.

Astros players disputed whether knowing the pitches seconds in advance helped batters. Houston had fewer wins at home than on the road, winning 94 home games and 110 on the road during the two seasons. There was no sign-stealing system on the road.

"While it is impossible to determine whether the conduct actually impacted the results on the field, the perception of some that it did causes signifi-

cant harm to the game," Manfred said.

Manfred, in his most significant action since becoming commissioner five years ago, said Hinch failed to stop the sign stealing and Luhnow was responsible for the players' conduct even though he made the dubious claim he was not aware. Manfred said owner Jim Crane was not informed.

An hour after MLB announced its punishment, Crane opened a news conference by saying Hinch and Luhnow were fired.

"I have higher standards for the city and the franchise, and I'm going above and beyond MLB's penalty," he said. "We need to move forward with a clean slate."

Both Luhnow's and Hinch's suspensions for the 2020 season were to be without pay. Crane said he will look outside the organization and internally for candidates to replace Luhnow. If he hires internally, the most likely candidate would be Pete Putila, who was promoted to assistant general manager this offseason.

Crane, who said he learned of the discipline this weekend, was visibly upset during Monday's news conference and insisted that Houston's championship, which culminated in a seven-game World Series over the Los Angeles Dodgers, was not tainted.

"We want to be known as playing by the rules," he said. "We broke the rules. We accept the punishment and we're going to move forward ... if you read the report neither (Luhnow or Hinch) implemented this or pushed it through the system and (it) really came from the bottom up."

Hinch's penalty was among the longest for an MLB manager. Brooklyn's Leo Durocher was suspended for one year by Commissioner Happy Chandler in April 1947 for the "accumulation of unpleasant incidents" detrimental to baseball, and Cincinnati's Pete Rose was banned for life by Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti in August 1989 for betting on Reds games while managing the team.

Big East back to beast with four teams in Top 25

Associated Press

It has been a long time since the Big East commanded the spotlight like it does in college basketball these days.

In fact, you probably have to go back about seven years to the days before conference realignment, when Bob Huggins was stalking the sidelines at West Virginia, Rick Pitino was leading Louisville, and the conference tournament at Madison Square Garden might as well have been a proving ground for national championship hopefuls.

Those high-profile schools and others are gone, of course. They've been replaced by such schools as Butler and Creighton and Xavier. But wouldn't you know it? They are a big part of why the Big East is a beast once

again.

The Bulldogs moved into fifth in the latest AP poll this week, climbing one spot after another perfect week. Perennial contender Villanova resides at No. 14, four spots ahead of Seton Hall, while the Bluejays moved into the poll at No. 25 to give the plucky Big East four ranked teams — more than the Atlantic Coast, Pac-12 and Southeastern conferences.

"This league is a grind," said Creighton coach Greg McDermott, whose team knocked off Xavier over the weekend. "We lost two games in a row against a very good Butler team and a very good Villanova team and then you have a very good Xavier team waiting on the other side of that. I think it's very important you have the maturity and focus to understand when

you lose a couple games in this league, you can't throw everything out the window and try something else."

Expect more of the Big East's best teams to trade haymakers this week.

The fireworks begin in earnest on Wednesday night, when Butler (15-1, 3-0) welcomes Seton Hall to Hinkle Fieldhouse. The Bulldogs' lone loss remains a one-point setback against Baylor, a team that merely beat Texas Tech and Kansas on the road last week to climb to No. 2 in the nation. The Pirates (12-4, 2-0) have found their stride and won six straight.

Also on the docket Wednesday night, Xavier (12-5, 1-3) heads to Marquette (11-5, 1-3) in a meeting of teams desperate for a league win, and the

Bluejays (13-4, 2-2) try to continue their roll with a trip to Georgetown.

Chasing perfection

There are only two unbeaten teams left in major college basketball and both should stay that way. Fourth-ranked Auburn (15-0) plays rival Alabama on Wednesday night before a trip to Florida on Saturday, and seventh-ranked San Diego State has lowly Fresno State on Tuesday night before a visit from Nevada this weekend.

The Aztecs are off to their best start since the 2010-11 season, when Kawhi Leonard led them to a 20-0 start and the No. 4 ranking. They wound up with a 6-seed in the NCAA Tournament and advanced to the Sweet 16.

NBA roundup

James helps Lakers win ninth straight

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James scored 23 of his 31 points in a dominant second half, and Dwight Howard added season highs of 21 points and 15 rebounds in the Los Angeles Lakers' ninth consecutive victory, 128-99 over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Monday night.

James added eight assists while passing Isiah Thomas for sole possession of eighth place on the NBA's career list. The longtime Cavaliers superstar led a decisive run during the third quarter and poured it on in the fourth for the Lakers, who still haven't lost since Christmas.

Los Angeles won its third straight game without Anthony Davis, who is out with a bruised backside.

Kevin Love had 21 points and 11 rebounds for Cleveland in the third stop of a six-game road stretch. Two days after the Cavs posted a surprising

win at powerhouse Denver, they couldn't keep up with a franchise icon who hasn't slowed down since he moved to the West Coast.

Pacers 101, 76ers 95: T.J. Warren scored 21 points and blocked a late three-pointer that would have given Philadelphia the lead to help host Indiana hold on.

The Pacers have now beaten the 76ers twice in 14 days, this time after charging back from an 11-point deficit midway through the third quarter. Malcolm Brogdon also had 21 points and added seven rebounds and nine assists.

Thunder 117, Timberwolves 104: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 20 points, a career-high 20 rebounds and 10 assists in his first triple-double, leading visiting Oklahoma City over Minnesota.

Gilgeous-Alexander came in averaging 23.7 points in his previous 13 games but did

much more than score in this one, also matching his career best in assists.

Celtics 113, Bulls 101: Jayson Tatum scored 21 points, Jaylen Brown 19 and host Boston coasted past Chicago.

Enes Kanter had 15 points and nine rebounds, Kemba Walker added 14 points and Marcus Smart had 12 points for the Celtics, who won their second straight after a season-high three-game losing streak.

Trail Blazers 115, Hornets 112: Damian Lillard scored 30 points, including a buzzer-beating three-pointer from nearly halfcourt to end the third quarter, and host Portland handed Charlotte its fifth straight loss.

Anthony Tolliver had a season-high 16 points, all in the fourth quarter, and the Blazers snapped a two-game overall losing streak and a four-game skid at the Moda Center. CJ McCollum finished with 27 points.

Magic 114, Kings 112:

Aaron Gordon made a three-point play with 1.1 seconds remaining, and visiting Orlando beat Sacramento.

Gordon finished with 19 points and nine rebounds in his return to the Magic's lineup after missing one game with calf tightness. Nikola Vucevic had 26 points and 15 rebounds, and Evan Fournier scored 25 points.

Pelicans 117, Pistons 110 (OT): Lonzo Ball scored five of his 17 points in overtime and visiting New Orleans beat Detroit in a matchup of injury-depleted teams.

The Pistons are still missing starters Blake Griffin (knee), Luke Kennard (knee) and Reggie Jackson (back), while the Pelicans played without their top three scorers — Brandon Ingram (knee), Jrue Holiday (elbow) and JJ Redick (hamstring) — along with Derrick Favors (hamstring) and Zion Williamson (knee).

NHL roundup

Allen backstops Blues to ninth home victory in a row

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Backing up Jordan Binnington, Blues goalie Jake Allen knows he needs to make his starts count.

Allen stopped 20 shots and Brayden Schenn had two assists Monday night, leading St. Louis to a 4-1 victory over the Anaheim Ducks.

Making his first start in nine days, Allen improved to 8-3-3 this season. He lost his starting job last January to Binnington, who was called up from the American Hockey League and led the Blues to their first Stanley Cup title. He's been the starter ever since.

"I just try to keep fresh and stay sharp in practice," Allen said. "It wasn't really a busy game for me but I tried to han-

dle the puck as much as I could and get out of the net and talk and keep myself in the game. It felt pretty good."

The Blues won their ninth straight home game, tying the franchise record for one season set in 1991. The run marks the longest home winning streak in the NHL this season. St. Louis has outscored its opponents 36-15 during the streak.

"Night-in and night-out, we're playing our game," coach Craig Berube said. "That's a good thing, for sure. I think we're more consistent and sticking to what works."

Capitals 2, Hurricanes 0: Alex Ovechkin scored two first-period goals and Ilya Samsonov stopped 23 shots for his first career shutout as host

Washington beat Carolina.

The win broke the Capitals' two-game skid and the Hurricanes' three-game winning streak. Carolina posted shutouts in its previous two games.

Flyers 6, Bruins 5 (SO): Boston star Brad Marchand over-skated the puck at center ice on a shootout attempt, clinching host Philadelphia's victory.

Travis Konecny scored in the fifth round of the shootout for the Flyers, and Marchand lined up for his turn needing to score to keep the game going. The two-time All-Star charged toward the resting puck but barely nipped it as he skated past.

Rangers 6, Islanders 2: Artemi Panarin had two goals and three assists to match a career high with five points, and the

host New York Rangers beat the rival Islanders in their first meeting of the season.

Jesper Fast had a goal and two assists, Adam Fox added a goal and an assist, and Chris Kreider and Jacob Trouba also scored to help the Rangers get their third win in four games overall and fifth straight at home. Brady Skjei had two assists and Alexandar Georgiev stopped 32 shots.

Canadiens 2, Flames 0: Carey Price made 31 saves for his second shutout of the season and host Montreal snapped Calgary's five-game winning streak.

Jordan Weal and rookie Ryan Poehling scored for the Canadiens, who have won two straight since losing eight in a row.