

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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## Medal of Honor for Vietnam rescue mission

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Vietnam helicopter pilot Charles “Chuck” Kettles saved dozens of soldiers’ lives during a daring rescue mission in 1967, setting an example of selflessness for the country as it now struggles with divisions and violence, President Barack Obama said Monday.

Kettles, 86, of Michigan became the latest recipient of the Medal of Honor — the nation’s highest military award for heroism — during a ceremony with Obama at the White House.

The retired lieutenant colonel was an Army flight commander who helped evacuate 44 fellow soldiers who were ambushed by larger North Vietnamese forces. During the

rescue, Kettles piloted the lone Huey helicopter that returned to save eight more troops who had been stranded, despite enemy fire and a high probability of his overloaded aircraft being grounded on the battlefield.

“To the dozens of American soldiers that he saved in Vietnam half a century ago, Chuck is the reason they lived and came home, and had children and grandchildren,” Obama said. “Entire family trees [were] made possible by the actions of this one man.”

He said that after a couple of tough weeks in the United States, Kettles’ heroism can show how Americans look out for each other “even when times are tough, even when the odds are against us.”

The country is struggling

with grief and deep divisions over race following ambushes and killings of police in Dallas and Baton Rouge, La. The murders coincided with police shootings of black men that triggered nationwide protests charging racism in law enforcement.

“We have to remember everyone on our team just like Chuck Kettles,” Obama said, echoing his earlier calls for unity. “Sometimes we have to turn around and head back and help those who need a lift.”

Kettles, a former Republican councilman and car dealer in Ypsilanti, spoke to news reporters briefly about the award, saying the focus should be on the 74 Army helicopter crew members who worked with him that day in 1967 to save the 44 infantry soldiers.

“That’s the only thing that really matters, out of all the details,” said Kettles, who wore his dress blue uniform.

In his speech, Obama kidded Kettles about his modesty when recounting the mission.

“As he says, ‘This seems like a hell of a fuss over something that happened 50 years ago,’” Obama said. “Even now, all these years later, Chuck is still defined by the humility that shaped him as a soldier.”

Kettles, who was 37 at the time, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. The upgrade came after a push from a local historian in Michigan and Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich.

He is the 260th recipient from the Vietnam War, and only its 54th living recipient, according to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

## Japanese group seeks return to prewar military posture

BY SETH ROBSON

*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The growing influence of conservative lobby group Nippon Kaigi in Japan largely dovetails with the U.S. desire for the Asian country to expand its role in regional security, but worries opponents who fear a return to pre-World War II values.

The group, seldom mentioned in the media and not widely known outside Japan, wants to revise the nation’s postwar constitution, to restore traditional values, to promote worship of the emperor and to put the state before individuals.

“There’s no underestimating their influence,” said Jeff Kingston, director of Asia Studies at Temple University’s Japan campus in Tokyo.

Nippon Kaigi, which means “Japan Conference,” can mo-

bilize voters in large numbers and has a star-studded membership that includes some of the nation’s most powerful business and political leaders, Kingston said. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is a member, as are four out of five of his Cabinet ministers and 40 percent of the representatives in the Diet, Japan’s parliament.

The 40,000-member organization was formed in 1997 out of displeasure at Japanese leaders’ embrace of a “masochistic” history of the country as laid down by victorious Western nations after the war, Kingston said.

Abe’s gains in this month’s upper house election earned his Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partners a two-thirds majority in both Diet houses. Any constitutional amendment requires two-thirds approval in both houses and then must pass by a major-

ity in a voter referendum.

Nippon Kaigi views the constitution “as something written from the outside with western DNA,” Kingston said. “They don’t like the emphasis on human rights and liberties and think there should be more emphasis on tradition and duties.”

Nippon Kaigi members regard Japan’s Class A war criminals, such as executed wartime Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, as martyrs, and many didn’t approve of rapprochement between Japan and South Korea over the issue of comfort women last year, he said. Comfort women were forced into sexual slavery for Japanese troops during World War II.

Nippon Kaigi chairman Tadae Takubo, a former journalist who worked in Washington, told the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan last week that his group has been unfairly labeled extreme

and that its members want a civilian-controlled military with the same status as armies in other countries.

During the 1991 Gulf War, for example, Japan didn’t send military forces. The country contributed billions of dollars to the war effort but wasn’t mentioned in an advertisement the Kuwaiti government placed in The Washington Post to thank 30 countries that did send forces, he said.

Article 9 of Japan’s constitution renounces war as a means of settling international disputes and forbids a standing army, although Japan’s Self-Defense Forces work closely with their U.S. counterparts.

Despite Abe’s supermajority, he still could face difficulty pursuing changes to the constitution, which has never been amended since being passed in 1947 during the postwar occupation by the U.S.

# Iraqi Shiite cleric: US troops a 'target'

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A powerful Iraqi Shiite cleric said the additional 560 U.S. troops heading to Iraq to upgrade an air base recently retaken from the Islamic State group would be a “target” for his supporters.

Muqtada al-Sadr’s threat came in response to a supporter’s question about the deployment, announced in Baghdad last week by Defense Secretary

Ash Carter.

“They are a target for us,” Al-Sadr wrote on his official website late Sunday.

Al-Sadr’s supporters fought major battles against American troops in the years after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

His militia, the Peace Brigades, is among the largest of several government-sanctioned Shiite armed groups battling the Islamic State group.

In recent months, al-Sadr

has been campaigning for reform and an end to government corruption. Earlier this year, his followers twice stormed the heavily fortified Green Zone, a sprawling complex housing parliament, government ministries and diplomatic missions, including the U.S. Embassy.

On Friday tens of thousands of his supporters rallied in Baghdad.

It was not immediately clear

if al-Sadr’s comment amounted to ordering his followers to attack the American troops headed to the Qayara base in northern Iraq. The latest deployment brings the total U.S. force authorization in the country to 4,647.

Other Shiite militia leaders have made similar threats against U.S. military personnel deployed in Iraq, but they appear to be mainly aimed at pandering to supporters.

## Blue Angels announce new members

BY AARON KIDD

Stars and Stripes

Three Navy F/A-18 pilots, a Marine KC-130 aviator and other officers have been chosen to join the elite Blue Angels flight demonstration team for next year’s air show season.

The new aviators are Lt. Brandon Hempler, 32, a Super Hornet pilot from Training Squadron 22 at Naval Air Sta-

tion Kingsville, Texas; Lt. Damon Kroes, 34, a Hornet instructor pilot from Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101 at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.; and Lt. Nate Scott, 31, a Hornet instructor pilot from Strike Fighter Squadron 106 at Naval Air Station Oceana, Va.

Joining the C-130 demonstration team is Marine Capt. Kyle Maschner, 33, a Hercules pilot

from 1st Marine Aircraft Wing out of Camp Foster, Okinawa.

The other new officers are event coordinator Lt. Dave Steppe, 31; flight surgeon Lt. Juan Guerra, 31; supply officer Lt. Bryan Pace, 32; and administration officer Lt. j.g. Timothy Hawkins, 37.

They’ll join the Blue Angels’ new executive officer, Cmd. Matt Kaslik, who was selected earlier this year.

Each officer was recommended by Rear Adm. Dell Bull, chief of Naval Air Training, and was approved by Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker, chief of Naval Air Forces.

Tragedy struck the squadron on June 2, when Capt. Jeff Kuss was killed during a Blue Angels practice flight in Tennessee. The Navy is still investigating the crash.

## La. gunman was ‘seeking out’ officers

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — A former Marine dressed in black and carrying extra ammunition set out to ambush police in Baton Rouge, authorities said Monday, a day after three law enforcement officers were killed in the attack.

The gunman’s “movements, his direction, his attention was on police officers,” state police Col. Mike Edmonson said. He said the shooter was “seeking out” police.

Three other officers were wounded Sunday, one critically. The gunman, identified as Gavin Long, 29, of Kansas City, Mo., was killed at the scene.

In online posts, a man using

an alias of Long’s said people must fight back after the deaths of black men at the hands of police.

In a video posted July 10, the person making the post says he’s speaking from Dallas after five police officers were fatally shot there during a protest of the deaths of black men at the hands of law enforcement.

He says: “You’ve got to fight back. That’s the only way a bully knows to quit.” In an earlier video, the man says that if anything ever happens to him, he doesn’t want to be linked to any groups and mentioned once belonging to Nation of Islam.

The attack unfolded less than two weeks after Baton Rouge

police fatally shot a black man in a confrontation that sparked nightly protests nationwide.

Although Long was believed to be the only person who fired at officers, authorities were investigating whether he had some kind of help.

“We are not ready to say he acted alone,” state police spokesman Major Doug Cain said Sunday. Two “persons of interest” were detained for questioning in the nearby town of Addis. They were later released.

The shooting began at a gas station on Airline Highway. According to radio traffic, Baton Rouge police answered a report of a man with an assault rifle and were met by gunfire.

## Enlisted women are first to sail on Navy sub

Associated Press

BREMERTON, Wash. — The first group of enlisted women to serve aboard a Navy submarine is preparing to sail on the USS Michigan.

The Kitsap Sun (Wash.) says the guided-missile sub, whose homeport is Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor in Washington, was reconfigured recently to include living quarters for up to three female chief petty officers and 36 female crewmembers.



## American League all about the offense

Associated Press

Right now, the American League standings are all about offense.

The AL's top five teams in runs scored — Boston, Toronto, Cleveland, Baltimore and Texas — are also the five teams that would be in the playoffs if the season ended now. It's no shock that a high-scoring offense can lead to more wins, but the Red Sox and Rangers in particular are in this position despite middling performances on the mound.

Texas and Boston have allowed the fourth- and fifth-most runs in the AL. Perhaps that will change now that Yu Darvish of the Rangers is back from the disabled list — and after the Red Sox traded for All-Star Drew Pomeranz in an attempt to bolster their starting rotation.

That move was an indication that Boston isn't comfortable simply trying to outslug teams all season.

"I still think that — and we've seen it ourselves — when we face good pitching, good pitching is likely to shut down good hitting," Red Sox manager John Farrell said. "I don't see that changing."

Despite leading the league in batting average, on-base percentage and slugging, the Red Sox are a couple games behind Baltimore in the AL East. Texas, meanwhile, has lost nine of its last 12 and now leads Houston by only 4½ games in the AL West. The Rangers had a double-digit advantage toward the end of last month.

The race in the East could be especially intriguing. Baltimore's team ERA of 4.31 isn't much better than Boston's 4.38.

"When you look at, whether it's Baltimore or us or other clubs, you're looking at starting rotation ERA probably in the bottom half, so I think it speaks volumes to the number of runs that can be put up on a more consistent basis than some other clubs," Farrell said. "But I would like to think that the most complete team is the one that emerges to advance."

### At the bottom

There were no 100-game losers in either of the past two seasons, but a whopping four teams are on pace to reach that mark right now. Atlanta (on pace for 106 losses), Minnesota (103), Cincinnati (102) and Tampa Bay (100) are the top candidates for baseball's worst record in 2016.

The Rays snapped an eight-game losing streak with a win over the Orioles on Sunday. Tampa Bay had lost 24 of its previous 27.

### Line of the week

Perhaps the most surprising line of the week belongs to Pittsburgh star Andrew McCutchen. He was the only player to go 0-for-8 in his team's 18-inning victory over Washington on Sunday.

# Tanaka, Yankees top Red Sox

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Just a couple of days into the season's second half, Yankees manager Joe Girardi said his team needed to win this one.

Fortunately for New York, he had the right men on the mound.

Masahiro Tanaka outpitched David Price in their first matchup to win his fourth straight decision, and the Yankees ended Boston's six-game winning streak Sunday night with a 3-1 victory over the Red Sox.

"I think everybody understood how important it was to win today," Tanaka said through a translator.

Starlin Castro keyed New York's three-

run fourth inning with a double that scored Didi Gregorius from first base, snapping a 10-game drought without an RBI.

No. 9 batter Austin Romine lined a go-ahead single with two outs off the glove of diving second baseman Dustin Pedroia. Jacoby Ellsbury added another RBI single off Price, who gave up 11 hits in 52/3 innings as the Yankees prevented a three-game sweep.

"We had to bounce back," Gregorius said. "For us, today showed that we're fighting."

Following a loss on Saturday, Girardi said the Yankees had to turn things around immediately and called Sunday night "probably as important (a) game

that we've had in July in a long time."

New York responded with excellent pitching and a handful of timely hits.

"When you write up a win for us, this is exactly what we need," Romine said.

All-Star slugger Carlos Beltran even called it "a must-win" game. Well aware he could be an attractive trade target if the Yankees (45-46) decide to sell before the Aug. 1 deadline, Beltran said the current 10-game homestand is important to "what the future holds for a lot of guys here."

Price (9-7) had only one strikeout following three consecutive outings with 10. Pedroia homered early for Boston, which remained two games behind first-place Baltimore in the AL East.

# Marte's 18th-inning homer lifts Pirates over Nationals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After more than five hours of baseball between his Pittsburgh Pirates and the Washington Nationals, Starling Marte had all he could take.

"Too many innings," Marte said. "We were tired. It was time for a home run."

Marte's solo home run off Oliver Perez in the 18th inning on Sunday gave the Pirates a 2-1 victory in a game that was the longest for both teams this season. The only longer game in the majors this season came July 1 when Cleveland beat Toronto in 19 innings.

"I just love the grit of our club," said manager Clint Hurdle, whose Pirates snapped a three-game losing streak and avoided a series sweep. "I don't know if it builds character. It definitely reveals character."

It took 17 pitchers combining for 540 pitches in a bullpen- and stadium-emptying affair that lasted 5 hours, 48 minutes. It was close to ending a lot earlier — the Nationals were down to their last strike in the ninth inning when pinch hitter Daniel Murphy hit a tying home run.

Pittsburgh starter Chad Kuhl allowed one hit and two runners and struck out five in six shutout innings.

Washington's Max Scherzer wasn't too bad himself, giving up one run and six hits and struck out seven in seven efficient innings. The homer by an injured Murphy took Scherzer off the hook for what would've been his second loss in a 1-0 game in three starts.

"We were in the middle of a pitchers' duel and when it is like that, every little thing is amplified," Scherzer said.

**Mets 5, Phillies 0:** Jacob deGrom tossed a one-hitter, Curtis Granderson and Asdrubal Cabrera homered and visiting New York beat Philadelphia.

DeGrom (6-4) allowed only a third-inning single to pitcher Zach Eflin and retired 27 of 29 batters. The lanky right-hander struck out seven, walked one and went the distance for the first time in 68

career starts.

**Marlins 6, Cardinals 3:** Ichiro Suzuki doubled, singled twice and had another hit taken away on a replay challenge, leaving him six shy of 3,000, after visiting Miami's win over St. Louis.

The 42-year-old Suzuki made just his second start this month with All-Star Marcell Ozuna getting a day off. He's been largely reduced to pinch hitting behind a set outfield, and singled in that role on Friday.

**Rangers 4, Cubs 1:** Cole Hamels pitched eight dominant innings in his first game at Wrigley Field since throwing a no-hitter at the famed ballpark a year ago, and Texas stopped a four-game slide.

Hamels (10-2) struck out his first six batters. He fanned seven overall and gave up just an unearned run and four hits.

**Reds 1, Brewers 0:** Billy Hamilton dashed home on All-Star Jonathan Lucroy's passed ball with two outs in the ninth inning, giving host Cincinnati the win.

The speedy Hamilton drew a two-out walk from Tyler Thornburgh (3-3). Left-hander Will Smith relieved and walked Joey Votto. Hamilton stole third with Jay Bruce hitting, setting up the game-winning play.

**Tigers 4, Royals 2:** Jarrod Saltalamacchia hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning to lift host Detroit past Kansas City.

After Tyler Collins hit a leadoff single in the ninth, Saltalamacchia won it with a drive off Joakim Soria (3-4) that easily cleared the wall in right field.

**Rays 5, Orioles 2:** Evan Longoria homered twice, Jake Odorizzi picked up his first home victory this season and Tampa Bay won for just the fourth time in 28 games.

Longoria had solo shots in both the first and eighth innings. He has 21 homers this season after his 17th career multihomer game.

**Braves 1, Rockies 0:** Chase d'Arnaud

singled with two outs in the ninth inning off Gonzalez Gernem and host Atlanta avoided a three-game sweep.

It was a rare home victory for the Braves, who are 14-36 at Turner Field and have baseball's worst overall record.

**Indians 6, Twins 1:** Josh Tomlin pitched 7<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> strong innings, Mike Napoli hit one of three Cleveland homers in a road win over Minnesota.

Chris Gimenez had two RBIs off the bench as the division-leading Indians won for just the third time in eight games.

**Angels 8, White Sox 1:** Albert Pujols hit a pair of two-run homers, Jered Weaver pitched seven strong innings and host Los Angeles completed an emphatic three-game sweep of Chicago.

Pujols connected in the first and fourth innings of his 53rd multi-homer game. He has 577 career homers as he pursues Mark McGwire (583) for 10th place on baseball's career list.

**Astros 8, Mariners 1:** Jose Altuve homered among his four hits and drove in three runs, Collin McHugh escaped a pair of bases-loaded jams to pitch six scoreless innings, and visiting Houston beat Seattle.

Altuve had a two-run homer and three singles in five at-bats to raise his American League-leading average to .346.

**Blue Jays 5, Athletics 3:** Josh Donaldson hit a tiebreaking two-run double with two outs in the ninth against his former team and visiting Toronto avoided a three-game sweep.

Troy Tulowitzki homered while Russell Martin and Justin Smoak added two hits apiece for the Blue Jays.

**Diamondbacks 6, Dodgers 5:** Robbie Ray pitched seven scoreless innings, Jake Lamb hit his 21st home run and host Arizona held on to beat Los Angeles.

**Padres 5, Giants 3:** Edwin Jackson held San Francisco hitless until Conor Gillaspie's three-run homer with one out in the seventh inning, and host San Diego held off the Giants for its first sweep of the season.



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# WADA calls for ban of Russia

Associated Press

Russian government officials engineered the drug-fueled corruption of nearly 30 Olympic sports, an investigator found, prompting the World Anti-Doping Agency to call for a ban of the country's entire team from the Rio de Janeiro Games.

The scheme lasted at least four years, covered 28 Olympic sports — both summer and winter — and involved at least 312 positive tests that went unreported at the behest of higher-ups in the country's sports ministry, according to a 97-page report issued Monday.

"A mind-blowing level of corruption within both Russian sport and government," said Travis Tygart, the CEO of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency.

WADA, which hired arbitrator Richard McLaren to lead the investigation, called on the IOC to decline entries of all Russian athletes to this summer's Olympics.

"In the face of such evidence of state-sponsored subversion of anti-doping processes, WADA insists upon imposition of the most serious consequences to protect clean athletes from the scourge of doping in sport," said WADA President Craig Reedie, who is also an IOC member.

IOC President Thomas Bach called the revelations a "shocking and unprecedented attack on the integrity of sports and on the Olympic Games" and said the IOC wouldn't hesitate to apply the toughest sanctions available against those

accused of cheating. The IOC executive board will meet Tuesday to begin sorting through options.

McLaren's report said allegations made by Moscow's former anti-doping lab director about sample switching at the Sochi Olympics went much as described in a New York Times story in May. That program involved dark-of-night bottle tampering in order to switch dirty samples with clean ones; it prevented Russian athletes, including more than a dozen medal winners, from testing positive.

But McLaren said the bottle tampering in Sochi was a one-shot deal. Meanwhile, he described tactics he labeled "disappearing positive methodology" that began in 2011, shortly after Russia's disappointing performance at the Vancouver Olympics. It included the 2013 track world championships in Moscow and was in place as recently as the 2015 swimming world championships in Kazan — when everyone in Russian sports knew they were under the doping microscope.

In short, Russia's deputy minister of sports, Yuri Nagornykh, who was also part of Russia's Olympic Committee, would direct workers at Moscow's anti-doping laboratory of which positive samples to send through and which to hold back. Assisting the plan was Russia's national security service — the FSB, the current version of the Soviet Union's KGB. Russian President Vladimir Putin appointed Nagornykh to his post in 2010. On Monday, Putin said officials named as di-

rectly responsible in the doping scheme would be suspended.

McLaren said out of 577 positive sample screenings, 312 positive results were held back — or labeled "Save" by the lab workers — but that was only a "small slice" of the data that could have been examined. More than 240 of the 312 "Saves" came from track and field and wrestling, but other sports involved included swimming, rowing, snowboarding — even table tennis.

McLaren suggested the numbers could have been higher, but he had only 57 days for his investigation.

Time is crucial because the Olympics begin Aug. 5, and decisions about Russia's participation in Rio must be made.

On Thursday, the Court of Arbitration for Sport will determine the fate of 68 track and field athletes who have petitioned to compete in Rio despite a previously delivered ban of the Russian track team by that sport's federation, the IAAF.

Reedie said WADA is working to establish non-binding guidelines that will help the IOC and international sports federations identify exceptions to the Russian ban — notably, Russian athletes who trained in other countries that had robust, clean anti-doping systems. Those athletes, WADA said, should be allowed to compete in Rio under a neutral flag.

Among those not in favor of a full Russian ban were leaders in gymnastics — a sport that was not among the 28 with non-reported positives.

# Power trims Pagenaud's IndyCar lead with victory

Associated Press

TORONTO — Will Power used pit strategy to grab his third victory of the season and close in on Team Penske teammate Simon Pagenaud in the race for the IndyCar championship.

Power's victory Sunday on the temporary road course at Exhibition Place was his third in four races, and he was second last week at Iowa. He has closed the gap on Pagenaud to 47 points in the standings, and the two are tied for the most wins in IndyCar this season.

"We're definitely closing the gap and we've got to keep pushing, man," the Australian said. "If we can close that gap going into (the season finale) Sonoma, we can do this. We can win this championship, absolutely."

He noted that Scott Dixon snatched the IndyCar title away from teammate Juan Pablo Montoya last year with a strong late surge all the way through Sonoma.

"As long as it's mathematically possible, you should never give up," Power said. "Dixon has been the example of that year after year. He said to me the other day, with six to go, he was 90 back. Just shows you how quickly that can change."

Power pitted on Lap 57 of 85 for his final stop of the race and moments later, defending race winner Josef Newgarden crashed when he ran over the curb in Turn 5. It brought out a caution and ruined the race for pole-sitter Scott Dixon, who had dominated up to that point.

Because Dixon — along with Pagenaud and five others — had yet to pit, they were behind Power and stuck in traffic when they did make their stop.

"It was a late call," Power said. "I couldn't believe I came down pit lane and saw the yellow lights come on. I was so stoked to see yellow lights. It's not often you catch a yellow like that."

"We ran the top three all day. Had a fast car. It's very difficult to pass, so it was going to be a pit stop sequence if you're going to get by anyone, or a restart."

Dixon led 56 laps but couldn't recover from having to pit under yellow and finished eighth. His plight earned sympathy from runner-up Helio Castroneves.

"Sometimes not the fastest car wins the race," said the Brazilian. "It makes the level of everyone better. One day it's going to play on your side, another day it's not going to be on your side."

A caution with four laps remaining — first Jack Hawksworth hit a tire barrier, and in an unrelated incident, Juan Pablo Montoya hit the same barrier — to set up one final restart with one lap remaining. Power got a great start to pull away from teammate Castroneves to give Penske a 1-2 sweep.

Castroneves rallied from an early flat tire to finish second.

"We are never giving up, especially now," he said. "We are not giving up."

Toronto native James Hinchcliffe finished third for his first career podium at his home race.

"As we were coming to the last restart, I saw everyone come to their feet and hoped I didn't screw it up," Hinchcliffe said of the home crowd support.

Newgarden crashed to set up the race-deciding pit sequence and finished last in the 22-car field. The American was coming off a dominating victory last week on the oval at Iowa despite a broken right wrist suffered in a crash at Texas in June, and he appeared to aggravate his injury on the contact with the wall on Sunday.

# Kenseth pulls away at New Hampshire

Associated Press

LOUDON, N.H. — Matt Kenseth was always near the front of the pack. He stalked the leaders and waited for contenders to wilt.

Kyle Busch and Martin Truex Jr. faded down the stretch. So did Denny Hamlin.

It almost seemed like a repeat scenario for Kenseth.

Just like last fall on the same track when Kevin Harvick's lead evaporated when he ran out of fuel, Kenseth pounced. He pulled away down the stretch to win the Sprint Cup race Sunday at New Hampshire Motor Speedway.

Truex and Busch each led more than 120 laps before faltering over the final 75 laps, paving the way for Kenseth to win for the second time this season.

Kenseth also won the New Hampshire race last September. He has 38th career victories.

"Last fall, we squeaked one out, a little more fuel than Kevin and a little different strategy, but not quite as good a car," Kenseth said. "Today, I felt like we had the best car."

NASCAR said Kenseth's No. 20 Toyota failed the post-race laser inspection station and will be brought to the research and development center in Concord, N.C., for more evaluation. The penalty for that kind of failure has traditionally been a 15-point penalty. But this was the first time a race winner was busted since the lasers were instituted in 2013.

Tony Stewart finished second and strengthened his spot inside the top 30 in the points standings. Stewart has a win this season and needs to secure a spot in the top 30 in points to clinch a spot in the Chase for the Sprint Cup championship. He inched from 30th to 28th in points.

Joey Logano was third, followed by Harvick and Greg Biffle.

Alex Bowman had a solid day ruined when he hit the wall late and finished 26th

driving for Dale Earnhardt Jr. Earnhardt was sidelined because he suffered from symptoms of a concussion.

Truex tumbled to 16th when his Toyota suffered a broken shifter and Busch dropped to eighth when he could never break free on late-race restarts.

"We're doing everything right, but we're taking some on the chin here," Truex said.

That allowed Kenseth, Busch's Joe Gibbs Racing teammate, to cruise to the top and snatch the lead with fellow JGR teammate Denny Hamlin with 30 laps. He drove away on the final restart with 11 to go in the 301-mile race and soon the traditional lobster plopped on the hood of his Toyota.

But this race could be the one remembered for truly solidifying Stewart in Chase contention. He snapped an 84-race losing streak last month at Sonoma and was fifth last week at Kentucky Speedway. Smoke is heating up this summer and could be racing for a fourth championship in his final NASCAR season.

"Everyone wants this last year to be good," Stewart said. "Sonoma, I think really helped relax everybody."

Kenseth became the first driver since Kurt Busch in 2004 to win consecutive starts at New Hampshire. He didn't win in his first 27 Cup starts at the track but has three wins in his last three races at the 1.058-mile track.

"It used to be one of my worst places and now I feel like it's one of our better places," he said.

Here are other items of note from Sunday's race:

**Bowman's run:** Bowman enjoyed perhaps the final race of his Sprint Cup career, running inside the top 10 and seemingly in position for his best finish in 72 starts.

But Bowman's run in the No. 88 Chevrolet ended with a thud when a tire issue slammed his car into the wall and he finished 26th in his first Cup race of the season.

"I've never got to actually race with guys

like Jimmie Johnson, Tony Stewart, Kurt Busch, all those guys," he said. "I had a lot of fun passing really good cars."

With four-time champion Jeff Gordon set to take the wheel next week if Earnhardt isn't cleared, Bowman is out of options for the rest of the year.

"The result will not show what a great job @AlexBRacing and the @nationwide88 gang did this weekend. Proud of them guys," Earnhardt tweeted.

Bowman had no top-10 finishes in 71 starts over the 2014-2015 seasons with BK Racing and Tommy Baldwin Racing.

"I don't think I've gotten out of a Cup car with a smile on my face in a while," he said. "It's just so much fun to be able to run up front like that. I've spent two years of my career wondering if I can really do this at the Cup level and today I answered that for myself."

**Unhappy Harvick:** Harvick was hardly happy over his top-five finish.

He went on TV after the race and blasted his Stewart-Haas Racing No. 4 Chevrolet pit crew for continued poor stops that cost him a serious shot at the checkered flag.

"I'm disgusted to tell you the truth. It's the same thing every week. We just make mistake after mistake and until we clean that up we don't have a chance to win races putting ourselves in a hole every time we make a mistake," Harvick said.

He added, "It's really going to have to come from the top. I mean, they are going to have to clamp down and there is no way we can win a championship like this unless they straighten some of this stuff out."

Harvick's crew had problems with lug nuts and the air gun on two separate spots that sunk him from contention.

"We always do something wrong," he said.