

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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First boys emerge from Thai cave

Associated Press

MAE SAI, Thailand — Rescuers in northern Thailand on Sunday extracted four members of a youth soccer team from the cave where they had been trapped for more than two weeks, part of an ongoing operation to rescue the 12 boys and their coach. The head of the operation said it was going “better than expected.”

The operation to rescue the boys, ages 11 to 16, and their 25-year-old coach by having them dive out of the flooded cave began Sunday morning, with expert divers entering the sprawling complex for the com-

plicated, dangerous mission.

Shortly before 8 p.m., Thai navy SEALs, who are taking part in the rescue operation, reported on their official Facebook page that four had been rescued.

Chiang Rai acting Gov. Narongsak Osatanakorn, who is heading the operation, said the four boys had been taken to a hospital.

“The operation went much better than expected,” Narongsak said at a news conference, adding that the healthiest were taken out first. He said the next phase of the operation would start in 10 to 20 hours.

The entire operation to rescue all 13 could last two to four days, depending on weather and water conditions, said army Maj. Gen. Chalongchai Chaiyakam.

Narongsak said earlier in the day that 13 foreign and five Thai divers were taking part in the rescue and that two divers would accompany each boy as they’re extracted gradually.

The only way to bring the boys and their coach out of the cave is by navigating dark, tight passageways filled with muddy water and strong currents, as well as oxygen-depleted air. A former Thai navy SEAL passed

out and died making the dive Friday.

Experienced cave rescue experts consider an underwater escape a last resort, especially with people untrained in diving, as the boys are.

The path out is considered especially complicated because of twists and turns in narrow, flooded passages.

But Narongsak said earlier that mild weather and falling water levels during the last few days had created optimal conditions for an underwater evacuation that won’t last if it rains again.

ISIS ‘capital’ in Afghanistan captured

BY J.P. LAWRENCE

Stars and Stripes

U.S. and Afghan special operations troops in one of their largest joint operations captured a stronghold that Islamic State fighters claimed as their local capital, military officials said Saturday.

No American or Afghan troops were killed in the offensive, which the U.S. military said killed 167 fighters from ISIS — also known as Daesh — and involved a complex, multipronged attack on Gurgoray, a town purported to be the group’s capital in Deh Bala district in Nangarhar province.

“This area, two months ago, was controlled by Daesh,” Brig. Gen. John W. Brennan Jr., commander of NATO forces in eastern Afghanistan, said at a special operations outpost in Deh Bala. “We pushed them into the mountains, so they cannot harm the people here.”

The U.S. and Afghan offensive involved five Special Forces teams and three Afghan commando companies. In total, 600 members of the U.S. Army Special Forces, also known as Green Berets, participated in the mission, which began in April and continued into June, a U.S. military officer said.

Checkpoints manned by Green Berets, Afghan commandos and police now rise high above the valleys of Deh Bala, while American aircraft continue to blast the Gurgoray Valley to stifle movements there by remnants of ISIS.

Nangarhar province is one of the few places Americans continue to fight alongside Afghan forces, and it also has been the deadliest spot for U.S. servicemembers, with a third of American combat deaths last year occurring there.

A team of Green Berets and Afghan commandos arrived in Deh Bala and dug into a posi-

tion on a ridge overlooking the Gurgoray Valley on April 28, Thiel said.

This position, Observation Post Krakken, was east of Gurgoray and fired down into the valley as other U.S. and Afghan forces built up a larger base, Camp Blackbeard, near the Deh Bala district center.

“They put the capital under fire for about 30 days as they built up this space,” Thiel said while at Camp Blackbeard.

Machine gun and mortar fired rose up from Gurgoray and the valley below OP Krakken, and U.S. airstrikes pounded the valley as ISIS fighters dug in. Afghan soldiers fasted during the day and ate only at night during the offensive, which overlapped with the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, Thiel said.

Then helicopters filled with Green Berets and Afghan commandos landed on ridgelines to the northwest of Gurgoray on

May 30 and built outposts overlooking Gurgoray. That maneuver placed ISIS fighters under attack from both west and east, Thiel said.

ISIS fighters had built their defense to guard against an attack from the east, through the valley leading from OP Krakken to Gurgoray, Thiel said. Militants emerged from their positions and attacked the Green Berets and Afghan commandos to their west. Heavy airstrikes called in by Afghan commandos killed more than 100 ISIS fighters.

These Afghan commandos to the west of Gurgoray pushed on the capital. Meanwhile, two companies of commandos and Green Berets attacked from the east and cleared the valley, Thiel said.

The pincer movement trapped ISIS fighters and led to the capture of the city by June 9, Thiel said.

Pompeo upbeat despite N. Korean taunts

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO, Japan — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is sticking with a positive assessment of his talks in Pyongyang despite North Korea calling American denuclearization requests “gangster-like.”

Pompeo initially described discussions with senior communist official Kim Yong Chol in the North’s capital Friday and Saturday as “productive.”

He stuck with the upbeat assessment after arriving in Tokyo for his first visit as Secretary of State Sunday despite complaints by the North that the U.S. was not acting in the spirit of the June 12 summit in Singapore between President

Donald Trump and leader Kim Jong Un.

“The U.S. side came up only with its unilateral and gangster-like demand for denuclearization,” a North Korean foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement to the official KCNA news agency Saturday.

However, Pompeo told reporters in Tokyo that his talks with Kim were “good faith, productive conversation[s].”

The “requests” asked of North Korea were in line with the “unanimous decision by the [United Nations] Security Council on what needs to be achieved,” he said.

“If the requests were gangster-like, then the whole world is a gangster,” Pompeo said,

brushing off the North’s statement as a “stray comment” to the media.

North Korea “did not push back” regarding the broad nature of calls for denuclearization and reaffirmed a commitment to destroy its missile-engine test site, he said.

“I am counting on Chairman Kim to be determined to follow through on the commitments,” said Pompeo, who has held three rounds of talks in Pyongyang.

Pompeo and Kim discussed timelines for denuclearization and further talks, he said.

The two sides also plan to meet on Thursday to discuss the North’s summit promise to return remains of Americans

soldiers killed during the 1950-53 Korean War.

South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha told reporters in Tokyo that Pompeo’s meeting was a “first step” toward implementing denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The South Korea-U.S. alliance is “firm and strong,” she said, adding that recent decisions to suspend annual South Korea-U.S. war games were “taken jointly.”

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis has said that the drills were halted to “create space for our diplomats to negotiate strongly and increase the prospect for a peaceful solution on the peninsula.”

US ships sail in Taiwan Strait

Stars and Stripes

A pair of U.S. warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait over the weekend, according to Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense.

The ministry, in a statement Saturday, identified the ships entering the 110-mile strait between mainland China and Taiwan as the Yokosuka, Japan-based destroyers USS Mustin and USS Benfold.

“Two U.S. Navy ships conducted a routine transit through the international waters of the Taiwan Strait on July 7-8,” U.S. Pacific Fleet spokesman Capt. Charlie Brown told USNI News Saturday. “U.S. Navy ships transit between the South China Sea and East China Sea via the Taiwan Strait and have done so for many years.”

The transit, which comes as the U.S. and China spar over trade and access to international waters, is the first since another American destroyer, the USS John S. McCain, entered the strait last July.

Sailors prep for RIMPAC sea drills

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM — French Navy Lt. Gaetan Lamour faces plenty of challenges as the sole doctor aboard a French frigate — but coping with isolation at sea isn’t something he learned about in medical school.

“You can feel really alone because the Pacific Ocean is so vast,” said Lamour, a crewmember on the *Prairial*, one of the 41 vessels visiting Hawaii for the biennial Rim of the Pacific exercise.

“You really feel on your own during all those weeks,” he said. “Finally, when you arrive at RIMPAC you see all the ships, the sailors, all the medical providers, and it really feels great. Like a family, we do the same jobs.”

As RIMPAC winds up its first week, many of the 25,000 personnel who have gathered in Hawaii and Southern California spent an initial “ashore” phase getting to know their international counterparts as much as they did sharing in-

formation, or training for upcoming amphibious and at-sea drills.

“I think for all of RIMPAC, there is a social and networking aspect to the exercise — and that’s not by accident,” said Lt. Cmdr. Johnathan MacDonald with the Royal Canadian Navy, who is serving as a medical planner for the exercise. “It really allows us during the first week, when we get on ground, to meet one another — the partners we will be working with.”

MacDonald coordinated exchanges of medical personnel between three ships July 2 and July 3, including aboard Australia’s HMAS *Adelaide*, where they demonstrated the challenges of moving an injured patient through the ship’s narrow passages, ladders and stairs.

“It’s potentially small challenges that can grow into bigger ones when a patient is injured on one end of the ship and needs to be moved to the surgical area,” he explained.

The French Navy’s Lamour was one of 12 medical specialists to present topics at a two-day symposium ending Friday

— which included presenters from the Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, Chile, Japan, United States, Singapore, South Korea, India, Canada and the United Kingdom.

During RIMPAC’s ashore phase, ship crews also receive training on sighting and protecting marine mammals.

Meanwhile, troops at Marine Corps Base Hawaii spent the week training with counterparts from partner nations such as Australia, Chile, the Philippines and Japan. The training included small-unit insertions via parachute and rubber raft, urban-clearing operations, and small-arms live fire.

Another opportunity for interaction in the opening days of the exercise came during the inaugural Innovation Fair.

During the fair, exhibitors representing 22 countries shared cutting-edge concepts and emerging technologies, focusing on innovations in sonar, power and fuel, underwater drones, and virtual reality.

Corps: Don't use dating app in recruiting

BY JAMES BOLINGER

Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps has reminded recruiters not to use online matchmaking services to entice youngsters to join up after evidence that someone has been promoting military service on the popular Bumble dating app.

A screenshot posted on Reddit on Monday appears to show a conversation on Bumble between a young man and a

woman who tells him:

"Hey! My name is Kaitlin Robertson and I am with the Marine Corps. I would love to have one of my recruiters sit down and talk with you about your options within the Marine Corps including education, financial stability, hundreds of job opportunities, and free health/dental insurance, just to name a few. I would love to make you part of our Marine Corps family!!"

The young man's quick re-

sponse, "You're not even going to bribe me with crayons?" shows he might well be military material but, according to officials, using dating apps to recruit Marines is against the rules.

"We don't condone use of dating apps for business purposes and no, that Bumble post was not written by a recruiter," Marine Corps Recruiting Command spokesman Gunnery Sgt. Justin Kronenberg said in an email Thursday.

The Marines have searched their personnel records and can't find any Marine named Kaitlin Robertson, Kronenberg told the Washington Times newspaper for a July 3 article.

"Command-wide guidance was reemphasized to ensure recruiters are up to date with online conduct expectations," he said in the article, emphasizing that recruiters are not to form short- or long-term relationships with dating apps.

Journey takes reins of 3rd Marine Division

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Brig. Gen. William Journey took command of the 3rd Marine Division during a ceremony Friday at Camp Courtney, Okinawa.

The former enlisted infantryman-turned-officer with combat experience and a Bronze Star arrives at America's only forward-deployed Marine division — affectionately referred to as "Caltrap Nation" — after a stint leading Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego

and the Western Recruiting Region.

He replaces Maj. Gen. Craig Timberlake, who is retiring after 41 years in uniform.

"I am new to the team and I am new to the Okinawa, but I am no stranger to the Division mission," Journey said, according to a Marine Corps statement.

Journey will oversee an aviation-supported division — split between Hawaii and Okinawa — tasked, primarily, with amphibious assault. His forces include rotational units

forward deployed through the Unit Deployment Program.

A college graduate, Journey enlisted in 1987 as an infantryman and became an officer a year later under the Enlisted Commissioning Program.

He deployed in support of operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, conducted peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He also served as executive officer of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan in 2013.

Timberlake, a Kentucky native and combat veteran, departs Okinawa after about a year and a half on the job. He took over for Maj. Gen. Richard Simcock II in January 2017 at a time of heightened geopolitical tension in the region.

"It is the Marines, sailors, soldiers and family members of 3rd Marine Division that make it great," Timberlake said, according to the statement. "There is no prouder moment within my 41 years of service than when I joined Caltrap Nation."

US Marine charged in assaults at Australian base

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A U.S. Marine on exercise in eastern Australia was arrested Tuesday and charged with multiple assaults after an incident at an Australian army base.

The 20-year-old, whose name hasn't been released, is accused of dragging a 60-year-old female Australian Defence Force employee out of her car as she sat in the Gallipoli Barracks' parking lot and physically assaulting her at about 3:15 p.m.,

the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

The Marine also is accused of a subsequent assault on an off-duty Queensland Police officer who attempted to intervene with military police.

The woman suffered "serious" but non-life-threatening injuries and was taken to a local hospital, Brisbane's The Courier-Mail newspaper and the broadcaster reported. She was treated and later was released.

Police told the newspaper that the Marine and the woman

did not know each other and it is unknown what sparked the attack.

Australia's Defence Department is providing support to the woman.

The Marine — who is with Marine Rotational Force-Darwin — was charged with the serious assault of a person older than 60, assaulting a police officer and willfully damaging the woman's car, the outlets reported. He is due in Brisbane Magistrates Court on July 18.

MRF-Darwin officials ac-

knowledged the arrest Friday but said it was "inappropriate" to provide further details due to the ongoing judicial process.

"The Marine Corps takes this incident very seriously and is working closely with local officials," MRF-Darwin spokesman 1st Lt. Jose Uriarte wrote in an email to Stars and Stripes.

The Gallipoli Barracks are located in Enoggera, which is in northwestern Brisbane.

Flooding's toll climbs in Japan

Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan — Searches continued Sunday night for victims of heavy rainfall that hammered southern Japan for the third straight day, as the government put the death toll at 48, with 28 others presumed dead.

Japanese government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said the whereabouts of 92 other people were unknown, mostly in the southern area of Hiroshima prefecture. More than 100 reports of possible casualties had been received, including some involving cars being swept away, he said. Some 40 helicopters were out on rescue missions.

"Rescue efforts are a battle with time," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters. "The rescue teams are doing their utmost."

The Japan Meteorological Agency said three hours of rainfall in one area in Kochi prefecture reached an accumulated 10.4 inches, the highest since such records started

in 1976.

The assessment of casualties has been difficult because of the widespread area affected by the rainfall, flooding and landslides. Authorities warned that landslides could strike even after rain subsides as the calamity shaped up to be potentially the worst in decades.

In Hiroshima prefecture, water streamed through a residential area, strewn with fallen telephone poles, uprooted trees and mud. Some homes were smashed.

A woman who was reported as missing after getting trapped in her car was found but was pronounced dead, Kyodo news service reported.

In another area in Hiroshima, 12 people went missing when a residential area got sucked into a landslide, and one body was later found.

Kochi prefecture, on Shikoku, issued landslide warnings almost over the entire island. Public broadcaster NHK TV showed overturned cars on roads covered with mud.

A convenience store worker,

who had fled to a nearby rooftop, said water had reached as high as his head.

The Japanese government set up an emergency office, designed for crises such as major earthquakes. Military paddle boats were also being used to take people to dry land.

Okayama prefecture said in a statement that four people had died, eight others were missing and 11 were injured, at least one of them seriously. Seven homes were destroyed, dozens more were damaged, while more than 570 were flooded.

Kyodo reported several deaths in a landslide in Hiroshima and more bodies were retrieved from collapsed housing in the ancient capital of Kyoto, both areas where the rainfall was heavy in the past few days.

Throughout the hard-hit areas, rivers swelled and parked cars sat in pools of water. Japan has sent troops, firefighters, police and other disaster relief. People have also taken to social media to plead for help.

Crews try to contain wildfires

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Firefighters have been able to build containment around several destructive wildfires burning in California.

Officials said Sunday that the 48-square-mile blaze on the California-Oregon border known as the Klamathon fire is now 25 percent contained. It's one of many fires burning around the drought-ridden states in the U.S. West.

The fire killed one woman in her home and destroyed 72 structures, including homes.

Crews have built at least 80 percent containment on a wildfire that destroyed 20 homes in Santa Barbara County and a central San Diego County fire that burned 18 structures.

In heat-stricken Southern California, powerful winds that sent an overnight inferno hopping through the Santa Barbara County community of Goleta vanished Saturday morning, allowing firefighters to extinguish smoldering ruins of an estimated 20 structures, including homes.

Fires also burned on the Marine Corps' sprawling Camp Pendleton base in northern San Diego County.

Among new fires Saturday, a blaze erupted on a steep mountain slope just above the Los Angeles suburb of Burbank and helicopters pounded it with water to try to keep it from getting out of hand.

Southern California fires began erupting Friday as strong high pressure over the West spawned an epic heat wave that saw parts of Los Angeles broil in temperatures up to 117 degrees Fahrenheit.

In Utah, meanwhile, authorities allowed the return of some residents who fled a wildfire near a fishing lake 80 miles southeast of Salt Lake City.

In Colorado, firefighters took advantage of occasional rainstorms to extend their containment lines at several large wildfires.

Trump set to announce justice pick

Associated Press

BERKELEY HEIGHTS, N.J. — President Donald Trump was closing in on his choice to replace retiring Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy on Saturday, making final deliberations from the privacy of his New Jersey golf club.

Clearly relishing the mounting suspense, Trump tweeted early in the morning: "Big decision will soon be made on our next Justice of the Supreme Court!"

The president, who is planning a Monday night announcement from the East Room in the White House, has told reporters that he was focused on four people and "of the four people, I have it down to three or two." He had dinner Friday night with Vice President Mike Pence, who also has been meeting with some of the finalists.

The president's top contenders include federal appeals court judges Brett Kavanaugh and Raymond Kethledge, with judges Thomas Hardiman and Amy Coney Barrett also considered in the mix. As part of the rollout process, the White House has been preparing information packages on all four, said two people familiar with the process who were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Starting from a list of 25 names vetted by conservative groups, Trump also has given serious consideration to federal appeals court judges Amul Thapar and Joan Larsen.

The president enjoyed the suspenseful process leading up to his announcement last year that he was nominating Neil Gorsuch for the high court and is hoping to keep the guessing

game going until he announces his pick Monday in prime time.

The president and White House officials involved in the process have fielded calls and messages and have been on the receiving end of public pleas and op-eds for or against specific candidates ever since Kennedy announced on June 27 that he would retire this summer.

As Trump's list tightened, there was some internal concern that the president's options could be narrowed by the public outcry — particularly what had appeared to be mounting conservative reservations about Kavanaugh. But in recent days the White House has seen the pressure ebb, as Kavanaugh's defenders — most recently Alberto Gonzales, who served as attorney general under President George W. Bush — have provided balance.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Relocated bear travels 70 miles in 7 days

NH HANOVER — A bear that was relocated to northern New Hampshire a week ago after she and her cubs were raiding trash bins and bird feeders near Dartmouth College in Hanover is on the move, traveling nearly 70 miles in seven days as she likely tries to find her way back home and to her cubs.

The bear was captured June 29 and hauled north to Coos County, near the Canadian border, where she was released with a tracking collar. Her four cubs were taken to a center that rehabilitates orphaned cubs.

Town works to protect its covered bridge

VT THETFORD — A small Vermont town is working to protect one of its most prized possessions, a 19th Century covered bridge, from the hazards of modern traffic.

In Thetford, the 1839 Sayre's Covered Bridge over the Ompompanoosuc River has been regularly damaged by vehicles that cross it. Officials said many wooden covered bridges that carry modern traffic are often damaged by oversized and overweight vehicles and inattentive drivers.

In Thetford, the damage to the Sayre's Bridge has been mostly cosmetic. Two years ago, another Vermont covered bridge was destroyed by fire.

Cop fires at dog with shotgun, hits owner

OH CINCINNATI — Cincinnati police say an officer forced to shoot at an aggressive dog wounded the animal's owner.

The Cincinnati Enquirer re-

ported the woman was taken to a hospital for treatment after the shooting around 9 p.m. Friday.

Cincinnati police Lt. Steve Saunders said the officer fired one round with a shotgun as the dog advanced aggressively and a pellet struck the woman, who was trying to contain the animal, in the leg. The dog had earlier bitten a man.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has taken custody of the dog.

Hundreds to join venerable loon count

ME FALMOUTH — Maine bird lovers who have counted one of the state's most beloved birds for three-and-a-half decades are getting ready to do it again.

The Maine Loon Count is taking place on July 21. It's the 35th anniversary of the count, which seeks to quantify the number of mature and young loons in the southern part of the state.

Maine Audubon promotes the annual count. The group said more than 1,400 volunteers are going to participate this year, and more than 50 of them have counted loons for 25 or more years.

Last year's loon count found 2,817 adult loons and 453 chicks.

New markers tout 'Shoeless Wonders'

VA RICHMOND — Ten new historical markers were approved for placement along Virginia roads, including one that tells the story of a Lynchburg-based football team known as the "Shoeless Wonders."

The team of the Presbyterian Orphans' Home played its first

games in 1922. The players received minimal coaching, wore second-hand uniforms and competed without shoes except for a boot used during kickoffs. The team was undefeated for at least six straight seasons.

Another marker tells the story of a World War II German prisoner of war camp in Virginia Beach.

Cops: Suspect took meth to K-9 car

SC GOOSE CREEK — Police said a man who brought drugs with him when he opened a car door and found himself facing a drug enforcement squad simply uttered an expletive and added, "What's up, guys?"

Then he got arrested.

Citing a statement from the Berkeley County, S.C., Sheriff's Office, WCSC-TV reported the team was investigating a drug complaint Thursday night and pulled up in an unmarked K-9-equipped car to encourage the suspected drug dealer to leave the area. The sheriff's office said the suspect wasn't discouraged by the dog's excited yelps.

The statement said Eric Hall, 40, dropped baggies containing suspected meth and kicked them under the police vehicle when he realized who was inside. But he was arrested, along with his passenger, Paul Howard, 40.

Girl, 9, saves baby nephew from drowning

MS SEMINARY — A 9-year-old Mississippi girl saved her toddler nephew from drowning in a creek.

Sandy Caswell told WJTV that she was standing on the edge of Terrible Creek in Collins when she thought she saw a bucket floating in the water

Sunday. She soon realized it was her nephew, Dwight Caswell.

Sandy said she doesn't know how to swim very well herself, but she jumped in after him and pushed him toward his dad.

Man arrested in cemetery vase case

IA MUSCATINE — Police arrested a 44-year-old Muscatine man on suspicion of stealing dozens of brass vases that marked graves at a local cemetery.

The Muscatine Journal said Thomas Edgar Thornburg was arrested Thursday night on suspicion of theft.

A police report filed last month said 15-20 vases had been taken from Muscatine Memorial Park.

Cemetery officials later said up to 50 of the urns may be missing.

Cemetery manger Cindy Allen has said each vase can cost up to \$650 to replace.

Opting out of getting newspaper circulars

LA METAIRIE — A New Orleans-area community now has a "Do Not Toss" ordinance that will let residents put themselves on a list to avoid having newspaper circulars and similar materials thrown on their lawns.

A news release from the government of Jefferson Parish said parish officials have for years received complaints about possible problems with the printed materials. Concerns include papers piling up on the lawns of vacationing residents or the possibility of them clogging storm drains.

From wire reports

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Cormier KOs Miocic for heavyweight title

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Daniel Cormier knocked out the UFC heavyweight champion, argued with a professional wrestler and left the octagon dancing with glee and perfect balance, thanks to one championship belt on each arm.

There will never be another Saturday night like it for the 39-year-old former amateur wrestler who stands on the pinnacle of the UFC.

Make that two pinnacles.

Cormier added the heavyweight championship to his light heavyweight title when he stopped Stipe Miocic in dramatic fashion during the first round of their superfight at UFC 226.

Late in a lively opening round, Cormier (21-1, 1 no-contest) abruptly flattened the UFC's long-reigning heavyweight kingpin with a right elbow out of a clinch. He finished Miocic (18-3) on the ground with 27 seconds left in the round, landing several shots to the defenseless champion's head.

Cormier became the second fighter in UFC history to hold two championship belts simultaneously. Conor McGregor was the UFC's featherweight champ in 2016 when he took the lightweight title from Eddie Alvarez.

"I was a heavyweight for a long time, and I left the division," Cormier said. "I never knew what I could become, but tonight I got the answer. I'm a two-division champion, baby!"

Cormier, a former Strikeforce heavyweight champion who moved down in weight to avoid fighting a good friend, has never lost to anyone except Jon Jones, the star-crossed former light heavyweight champion who

beat him twice. The second victory last summer was changed to a no-contest when Jones failed a doping test, and he remains out of the sport.

Cormier is on top of it with less than a year to go until reaching his self-imposed retirement age of 40.

"I'm 39 years old, and I've been second many times," Cormier said. "But today, I have accomplished everything I ever wanted. From crying in this octagon almost a year ago, to leaving as the heavyweight champion."

Cormier's move up to challenge Miocic was only the third superfight in UFC history between reigning champions of two weight classes. Welterweight champ Georges St. Pierre defended his belt in 2009 by battering lightweight champ BJ Penn, and McGregor accomplished his feat less than two years ago in his most recent MMA fight.

UFC President Dana White said the result confirms Cormier is "one of the best of all time. ... It finally gives him the respect that he deserves. It couldn't happen to a better guy. I said to him, 'If you're the champion for the rest of my career, I'll be a happy man.'"

After beating Miocic, Cormier engaged in a bit of clearly planned theatrics with Brock Lesnar, the professional wrestler and former UFC heavyweight champion. Cormier called Lesnar into the cage, and Lesnar shoved Cormier in the chest while the fighters traded insults to hype a potential future bout.

"Push me now, (and) you're going to sleep later," Cormier yelled at Lesnar. "Your days are in the past. In the stone age."

Lesnar, likely the biggest pay-per-view draw in UFC history, is widely expected to return to MMA early next year. White con-

firmed he'll book Cormier against Lesnar as soon as Lesnar has completed the requisite drug testing, but Cormier said he would like to defend his 205-pound title later this year before fighting Lesnar.

Earlier at UFC 226, heavyweight Derrick Lewis earned a lifeless decision over formerly fearsome prospect Francis Ngannou in the co-main event at the UFC's biggest show of the summer. Welterweight Mike Perry also earned a copiously bloody split-decision victory over Paul Felder.

Lewis (20-5) earned an easy decision victory practically by default when Ngannou (11-3) seemed uninterested in engaging amid heavy boos. Ngannou, who landed a paltry 11 strikes over three rounds, was thought to be the UFC's next heavyweight force before Miocic dominated him in January.

The sometimes outrageous Perry (12-3) ended a two-fight skid with a disciplined, punishing performance against Felder (15-4), who hung in despite seriously injuring his right forearm and getting a frightening cut near his left eye. Both fighters were covered in Felder's blood by the final bell.

Former lightweight champion Anthony Pettis also submitted Michael Chiesa in the second round with a triangle armbar from a bottom position. Pettis (21-7) won for just the third time in eight fights since 2014.

Earlier, unbeaten Brazilian middleweight Paulo Costa stopped Uriah Hall in the second round of a jaw-dropping slugfest between two of the sport's hardest punchers.

Light heavyweight Khalil Rountree kicked off the PPV card with a surprising first-round stoppage of Gokhan Saki, a heralded Dutch kickboxer in his third pro MMA fight.

Croatia ends Russia's World Cup run in PK shootout

Associated Press

SOCHI, Russia — Nyet this time.

Although Russia made it further at this year's World Cup than most anyone expected, it was Croatia that advanced to the semifinals with a 4-3 shootout victory Saturday following a 2-2 draw.

The overachieving hosts, the lowest ranked team in the tournament at No. 70, were trying to make it to the World Cup semifinals for the first time since the Soviet Union finished fourth at the 1966 tournament in England.

Even Russian President Vladimir Putin was taken in by the host nation's surprising run, at least according to Russia coach Stanislav Cherchesov.

"Putin called me during the day, and he called me right now," Cherchesov said. "He congratulated us on a very good game. He said what we showed on the field was great. I told him we were disappointed. He said we should have our eyes open and make the next steps."

The Croats hadn't advanced to the semifinals at the World Cup since 1998, when the country made its first appearance. Croatia will play England in

the semifinals on Wednesday in Moscow.

With the crowd silenced following an extra-time header from Croatia defender Domagoj Vida in the 101st minute, Russia defender Mario Fernandes scored with his own header in the 115th to send the match to yet another penalty shootout.

Fernandes, who was born in Brazil but rejected a chance to play for that country's national team in 2011, sent his penalty kick wide of the net in the shootout, giving Croatia the advantage.

Both goalkeepers made early saves in the shootout, with an

injured Danijel Subasic stopping the opening shot from Fyodor Smolov. Igor Akinfeev later blocked an attempt from Mateo Kovacic.

At 1-1, Fernandes missed his shot — only the second player to miss in any of the four shootouts at this year's World Cup.

The teams then traded two scores each before Ivan Rakitic calmly converted the winner.

It was the second straight time both teams played in a penalty shootout. Russia beat Spain 4-3 and Croatia defeated Denmark 3-2 in the round of 16.

Briefly

Booker signs big 5-year deal with Suns

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Devin Booker, the high-scoring guard at the heart of Phoenix's rebuilding plans, has signed a five-year, \$158 million maximum contract with the Suns.

Booker, 21, tweeted a photo of himself smiling as he signed the contract Saturday night, moments before the Suns announced the deal, which makes him the highest-paid player in the franchise's history.

The 13th overall pick in the 2015 draft out of Kentucky, Booker has averaged 19.8 points per game in his three NBA seasons. He averaged 24.9 points last season, shooting 38 percent from three-point range. He won the NBA three-point contest at All-Star weekend in February.

Booker set a franchise record by scoring 70 points in a game at Boston on March 24, 2017, just the sixth player in NBA history to score that many.

"I am humbled & honored to commit to the Suns organization long term," he wrote. "I loved calling Phoenix home the last 3 seasons as this team & community are special to me. Thank you to the Suns for drafting me and believing in me. I look forward to the future & pursuing a title as a Sun."

The announced signing came five days after Booker and his agent met with Suns

owner Robert Sarver, general manager Ryan McDonough and vice president of basketball operations James Jones in Los Angeles to discuss the contract.

The contract takes effect in the 2019-20 season.

Booker topped 4,000 career points last March 2, becoming the third-youngest player to reach that milestone. Only LeBron James and Kevin Durant were younger.

But while Booker has amassed big individual statistics, there has been little team success. The Suns have missed the playoffs the last eight seasons and had the worst record in the NBA last season at 21-61.

In other NBA news:

■ Timofey Mozgov has been traded for the second time this summer, dealt from Charlotte to Orlando in a three-team deal that also included Chicago.

The Magic sent Bismack Biyombo and two future second-round picks to Charlotte, which traded Mozgov to Orlando. The Magic also got guard Jerian Grant from the Bulls in the deal.

Sagan wins Tour stage

LA ROCHE-SUR-YON, France — World champion Peter Sagan won a sprint finish

to claim the second stage of the Tour de France and the race's overall lead on Sunday, while Chris Froome had a calmer ride after his tumble in the first leg.

Sagan won the mostly flat 113.4-mile leg from Mouilleron-Saint-Germain to the department capital of La Roche-sur-Yon in just over four hours. The Slovakian rider for Bora-Hansgrohe edged Sonny Colbrelli at the finish line after a short uphill push.

Froome, who fell into a ditch near the end of Saturday's opening stage, arrived safely with most of the peloton, 1:07 behind Sagan's leading time.

Kim ties LPGA 54-hole record

ONEIDA, Wis. — Sei Young Kim shot an 8-under-par 64 in the third round of Thornberry Creek LPGA Classic on Saturday to tie the 54-hole record of 24 under and take a commanding eight-stroke lead.

Kim, who had a 63 on Thursday and a 65 on Friday, got rolling with an eagle on No. 3 and added six birdies. A birdie on No. 16 tied Annika Sorenstam's 24 under at the Mizuno Classic in Japan in 2003. After Kim missed a long birdie putt on the par-3 17th, she hit her tee shot on the 390-yard 18th into the left rough.

Jones gets 1st win in chaotic Daytona race

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Erik Jones survived several gnarly wrecks, defending Cup Series champion Martin Truex Jr. on his bumper late and the pressure of overtime at NASCAR's most famous track.

Maybe these so-called "Young Guns" do know how to find victory lane.

Jones won a crash-filled race at Daytona International Speedway, passing Truex on the final lap and then wildly celebrating the first victory of his Cup career. Jones created so much smoke during his burnout that he had trouble breathing afterward.

"How about that race boys and girls?" said Jones, who replaced 2004 series champion Matt Kenseth at Joe Gibbs Racing this year. "I thought we

were out of it and all of a sudden we're right back in it. My first Cup win. My first win at Daytona, My first superspeedway win. What an awesome day."

It was huge for Jones, who clinched a spot in the playoffs. It may have been just as big for the up-and-coming generation of drivers who had gotten most of the promotion and none of the previous wins in 2018.

International Speedway Corp. President John Saunders pinned some of NASCAR's woes on the failure of the new crop of drivers, who have struggled to replace the sport's retired crop of stars.

Saunders said this week the sport needed the young guys to come along and "start to win and build their brands." Ryan Blaney and Darrell Wallace Jr. fired back at Saunders, saying the 20-somethings were trying

their best to win.

Jones delivered the parting shot on the track.

Truex took a jab at the critics, saying "now maybe ISC and those guys can be happier about those things."

Jones was involved in one of the many wrecks, but his No. 20 Toyota was still in good enough shape to get by Truex late. Truex blamed himself for failing to see Jones' run coming in his rear-view mirror.

Truex finished second, followed by AJ Allmendinger, Kasey Kahne and Chris Buescher — another odd top 10 at Daytona. Ty Dillon was sixth, followed by Matt DiBenedetto, Ryan Newman and Daytona 500 champion Austin Dillon.

For Jones, a 22-year-old Michigan native driving in his first season for Joe Gibbs Racing, the breakthrough victory

came in his 57th career start.

Last year's race winner, Ricky Stenhouse Jr., had the most memorable run of the night. He started two early accidents that wrecked more than half the field and was part of two more cautions late.

Stenhouse took out Kurt Busch, Kyle Busch, Brad Keselowski and others. Jones was one of the lucky ones who avoided major damage.

"I just think it's cool for Erik," said Truex, who had Jones as a teammate at Furniture Row Racing last year. "He's a good kid. He's worked hard. I don't know the repercussions of him winning here, what they're going to be. But I think for me, it's a good story. So happy for him, happy for his family and his fans."

Arizona scores 20 runs in win over Padres

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Five home runs, 18 hits, 20 runs.

The Arizona Diamondbacks have never had a better offensive night than they did Saturday against the San Diego Padres.

David Peralta drove in three runs and matched his career best with five hits and the Diamondbacks set a single-game franchise scoring record with a 20-5 rout of the Padres.

“It wasn’t just a good night for me,” Peralta said. “It was a good night for everybody.”

Wil Myers became the third Padres player to homer three times in a game, but San Diego was blown out in its 16th loss in 21 games.

“This day was painful, there is no doubt about it,” Padres

manager Andy Green said. “This day was painful for fans, painful for players, for us. But you have to look at it like tomorrow you have a chance to split the series against a first-place club. It is one loss. It is a painful one. We will remember it, but we will also move on.”

Paul Goldschmidt, Steven Souza Jr., Alex Avila, Nick Ahmed and Ketel Marte homered for the Diamondbacks in breaking the team scoring record set in an 18-7 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers on May 17, 2014.

Goldschmidt, Ahmed and Avila also each had three RBIs.

“I don’t even know where to start, to tell you the truth,” Arizona manager Torey Lovullo said. “You set a franchise record for runs scored in a game,

you know that you’ve done something pretty special.”

The romp kept the Diamondbacks a game ahead of the second-place Dodgers in the NL West.

Arizona jumped on Tyson Ross for eight runs in the first two innings and was up 15-4 after four, scoring at least three runs in four consecutive innings for the first time in franchise history.

Ross (5-7) lasted just two innings, giving up eight runs and seven hits.

“Days like today happen,” he said. “It was a rough one for me out there.”

Ross has allowed 15 runs in seven innings in his last two outings.

Goldschmidt’s three-run shot off reliever Kazuhisa Makita was the slugger’s 20th homer of

the season, the sixth time in his career he has homered 20 times in a season. Souza’s homer off Ross was his first of the season. Avila, just off the disabled list, had two RBI singles to go with his fourth homer of the season.

Despite the huge early lead, Robbie Ray did not last long enough to get the victory. In his third start since coming off the disabled list, Ray allowed four runs, including three homers, and four hits, walking four in 4¹/₃ innings. He left after throwing 97 pitches.

Ray said it was “very frustrating” to not get through the fifth inning despite such a big lead.

Lovullo said he pulled Ray because of the high pitch count, even though it deprived the left-hander of a victory.

MLB roundup

Reynolds drives in career-best 10, Nats win again

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Mark Reynolds homered twice and drove in a career-high 10 runs, Max Scherzer won for the first time since June 5, and the Washington Nationals beat the Miami Marlins 18-4 on Saturday night.

Washington has won three straight and scored a combined 35 runs since calling a players-only meeting on Wednesday after falling under .500 for the first time since May 2.

Reynolds (5-for-5) tied his career high for hits and equaled the Nationals’ RBI record.

Scherzer (11-5), who was 0-4 in his previous five starts, pitched seven innings, allowing four runs on four hits — three of which were home runs. The Nationals had been shut out in three of Scherzer’s previous five starts.

Dodgers 3, Angels 1: At Anaheim, Calif., Ross Stripling pitched another gem and Justin Turner drove in two runs to lead the Los Angeles Dodgers to a win over the Angels.

Stripling (7-2) is making a strong case to make the NL All-Star team with another terrific outing. He allowed just one run and three hits — all by Mike Trout — in six innings. The right-hander struck out seven

and walked none, and lowered his ERA to 2.14.

Red Sox 15, Royals 4: Andrew Benintendi homered, doubled, walked a career-high four times and scored four runs, and Boston routed host Kansas City.

Mookie Betts had four hits, raising his American League-leading average to .343. Ten Red Sox players had RBIs as they scored a season high in runs.

Twins 5, Orioles 4: Kyle Gibson recovered from a rough start to throw seven innings, and Max Kepler homered in his second straight game to lead Minnesota past visiting Baltimore.

Bobby Wilson went 2-for-3 with three RBIs for the Twins, who won their third in a row.

Cubs 8, Reds 7: Javier Baez homered and had four hits — including a game-tying infield single in the eighth — and host Chicago rallied from a five-run deficit.

Anthony Rizzo’s RBI groundout capped a four-run eighth inning for Chicago, which has come from behind in each of its last eight wins.

Phillies 3, Pirates 2: At Pittsburgh, Nick Williams, Scott Kingery and Jorge Alfaro drove in runs on consecutive at-bats in the seventh inning to help first-place Philadelphia win its sixth straight.

Cardinals 3, Giants 2: Carlos Marti-

nez pitched seven effective innings for his third consecutive win and St. Louis beat host San Francisco.

Braves 5, Brewers 1: Anibal Sanchez pitched effectively into the seventh and Freddie Freeman added three hits, lifting visiting Atlanta over Milwaukee.

Tigers 7, Rangers 2: Nicholas Castellanos homered as part of a seven-run first inning for host Detroit, and the Tigers cruised past Texas.

Yankees 8, Blue Jays 5: Luis Severino pitched five innings to earn his major league-leading 14th win, Brett Gardner and Aaron Judge each hit solo home runs, and visiting New York beat Toronto.

Rays 3, Mets 0: Blake Snell blanked the Mets over a career-high-tying 7¹/₃ innings, Wilson Ramos drove in a pair of runs and Tampa Bay downed host New York.

Rockies 5, Mariners 1: Noel Cuevas hit a three-run homer in the seventh inning among his three hits to lead visiting Colorado to a win against Seattle.

Astros 12, White Sox 6: Yuli Gurriel and Alex Bregman each homered and Charlie Morton won his 11th as host Houston beat Chicago for its fifth straight win.

Athletics 6, Indians 3 (11): Stephen Piscotty hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the 11th inning to lead Oakland past host Cleveland.