

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Iran sends out fake warship amid US tensions

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran has moved a mock aircraft carrier to the strategic Strait of Hormuz amid heightened tensions with the United States, satellite photographs released on Monday show, likely signaling the Islamic Republic soon plans to use it for live-fire drills.

An image from Maxar Technologies taken Sunday shows an Iranian fast boat speed toward the carrier, sending waves up in its wake, after a tugboat pulled her out into the strait from the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas.

Iranian state media and officials have yet to acknowledge bringing the replica out to the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil

passes. Its appearance there, however, suggests Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard is preparing an encore of a similar mock-sinking it conducted in 2015.

The U.S. Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet, which patrols Mideast waterways, remains "confident in our naval forces' ability to defend themselves against any maritime threat," said spokeswoman Cmdr. Rebecca Rebarich when asked about the faux carrier's movements.

"We cannot speak to what Iran hopes to gain by building this mockup, or what tactical value they would hope to gain by using such a mock-up in a training or exercise scenario," Rebarich told The Associated Press. "We do not seek conflict,

but remain ready to defend U.S. forces and interests from maritime threats in the region."

The replica resembles the Nimitz-class carriers that the U.S. Navy routinely sails into the Persian Gulf from the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the waterway. The USS Nimitz, the namesake of the class, just entered Mideast waters late last week from the Indian Ocean, likely to replace the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Arabian Sea.

It remains unclear when or if the Nimitz will pass through the Strait of Hormuz or not during its time in the Mideast. The USS Abraham Lincoln, deployed last year as tensions initially spiked, spent months in the Arabian Sea before heading through the strait. The Eisen-

hower came through the strait early last week.

The replica carries 16 mock-ups of fighter jets on its deck, according to the satellite photos taken by Maxar Technologies. The vessel appears to be some 650 feet long and 160 feet wide. A real Nimitz is over 980 feet long and 245 feet wide.

Asked about the fake aircraft carrier, Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, told journalists on a conference call from Kuwait it was part of an "ongoing problem with the regime."

"We would like to see the Iranian regime spend more time on diplomacy and less time on military stunts," Hook said. "Much of its foreign policy relies on intimidation and threats."

N. Korea, UNC mark anniversary of end of the war

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

PANMUNJOM, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un handed out commemorative pistols, while the U.S.-led United Nations Command reaffirmed its commitment to seeking a "lasting peace" on the Korean Peninsula as the rival nations Monday marked the 67th anniversary of the end of the Korean War.

The 1950-53 war ended when the sides signed an armistice instead of a peace treaty, paving the way for decades of tensions that are rising again amid deadlocked diplomatic efforts aimed at improving relations and persuading the North to abandon its nuclear weapons.

"Last year on this day when I stood before you right here in the Freedom House, there was an air of cautious optimism as the world witnessed a significant and powerful reduction of tensions between North and South Korea," said Gen. Robert Abrams, commander of the U.N. Command and U.S. Forces Korea. "Today, this cautious optimism has shifted somewhat to an air of

uncertainty.

"A lasting peace remains our earnest goal," Abrams added during his address Monday in the Freedom House on the South Korean side of the truce village of Panmunjom, with North Korea visible outside the windows behind him.

He also reaffirmed the U.N. Command's "unwavering" commitment to enforcing the armistice until peace is achieved.

North Korea's leader, meanwhile, gave his military commanders "commemorative pistols" Sunday to celebrate the occasion of what state-run media called the "victory in the great Fatherland Liberation War," reflecting the North's official interpretation of how the war ended.

"He directly conferred on the leading officers the significant commemorative pistols bearing his august name in token of his trust," the Korean Central News Agency reported Monday, publishing several photos of the event at the headquarters of the ruling Workers' Party's central committee in Pyongyang.

"The participants held high the pistols and made firm pledges to fight for Kim

Jong Un at the cost of their lives," KCNA added.

The two sides also displayed different approaches to the coronavirus.

Abrams spoke to an audience of South Korean foreign dignitaries who wore masks to protect against the spread of the virus and sat in seats spaced to a safe distance between guests. The North Koreans went mask-less and stood relatively close in the photos published by KCNA.

The armistice was signed in one of the iconic blue buildings that straddle the Military Demarcation Line in Panmunjom by a North Korean general representing the Chinese-backed communist forces and a U.S. general representing the nations fighting under U.N. auspices on behalf of the South.

Abrams also paid homage to the more than 7,500 American troops who remain missing from the war, most believed to have been killed on the North Korean side.

"It's our most sacred obligation to return every last soul to their families. The United Nations Command remains committed to this promise," he said.

USAF powers up flight simulator at Yokota

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — From the outside, the \$30 million C-130J Super Hercules flight simulator that opened Monday at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo looks like it would be at home in orbit.

Inside, the high-tech system near Yokota's runway is laid out like the cockpit of a cargo plane. During simulated flights, a curved mirror reflects five video feeds through the front windows while a hi-fi sound system mimics engine noise and electronic legs tilt the cabin to give those inside the sensation of motion.

The \$7 million building that

houses the simulator includes facilities to train loadmasters as well as a system that teaches crews to identify threats.

During Monday's opening ceremony, 374th Airlift Wing commander Col. Andrew Campbell told a group of squadron and group commanders and enlisted leaders that the facility would provide realistic training for 200 personnel.

"No simulator can fully replicate the heat, glare and vibration and stress of an aircraft," he said, adding that the simulator would allow crews to test themselves again and again.

It will build safety and proficiency for crews and save the Air Force money, Campbell said.

"It costs nearly a half-million

dollars a year to send crews back to the States to do simulated training," he said.

After the facility opened, the 374th Operations Support Squadron assistant director of operations, Maj. Chris Wolff, said crews must practice certain emergency procedures in simulators for safety reasons. It's possible to practice landing an aircraft five times in the simulator in the time it would take to land a real aircraft once, he said.

Former Air Force C-130 pilot Chris Miceli, who works for Nova Technologies, the company that provides instruction and maintenance for the simulator, said Monday that he trained on a more basic device

in the 1980s.

The Yokota simulator showed the base's runway complete with Mount Fuji in the background.

The simulator can model air bases all over the world, although some, such as Yokota, have more detail, he said. The models are updated based on photographs and satellite images.

The advantage of the simulator is it can be used in all weather conditions and crews can practice as much as they want without risk, Miceli added.

The simulator can be linked to wargames and Yokota crews may participate in some U.S.-based exercises using the simulator, he said.

Hawaii bases issue 'all clear' after hurricane

Stars and Stripes

HONOLULU — Hurricane Douglas on Sunday evening slipped north of the island of Oahu, home to most of Hawaii's military bases, a close encounter in the night with a Category 1 storm packing 85 mph sustained winds.

Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, a combined Navy and Air Force installation, sounded "all clear" around 9:30 p.m., according to its official Facebook page. "No hazardous conditions exist. Resume normal operations," the post said.

Marine Corps Base Hawaii,

meanwhile, announced it would operate under normal working conditions Monday, but urged personnel to be cautious during the morning commute and report any unsafe conditions.

The storm appeared headed for the island of Kauai, according to the National Weather Service's Central Pacific Hurricane Center. At 9:08 p.m. Sunday, the eye was about 75 miles from Honolulu, heading west-northwest at 16 mph.

"Gradual weakening is forecast during the next 48 hours, but Douglas is expected to remain a hurricane as it moves

near Kauai later tonight," according to the center's 8 p.m. bulletin.

The Hurricane Hunters of the Air Force 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron were flying their WC-130J aircraft into the storm to gather data, the center added.

Forecasters said Douglas would pass close to Oahu, which is home to most of Hawaii's military installations, including Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Schofield Barracks and Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

Navy ships sortied out of Pearl Harbor beginning Satur-

day morning to avoid the storm. The Air Force meanwhile secured its aircraft at Hickam Airfield.

The Coast Guard set port condition Zulu for Oahu and Kauai islands Sunday morning, which restricts all ports until the storm has passed.

The military moved Oahu to the highest cyclone readiness condition Sunday morning.

Early Monday, Douglas was 60 miles northwest of Lihue, Kauai, with maximum sustained winds of 90 mph.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

Work begins on new combat ship in Wisconsin

Associated Press

MARINETTE, Wis. — Construction of a new Navy combat ship named for the City of Beloit is underway in Marinette.

The ceremonial keel laying took place Wednesday as Lockheed Martin and Fincantieri Marinette Marine began work on the USS Beloit.

As part of a ship-building tradition, a worker welded the initials of the ship's sponsor, Retired Major General Marcia Anderson, into a rectangular piece of steel called the keel plate that will be affixed to the vessel, WLUK-TV reported.

Anderson is from Beloit and is the first Black woman to become a major general in

the U.S. Army Reserve.

"It's unusual in the fact that we normally name ships and other things after former members of the military, senators, other congress people, mayors, governors or large cities, and that's why this is important for this particular ship to be named the USS Beloit," Anderson said.

Vaccine put to final test in 30K volunteers

Associated Press

The world's biggest COVID-19 vaccine study got underway Monday with the first of 30,000 planned volunteers helping to test shots created by the U.S. government — one of several candidates in the final stretch of the global vaccine race.

There's still no guarantee that the experimental vaccine, developed by the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc., will really protect.

Volunteers won't know if they're getting the real shot or a dummy version. After two doses, scientists will closely track which group experiences more infections as they go about their daily routines, especially in areas where the virus still is

spreading unchecked.

"Unfortunately for the United States of America, we have plenty of infections right now" to get that answer, NIH's Dr. Anthony Fauci recently told The Associated Press.

Moderna said the vaccination was done in Savannah, Ga., the first site to get underway among more than seven dozen trial sites scattered around the country.

In Binghamton, N.Y., nurse Melissa Harting said she volunteered as a way "to do my part to help out.

"I'm excited," Harting said before she received a study injection Monday morning. Especially with family members in front-line jobs that could expose them to the virus, "doing

our part to eradicate it is very important to me."

Other vaccines made by China and by Britain's Oxford University began smaller final-stage tests in Brazil and other hard-hit countries earlier this month.

But the U.S. requires its own tests of any vaccine that might be used in the country and has set a high bar. Every month through fall, the government-funded COVID-19 Prevention Network will roll out a new study of a leading candidate — each one with 30,000 different volunteers.

The massive studies aren't just to test if the shots work — they're needed to check each potential vaccine's safety. And following the same study rules

will let scientists eventually compare all the shots.

Next up in August, the final U.S. study of the Oxford shot will begin, followed by plans to test a candidate from Johnson & Johnson in September and Novavax in October — if all goes according to schedule. Pfizer Inc. is planning its own 30,000-person study this summer.

"These trials need to be multigenerational, they need to be multiethnic, they need to reflect the diversity of the United States population," Corey told a vaccine meeting last week.

If everything goes right with the final studies, it still will take months for the first data to trickle in from the Moderna test, followed by the Oxford one.

Trump's national security adviser has tested positive

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's national security adviser Robert O'Brien has tested positive for the coronavirus — making him the highest-ranking official to test positive.

That's according to two people familiar with the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss it by name. The White House confirmed that O'Brien has mild symptoms and "has been self-isolating and working from a secure location off site."

Officials did not respond to questions about the last time the president and O'Brien had contact, but the White House insisted that, "There is no risk of exposure to the President or the Vice President" and that the "work of the National Security Council continues uninterrupted."

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow told reporters Monday morning that O'Brien's daughter also has the virus, and that is how they think he was exposed.

O'Brien is the highest-ranking White House official known to have contracted the virus and the first since May, when a personal valet to the president and the vice president's press secretary tested positive for the virus that has now infected more than 4 million people nationwide. Numerous U.S. Secret Service agents and Trump campaign staffers have also tested positive, including national finance chair Kimberly Guilfoyle, who is the girlfriend of Trump's oldest son, Donald Trump Jr.

Senior White House staff and anyone who comes into close contact with the president and vice president are tested for the virus daily, but mask-wearing remains lax at the White House.

Trump, who has long dismissed the severity of the virus and claimed wrongly earlier this month that "99 percent" of cases are "totally harmless," said in a recent interview on Fox News Channel that he had personally "lost five people, probably six, actually, as of this moment, I think, pretty soon" to the virus.

No new virus cases for US Marines on Okinawa

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Marine Corps on Okinawa announced Monday that it had no new coronavirus cases to report within the last 24 hours and it was relaxing certain off-base restrictions for essential services.

That's a respite for the Marines, which this month has reported, directly or through Okinawa prefecture, 232 infections, most stemming from a pair of clusters at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and Camp Hansen. The outbreaks began at MCAS Futenma with cases reported there July 7.

Monday's announcement follows a three-day period in which Marine Corps Installations Pacific reported 72 new infections. The Marines maintain that while the number of cases at its Okinawa bases remains high, they have the outbreak under control through aggressive contact tracing and testing.

"We continue to test large groups of individuals and have

been re-testing many already placed in [restriction of movement] before they return to work," said a post Monday on the Marine Corps installations official Facebook page. "We are also phasing in a new policy to test all inbound personnel and will notify those who will be tested."

Beginning Tuesday, Marines in Japan may once again participate in off-base outdoor fitness activities and make medical and veterinary appointments, visit banks and grocers, pay bills, visit auto mechanics and use other essential off-base services, including schools and child day care centers, said a III Marine Expeditionary Force statement released Monday evening.

III MEF personnel are still barred from participating in off-base liberty and recreational activities.

"After rigorous contact tracing and conducting more than 4,500 COVID-19 tests in the past month, [Marine Forces Japan] had been able to identify two localized clusters," the III MEF statement said.

Flash bangs used to clear protesters in Portland

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. — A night that started with a reported shooting and a bag containing loaded rifle magazines and Molotov cocktails amid a peaceful protest morphed into an intense early morning confrontation between demonstrators and law enforcement in Oregon's largest city.

U.S. agents repeatedly fired what appeared to be tear gas, flash bangs and pepper balls early Monday to clear a mass of protesters outside the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse in Portland. Some protesters had climbed over the fence surrounding the courthouse, while others shot fireworks, banged on the fence and projected lights on the building.

The federal courthouse has been a place of contention as the city has seen nightly protests for two months since the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May. President Donald Trump said he sent federal agents to Portland to halt the unrest but state and local officials said they are making the situation worse.

The protest late Sunday started peacefully, with organizers giving speeches and leading chants with the crowd. But things intensified as the night wore on. U.S. agents declared an "unlawful assembly," and just after 1 a.m., confronted protesters on the street and worked to clear the area. Several people were seen being detained, but it was not immediately clear how many may have been arrested.

Law enforcement spent hours working to disperse the crowd. At times, protesters scattered amid flash bangs. Officers deployed more tear gas and less-lethal munitions and formed a line to push back demonstrators. Many dispersed, but several protesters remained well after 2 a.m.

About 4K federal workers say they contracted virus at work

The Washington Post

About 4,000 federal employees are seeking disability compensation on grounds that they contracted the novel coronavirus at work, while survivors of 60 deceased employees are seeking death benefits for the same reason.

The total number of claims is expected to increase to 6,000 within weeks, according to a report that amounts to one of the first accountings of the pandemic's impact on the health of the federal workforce.

The report by the Labor Department's inspector general assessed coronavirus-related trends in workers' compensation programs including the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, which covers the 2.1 million employees of executive branch departments and agencies plus the 630,000 employees

of the semi-independent U.S. Postal Service.

The report said that soon after the pandemic was declared in March, the FECA program took several steps to prepare for coronavirus-related claims, including to designate occupations such as law enforcement, first responders and front-line medical and public health personnel as at the highest risk of contracting the virus while at work.

For those occupations, the program "will accept that the exposure to COVID-19 was proximately caused by the nature of the employment and will only require medical evidence that establishes a diagnosis of COVID-19, such as a positive COVID-19 test result," it said. Those in other types of positions must show that the disease was employment-related, as with any other type of

injury or illness claim.

Employees of three departments with high concentrations of jobs deemed to carry the highest risk of exposure — Homeland Security, Justice and Veterans Affairs — accounted for most of the 4,011 claims filed through July 23.

Of those, 1,623 had been granted, fewer than seven denied, 25 withdrawn and the rest were waiting to be adjudicated — including all of the death claims — according to data provided by the Labor Department that are more current than those in the inspector general report.

As of Friday, the largest, the Defense Department, reported 5,096 total infections among its roughly 750,000 civilian employees dating to March, of whom 257 were currently hospitalized and 1,841 recovered, with 32 deaths.

John Lewis carried across Selma bridge

Associated Press

SELMA, Ala. — The late U.S. Rep. John Lewis crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., for the final time Sunday as remembrances continue for the civil rights icon.

The bridge became a landmark in the fight for racial justice when Lewis and other civil rights marchers were beaten there 55 years ago on "Bloody Sunday," a key event that helped galvanize support for the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Lewis returned to Selma each March in commemoration.

Sunday found him crossing alone — instead of arm-in-arm with civil rights and political leaders — after his coffin was loaded atop a horse-drawn wagon that retraced the route through Selma from Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where the 1965 march began.

As the black wagon pulled by a team of horses approached the bridge, members of the crowd shouted "Thank you, John Lewis!" and "Good trouble!" the phrase Lewis used to describe his tangles with white authorities during the civil rights movement.

Lewis died July 17 at 80, months after he was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer. Lewis served in the U.S. House of Representa-

tives for Georgia's 5th congressional district from 1987 until his death.

The wagon rolled over a carpet of rose petals, pausing atop the bridge over the Alabama River in the summer heat so family members could walk behind it. On the south side of the bridge, where Lewis was beaten by Alabama state troopers in 1965, family members placed red roses that the carriage rolled over, marking the spot where Lewis spilled his blood and suffered a head injury.

As a military honor guard lifted Lewis' casket from the horse-drawn wagon into an automobile hearse, Alabama state troopers, including some African American ones, saluted Lewis.

Lewis' body was then taken to the Alabama Capitol in the afternoon to lie in repose, retracing the route marchers took in the days after Bloody Sunday to demand justice from Alabama Gov. George Wallace.

On Monday, Lewis' flag-draped casket arrived at Joint Base Andrews.

A motorcade carrying the body stopped at Black Lives Matter Plaza near the White House as it wound through Washington before arriving at the Capitol, where he will be the first Black lawmaker to lie in state in the Rotunda.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Former GOP governor becomes Dem mayor

MS NATCHEZ — A man who once ran as a Republican for Mississippi governor has become the new Democratic mayor of Natchez, and this is the second city where he has held the top job.

Mayor Dan Gibson and members of the Natchez Board of Aldermen were inaugurated last week.

Gibson succeeds Darryl Grennell, a Democrat who did not seek a second term as mayor in the city of 14,600.

Gibson was elected in 1996 as mayor of Crystal Springs, which had about 5,000 residents and is about 90 miles northeast of Natchez.

Deputies: Woman had guns in diaper bag

FL ORLANDO. — A Georgia woman was arrested at Walt Disney World after security for the Florida resort found two guns and some marijuana in her child's diaper bag, according to court documents.

Yunique Smith, 27, of Stone Mountain, Ga., was arrested July 18 on misdemeanor counts of carrying a concealed weapon and marijuana possession, the Orlando Sentinel reported.

Smith was going through the Epcot security line when the guard spotted a 9mm handgun and a plastic bag containing marijuana, an arrest report said.

A search of the diaper bag revealed a .45 caliber handgun on the bottom, deputies said.

Multiple fires destroy historic patrol cabin

MT MISSOULA — Multiple fires in Glacier National Park's North Fork

region in Montana destroyed a historic patrol cabin near Polebridge, authorities said.

Firefighters from the U.S. National Park Service, Flathead County and the state fought at least seven fires reported Thursday, park officials said. All the fires were contained or extinguished by Friday.

The 1928 Ford Creek patrol cabin was destroyed by "suspicious" fires, Glacier spokeswoman Gina Kerzman said.

2nd stolen alligator recovered from creek

KS MANHATTAN — One of two alligators stolen from an animal store in Manhattan was recaptured after a man who spotted it waded into a creek and wrestled it into submission.

The 5-foot alligator, named Beauregard, was captured after it was seen sunbathing near Walnut Creek. It and another American Alligator were taken from Manhattan Reptile World in June. The other alligator was seen in Wildcat Creek days after the theft but it drowned in a trap.

Hog farm manure tank leak causes fish kill

IA ALBERT CITY — A hog farm manure tank leak was the likely cause of a fish kill in a northwestern Iowa tributary, state environmental officials said.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources said the leak happened near Albert City when an unknown amount of manure was released into the tributary. The DNR found some dead fish, manure and elevated ammonia levels throughout four miles of the tributary, which connects to the North Raccoon River.

The incident was reported by

farm owner Kris Ehlers, who suspected a failed valve on the manure tank, officials said.

2 coaches injured in basketball brawl

WI GERMANTOWN — Two coaches were taken to the hospital after they were injured in a brawl at a suburban Milwaukee girls basketball game.

Officials said at least three men were causing problems at a Wisconsin Blizzard game against the Wisconsin Playground Elite at Germantown High School.

The game was stopped and the men were asked to leave. Police said it's not clear what was said, but surveillance video showed the men closing in on the bench and throwing a punch that ignited a brawl.

Blizzard president Richard Kuranda said one of the coaches was hit in the eye and had broken bones.

Officials: Man painted swastikas on 2 temples

FL SARASOTA — Authorities in Florida announced that they've captured the man who spray-painted swastikas on two Jewish temples.

Vincent Martinez, 21, was being held at a secure medical facility pending his arrest, according to a Sarasota County Sheriff's Office news release. He faces three counts of criminal mischief by defacing and damaging a synagogue, all classified as felony hate crimes.

Detectives received information identifying Martinez as a suspect after releasing surveillance video and images to the public. Surveillance video showed a man with his face covered walk onto the grounds of Temple Emanu-El, investi-

gators said. A short time later, he visited Temple Sinai several miles away.

Missing red panda found safe in zoo

OH POWELL — A red panda that disappeared from its habitat at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium "is home safe and sound" after it was tranquilized in a tree, the zoo said.

Two visitors spotted Kora on the ground among dense foliage between the rhino habitat and the pachyderm building, the zoo said on Facebook.

Kora was "given a clean bill of health" by a health team.

The zoo said she will be reunited with her cubs and the cubs' father, General Tso.

Environmental group sues over tower lights

ME BATH — A Maine environmental group is suing over lights installed on a set of power line towers.

The lawsuit filed in Superior Court by the Friends of Merymeeting Bay contends there were no lights at a pair of 195-foot Central Maine Power Co. towers on the Kennebec River until the utility replaced the towers.

Since then it said the light pollution is having an adverse impact on people and wildlife.

The group also is opposed to the utility's proposal to reduce the amount of time the lights are in operation with a radar to detect approaching aircraft.

Catharine Hartnett, a utility spokeswoman, said its plan will mitigate the impacts of the lights on the community while ensuring aviation safety and protecting the utility's infrastructure.

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Plenty of thrills, red flags for baseball

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The World Series champion Washington Nationals stood six feet apart along the first base line and watched as a banner commemorating their title was raised, then took a knee alongside the New York Yankees in a call for social justice.

Star slugger Juan Soto wasn't there — he was flagged hours before the first pitch for COVID-19. Neither, of course, were any fans.

Hardly ideal, but there was hardball nonetheless.

"I'd rather be playing baseball than not," Nationals ace Max Scherzer said.

Major League Baseball returned to action this weekend with a flourish of highs and lows as the sport attempts to play a 60-game regular season amid a coronavirus pandemic still plaguing much of the United States.

The baseball itself was a breath of fresh air — even through all those face coverings.

Opening day gems from Jacob deGrom, Shane Bieber and Kyle Hendricks. A mesmerizing home run from Giancarlo Stanton. Deft baserunning by Lorenzo Cain that baffled the entire Cubs infield.

But COVID-era baseball has been un-

mistakably different.

Cardboard cutouts of fans, managers arguing with umpires through face masks, air fives after home runs — not to mention a stream of players put on the coronavirus injured list, including potential outbreaks within the Marlins and Reds clubhouses.

The 60-game sprint started with a bang — thunder, actually, along with a torrential downpour in the rain-shortened opener between the Yankees and Nationals. Despite that, it was the sport's most-watched regular season game in nine years.

Later that night, Mookie Betts made his Dodgers debut in Los Angeles, one day after signing a \$365 million, 12-year deal to stay there through 2032.

Among Betts' first acts — kneeling during the national anthem ahead of the opener.

There's been a push within baseball this week to address racial injustice four years after the sport was largely silent during quarterback Colin Kaepernick's protests — only one baseball player, Oakland catcher Bruce Maxwell in 2017, had kneeled during the anthem prior to this season.

That's changed this year. Every team participated in Black Lives Matter-inspired ceremonies before their opener, and numerous players and coaches have taken

a knee.

"Now is when people will finally listen," explained Stanton, a Black slugger with the New York Yankees who plans to kneel throughout the season.

Forced into an unprecedented season, Major League Baseball is taking the chance to break with tradition, unleashing a trio of controversial changes.

The National League adopted the designated hitter for the first time, and Mets slugger Yoenis Cespedes — sidelined since 2018 with various lower body injuries — hit the first home run by a DH during a game between NL teams on opening day.

There's a new protocol for extra innings, with each team awarded an automatic runner at second base to start each inning after the ninth.

Angels two-way star Shohei Ohtani became the majors' first designated duck on the pond Friday night. A's first baseman Matt Olson caught him trying to take third on a grounder to kill Los Angeles' inning, then slugged a game-ending grand slam in the bottom of the frame.

"It's another one of these changes that we might end up liking," 64-year-old Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "Made it interesting."

Outbreak forces 2 MLB postponements

Associated Press

MIAMI — Two major league games scheduled for Monday night were postponed after more than a dozen Miami Marlins players and staff members tested positive for the coronavirus in an outbreak that stranded the team in Philadelphia.

The Marlins' home opener against Baltimore was called off, as was the New York Yankees' game at Philadelphia. The Yankees would have been in the same clubhouse the Marlins used last weekend.

Nine Marlins players and five staff members received positive results in tests conducted Friday, a person familiar with the situation told The Associated Press, speaking on the condition of anonymity because the results hadn't been publicly disclosed.

The Yankees are staying in Philadelphia for now, and have their own clubhouse staff with the team there, the person said.

The Marlins postponed their flight home Sunday night after their series finale against the Phillies.

Major League Baseball announced the postponement of both games about eight hours before the scheduled first pitch, and said additional COVID-19 testing was being conducted.

"The members of the Marlins' traveling party are self-quarantining in place while awaiting the outcome of those results," MLB said in a statement.

The Marlins' outbreak raised anew doubts about MLB's ability to finish a 60-game season barely underway amid a pandemic.

"The health of our players and staff has been and will continue to be our primary focus as we navigate through these uncharted waters," Marlins CEO Derek Jeter said in a statement. "Postponing tonight's home opener was the correct decision to ensure we take a collective pause and try to properly grasp the totality of this situation."

Miami pitcher Jose Urena was scratched from his scheduled start in Sunday's game, and catcher Jorge Alfaro went on the injured list Friday. No reasons were given for the moves.

It's unclear when the Marlins received the latest positive test results. Some players texted each other about the team's health issues before Sunday's game, but there was no talk of declining to play, shortstop

Miguel Rojas said.

"That was never our mentality," Rojas said. "We knew this could happen at some point. We came to the ballpark ready to play."

Said manager Don Mattingly: "It's fair to say guys are concerned about things. They want how they're feeling about the situation to be heard. I think it's fair. We're talking about health."

The Marlins played exhibition games at Atlanta on Tuesday and Wednesday against the Braves, who have since been without their top two catchers, Tyler Flowers and Travis d'Arnaud, after both players showed symptoms of COVID-19. Mattingly declined to say whether he thought the Marlins' health issues were related to the Atlanta stop.

MLB roundup

Carrasco strikes out 10, Indians take series

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — More than a year since being stricken with leukemia, Carlos Carrasco struck out 10 in six-plus innings to help Cleveland defeat Kansas City 9-2 to take two of three in the delayed season-opening series.

Jose Ramirez hit a three-run homer left-handed in the fourth and added a solo shot from the right side in the sixth for the Indians, who finally put some solid swings together against the Royals' bullpen.

With his rotation currently thin due to pitchers testing positive for COVID-19, Kansas City manager Mike Matheny started reliever Ronald Bolanos (0-1), who gave up two runs in the first and took the loss.

Carrasco allowed two runs and five hits before he was lifted after allowing a leadoff double in the seventh. It was his first start since his recovery from chronic myeloid leukemia, a blood disorder that threatened his life.

"I've just waited for this moment today," he said. "I feel pretty good, man. Keeping my emotions down and just thinking about the way I'm gonna pitch was the key because just getting here to the stadium this morning, I was so happy to getting back to the rotation."

Mariners 7, Astros 6: Houston surrendered a tiebreaking two-run single to rookie Kyle Lewis in the eighth inning and then announced ace Justin Verlander will be shut down for at least two weeks with a strained right forearm.

Astros manager Dusty Baker denied a report that said the injury would end Verlander's season. He said Verlander would be evaluated after two weeks.

Marlins 11, Phillies 6: Miami scratched right-hander Jose Urena from its victory at Philadelphia and canceled its home opener Monday because of a team coronavirus outbreak that stranded them on the road.

Besides, Urena, Jorge Alfaro went on the injured list Friday. No reasons were given for the moves, but Marlins manager Don Mattingly said those who tested positive would be quarantined in Philadelphia.

Miami's Brian Anderson and Miguel Rojas each hit a three-run homer, and Stephen Tarpley (1-0) got two outs for the win. Jesus Aguilar and Corey Dickerson also went deep.

Tigers 3, Reds 2: C.J. Cron hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the ninth inning, and visiting Detroit got to Cincinnati's bullpen for the second straight day.

Miguel Cabrera led off with a 10-pitch walk before Cron connected against Michael Lorenzen (0-1), sending an opposite-

field drive deep to right.

Jose Cisneros (1-0) pitched the eighth for the win. Joe Jimenez got Joey Votto to bounce into a game-ending double play for his second save in two days.

Rockies 5, Rangers 2: Trevor Story homered twice for visiting Colorado after Corey Kluber left his Texas debut with shoulder tightness.

Kluber, who was acquired in an off-season trade with Cleveland, lasted just one inning and 18 pitches in his first start in almost 15 months.

The Rangers said Kluber reported feeling the tightness in the first few pitches and it got worse as the inning progressed. The two-time Cy Young Award winner was examined by a team doctor and will be further evaluated Monday.

Athletics 6, Angels 4: Shohei Ohtani failed to record an out in the two-way star's return to the mound, allowing the first six Oakland batters to reach base as Los Angeles lost on the road.

The right-hander from Japan gave up Marcus Semien's leadoff single and three straight walks before a mound visit and Mark Canha's two-run single. Robbie Grossman singled in another run, and Angels manager Joe Maddon replaced Ohtani (0-1) with Matt Andriese down 4-0.

The Angels wasted a big day by Mike Trout, who hit a three-run homer in the third and a sacrifice fly in the fifth. David Fletcher wound up with four hits.

Twins 14, White Sox 2: Nelson Cruz homered twice and drove in seven runs, helping Kenta Maeda win his debut with visiting Minnesota.

Jake Cave hit a grand slam in the first inning for the Twins, who belted a major league-record 307 homers last season. Marwin Gonzalez added a solo shot in the ninth.

Yankees 3, Nationals 2: Gleyber Torres homered to help the Yankees rally for the road victory.

Torres and Luke Voit connected in the seventh, tying it at 2. Torres then singled in Hicks in the eighth against Sean Doolittle (0-1).

Pirates 5, Cardinals 1: Pittsburgh's Derek Shelton staged baseball's first major, socially distanced umpire argument, then got his first victory as a big league manager.

Colin Moran and Jose Osuna homered for the visiting Pirates, and Mitch Keller (1-0) pitched five solid innings.

Shelton came out to argue with plate umpire Jordan Baker in the third inning after pitcher Derek Holland was ejected from the dugout for arguing balls and strikes.

Baker let Shelton say his piece, and the first-year skipper was not ejected.

Diamondbacks 4, Padres 3: Ketel Marte hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly off Kirby Yates, and host Arizona rallied for four runs off San Diego's vaunted bullpen after the Diamondbacks' Torey Lovullo became the first manager to be ejected in the COVID-19 era.

Padres starter Garrett Richards left with a 1-0 lead after holding Arizona to one hit in five innings, but the Diamondbacks, who struggled offensively in their first two games, came alive three innings after the masked Lovullo was ejected for arguing with plate umpire Mark Ripperger, who wasn't wearing a cloth facemask.

Cubs 9, Brewers 1: Tyler Chatwood pitched three-hit ball over six innings, Willson Contreras homered and host Chicago beat Milwaukee to take two of three in their opening series.

Chatwood (1-0) struck out eight and walked two in an impressive start for a pitcher who struggled with his control his first two years with the Cubs.

Rays 6, Blue Jays 5 (10): Kevin Kiermaier's first hit of the season, a two-run triple into the right field corner in the 10th inning, gave host Tampa Bay the win.

The Rays' defensive whiz delivered the second game-ending hit of his career after his team scored twice in the ninth to force extra innings, then fell behind again 5-4 when Toronto pinch-runner Santiago Espinal stole third base and scored on Lourdes Gurriel Jr.'s sacrifice fly off Chaz Roe (1-0).

Orioles 7, Red Sox 4: Rio Ruiz and Anthony Santander each hit a two-run homer, powering visiting Baltimore to the win.

Jose Iglesias added four hits for the Orioles, who took the final two games of the season-opening series. Wade LeBlanc (1-0) worked 5²/₃ innings, and Cole Sulser got six outs for the save.

Braves 14, Mets 1: Dansby Swanson tied his career high with five RBIs and visiting Atlanta chased an erratic Rick Porcello during the third inning of his New York debut.

The Braves had 17 hits, 11 for extra bases, and took two of three in the season-opening series after losing 1-0 on Friday and coming within a strike of defeat Saturday before rallying.

Giants 3, Dodgers 1: Mauricio Dubon singled home the go-ahead run in the sixth inning and San Francisco beat host Los Angeles. The Giants gained a split of the four-game series under new manager Gabe Kapler to open the shortened season after the Dodgers took the first two.

Thompson gets 1st win in 7 years

Associated Press

BLAINE, Minn. — Without a gallery around him on the 18th green, Michael Thompson settled for a subdued victory celebration at the 3M Open with a FaceTime call home to his wife and children in Georgia.

The tears came from him and his wife as soon as they saw each other on the screen.

Thompson birdied two of the last three holes Sunday for a 4-under 67 and a two-stroke victory, finishing off his second PGA Tour win seven years after his first.

“It is a little sad that there wasn’t anybody out there to cheer on some of the great shots that I hit toward the end, but I know everybody who’s rooting for me at least was watching and screaming at their TV,” Thompson said. “This is definitely a win for everybody who supported me throughout the years. It doesn’t diminish the excitement.”

Adam Long was second after a 64. Richy Werenski, who had the 18-hole lead and shared it with Thompson after both Friday and Saturday, shot a 70 for his worst round of the tournament and settled for a nine-way tie for third — three strokes back.

Tony Finau finished in the third-place group, too, after a 68. Finau was the only one among the five world top-30 players in the field to reach the weekend, far outperforming fellow high-profile peers Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka, Tommy Fleetwood and Paul Casey.

Thompson finished at 19-under 265 at the TPC Twin Cities.

Finau and Werenski were joined in third by Robby Shelton, who shot a 64 on Sunday, as well as Charles Howell III, Emiliano Grillo, Alex Noren, Max Homa, Cameron Tringale and Charl Schwartzel.

Dash capture Challenge Cup

Associated Press

SANDY, Utah — As the underdog Houston Dash celebrated winning the Challenge Cup title, forward Rachel Daly was asked if she could define the team’s identity after the month-long tournament.

“Winners,” the Dash co-captain simply said.

Sophie Schmidt scored on an early penalty kick and Shea Groom added a stoppage-time goal to give Houston the trophy with a 2-0 victory over the Chicago Red Stars on Sunday.

The tournament was the National Women’s Soccer League’s re-boot after the regular season was shut down by the coronavirus outbreak. Houston, in its seventh year in the league, had never previously made the playoffs.

“Grit and determination and courage, I could use all of those cliché words but they actually mean something within our team,” Daly said. “After every postgame I say ‘Nothing breaks our circle, and if anything breaks our circle, we’ll lose.’ Today nothing broke our

circle.”

The Red Stars went to the NWSL championship game last season, but were routed 4-0 by the North Carolina Courage.

Houston was aggressive from the start. Kristie Mewis was on the run when she was fouled by Kayla Sharples for a Dash penalty kick. Schmidt nailed the PK in the fifth minute. It was the tournament’s first penalty kick in regulation.

The Red Stars nearly drew even in the 15th minute, but Savannah McCaskill’s header off a rebound hit the post.

McCaskill had another chance from distance in the 67th minute, but Houston goalkeeper Jane Campbell tipped it up and over the crossbar.

The Dash took a hit in the 29th minute when Mewis had to come out of the game with a hamstring injury. She sobbed as she was subbed out.

The NWSL was the first professional team sport to return in the United States. Eight of the league’s nine teams have been sequestered in Utah for the duration of the tournament, which started on June 27.

There were no positive tests in the so-called bubble in Utah for the duration of the event.

The Red Stars were the tournament’s sixth seed going into the knockout round. They advanced to the semifinals on penalties after a scoreless draw with OL Reign, then held off Sky Blue 3-2 on Wednesday.

Chicago had just two total goals in the tournament before the outburst against Sky Blue.

“I think our challenge has been putting away our final crosses and getting some goals this tournament,” Chicago’s Julie Ertz said. “So I think in the first half after (the penalty kick), we had a really good reaction to it. And it got harder because once they got up 1-0, they dropped really low in the box, so it’s hard to break down when a lot of numbers are in there. Obviously disappointing, but I’m so proud of the girls.”

The Dash finished seventh in the NWSL last season. Daly, who plays for England’s national team, led Houston with three goals in the tournament and was the Challenge Cup’s most valuable player.

Trip out of bubble means Williams must quarantine

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The NBA said Sunday that Lou Williams of the Los Angeles Clippers is being quarantined for 10 days because of his trip out of the league’s bubble last week to attend a family member’s funeral.

He will miss at least two of the Clippers’ seeding games, including their July 30 opener against the Los Angeles Lakers. It’s possible he could miss more than two since his likely release will be Aug. 4, the day of the Clippers’ third seeding game.

The issue was not that Wil-

liams left the bubble but that he also went to a strip club on that trip to Atlanta, and photographs of that visit — with him wearing a type of mask that the NBA distributed inside the bubble at Walt Disney World — appeared on social media.

That prompted an investigation by NBA security, and ultimately the 10-day ruling. Williams visited a club that he has often described as being his favorite restaurant, and the establishment even has chicken wings that are named for him on the menu.

But by being in a group of people and potentially exposing himself to coronavirus,

the NBA decided that a longer quarantine was what’s required to ensure the safety of those in the bubble.

Zion Williamson of the New Orleans Pelicans got only a four-day quarantine after leaving the bubble earlier this month for a family matter. Williamson received the shorter quarantine because he was tested daily during his absence and continually was negative, plus satisfied other NBA requirements.

Williams is a Sixth Man of the Year candidate this season, averaging 18.7 points this season for the Clippers.