

In LA, Guard troops battle boredom

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — They were deployed by the Trump administration to combat “violent, insurrectionist mobs” in and around Los Angeles, but in recent days the only thing many U.S. Marines and California National Guard troops seemed to be fighting was tedium.

“There’s not much to do,” one Marine said as he stood guard outside the towering Wilshire Federal Building in Westwood this week.

The blazing protests that first met federal immigration raids in downtown Los Angeles were nowhere to be seen along Wilshire Boulevard or Veteran Avenue, so many troops passed the time chatting and joking over energy drinks. The Marine, who declined to give his name because he was not authorized to speak to reporters, said his duties consisted mostly of approving access for federal workers and visitors to the Veterans Affairs office.

More than five weeks after Trump mobilized an extraordinary show of military force

against the will of California Gov. Gavin Newsom and L.A. Mayor Karen Bass, few National Guard troops and Marines have remained in public view, most retreating to local military bases in Orange County.

As an indication of the military’s dwindling role in immigration enforcement operations, U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth on Tuesday ordered the release of 2,000 National Guard troops. Now, Bass, Newsom and others are demanding the complete removal of remaining troops — or about 2,000 California National Guard soldiers and 700 Marines.

“Thousands of members are still federalized in Los Angeles for no reason and unable to carry out their critical duties across the state,” Newsom said on X, accusing Trump of using California National Guard troops as “political pawns.”

“End this theater and send everyone home,” the governor said.

Bass said the troops’ primary mission in L.A. was to guard fed-

eral buildings that “frankly didn’t need to be guarded.”

“They had to leave their families, they had to leave their education, they had to leave their work,” Bass said at a news conference Tuesday. “We have had no problems for weeks, so why were they here?”

Steve Woolford, a resource counselor for GI Rights Hotline, a nonprofit group that provides free, confidential information to service members, said calls from troops had gone down dramatically over the last month.

“The most recent people I talked to sounded like they’re sitting around bored without much to do,” Woolford said. “And they’re happy with that: They aren’t asking to do more. At the same time, I don’t think people see a real purpose in what they’re doing at all.”

The majority of National Guard troops have been stationed at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos, according to military officials and governor’s office officials who spoke on the condition of ano-

nymity.

Over the last few weeks, a massive tent city has risen at the Orange County base — about 25 miles southeast of downtown L.A. The tents, some of which stretch up to 50 yards long, provide living quarters, cafeteria space and other facilities.

On a recent morning, National Guard troops — some dressed in full combat fatigues, others in T-shirts and shorts — could be seen exercising, milling about and playing a game of touch football.

A separate group of Marines and National Guard troops have remained at the Westwood federal building for an entire month. The federal building has been outfitted with sleeping and eating arrangements for troops, according to a Marine who spoke with the *Los Angeles Times*.

An estimated 90% of the National Guard troops stationed in the L.A. area over the last few days have not been deployed on daily missions, according to a source within Newsom’s office who has knowledge of the military operation.

Senate, House NDAA address Confederate names

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has undone a 2022 congressionally chartered commission’s renaming of military bases and ships that had for years celebrated the Confederacy, but as of last week both the House and Senate are poised to consider at least a partial reversal of President Donald Trump’s moves.

The House fiscal 2026 NDAA contains an amendment by Rep. Marilyn Strickland, D-Wash., that would ensure all the former-

ly Confederate-linked facilities, assets and streets across the U.S. military are renamed along the lines proposed by the 2022 commission to honor other warriors or certain values. Strickland’s amendment was adopted by the narrowest of margins: one vote, thanks to just two Republicans bucking their colleagues to support her provision.

The Senate’s NDAA, meanwhile, contains language that would achieve the same aim as Strickland’s amendment — but only for Virginia, as of now.

As a result, the issue of how to remember racially charged U.S. history is again coming to the fore in the debate over the defense authorization bill.

Trump, in his first term, vetoed the fiscal 2021 NDAA, largely because it created the base renaming commission. Bipartisan majorities overrode his veto.

This year, Trump’s Defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, has wasted no time restoring the old Confederate names, albeit in slightly revised form.

If Congress rebuffs Trump

again this year and codifies the commission’s names, and if the president and his congressional allies fight back fiercely as before, the coming debate could at least complicate — if not stymie — the NDAA’s progress toward enactment for the 65th fiscal year in a row.

An aide to Strickland said the committees’ actions are the first step in a long process that could become combative.

Neither the White House nor the Pentagon immediately replied to a request for comment.

Army leaders: Drones force training rethink

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

WIESBADEN, Germany — A recent robotic assault by Ukraine on Russian positions north of Kharkiv marked a watershed moment for how ground combat forces must prepare for war, a top U.S. general said.

The attack saw 50 Ukrainian unmanned ground vehicles and aerial drones seize initial positions. It pushed the Russians back and paved the way for Ukrainian troops to hold the territory.

“I think that battle right there indicates that the time to reimagine armor has begun, and we have got to think about what armor will look like in the future,” 1st Armored Division command-

er Maj. Gen. Curtis Taylor said Thursday.

For tank units, that means thinking about protecting formations with a layered defense, similar to the way a naval aircraft carrier group maneuvers at sea.

Taylor and other top Army commanders discussed how the Russia-Ukraine war has upended traditional ground warfare tactics at the Association of the U.S. Army’s two-day symposium in Wiesbaden. Defense industry leaders showcased systems for NATO militaries, while commanders stressed the need for faster innovation. Much of the discussion revolved around how drones have transformed the modern battlefield. The shift af-

fects everything from coordinating assaults to supplying troops and managing the stress of being under constant surveillance.

“To counter (unmanned aerial systems), it can quickly burden small unit leaders,” said Col. Donald Neal, commander of the Vilseck, Germany-based 2nd Cavalry Regiment.

Ground troops are working with a wide range of systems to monitor the skies, which means keeping track of large amounts of unsynchronized data. Managing that data needs to be part of combat arms training, Neal said.

“What’s hard is to get all these systems to talk to each other ... getting all the data to be centrally processed and pop up on a com-

mon operating picture so you can see the things flying in the air,” he said.

Meanwhile, the practice of conveying supplies to troops at the front lines is becoming obsolete because of the ubiquitous presence of camera-equipped drones.

“We usually have these large clusters of formations. We like to drive in convoys,” said Maj. Gen. Ronald R. Ragin, commander of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command. “I do not believe that that will be applicable on future battlefields, because if you can be seen, you can be killed.”

The situation also puts pre-positioned weapons stocks at risk, he said. Large NATO warehouses would be immediate targets.

US watercraft offers peek at Australia’s littoral future

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

TOWNSVILLE, Australia — A U.S. Army vessel that typically operates out of Japan has executed a first-of-its-kind mission in Australia: hauling four M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks for the Australian army as part of ongoing Talisman Sabre drills. The USAV Paulus Hook is a Runnymede-class landing craft utility that’s 174 feet long and capable of carrying up to five of the 74-ton tanks at once.

On Saturday, the vessel loaded the tanks at Port of Townsville in Queensland and headed

south along the coast to drop them off at the Port of Gladstone, south of Rockhampton.

“We are right in the most critical region for this capability,” the vessel’s master, Warrant Officer 1 Chad Arness, told Stars and Stripes on Friday aboard the ship, berthed near commercial freighters and a towering crane.

The Paulus Hook is part of the 5th Transportation Company, which was activated in February 2024 at Yokohama North Dock, just south of Tokyo.

The company is making its debut at Talisman Sabre, a biennial exercise and the largest

ever conducted by the United States and Australia. This year’s drills, which began July 13 and run through Aug. 4, involve more than 35,000 personnel from 19 countries. Transporting tanks at sea is not without its challenges. Arness said the additional weight brings the Paulus Hook’s top speed down from 12 knots to 10, but does not compromise its stability.

The transportation company’s commander, Capt. Alena Leshchik, also in Townsville on Friday, said the service hopes to expand its watercraft fleet in the area, though decisions about basing locations remain under consideration.

Another Hegseth aide exits Pentagon as churn continues

The Washington Post

Another senior aide to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is leaving the Pentagon, officials said Saturday, marking at least the sixth departure of a top adviser in Hegseth’s first six months in office.

Justin Fulcher, who was named a senior adviser to the defense secretary in late April, said in a text message to The Washington Post that his departure is “perfectly

amicable” and that he planned all along to complete just six months of government service. Fulcher said he is grateful to Hegseth, President Donald Trump “and to the extraordinary civilians and service members who turn vision into action every day.”

Sean Parnell, a Pentagon spokesman, acknowledged Fulcher’s departure in a text message, after CBS News first reported that

Fulcher had been fired. Parnell said it was “not fair” to characterize the exit as a firing and called Fulcher a “great guy.”

Fulcher was embroiled in controversy last month after the Guardian reported that he told Hegseth’s personal attorney, Tim Parlatore, and Hegseth’s chief of staff at the time, Joe Kasper, that he knew of surveillance measures for finding leakers in the Pentagon.

Fulcher joined Parlatore in the search for suspected leakers, but officials at the White House and in the Pentagon later determined that Fulcher had exaggerated his usefulness and the purported evidence he had alluded to did not exist, people familiar with the matter said. In light of that, some of Hegseth’s other advisers began to cast doubt on Fulcher’s standing in the administration.

Car strikes crowd outside Los Angeles venue

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A vehicle rammed into a crowd of people waiting to enter a performance venue along a busy boulevard in Los Angeles early Saturday, injuring 30 people and leading bystanders to attack the driver, authorities said.

The driver was later found to have been shot, according to police, who were searching for a suspected gunman who fled the scene along Santa Monica Boulevard in East Hollywood.

It was not immediately clear if the driver was shot before or after the crash took place or why he had driven into the crowd, a police spokesperson

said.

Twenty-three victims were taken to hospitals and trauma centers, according to police. Seven were in critical condition, the Los Angeles Fire Department said in a statement.

Fire Capt. Adam VanGerpen said a line of people were waiting to enter Vermont Hollywood when they were struck by a Nissan Versa that also hit a food vending cart and valet stand.

"This was a very chaotic scene," said VanGerpen, a public information officer.

People inside came out to help victims in the minutes before emergency crews arrived, he said.

The driver, whose gunshot wound was found by paramedics, was also taken to a hospital.

Police did not immediately identify him or disclose his condition.

The person suspected of shooting him was described as a man in a blue jersey with a revolver.

"This is under police investigation," VanGerpen said. "This will be a large investigation with the LAPD."

Vermont Hollywood was hosting a reggae-hop event from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., according to its online calendar. There was no immediate response to a phone message left with the

business.

A fight broke out outside the venue beforehand, according to Maria Medrano, who with her husband was there selling hot dogs.

Shortly afterward, she said, the car hit the people, and the couple narrowly escaped when it crushed their stand.

"The car stopped once it hit the hot dog stand, it got stuck there," Medrano told The Associated Press from the hospital. "If not, I wouldn't be here to tell" the story.

After the crash she heard what sounded like gunshots.

"Everyone started running," Medrano said.

Venezuela releases jailed Americans as part of deal

Associated Press

Venezuela on Friday released 10 jailed U.S. citizens and permanent residents in exchange for getting home scores of migrants deported by the United States to El Salvador months ago under the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, officials said.

The complex arrangement represents a diplomatic achievement for Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, helps President Donald Trump in his goal of bringing home Americans jailed abroad and lands Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele a swap that he proposed months ago.

"Every wrongfully detained American in Venezuela is now free and back in our homeland," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement in which he thanked Bukele, who has been an ally to Trump.

Bukele said El Salvador had handed over all the Venezuelan nationals in its custody. Maduro described Friday as "a day of blessings and good news for Venezuela."

He called it "the perfect day for Venezuela."

Central to the deal are more than 250 Venezuelan migrants freed by El Salvador, which in March agreed to a \$6 million payment from the Trump administration to house them in its notorious prison.

That arrangement drew immediate blowback when Trump invoked an 18th century wartime law, the Alien Enemies Act, to quickly remove from the U.S. the men that his administration had accused of belonging to the violent Tren de Aragua street gang.

The move teed up a legal fight that eventually reached the U.S. Supreme Court.

The administration did not provide evidence to back up those claims.

The State Department office responsible for negotiating the release of American detainees posted a photo Friday evening of the newly released prisoners smiling for the camera inside an airplane bringing them home, some clutching an unfurled American flag.

Search for flood victims stretches into third week

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — The number of people still missing in a Texas county ravaged by deadly flooding over the Fourth of July holiday weekend now stands at three, down from nearly 100.

The announcement Saturday by Kerr County that the list of missing has shrunk came after people who were previously reported missing have since been accounted for and as state lawmakers prepare to discuss authorities' initial response and the possible improvements to warning systems.

Flash floods killed at least 135 people in Texas over the Fourth of July holiday weekend, with most deaths along the Guadalupe River in Kerr County, about 60 miles northwest of San Antonio.

The Hill Country is naturally prone to flash flooding because its dry, dirt-packed soil cannot soak up heavy rain.

The Texas Legislature is scheduled to convene Monday for a special session. Gov. Greg Abbott initially called lawmakers

back to the Texas State Capitol in Austin for other reasons, but he and legislative leaders have recently added flooding-related issues to the agenda.

Abbott said lawmakers would also review authorities' handling of the flooding and consider improving warning systems for Hill Country residents. Kerr County does not have a warning system because state and local agencies missed opportunities over the past decade to finance one.

Trump and Abbott have pushed back aggressively against questions about how well local authorities responded to forecasts of heavy rain and the first reports of flash flooding.

The president called a reporter "evil" for raising such issues and said he thought "everyone did an incredible job under the circumstances."

Abbott dismissed a question about who was to blame for the deaths as "the word choice of losers" and used an analogy that began: "Every football team makes mistakes."

Trump signs new stablecoin regulations

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Friday signed into law new regulations for a type of cryptocurrency, a major milestone for an industry that has spent heavily to strengthen its legitimacy and political might.

The GENIUS Act sets initial guardrails and consumer protections for stablecoins, which are tied to assets like the U.S. dollar to reduce price volatility compared with other forms of cryptocurrency. It passed both the House and Senate with wide bipartisan margins.

The new law is meant to bolster consumer confidence in the crypto industry, which has quickly become a major power player in Washington thanks to massive campaign donations and spending on lobbying. Its passage comes as Trump had repeatedly pledged to make the

U.S. the “crypto capital of the world.”

“For years you were mocked and dismissed and counted out,” Trump told crypto industry executives at a White House bill signing attended by about 200 people, including several top GOP lawmakers. “This signing is a massive validation of your hard work and your pioneering spirit.”

The crypto industry has long complained it was unfairly targeted by former President Joe Biden’s administration and spent heavily to help Trump win last year’s election.

The president lavished praise on crypto leaders during his speech Friday, saying “nobody has gained the respect in such a short period of time.”

Trump said helping the cryptocurrency industry was “good for the dollar and it’s good for the country.”

“That’s why I backed you at an early stage,” said Trump, who had previously been a skeptic of cryptocurrency before embracing it. His administration has taken several early steps to boost the crypto industry, including the Securities and Exchange Commission dropping several enforcement actions against large crypto companies.

Trump then added a candid admission about the political calculus of his support for the crypto industry: “And I also did it for the votes,” he said, drawing laughter from the audience.

The president also joked that lawmakers had named the GENIUS Act after him. The acronym stands for “Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for U.S. Stablecoins.”

The use of stablecoins has grown dramatically in recent years. Circle, the U.S.-based is-

suer of one of the most popular cryptocurrencies, made its debut on the New York Stock Exchange earlier this year and quickly saw its value soar amid heavy interest from crypto enthusiasts and investors. Stablecoin issuers make profits by collecting the interest on the assets they hold in reserve to back their stablecoins.

A provision in the GENIUS Act bans members of Congress and their families from profiting off stablecoins. But that prohibition does not extend to the president and his family, even as Trump builds a crypto empire from the White House.

His family holds a significant stake in World Liberty Financial, a crypto project that launched its own stablecoin earlier this year and received an early boost from an investment fund in the United Arab Emirates.

Palestinians killed seeking aid in Gaza

Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — At least 85 Palestinians were killed while trying to reach food at locations across Gaza on Sunday, the territory’s Health Ministry said, on the deadliest day yet for aid-seekers in over 21 months of war.

There was new alarm as Israel’s military issued evacuation orders for areas of central Gaza, one of the few areas where it has rarely operated with ground troops and where many international organizations trying to distribute aid are located. One aid group said several groups’ offices were told to evacuate immediately. There was no immediate Israeli comment on that.

The largest death toll was in devastated northern Gaza, where living conditions are es-

pecially dire. At least 79 Palestinians were killed while trying to reach aid entering through the Zikim crossing with Israel, Zaher al-Waheidi, head of the Health Ministry’s records department, told The Associated Press. The U.N. World Food Program said 25 trucks with aid had entered for “starving communities” when it encountered massive crowds that came under gunfire.

A U.N. official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not allowed to comment on the incident to the media, said Israeli forces opened fire toward the crowds who tried to take food from the convoy. Footage taken by the U.N. and shared with the AP showed Palestinian men running as the sound of automatic gunfire could be heard.

Heavy rains in S. Korea leave at least 17 dead

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — Torrential rains that slammed South Korea for five days have left 17 people dead and 11 others missing, the government said Sunday.

One person was killed on Sunday after their house collapsed during heavy rain and another person was found dead after being swept away by a swollen stream in Gapyeong, a town northeast of Seoul, the Interior and Safety Ministry said.

The ministry said 10 people were discovered dead and four others were reported missing in the southern town of Sancheong over the weekend after heavy downpours caused landslides, house collapses and flash floods there.

A ministry report said that one person died in the south-

ern city of Gwangju. It said that seven others remain missing in Gwangju, Gapyeong and elsewhere.

As of 4 p.m. on Sunday, about 2,730 people remain evacuated from their homes, the ministry report said. The rain stopped in most of South Korea on Sunday, and heavy rain alerts have been subsequently lifted throughout the country, ministry officials said.

Since Wednesday, southern regions have received up to about 24-31 inches of rain, according to the ministry report.

President Lee Jae Myung expressed deep sympathy to those who lost their loved ones and suffered financial damage due to the heavy downpours. Lee said the government will push to designate areas hit hard by the downpours as special disaster zones.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man who boasted of rape pleads guilty

PA GETTYSBURG — An American extradited from France to face charges that he sexually assaulted a fellow Pennsylvania college student in 2013 — and later sent her a Facebook message that said “So I raped you” — pleaded guilty Thursday.

Ian Cleary, 32, pleaded guilty to second-degree sexual assault more than a decade after Shannon Keeler said he sneaked into her first-year dorm at Gettysburg College on the eve of winter break and assaulted her. Cleary’s guilty plea was the first time she’d seen him since the assault.

“I had been thinking about this moment for 12 years,” said Keeler, who clenched her husband’s hand as Cleary was led into court by deputies. She called it a surreal moment. A decade ago, a former prosecutor had declined the case.

“It’s taken a lot of twists and turns to get to this point,” said Keeler, now 30. “It took a lot of people doing the right thing to get us here.”

Judge Kevin Hess set an Oct. 20 sentencing date. The two sides proposed a four- to eight-year sentence, which the judge can accept or not.

State cancels \$3B plan to restore coastline

LA NEW ORLEANS — Louisiana canceled a \$3 billion repair of disappearing Gulf coastline, funded by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill settlement, scrapping what conservationists called an urgent response to climate change but Gov. Jeff Landry viewed as

a threat to the state’s way of life.

Despite years of studies and reviews, the project at the center of Louisiana’s coastal protection plans grew increasingly imperiled after Landry, a Republican, took office last year.

Its collapse means the state could lose out on more than \$1.5 billion in unspent funds and may even have to repay the \$618 million it already used to begin building.

The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group, a mix of federal agencies overseeing the settlement funds, said that “unused project funds will be available for future Deepwater Horizon restoration activities” but would require review and approval.

Notes lead rescuers to lost mother, son

CA SACRAMENTO — A mother and her 9-year-old-son who got lost in a remote California forest were rescued after a search crew found notes the pair had left behind.

A volunteer search-and-rescue team that was training in the Sierra Nevada foothills found the pair July 12, a day after they had set out for a Boy Scouts camp, according to the Calaveras County Sheriff’s Office.

The woman and her son got lost after they left the Sacramento area and their GPS had directed them onto old logging roads deep into the forest, said Lt. Greg Stark, a spokesperson for the sheriff’s office.

They eventually lost their GPS signal and then got stuck about 10 miles from the nearest paved road, Stark said.

About four hours after being dispatched, the search team

found the first note that read: “HELP. Me and my son are stranded with no service and can’t call 911. We are ahead, up the road to the right. Please call 911 to get help for us. Thank you!”

Puppies rescued from floods arrive at shelter

IL CHICAGO — Nine puppies from parts of Texas submerged by catastrophic flooding that killed at least 132 people arrived Wednesday at the no-kill shelter PAWS Chicago, joining dozens of puppies that had already arrived.

The critters landed by plane at Waukesha Airport in Wisconsin then made a three-hour journey by van to Chicago.

This is the second batch of pets to arrive in Chicago from Texas. The group Austin Pets Alive!, which has been on the ground in the flood-stricken region since the flooding began, has coordinated the effort with PAWS Chicago.

The animals were in shelters in Texas before the floods began. Organizers have said the transfers help those shelters focus on rescuing and reunifying animals separated from their humans by the disaster.

Planned Parenthood, state reach agreement

ID BOISE — Idaho doctors are free to refer patients out of state for abortions without concern for criminal prosecution thanks to an agreement signed by the state’s top attorney that ended a lawsuit over the issue.

Idaho Attorney General Raúl Labrador, along with the Ada and Valley County prosecutors, on Thursday signed a consent

decree — a legally binding settlement agreement — that prevents them from enforcing the state’s near-total abortion ban when it comes to health care providers’ ability to consult with patients on abortion options outside of Idaho.

The settlement concludes a 2-year-old lawsuit brought against Labrador and the prosecutors in each of Idaho’s 44 counties by reproductive health care nonprofit Planned Parenthood and Idaho physicians Caitlin Gustafson and Darin Weyrich.

The majority of the county prosecutors were later dismissed as defendants.

Work halted after noose found at stadium site

TN NASHVILLE — A noose was found at the construction site of the new football stadium for the NFL’s Tennessee Titans in Nashville, the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department said, halting work in the area.

“The MNP is aware and investigating this situation,” Metro Nashville Police spokesperson Brooke Reese said in an email.

The Tennessee Builders Alliance, which is overseeing construction of the estimated \$2.1 billion 60,000-seat stadium, said in a statement that it suspended work at the site after the discovery of the “racist and hateful” symbol.

“We are outraged and deeply saddened by this act,” the group said in a statement.

The Tennessee Builders Alliance said its workers will be required to undergo additional antibias training.

— From wire reports

STARS  STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Scheffler closes in on another major

Associated Press

PORTRUSH, Northern Ireland — The question Scottie Scheffler was asking of himself at the start of the week could very well be posed to those chasing him in the British Open.

What's the point?

Scheffler delivered another example Saturday at Royal Portrush why he has dominated golf for the past three years. He was the only player in the last eight groups not to make a bogey on his way to a 4-under 67 that allowed him to open a four-shot lead as he goes for the third leg of the career Grand Slam.

Scheffler has won the last 10 times he has led after 54 holes. It's never easy, no matter how he makes it look. But on this gorgeous day he was in full command of his game, and was in prime position to win his second major of the year going into Sunday.

He was helped by a 6-iron to 10 feet for eagle on the par-5 seventh, and saved by three big par saves, two on the back nine, to keep everyone at a distance.

"Talking of execution, he's probably the best in the business right now," Rory McIlroy said after a 5-under 66 that brought him to only within six shots of Scheffler.

Scheffler had the golf world buzzing earlier this week when he said celebrations don't last but a few minutes. He loves the competition. He loves the work. But in terms of fulfillment, he often questions why he wants to win so badly when the thrill of

winning is fleeting.

Ahead of him is competition, and still plenty of work.

He was at 14-under 199, four shots ahead of Li Haotong of China, who delivered his own mystery by saying he had no idea how he recovered from the full swing yips a few years ago to be in the final group of a major for the first time.

Another shot back was Matt Fitzpatrick, who was tied with Scheffler through six holes and couldn't stay with him when the No. 1 player began to pull away. Fitzpatrick missed a pair of short par putts and had to settle for a 71.

The biggest roars belonged to McIlroy, so much that it felt as though all of Northern Ireland was behind him. There wasn't an inch of grass or gorse to be seen beyond the wall of people lining the fairways. There were 30-yard gaps along the ropes for Scheffler.

McIlroy opened with three birdies in four holes. The roar that shook Royal Portrush came on the par-5 12th when McIlroy holed a 55-foot eagle putt that gave him a spark and the gallery hope — even though he still was six behind.

He produced only one more birdie the rest of the way and still faced a big climb.

"I played well enough today to at least feel like I have a chance tomorrow," McIlroy said. "Yeah, it's going to be tough to catch him tomorrow if he keeps playing the way he does. But if I can get out tomorrow

and get off to a similar start to what I did today, get the crowd going ... you never know. But I just need to go out and play another really good round of golf tomorrow and see what happens."

But this championship was in the hands of Scheffler, who has been No. 1 in the world longer than anyone since Tiger Woods. And there was nothing Saturday to indicate he was going to make it easy on anyone chasing him.

"I'm just trying to execute, not overthinking things," Scheffler said. "I feel like I've been doing the right thing so far, and I'm looking forward to the challenge of tomorrow."

After his first three-putt of the tournament — making par after reaching the par-5 second hole in two shots — Scheffler made a 10-foot par putt that was as big as any. In deep trouble behind the 11th green, he hacked out to 10 feet to save par, then saved another par from the deep grass left of the 14th fairway.

Royal Portrush has a nasty par 3 at No. 16 known as "Calamity Corner." Scheffler made birdie for the third straight day, this time a 3-iron that settled 15 feet below the cup.

Each shot helped him pull away from the field. Each shot moved him closer to the claret jug, to go along with the PGA Championship he won in May and the two Masters green jackets he has won in two in the last four years.

McIlroy, who revved up the enormous crowd early, had the

most bizarre moment of the championship when he went to gouge out a shot from the rough right of the 11th fairway and a second ball emerged from the turf.

"It's never happened to me before," McIlroy said. "It could never on any other course but a links course."

It led to his lone bogey. He responded with that eagle putt and probably needed more.

"Scottie is ... it's inevitable," McIlroy said. "Even when he doesn't have his best stuff, he's become a complete player."

This is what McIlroy noticed last year, when Scheffler won nine times around the world. What impressed him was that Scheffler played so many bogey-free rounds.

Scheffler picked a great time for another one.

"I think the card could look stress-free, but I had two really nice par saves on the back nine that were key ... two really important putts," he said. "I think any time you can keep a clean card around a major championship, you're going to be having a pretty good day."

Fitzpatrick did his best to keep pace, but he missed a 4-foot par putt on the 13th, got a bad bounce on the 17th that led to another bogey and wound up five shots behind.

"Just didn't make any putts. I didn't hit it close enough," Fitzpatrick said. "Drove it well enough, didn't hit it close enough. Just made way less putts than Scottie."

Collier caps busy weekend with All-Star Game MVP

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Napheesa Collier played the role of All-Star captain perfectly.

First, she made all the right picks for her roster. Then she answered all the labor questions. And finally, she showed everyone, even the WNBA's young guns, how to stay focused on basketball.

The five-time All-Star scored a record 36

points, grabbed nine rebounds and led the aptly named Team Collier past Team Clark 151-131 in the highest scoring All-Star Game in WNBA history. Naturally, Collier was selected the MVP.

She made 13 of 16 shots, four from the specially designed AT&T logo 4-point-line that seemed perfectly aligned for Caitlin Clark, the other team captain who didn't play be-

cause of a right groin injury. And it was all by design.

Collier spent Thursday afternoon negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement and Friday answering questions from a throng of reporters detailing the meeting.

She, like the other All-Stars, wore a T-shirt that read "Pay us what you owe us" during pregame warmups.

Barrios edges out Pacquiao in majority draw

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Manny Pacquiao pushed back against his doubters, the odds and even Father Time on Saturday night — and nearly made some history.

But in the end, Pacquiao fell just short on the judges' scorecards as Mario Barrios escaped with a majority draw to retain the WBC welterweight championship. Two judges scored the bout a draw, and judge Max DeLuca awarded Barrios a 115-113 victory.

The Associated Press scored the fight 115-113 in favor of Pacquiao.

"I thought I won the fight," Pacquiao said.

Barrios landed more total punches (120-101), according to Compubox, but Pacquiao had the edge in power shots (81-75).

Pacquiao, enshrined into the International Boxing Hall of Fame last month, was trying to break his own record for oldest welterweight champion. He was 40 when he emerged in a

2019 split decision over Keith Thurman. This was also the first appearance in the ring in nearly four years for the 46-year-old Filipino, a loss by unanimous decision to Yordenis Ugás.

Barrios, a 30-year-old from San Antonio, was a -275 favorite at BetMGM Sportsbook. He hoped to bounce back from a split-decision draw Nov. 15 against Abel Ramos, but didn't exactly come away with an emphatic victory in improving to 29-2-2. The heavily pro-Pacquiao crowd loudly booed the decision.

"It was an honor to share the ring with him," Barrios said. "This is by far the biggest event I've had to date, and we came in here and left everything in the ring. I have nothing but respect for Manny."

"His stamina is crazy. He's still strong as hell and his timing is real. He's still a very awkward fighter to try to figure out."

Pacman (62-9-2) moved swiftly around the ring from the

beginning, often looking more like the younger champion who captured 12 world titles in eight divisions. He began to be take control in the seventh, landing several big left hands to win the following three rounds on two cards and two on the other.

But Barrios was the better fighter at the end, coming out more aggressive knowing he might be in trouble with the judges. All three, in fact, awarded Barrios each of the final three rounds.

"I didn't think the fight was getting away from me, but I knew I had to step it up to solidify a win," Barrios said.

Both sides said they would be interested in a rematch.

"I hope this is an inspiration to boxers that if you have discipline and work hard, you can still fight at this age," Pacquiao said.

Sebastian Fundora (23-1-1, 15 KOs) retained his WBC super welterweight title when Tim Tszyu (25-3) didn't come out for

the eighth round in the co-main event. Fundora floored Tszyu with a left hand in the first round and dominated the action with 118 power punches, according to Compubox, by repeatedly backing down the Australian.

"I'm the bigger guy," said Fundora, who led 69-63 on all three judges' cards. "Everyone says I'm a bully in the ring, so I thought I should start really bullying these guys. I just kept working on aggression my whole career and we've just been adding."

It was a big week for Fundora, who was accepted into Harvard and then won the rematch with Tszyu. The first fight on March 30, 2024 was much closer, with Fundora emerging with a split-decision victory.

The Coachella, Calif., resident had also been the WBO champion, but that organization stripped him of his belt for not fighting mandatory challenger Xander Zayas.

Holloway keeps BMF title, spoils Poirier's retirement fight

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Max Holloway said he wanted to play spoiler, and he did it Saturday night in the main event.

Holloway defeated Dustin Poirier in a unanimous decision to retain the UFC BMF Championship in UFC 318 at the Smoothie King Center.

The win for Holloway is the first in three fights against Poirier, who beat him in 2012 and 2019.

Holloway (28-8) retained his BMF title after landing 98 more strikes (201-109) and landing 53% of his significant strikes.

Fighting against a partisan Louisiana crowd for the native son Poirier in his retirement match, Holloway was the quicker fighter for the entire match, knocking Poirier off his feet early in the first round.

In the second, another flurry of combinations put Poirier on the mat again, followed by two minutes of dominant grappling.

"I'm pretty happy," Holloway said. Poirier can still hit hard, he said. "but he kept

coming back and back. I came in and I knew I was going to try and be the spoiler and the villain."

Poirier's best chance came in the last 30 seconds of the second round, getting Holloway on the ground with a chokehold and several ground punches before the round ended.

The loss ends a brilliant career for Poirier, who finishes his career with a 30-10 record. The UFC Lightweight Interim Champion in 2019, he also defeated the likes of Connor McGregor twice in addition to victories over Justin Gaethje and Michael Chandler.

"Obviously I wanted to win, but being inside the eye of the storm I thought the fight was a lot closer," Poirier said. "I thought I had him out in the second round, we couldn't hear the bell. The fight just felt a lot closer. It is what it is though."

"Going into the fifth round I thought it was close. I feel like I could have maybe put myself in harm's way more. I could have taken more chances, but I didn't want

to take too many risks. I thought I fought smart. I tried to win."

In the co-main event, Paulo Costa (15-4) snapped a three-match losing streak, defeating Roman Kopylov for a middleweight division win by a unanimous decision.

Daniel Rodriguez (20-5) won his third consecutive fight after a unanimous decision over Kevin Holland in welterweight action in a significant upset. Rodriguez was +425 to win the fight, but beat Holland (28-14), who lost his second fight of 2025.

In the featherweight division, Patricio Freire beat Dan Ige by a unanimous decision. Freire (37-8) dominated the three-round fight, taking down Ige five times.

The five-fight main card opened with a unanimous decision upset win by Michael Johnson over Daniel Zellhuber in the lightweight action. Johnson opened the fight +475 according to Bet MGM. Johnson (25-19) landed 81 strikes compared to only 52 from Zellhuber as he won his third consecutive fight.

Yankees rally on Grisham's slam in 9th

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Trent Grisham hit a tiebreaking grand slam with two outs in the ninth inning and the New York Yankees rallied from five runs down to beat the Atlanta Braves 12-9 on Saturday night before a crowd of 42,530, the largest this season at Truist Park.

Anthony Volpe homered twice and finished with four RBIs for the Yankees, including a tying shot in the eighth. Cody Bellinger went deep in the seventh to help New York stop a three-game slide.

Braves closer Raisel Iglesias (4-6), who hadn't given up a run in 15 appearances, allowed a leadoff double to Paul Goldschmidt in the ninth. One out later, Aaron Judge was intentionally walked and Giancarlo Stanton drew a walk that loaded the bases.

Jazz Chisholm Jr. lined out to third base, but Grisham drove a 1-1 slider to right-center for a 12-8 lead.

Luke Weaver (2-3) earned the win with 1½ scoreless innings in relief. Devin Williams gave up a run in the ninth before closing it out.

Reds 5, Mets 2: Jake Fraley matched a career high with three hits and drove in two runs as visiting Cincinnati beat New York.

On a festive afternoon at Citi Field, the Mets honored David Wright by retiring his No. 5 jersey and inducting him into the team's Hall of Fame during a pregame ceremony. They jumped out to a 2-0 lead before Fraley doubled and scored on a two-base throwing error by catcher Luis Torrens in the third inning.

Fraley then delivered a tie-breaking single in the fourth and a run-scoring double in the sixth for the Reds, who moved a season-high five games over .500 at 52-47.

Phillies 9, Angels 5: Kyle Schwarber hit a grand slam in the sixth inning and Bryce Har-

per capped the scoring with a two-run homer in the eighth, carrying host Philadelphia to a win over Los Angeles.

Schwarber's shot to right field off reliever José Fermin was his eighth career grand slam and 32nd homer of the season.

Taylor Ward and Jo Adell hit back-to-back home runs for the Angels in the fourth inning for a 3-1 lead that wouldn't stand after LA starter Yusei Kikuchi left after five solid innings.

Rockies 10, Twins 6: Ezequiel Tovar hit a three-run homer to break a fifth-inning tie and Colorado won a home series for the first time this season with a victory over Minnesota.

Hunter Goodman had three hits, the last a two-run homer in the eighth, and Ryan McMahon homered for the second straight game. The Rockies have also won two straight home games for the first time this season.

Antonio Senzatela (4-13) gave up three runs in the second inning but faced only one batter over the minimum in the next five, going seven innings for the first time this season.

Blue Jays 6, Giants 3: Addison Barger had a career-high four hits, Will Wagner hit a go-ahead two-run double in a four-run sixth inning and host Toronto beat San Francisco for its ninth straight home victory.

Tyler Heineman homered and drove in three runs for the AL East-leading Blue Jays, who have won 15 of 19.

Marlins 3, Royals 1: Otto López hit a go-ahead two-run double in the eighth inning and host Miami beat Kansas City.

Xavier Edwards tripled and doubled for the Marlins, who won their fourth straight and are 21-10 since June 13. Miami's Kyle Stowers doubled and had two walks after hitting five homers in the last two games.

White Sox 10, Pirates 4: Mike Tauchman had a go-ahead three-run double in a six-run sixth inning, Lenyn Sosa had

three hits and three RBIs and visiting Chicago beat Pittsburgh.

Tauchman gave Chicago a 7-4 lead with the two-out double off Isaac Mattson. The White Sox scored the first four runs of the inning off Caleb Ferguson (2-2), who retired one batter and gave up four hits.

Rays 4, Orioles 3: Chandler Simpson had a tying RBI single and scored the go-ahead run on Ryan O'Hearn's throwing error in a three-run eighth inning in host Tampa Bay's victory over Baltimore.

Tyler O'Neill had a one-out double off Scott Fairbanks in the ninth and scored on Cedric Mullins' two-out single to get Baltimore within a run. Mullins swiped his 14th base before Fairbanks finished it for his 16th save in 19 opportunities.

Rangers 4, Tigers 1: Kumar Rocker took a no-hitter into the sixth inning and Rowdy Tellez hit a three-run home run in his second game with Texas as the host Rangers beat slumping Detroit.

Rocker (4-4) pitched 6⅓ innings, allowing only Wenceel Pérez's two-out single in the sixth that was pulled down the first-base line on an 0-2 cut fastball that was low and inside. The rookie struck out five and walked three, throwing 96 pitches, one shy of his career high.

Nationals 4, Padres 2: Nathaniel Lowe homered and host Washington snapped a five-game losing streak Saturday with a victory over San Diego.

Mitchell Parker earned his first win at home since May 20 for the Nationals, who had dropped nine of 10.

Athletics 8, Guardians 2: Shea Langeliers, Jacob Wilson and Nick Kurtz homered in the final two innings to help the visiting Athletics pull away for a victory over Cleveland.

Luis Severino (3-11) gave up three hits in five innings for the win — allowing only José Ramí-

rez's two-run homer in the third. All three of Severino's wins have come on the road.

Cubs 6, Red Sox 0: All-Star Pete Crow-Armstrong hit his 26th homer, one of five solo shots for host Chicago to back seven sharp innings by Shota Imanaga, and Chicago beat Boston.

Michael Busch, Kyle Tucker, Matt Shaw and Ian Happ also connected for the Cubs, who moved a season-best 20 games over .500 and have the best record in the majors at 59-39.

Diamondbacks 10, Cardinals 1: Eugenio Suárez homered twice to bring his season total to 33, Corbin Carroll had two triples and host Arizona cruised to a victory over St. Louis.

Diamondbacks righty Ryne Nelson (6-2) had a quality start, giving up one run on four hits over six innings.

Brewers 8, Dodgers 7: Freddy Peralta won his seventh straight start, Isaac Collins and Joey Ortiz homered, and visiting Milwaukee held off Los Angeles to extend its win streak to nine.

Peralta (12-4) wasn't particularly sharp, giving up four runs and five hits in five innings. He struck out four and walked three as his ERA rose from 2.66 to 2.85. But the Brewers tacked on three insurance runs after Peralta departed to maintain the lead.

Mariners 7, Astros 6 (11): Rookie second baseman Cole Young hit a walk-off single in the 11th inning to give Seattle a victory over Houston.

Young—who also delivered a game-ending fielder's choice in the 11th inning of his major league debut—provided some more late-night theatrics in the Emerald City. Just a couple weeks shy of his 22nd birthday, Young went below the zone to drive a splitter from reliever Hector Neris (3-2) into right field, scoring automatic runner Dominic Canzone from third base.