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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Navy eyes 'more lethal' warships

New versions of LCS to have enhanced weapons systems, armor

Associated Press

BATH, Maine — The Navy spent hundreds of millions of dollars to fulfill its need for speed with a new class of fast, agile warships capable of zipping along at highway speeds.

It turns out speed is overrated.

The Navy has learned lessons from the light-and-speedy littoral combat ships. Upcoming ships will trade some speed in favor of more weapons and heavier armor.

Rear Adm. Peter Fanta, director of surface warfare, said the goal is to increase the offensive punch of all warships from the biggest to the smallest. For the littoral combat ship, that'll begin with the installation of

over-the-horizon missiles this summer.

"Each ship that I now have I have to make more lethal because I cannot build ships fast enough, or enough of them," Fanta told The Associated Press.

Two versions of the warships were sped into production to meet the Navy's goal of having an affordable, fast ship to operate in shallow coastal — or littoral — waters.

The ships, which are capable of topping 50 mph, utilize steerable water jets instead of propellers and rudders to operate in shallow water.

They also are built to be equipped with swappable mission modules for surface warfare, anti-submarine duty or

mine removal. That's in contrast to larger, multiple-mission ships like the 610-foot Michael Monsoor, a Zumwalt-class destroyer christened Saturday at Bath Iron Works.

But the gee-whiz factor was overshadowed by concerns over growing costs — the latest versions cost \$482 million to \$563 million apiece — along with criticism by the General Accounting Office that the warships were both armed and armored too lightly.

Two high-profile breakdowns, in December and January, raised additional questions about reliability. The USS Milwaukee had to be towed 40 miles to a naval base in Virginia, while the USS Fort Worth was sidelined in Singapore.

Fanta said the Navy is learning from the initial deployments and is incorporating changes into a new version that will be called a frigate. The Navy also intends to zero in on one design either next year or the following year, leading to cost savings.

The Freedom class, with a steel monohull, is built in Marinette, Wis., while the tri-hulled, aluminum Independence class is built in Mobile, Ala. Both were rushed into production to deal with unconventional post-Cold War threats including swarm boats and pirates. But the threats have changed again, with China flexing its muscle in the South China Sea and Russia reasserting its naval presence.

Carter: Orlando underscores need to hasten terror fight

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Islamic State group is losing its battles for territory in Iraq and Syria, but the most recent mass shooting on American soil inspired by the terrorist organization underscores the need to accelerate the U.S.-led campaign, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Monday.

Once again, Carter called on America's military partners in the fight against the Islamic State to do more to hasten the campaign against the terrorist group in a speech during the Center for a New American Security's annual conference in Washington that focused largely on the strategic importance of U.S. military allies across

the globe.

Fighting terrorism, particularly the Islamic State group, is one of five key global security endeavors for the United States, Carter said. The attack last week by a gunman on an Orlando, Fla., nightclub that left 49 dead and more than 50 others injured reportedly was inspired by the terrorist group. The mass shooting only reinforces the existing influence of the Islamic State, even as it has been corralled in Iraq and Syria, where the group has lost massive amounts of territory.

"Last week's tragic shooting in Orlando underscores the urgency," Carter said Monday. "... It reminds us that [the Islamic State group] not only tyrannizes the populations where it arose in Iraq and Syria, but it

also wants to spread its evil ideology and to plot or inspire attacks on Americans, including here at home."

The June 12 attack was at least the second mass shooting on American soil carried out by a gunman who officials have said pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The group has also directed attacks in European cities, including Paris and Brussels.

CIA Director John Brennan last week told Senate intelligence committee members that the Islamic State group has not lost its abilities to export terrorism, though the fight against the group has been successful in Iraq and Syria, where its force has been reduced from about 33,000 fighters last year

to 18,000 to 22,000 today.

"Our efforts have not reduced the group's terrorism capability and global reach," he said.

Recent U.S. airstrikes, Carter said Monday, have killed about 20 of the Islamic State group's "external operators," who were believed to be "actively plotting to attack our friends and allies and America's own men and women in uniform."

Carter did not provide specific examples of further steps that could be taken to accelerate the campaign against terrorism. He will host the defense ministers of all 30 nations involved in the campaign against the Islamic State group next month in Washington "to plan and resource our next steps."

Trump's longtime aide is out as campaign manager

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Donald Trump fired his hard-charging campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, on Monday in a dramatic shake-up designed to calm panicked Republican leaders and to reverse one of the most tumultuous stretches of Trump's unconventional White House bid.

Lewandowski, in some ways as brash and unconventional as the candidate, himself, had been by Trump's side since the beginning of his unlikely rise to presumptive GOP nominee. But he clashed with longtime operatives brought in to make the seat-of-the-pants campaign more professional. The former conservative activist played a central role in daily operations, fundraising, and Trump's search for a running mate, but Lewandowski's aggressive approach also fueled nearly constant campaign infighting that complicated Trump's shift toward the general election.

Reached on Monday, Lewandowski deflected any criticism of his approach, pointing instead to campaign chairman Paul Manafort.

"Paul Manafort has been in operational control of the campaign since April 7. That's

a fact," Lewandowski said, declining to elaborate on his dismissal.

Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks described Lewandowski's departure as a "parting of ways." A person close to Trump said Lewandowski was forced out largely because of his poor relationship with the Republican National Committee and GOP officials. That person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to discuss internal deliberations.

The move came as Trump faced continued deep resistance from many quarters of his party concerned by his contentious statements and his reluctance to engage in traditional fundraising. Trump was upset that so many Republicans — House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell among them — were reluctant to support him, the person said, and at least partially blamed Lewandowski.

People close to Trump, including adult children Ivanka, Eric and Donald Jr., also had long-simmering concerns about Lewandowski, who had limited experience on the national scale before becoming Trump's campaign chief.

US to seek funds for Afghanistan efforts

The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — America's longest war is about to include more cash for Afghanistan's army and police force — without any new conditions to try to make sure it doesn't get gobbled up before making it to the battlefield.

At a NATO summit in Warsaw that begins July 8, the United States and its allies will try to raise \$15 billion to fund Afghan security forces through 2020. About \$10.5 billion of that is expected to come from the United States.

Even though billions of dollars have been wasted or stolen here during the past 15 years, NATO leaders will probably not link the money to new benchmarks or anti-corruption standards for the Afghan military, said Maj. Gen. Gordon "Skip" Davis Jr., commander of Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, which oversees coalition support for Afghan security forces.

"There was discussion last year about having some spe-

cific benchmarks before the Warsaw summit, but I think the allies felt it was impractical," said Davis, adding that it would have taken months to agree on what new strings should be placed on the money.

Davis said NATO leaders have confidence in Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to safeguard the money. He also thinks Afghan security forces can operate effectively under existing performance goals.

When NATO last met to consider Afghanistan funding in 2014, President Barack Obama was still insisting that all but 1,000 U.S. troops would be withdrawn from the country by the end of this year. At the time, Congress also appeared to be growing frustrated with reports that vast sums had been lost or stolen under former Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

But Obama agreed to keep 9,800 soldiers here this year.

Earlier this month, Obama gave troops more authority to take offensive action against the Taliban.

Navy, Coast Guard help save 2 off Marianas island

Stars and Stripes

The Coast Guard and a Navy helicopter squadron assisted in the rescue of two fishermen 13 miles northwest of the North Marianas island of Tinian, the Navy said Sunday.

The sailors from Guam-based Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25, known as the Island Knights, left Andersen Air Force Base at 9:35 p.m. Saturday in response to an emergency call to Coast Guard Sector Guam.

Within an hour, the squadron located the fishermen's capsized boat from their MH-60S Sea Hawk and notified the region's Coast Guard unit. The Coast Guard and the local fire department then had the fishermen swim to their boat and moved the two men to safety on the island of Saipan.

"It means a great deal to be able to help save life," Lt. Amanda Lowery, the aircraft commander of the search-and-rescue helicopter, said in a Navy statement.

'Star Trek' actor Yelchin hit, killed by own vehicle

Associated Press

Anton Yelchin, a rising actor best known for playing Chekov in the new "Star Trek" films, was killed by his own car early Sunday as it rolled down his driveway, police and his publicist said.

The 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee pinned Yelchin, 27, against a brick mailbox pillar and a security fence at his home in Los Angeles, Officer Jenny Hosier said. He had gotten out of the vehicle momentarily, but police did not say why he was behind it when it started rolling.

Coroner's spokesman Ed

Winter said the death has been ruled an accident. An autopsy performed Sunday determined the actor died of blunt force asphyxia.

Winter said any toxicology results will take months to analyze.

Yelchin was on his way to meet friends for a rehearsal, Hosier said. When he didn't show up, the group came to his home and found him dead early Sunday.

Yelchin had a promising acting career. "Star Trek Beyond," the third film in the rebooted series, comes out in July.

Cavaliers win thrilling Game 7

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — LeBron James cradled the shiny, gold trophy and struggled to sum up what might be his sweetest championship yet, the one he is so proudly bringing home to his native northeastern Ohio just as he promised to do when he returned to the Cavaliers two summers ago.

Later, flanked by his three children on Father's Day, a cigar between his lips and the winning net as a necklace with the lingering aroma of champagne, James began to understand the magnitude of his accomplishment for Cleveland after a half-century wait.

"I'm coming home with what I said I was going to do," he said, adding, "I can't wait to get off that plane, hold that trophy up and see all our fans at the terminal."

James and his relentless, never-count-them-out Cavs pulled off an improbable NBA Finals comeback and Cleveland is title town again at long last.

James delivered on a vow to his home state and brought the Cavs back from the brink as they became the first team to rally from a 3-1 finals deficit, beating the defending champion Golden State Warriors 93-89 on Sunday night to end a 52-year major sports championship drought in Cleveland.

"I've never seen a man in my life tell an entire state: 'Get on my back, I got you. Get on my back and I'm going to carry you. ...'" Richard Jefferson said. "... He was like, 'I'm going to come back home because I promised them that I would do something.' And he carried us the whole way."

In a testy series of blowouts — and a few blowups — the winner-take-all Game 7 provided the thrilling finale with James as the finals MVP disarming two-time reigning MVP Stephen Curry and his record-setting Warriors.

The native of Akron rattled off moments from the lengthy list of Cleveland sports heartbreak and said what it meant for him to personally bring the Cavaliers their first championship.

Playing his sixth straight finals, James almost single-handedly carried the Cavs back into this series and finished with 27 points, 11 assists and 11 rebounds as the Cavs gave their city its first major sports winner since the Browns won the NFL title in 1964. He also had three blocked shots and two steals, overcoming five turnovers.

An emotional James fell to the floor when this one ended with a second win in a week on Golden State's imposing home floor, surrounded by his teammates. Only moments earlier, he went down in pain

with 10.6 seconds left after being fouled by Draymond Green while going for a dunk, then came back out to make the second of two free throws.

After four successful seasons in Miami and two titles with the Heat, James came back to the Cavs in hopes of winning the title this franchise and championship-starved city so coveted. It took a second try against Golden State after Cleveland lost to the Warriors in six games last year.

"I was calm. I was focused. I was locked in," James said.

Cleveland did it after a coaching change, with Tyronn Lue taking over in January for the fired David Blatt.

"We made history tonight," Lue said. "Cleveland, Ohio, we're coming back, baby!"

Kyrie Irving scored 26 points to cap his brilliant finals, including a 3-pointer over Curry with 53 seconds left.

Curry sat briefly on the bench to take in the scene after the Warriors made their last basket with 4:39 left.

"It hurts, man," Curry said. "... Hopefully we'll have many more opportunities to fight for championships and be on this stage because this is what it's all about."

No doubt left about James' talent, legacy

Associated Press

The drought is over for Cleveland, and the debate is over as well.

The best player in basketball?

His name is LeBron James.

This is why he went back to Cleveland, to deliver a title, ending the city's epic championship drought and finally giving northeastern Ohio what it craved for nearly 52 years.

It's done. And now he's free. Anything that happens from here is icing on a three-tiered championship cake for James.

The only thing he hadn't done on a basketball court was make Cleveland, a city whose sports teams were cursed for so long, a winner. December 27, 1964, was the day Jim Brown last made them one. That is, until June 19, 2016. James was an NBA champion before from his time in Miami, an Olympic champion, an MVP, a Finals MVP ... he had checked every box but one, and now that one is filled as well.

Stephen Curry is the two-time reigning MVP and rightly so, the best player on the best regular-season team in league history. Oklahoma City's Kevin Durant will likely be the hottest free agent on the market this summer, coveted by everyone. Kobe Bryant was the highest-paid player in the NBA this season and this year was a celebration of his 20 years of greatness.

But they're all part of LeBron's world.

James is the freight train, the most unstoppable force in the game, and he shows no signs of slowing down after 13 years in the league. He's 31. He rarely misses games. He's been in seven of the past 10 NBA Finals, including each of the past six. He's nowhere near his decline, which must delight even those Cleveland fans who burned his jerseys in 2010. And while winning cures all, he can be a free agent this summer, which is likely to scare some people as well.

"I'm true to the game," James said, "and I know what I bring to the table."

It bears noting that some of what's on that table now wasn't there six years ago, though.

It's fair to say, this celebration would not be happening without July 8, 2010, the day James headed to Miami.

James needed a change and craved a title. He got all that and more. He learned how to lead, he learned the value of structure, he learned from Dwyane Wade and Erik Spoelstra and Pat Riley and Micky Arison, took little bits from each of them, added it all to his already-ridiculous game and made himself better.

James never went to college. But like many college kids, he went away for four years and then returned home with hopes of making his city better.

The result: Cleveland is a city of champions.

"I knew what I learned in the last couple years that I was gone," James said, "and I knew if I had to — when I came back, I knew I had the right ingredients and the right blueprint to help this franchise get back to a place that we've never been. That's what it was all about."

Curry, Warriors 1st to surrender 3-1 lead

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Stephen Curry tried to shake Kevin Love with a dribble and let loose with one of those long three-pointers he seemed to make at every big moment this season.

Instead of a game-tying splash in the final minute, the ball rimmed out, and so did the Golden State Warriors' chances of adding a second straight championship to a record-setting season.

"It will haunt me for a while because it means a lot to me to try to lead my team and do what I need to do on the court and big stages," Curry said. "Done it before. Didn't do it tonight."

With Curry and fellow Splash Brother Klay Thompson off all night, the Warriors capped the greatest collapse ever in the NBA Finals instead of the most successful season in league history with a 93-89 loss to the Cleveland Cavaliers in Game 7 on Sunday night.

The record-setting 73 wins in the regular season, Curry's unanimous MVP and the memorable comeback in the conference finals will all be a footnote now after the Warriors became the first team ever to lose the NBA Finals after taking a 3-1 series lead.

"It wasn't easy what we accomplished, and it's not an easy pill to swallow what we didn't accomplish," Curry said.

After blowing two earlier chances to clinch the title, the Warriors were in position for the win in the closing minutes of a tense Game 7 that had the boisterous crowd at Oracle Arena alternating between delirious cheers and nervous energy.

But the Warriors did not score after

Thompson tied the game with a driving layup with 4:39 to play. Golden State missed its final nine shots with LeBron James coming out of nowhere to block what seemed like an uncontested go-ahead layup by Andre Iguodala with less than two minutes left and Curry missing his final four three-point attempts as part of a 4-for-14 night from long range.

"We really just kind of settled too much," Curry said. "That's something that is tough to kind of swallow with the opportunity we had in front of us."

Kyrie Irving gave Cleveland the lead for good with his three-pointer over Curry with 53 seconds left before Curry missed at the other end. After a free throw by James made it a two-possession game, Curry missed again and trudged back toward the Warriors bench as the Cavaliers celebrated the title on Golden State's home floor.

Curry sat on the bench for a few minutes as the stage was assembled for Cleveland's trophy celebration before he congratulated the victorious Cavs. He then returned to the locker room where he was still sitting in full uniform with his head in his hands nearly 30 minutes later after a disappointing ending to a season that featured a record 402 three-pointers and the first unanimous NBA MVP for Curry.

By falling short of the title, the Warriors will now be part of a debate they hoped to avoid: the best teams that failed to win a championship.

Golden State joins the 18-0 New England Patriots that lost the Super Bowl in 2008, the 116-win Seattle Mariners that fell in the 2001 AL championship series and the 68-win Boston Celtics that lost in the Eastern Conference finals in 1973 as great regular season teams that couldn't get it

done in the postseason.

"We had a goal at the beginning of the year to repeat, and that goal we failed," forward Draymond Green said. "But I don't look at this entire season as a failure because there's been too many great things that happened."

After winning a record 24 straight games to start the season and pushing hard to break Chicago's record of 72 wins set in 1995-96 on the final day of the regular season, few things came easy for the Warriors in the playoffs when their nine losses matched their entire total from the regular season.

Curry missed six games in the first two rounds with injuries to his ankle and knee. Golden State then rallied from 3-1 down to beat Oklahoma City in the Western Conference finals before blowing the same lead to Cleveland a round later.

The collapse started when Green was suspended for hitting James in the groin late in Game 4. James and Irving each scored 41 points in the Game 5 win and Cleveland followed it with two more, handing the Warriors their first three-game losing streak in two seasons under coach Steve Kerr.

"This is why you can't mess around," Kerr said. "Not that we messed around, but this is why every game counts. Game 5 was really the key. That was the turning point of the whole series."

Green tried to redeem himself with 32 points, 15 rebounds and nine assists in Game 7. But with Curry and Thompson shooting 6-for-24 from three-point range, the Warriors fell short.

"It's going to be a long three months over the summer thinking about it," Curry said.



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Johnson finally wins a major

Associated Press

OAKMONT, Pa. — Dustin Johnson had everything going his way Sunday in the U.S. Open.

He was playing the best golf on the toughest course. He had a two-shot lead on the back nine at Oakmont. He even got a huge break on a ruling that allowed him to escape deep rough, the kind of breaks that usually go to major champions.

That's when he saw two USGA officials approach him on the 12th tee. They told him he might get a one-shot penalty for his ball moving on the fifth green. They wouldn't know until after his round.

Try playing the back nine of a U.S. Open with that kind of confusion.

"It's nothing new at this point," said Johnson, who has had major mishaps for the last six years. "It's happened so many times I kind of expect it now."

The difference was the outcome. Johnson showed the mettle — and yes, the wits — to finally win a major championship.

"For it to not affect the outcome is fantastic," he said. "It just shows how well I played."

No one knew if he was leading, tied or one shot behind, and neither did Johnson. He didn't look at a board the rest of the day, taking on each shot regardless of the score and coming up with all the right

shots — the 10-foot par save on the 16th, a cautious bunker shot on the 17th, and a 6-iron that settled the score. It dropped down 5 feet from the hole for a birdie that wrapped up a U.S. Open that was overdue.

The USGA wound up giving him the penalty shot after it was over, so Johnson closed with a 1-under 69 for a three-shot victory over Shane Lowry, Scott Piercy and Jim Furyk, a runner-up at Oakmont for the second straight U.S. Open.

"I still didn't want the penalty. I didn't think that I did anything to cause the ball to move," Johnson said. "But at the end of the day, it didn't affect what happened. So it doesn't bother me at all."

Finally, he's a major champion. Johnson finished at 4-under 276, the lowest winning score in nine U.S. Opens at Oakmont.

The lingering question was whether the toughest test in golf was tougher than it needed to be.

Johnson had a short par putt on the fifth hole, took a few practice strokes and as he placed the putter behind the ball, it moved slightly — backward. Johnson stepped back and called over the rules official, told him he didn't cause it to move. He tapped in for par.

Jeff Hall, senior director of rules and open championships for the USGA, said a staff member said on the radio that it

might be worth another look. The USGA thought Johnson should know that his score might be one shot worse than it was, so it told him on the 12th tee.

"After looking at video, the actions he took could have caused the ball to move," Hall said. "We asked if there was some other reason the ball could have moved. He didn't state a reason."

But it led to confusion over the entire back nine — for Johnson and for the guys trying to catch him.

Lowry, who began the final round with a four-shot lead that he lost on the front nine, tied him when Johnson made bogey on the 14th.

Were they tied? Was Johnson trailing by one?

Jack Nicklaus, who won the first of his 18 majors at Oakmont in 1962, said if the USGA thought it might be a one-shot penalty, it should have done it right there and "let him get on with the job."

Lowry became the first player since Payne Stewart at Olympic Club in 1998 to lose a four-shot lead in the final round of the U.S. Open. He made birdie after being told of the potential Johnson penalty, but the Irishman lost his putting touch with three-putt bogeys on three straight holes. He closed with a 76.

Coastal Carolina surprises No. 1 Fla.

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — No. 1 seed Florida sent to the mound two first-round picks, a second-rounder, third-rounder and 10th-rounder against Coastal Carolina on Sunday night.

None was nearly as good as the never-drafted Andrew Beckwith.

Confounding the Gators with his submarine, sidearm and overhand deliveries and even a curveball he said he found in his "back pocket" in pregame warmups, Beckwith was the shiniest of all the stars at TD Ameritrade Park in the Chanticleers' 2-1 victory — their program's first College World Series game.

"Everything was working tonight," Beckwith said.

Yes, it was.

"Like I've said all year long, he's the best bullpen guy in the country, and he keeps proving me wrong," Coastal Carolina coach Gary Gilmore said. "He's a legit starter. To change arm angles and command the ball the way he does ... He's a unique guy."

The biggest victory in Coastal Carolina's history came in the third stage of its incredible postseason run. The Chanticleers beat host North Carolina State in the regional final and swept No. 8 national seed LSU on the road in super regionals to advance to Omaha.

"We're basically trying to do this for coach Gilmore," Beckwith said. "We got him to Omaha, but our job's not done."

The Chanticleers (50-16) have won 39 of their last 47 games and show no signs of slowing down.

The Gators (52-15) came to Omaha favored to win their program's first national title. Now they're in survival mode. A No. 1 national seed hasn't won the championship since Miami in 1999, the first year of the current tournament format.

"There are a lot of people disappointed. I'm disappointed, to be honest with you," Gators coach Kevin O'Sullivan said. "This is a really good team. We just ran across a guy who was really good tonight."

Beckwith pitched the first complete game of his career, and needed only 98 pitches to do it.

The Gators' only run off Beckwith (13-1) came on Jeremy Vazquez's pinch single in the fifth. Beckwith allowed two singles the rest of the way and retired the last 10 batters.

TCU 5, Texas Tech 3: At Omaha, Neb., when Luken Baker came up to bat in the ninth inning, the TCU dugout fell silent.

That changed in the amount of time it took the 6-foot-4, 265-pounder to hammer his bat into Robert Dugger's fastball and send it just inside the left-field foul pole into the seats for the go-ahead three-run homer in a 5-3 victory over Big 12 rival Texas Tech on Sunday.

Baker raised his right index finger as he neared first base and saw the ball go out, and teammates rushed out of the dugout for high-fives, hugs and celebratory arm bumps.

The Big 12's freshman of the year is only getting better as the Horned Frogs' season continues. He has hit six of his 10 homers in the last 12 games.

TCU has won its CWS opener three years in a row. The Red Raiders (46-19) have yet to win at the CWS, having gone 0-2 in 2014 in their only other appearance.

Cubs' rookie homers in 1st MLB at-bat

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Prized prospect Willson Contreras received a standing ovation as he made his way to the plate in the sixth inning for his first major league at-bat.

One pitch later, the Wrigley Field crowd was back on its feet demanding a curtain call.

Contreras crushed the first pitch he saw in the big leagues for a two-run home run, Kyle Hendricks struck out a career-high 12 in six innings and the Chicago Cubs completed a sweep of the fading Pittsburgh Pirates with a 10-5 victory Sunday night.

"It's incredible," a smiling Contreras said. "I don't have the words to explain how happy I am."

Contreras, called up from Triple-A on Friday, pinch hit for Hendricks in the sixth and sent A.J. Schugel's changeup an estimated 415 feet to center. The cheering didn't let up until the 24-year-old Venezuelan catcher hopped out of the dugout and tipped his cap.

A fan even returned the ball to Contreras, which sat in his locker.

"It's a dream come true," he said. Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo hit consecutive home runs in the third and Javier Baez added a solo shot for the Cubs, all off rookie Jameson Taillon (1-1). Addison Russell hit a two-run shot in the seventh for the Cubs, who have eight homers in two games.

Josh Harrison's solo home run was the lone blemish off Hendricks (5-6), who walked none and allowed seven hits. His previous career high was nine strikeouts.

Starling Marte returned from injury and had a two-run triple off Adam Warren in a three-run seventh for the Pirates, who have lost 17 of 22 and fell 15 games behind the Cubs in the NL Central.

Chicago's overall division lead jumped to 12½ games over St. Louis with Contreras providing the latest feel-good story.

"I was looking for the right spot," manager Joe Maddon said.

Contreras arrived from Iowa on Friday and played one inning of defense. Maddon announced before the game that Contreras would get his first start at catcher Monday.

Of course, Contreras is still a rookie, and the team's No. 3 catcher. Once the curtain call ended, he had to get back to warming up pitchers.

"That was funny," Contreras said. "After I hit a homer, they say, 'I know you're happy, but you have to go back to the bullpen.'"

Giants 5, Rays 1: Brandon Belt homered and Joe Panik snapped an eighth-inning tie with an RBI single, helping visiting San Francisco extend its winning streak to a season-best eight games.

Jake Peavy pitched six solid innings and Derek Law (2-1) worked a scoreless seventh in completing a three-game sweep at Tropicana Field. Belt hit his team-leading 10th homer off Rays starter Jake Odorizzi, while Panik delivered in a key situation for the second straight day with his run-scoring single against Xavier Cedeno (3-2) during a four-run eighth.

Orioles 11, Blue Jays 6: Matt Wieters homered and drove in four runs as host Baltimore outslugged Toronto to provide right-hander Chris Tillman with his ninth straight victory.

Braves 6, Mets 0: Julio Teheran tossed a one-hit masterpiece, pitching visiting Atlanta to a surprising three-game sweep of New York.

Nick Markakis homered and drove in two runs for Atlanta, which has won five straight for the first time since the first five games of last season.

Angels 2, Athletics 0: Jered Weaver pitched a three-hitter, leading visiting Los Angeles to the victory over Oakland.

Marlins 3, Rockies 0: Tom Koehler pitched around six walks in six innings and three relievers combined for three perfect innings, helping host Miami to the win.

Dodgers 2, Brewers 1: Pinch hitter

Yasmani Grandal walked with the bases loaded to end the game as host Los Angeles got another strong start from rookie Kenta Maeda.

Padres 6, Nationals 3: Drew Pomeranz allowed three solo homers in six innings and Adam Rosales drove in two runs, helping host San Diego to the victory.

Red Sox 2, Mariners 1: Boston left-hander David Price snapped a personal three-game losing streak by pitching eight sharp innings and Mookie Betts hit a go-ahead homer as the Red Sox topped visiting Seattle.

Indians 3, White Sox 2 (10): Jose Ramirez hit an RBI single with two out in the 10th inning, lifting host Cleveland to the three-game sweep.

Rangers 5, Cardinals 4: Jurickson Profar hit a two-run single in the eighth, helping visiting Texas to its sixth straight win.

Royals 2, Tigers 1 (13): Cheslor Cuthbert singled home Lorenzo Cain in the 13th inning, giving host Kansas City the win.

Twins 7, Yankees 4: Ervin Santana pitched into the eighth inning to earn his first victory since May 14 and host Minnesota avoided a four-game series sweep.

Eduardo Escobar's two-run triple keyed a four-run sixth inning as the Twins snapped a five-game losing streak.

Astros 6, Reds 0: Evan Gattis and Luis Valbuena homered, helping host Houston to the win.

Mike Fiers (5-3) allowed four hits and struck out five in 5²/₃ innings. He departed when Jay Bruce's line drive hit him in the thigh for a single.

Diamondbacks 5, Phillies 1: Archie Bradley pitched six strong innings and drove in a run to lead visiting Arizona.

Bradley (3-3) allowed an unearned run and three hits, snapping a personal three-game losing streak.