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July 4 events scaled back at Japan bases

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The rockets' red glare will be absent from Independence Day celebrations at U.S. military bases in Japan this year.

The decision to go low-key for the most patriotic American holiday — musical acts, including R&B singer Usher, were also canceled — is an extension of the monthlong “period of unity and mourning” declared on Okinawa following the slaying of a 20-year-old Okinawa woman that has been linked to a U.S. civilian base worker.

The impact of Rina Shimabukuru's brutal death, in combination with other recent crimes by U.S. servicemembers, has spread to the Japanese mainland and become a political hot

potato.

The spate of crimes also has led to liberty and alcohol restrictions for U.S. troops and a series of anti-base protests. About 65,000 people attended a demonstration Sunday on Okinawa to demand all Marines leave the island. An additional 7,000 protested outside the Japanese parliament building in Tokyo, focusing on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for his moves to expand the Japanese military's role beyond self-defense.

U.S. Forces Japan spokesman Air Force Lt. Col. Kenneth Hoffman said Wednesday that Independence Day events were being scaled back Japan-wide “to demonstrate unwavering respect for the loss our friends on Okinawa experienced.”

The announcement follows Saturday's statement by III Ma-

rine Expeditionary Force Lt. Gen. Lawrence D. Nicholson, the top U.S. military official on Okinawa, that it was “probably still too soon” for celebratory Independence Day events there.

AmericaFest, which had been scheduled July 2 at Kadena and was to feature Usher, has been canceled, and the Futenma Flightline Fair was postponed to September.

The Independence Day celebrations normally draw large crowds, including Japanese guests, for live music and American fast food, capped by extensive fireworks displays.

But the May 19 arrest of Kenneth Franklin Gadson, a former Marine who works at Kadena Air Base, left officials scrambling to show sympathy over Shimabukuru's death. Gadson has been charged with illegally

disposing of her body, and police have recommended additional charges of murder and rape resulting in death.

In addition, Seaman Apprentice Justin Castellanos pleaded guilty May 27 to raping an intoxicated Japanese woman at a Naha hotel, and Okinawa military officials tightened a curfew and added other liberty restrictions the same day as part of the “period of unity and mourning.”

Less than a week later, Petty Officer 2nd Class Aimee Mejia, 21, assigned to Kadena, was arrested on suspicion of drunken driving after crashing into two cars by driving the wrong way on an Okinawa highway.

That led the Navy to impose a ban on nonessential off-base travel and alcohol consumption by sailors for several days.

North Korean missile launch shows signs of progress

By KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired a ballistic missile that flew about 620 miles high Wednesday, officials said, a major step in the reclusive nation's bid to develop a weapon that can reach U.S. bases in the Pacific.

The test marked significant technical progress after the failure of five previous efforts to launch a mid-range Musudan missile over the past two months, including one earlier Wednesday. The first missile broke up in the air after flying about 93 miles, the South Korean news agency Yonhap reported, citing unidentified military sources.

Washington, Japan, South Korea and NATO strongly condemned the missile tests, while China — a traditional ally of the

North — urged restraint.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the first missile was fired at 5:58 a.m. from the Wonsan rocket facility on North Korea's east coast and was presumed to have failed. The second was fired at 8:05 and traveled 250 miles, the military said.

The department declined to provide more details or deem the test a success pending further analysis.

Japan's Defense Ministry said a radar analysis showed that the second missile reached an altitude of at least 620 miles, according to The Associated Press. South Korean officials did not immediately confirm that.

Jeffrey Lewis, of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, Calif., said the altitude would be sig-

nificant because it means the missile would have flown to its full range if fired on a normal trajectory.

“If true, then North Korea successfully tested the propulsion system,” he said in an email. “It's clear that North Korea's rocketeers are under enormous pressure to demonstrate the Musudan.”

The missile tests came amid heightened tensions over the North's refusal to give up its nuclear ambitions, despite international condemnation and harsh U.N. sanctions imposed after a fourth atomic test in January.

South Korean President Park Geun-hye warned the North Korean regime it risked “complete isolation and self-destruction” from its “reckless provocation.”

The U.S. Strategic Command in Hawaii said that its systems detected and tracked the two

suspected missiles, which fell into the Sea of Japan. It said the launches violated U.N. Security Council resolutions that prohibit the North from using ballistic missile technology.

“We urge North Korea to refrain from provocative actions that aggravate tensions and instead focus on fulfilling its international obligations and commitments,” it said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying called on the “relevant countries” to avoid action that could escalate tensions. “The situation on the Korean peninsula is very complex and sensitive,” she was quoted as saying by Yonhap.

Maj. Gen. Chang Ryong Choi, commander of South Korea's 1st Marine Division, said the North may be seeking a bargaining chip for potential talks on its nuclear program in the future.

Vietnam helo pilot to get Medal of Honor

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Charles Kettles knew the eight troops climbing aboard his helicopter would overload it, potentially grounding them amid North Vietnamese machine-gun and mortar fire.

As bullets raked the UH-1D Huey and shrapnel blew out a section of its windshield, Kettles made a long, slow takeoff, piloting the last group of men out of an ambush near Duc Pho, Vietnam, in 1967.

For his combat heroism, Kettles, 86, a retired Army lieutenant colonel and former flight commander, will receive the Medal of Honor in a White House ceremony scheduled for next month. The award is an upgrade from the Distinguished Service Cross as a result of support from Michigan

lawmakers.

During the 1967 mission, about 80 soldiers with 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division launched an assault and were surprised by enemy forces along a ridgeline.

"They were caught in an ambush, a bad scene," said Kettles, who retired from the Army in 1978 and now lives in Michigan.

Kettles, who spoke about the mission during a recent interview with Stars and Stripes, was a flight commander assigned to the 176th Aviation Company, 14th Combat Aviation Battalion. He was called up to lead a platoon of Hueys in support of the soldiers. His helicopters made multiple flights to the battle site and ferried wounded and dead.

The battalion commander called for all remaining troops to be extracted, including soldiers from Kettles' platoon who

were trapped when their helicopter was destroyed.

Kettles was down to one serviceable helicopter and had to call up another unit to assist. The helicopters went in to extract the last of the remaining soldiers and loaded up. As they flew away, Kettles had just one infantry soldier on his Huey.

"Then we were informed that there were eight troops who didn't get on helicopter," Kettles said.

Kettles knew his D-model Huey lacked the kind of lift power that could guarantee they would get back off the ground with an additional eight soldiers on board. He took the controls of the helicopter from the copilot and turned back toward the site of the ambush. As they landed, the infantry soldiers immediately began climbing aboard. Suddenly they were hit by North Vietnamese

mortar fire. Several of the soldiers were wounded. Later, the crew would find about 30 holes where enemy bullets pierced the aircraft.

The Huey was still badly overloaded and the rotor blade began to lose speed. To get the men out, Kettles would have to execute a running takeoff, flying slow and low over a long, open space.

As enemy fire continued, Kettles lowered the Huey's nose skid to nearly touch the ground and flew along a dry riverbed.

"Eventually, the thing did fly and came out with a rather shallow departure," he said.

Kettles was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroism. A push from lawmakers in Kettles' home state sought to upgrade his award.

Kettles will be the 260th recipient from the Vietnam War.

Afghan recruiting causes concern

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

HERAT, Afghanistan — Iran's recruitment of Afghan men from the regions along the common border to fight in Syria may be contributing to a shortage of Army recruits in western Afghanistan, NATO officials have said.

The Afghan security forces have struggled to keep their numbers up across the country, faced with record casualties in battle with the Taliban, desertions and phantom soldiers — names on the payrolls who may be dead or missing.

However, recruitment numbers are particularly low in Herat and neighbor provinces in western Afghanistan. The region is the most stable in the country, but if that changes as the Taliban spread their insurgency beyond their southern strongholds, Afghan forces in the region may not be up to the

challenge, officials said.

"If Afghanistan recruiting command can't keep pace, that's a problem," said U.S. Army Col. Steve Lutsky, deputy commander of NATO's Train Advise Assist Command-West.

Speaking with a select group of reporters at the command's headquarters in the province, Lutsky said Iran may be partly to blame for the shortage.

"We believe they are recruiting Afghan males to fight ISIS in Syria," he said, using an acronym for the Islamic State group. "That's what we've been told by multiple people, which is one of the reasons why our recruiting is low in this area."

Lutsky said he could understand why some Afghans would enlist.

"Iran pays better than the Afghan army, and you don't have to potentially fight your family members," he said.

Italian army Col. Roberto Viglietta, whose county heads TACC-West, agreed. "There is a

lot of Iran in [the] region."

In January, Human Rights Watch reported Iran had recruited thousands of Afghan refugees and migrants living in the country to join pro-government militias fighting in Syria, offering financial incentives and legal residence.

In some cases, Afghans said they were threatened with deportation to Afghanistan, if they refused. Iran dismissed the report, calling it "fabricated."

Viglietta said other factors contributed to low recruitment numbers.

The region's relatively good economy, compared with that of other areas, means many western Afghans can work for family businesses or choose other non-life-threatening jobs.

A good schooling system, including graduate programs, allows locals to become qualified doctors, lawyers and engineers, earning higher wages than the Afghan military.

'Dump Trump' effort is gaining followers

WASHINGTON — The "dump Trump" movement is gaining followers among delegates to the Republican National Convention, an effort that could tarnish Donald Trump's coronation even if it fails.

Several hundred Republican delegates are organizing to oppose Trump at the convention. That's not enough to topple Trump, but it's more than enough to create turmoil at an event that is typically used to bring a political party together in support of a presidential candidate.

"If Trump is the nominee, we truly believe it's the end of our party," said Kendal Unruh, a Colorado delegate who is leading the effort to dump Trump.

There could be floor fights over convention rules and the party's platform. The roll call to nominate Trump could be an opportunity for delegates to voice their displeasure on national television.

From The Associated Press

Post-Kobe era begins for LA

Associated Press

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. — Luke Walton realizes he is reporting to his dream job a little late.

The Los Angeles Lakers' new head coach is determined to catch up quickly as he starts the biggest project of his life.

The Lakers formally introduced the 36-year-old Walton on Tuesday, 53 days after they hired the Golden State assistant coach to lead their rebuilding from the worst season in franchise history.

"I'm so excited to get after it here," said Walton, who played nine seasons and won two titles as a Lakers forward.

After wowing Lakers owner Jim Buss and general manager Mitch Kupchak in a late-April interview, Walton still completed his second season as an assistant to Steve Kerr with the Warriors, who lost Game 7 of the NBA Finals on Sunday.

With the sting of that loss still fresh, Walton drove down from Oakland on Monday and immediately got to work with the franchise that drafted him in 2003. The Lakers are starting from the floor after Kobe Bryant's retirement and a 17-65 season, but Walton only sees opportunity.

"I think we're in an exciting time," Walton said. "We have extremely talented young players. We have a ton of money to spend in free agency. We have draft picks this year, and the fact that Mitch and Jimmy Buss trusted me with this, in being part of this rebuilding, post-Kobe era, just means the world to me."

The Lakers have the No. 2 pick in the draft on Thursday night, and they're expected to add Duke scorer Brandon Ingram to a young core that already in-

cludes D'Angelo Russell, Julius Randle and Jordan Clarkson. They've also got ample salary cap space to sign several veterans in free agency, and Walton immediately began his pitch to the game's big names.

"We're going to put our stamp on the culture that we want," Walton said. "It's going to be joy. Our players are going to like coming into practice every day. We're going to play a brand of basketball that LA fans will appreciate. ... We have money to spend. I know the Buss family and I know the Laker organization, and they're going to do what it takes to win. To me, that's all you really need to know. I don't see why you wouldn't want to come here."

Just three years after his playing career ended, Walton is under the spotlight that always shines on a franchise once run by Pat Riley and Phil Jackson. Walton became one of the hottest coaching properties in basketball in the just-completed season with his remarkable work running the Warriors during Kerr's medical absence.

Walton coolly led Golden State to a 24-0 start that eventually stretched to 39-4 before Kerr returned from back problems. NBA rules require the wins to be credited to a team's head coach, even if he isn't on the bench, which means Walton will coach his first official game this fall.

"That's the decision that was made, but 0-0 still helped me get my dream job," Walton said with a grin. "Looking back on it now, I would pay a salary to coach under Steve and learn under Steve, and to steal those ideas that he used up in Oakland. I'm putting all those into who I am as a coach now."

That includes an up-tempo, aggressive

approach patterned on Kerr's schemes with the Warriors. While the Lakers don't have Stephen Curry or Klay Thompson, Walton believes they have the ingredients of a winner already.

Russell, last year's No. 2 pick, showed up along with fellow 2015 picks Larry Nance Jr. and Anthony Brown to greet Walton and new assistant coach Brian Shaw. Russell has been working out daily in Los Angeles after showing his ample promise during a tumultuous rookie campaign.

"Just the way he talks makes me ready for the first game, makes me ready for the first practice," Russell said. "He knows what it takes."

With Shaw already hired, Walton plans to finalize his coaching staff before summer league play next month in Las Vegas, where he also plans to be heavily involved.

Walton's mother, Susan, watched the news conference next to his wife, Bre, who is pregnant with their second child. The family still has a home in Manhattan Beach, so returning won't be complicated.

The coach's father, Hall of Famer Bill Walton, didn't attend, yet still managed to be a topic of conversation.

Luke Walton chuckled when asked about his voluble father's declaration in an interview that he shouldn't have taken the Lakers job. Luke noted that his father didn't even want him to get into coaching, believing the lifestyle was too tough.

"I love my father," Walton said. "Sometimes he has great advice, and sometimes he doesn't. ... You'll see him in the hallways wearing Laker shirts that are too small for him."

Argentina hammers US men

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Lionel Messi was too much for the United States to contain.

The five-time world player of the year set up Ezequiel Lavezzi's opening goal in the third minute, then scored on a free kick to break Argentina's career scoring record and assisted on the final goal in a 4-0 rout of the U.S. on Tuesday night that put the La Albiceleste into the Copa America final.

"This was the goal when we got here, to play another final and we made it," Messi said. "We've been spectacular from day one and we deserved this."

After Messi doubled the lead in the 32nd minute with his 55th international goal, his tournament-leading fifth, Gonzalo Higuain quickly ended U.S. comeback hopes when he put the rebound of his initial shot past goalkeeper Brad Guzan in the 50th. Higuain scored off a Messi pass in the 86th.

Argentina will seek its first major title since the 1993 Copa — and its first since Messi's debut in 2005 — when it plays Chile or Colombia on Sunday in East Rutherford, N.J.

"That's what we hope and what we want, to finally achieve that," Messi said. "We deserve it, for all the good work we've been doing all these years."

Argentina will be without Lavezzi, who broke his left elbow in the second half when he tumbled backward over a barrier chasing a ball.

Hosting a special, expanded 16-nation edition of South America's championship to celebrate Copa America's 100th anniversary, the U.S. won a difficult group that included third-ranked Colombia and then beat No. 13 Ecuador in the quarterfinals. But top-ranked Argentina and Messi, who turns 29 Friday and is at the top of his game, outclassed the U.S. from the opening whistle and stunned the sellout crowd of 70,858 at NRG Stadium.

Messi has helped Barcelona win eight titles in Spain's La Liga and four in the Champions League, but his Argentina trophies have been limited to the 2005 FIFA World Youth Championship for players under 20 and the gold medal in the 2008 Olympics, mostly for players under 23. La Albiceleste lost to Germany in the 2014 World Cup final and to Chile in last year's Copa America final.

The U.S. and coach Jurgen Klinsmann were trying to rebound after getting eliminated by Jamaica in the semifinals of last year's CONCACAF Gold Cup, losing to Mexico in a playoff for a 2017 Confederations Cup berth and struggling in the semifinal round of 2018 World Cup qualifying. The Americans close the tournament Saturday in the third-place match at Glendale, Ariz.

Messi moved one goal ahead of Gabriel Batistuta's career total, according to the Argentine Football Association. However, FIFA records Batistuta's total as 56, including two goals in an exhibition against Slovakia in June 1995.

Celtics start with 8 picks, expect busy night

Associated Press

BOSTON — Danny Ainge became a marvel among his fellow league executives in 2007 when he pulled together the mega-deal that became Boston's Big Three and led to an NBA title.

Nine years later, the Celtics' president of basketball operations is again primed to pull off some offseason magic, and he's hoping a cache of draft picks he's collected can serve as both his four-leaf clover and magic wand.

The Celtics have a total of eight picks to play with entering Thursday night's draft, including the No. 3 overall selection, as well as two more in the first round. It's again placed Ainge in a unique spotlight — and bargaining position — as Boston looks to use the draft as a springboard back into the Eastern Conference's top tier.

The draft once had as many as 21 rounds in 1968. It reduced from three to its current incarnation of two rounds in 1989.

Ainge said even with so many bites at this year's draft crop, his approach remains unchanged. He is, however, allowing for the likelihood that other teams will offer to trade up.

"It's figuring out who's in the draft and who is the best fit for us," he said. "We'll also probably get some calls for (the No. 3 pick), that's what my guess is. So there'll probably be some discussion on that, too."

The premium on picks is even higher considering that beyond Ben Simmons and Brandon Ingram, who are expected to go to the 76ers and Lakers in the first two picks, opinions on the next top prospect vary greatly.

Additionally, some teams could be a little more shy this year.

The injection of the league's new television contract this summer and increase in the salary cap will give every team in the league more money to spend on free agents. So teams ordinarily looking to deal for young talent in June might want to instead hold off a month to throw money at available veterans.

"There's a lot of uncertainty about the future, and everybody's future in the NBA, and with players that we draft," Ainge said. "There are not guarantees. But we like this draft. We're excited about this No. 3 pick. We believe that a good player will come out of this draft."

The Celtics brought in more than 50

players for group and individual workouts. They included highly rated college early entries such as Kentucky's Jamal Murray and Domantas Sabonis, as well as international prospects such as Chinese 7-footer Zhou Qi.

A player such as one-and-done Murray, or Providence's Kris Dunn both would seem to have a lot of upside, but Boston already has an All-Star at point guard in Isaiah Thomas.

Former Oklahoma guard Buddy Hield certainly would bring more scoring to the Celtics lineup, but needs more time to develop defensively.

While initial impressions might have signaled a drop off after Simmons and Ingram, Ainge anticipates that the evaluation process — much like last year — likely will alter early assessments.

It's also why any deal that involves parting with the No. 3 pick would have to be a good one.

"Trading the No. 3 pick will be difficult, sure, because there's some very good players No. 3," Ainge said. "But there are some players that it wouldn't be difficult for. We'll be listening to that and we'll have a lot of communication internally to try to figure that out."



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ChiSox's Sale first to 12 wins

Associated Press

BOSTON — Tim Anderson gave Chicago White Sox ace Chris Sale the earliest lead possible, and Sale used it to become the majors' first 12-game winner.

Sale tied his season high with nine strikeouts, Anderson led off the game with his first career homer and the White Sox beat the Boston Red Sox 3-1 on Tuesday night.

"I felt really good out there. I had good command and just confidence, too," Sale said.

That confidence was evident as Sale (12-2) held Boston to four hits over seven innings. He got to a dozen wins before the season's midpoint.

Chicago led the whole way after Anderson homered to left on the first pitch from Clay Buchholz (3-7) in the right-hander's return to Boston's rotation after spending about a month in the bullpen.

Buchholz recovered after the rocky start and pitched pretty well, just not nearly as well as Sale.

"He was great. I think this is one of his better ones," Chicago manager Robin Ventura said of Sale. "He navigated it very well tonight. I think he was throwing strikes, a great changeup in some tough spots and got a strikeout when he needed it, too."

Todd Frazier hit his 20th homer and David Robertson got his 18th save for the White Sox, who won consecutive games for just the second time in June.

Boston sputtered against Sale and the relievers that followed. The Red Sox left eight runners on base and were 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position.

"He kept everybody off balance, mixed up pitches throughout counts and did what he does a lot of times," said Mookie Betts, who drove in Boston's only run.

Sale also had a 2-0 lead before even

throwing a pitch. Adam Eaton doubled on Buchholz's second pitch and later scored on a sacrifice fly by Melky Cabrera.

"Before I even stepped on the field we're sitting there 2-0," Sale said. "The way T.A. started that game off, it just gives you a spark, gives you a little bit more of a jolt."

Sale's biggest challenge came after Travis Shaw and Sandy Leon started the third inning with back-to-back singles. Shaw scored on a sacrifice fly by Betts, and the Red Sox loaded the bases with two outs before Sale struck out Hanley Ramirez swinging.

"I wasn't really focused on this or that," Sale said. "I know that these guys are a good hitting team, especially at their house. So I was just trying to keep the ball down and not let things get too far out of hand."

Raiders eliminate Gators

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — When Florida's Peter Alonso homered in the bottom of the ninth inning to pull the Gators within a run of Texas Tech, a familiar thought crossed Red Raiders coach Tim Tadlock's mind.

"Where is Goose Gossage when you need him? Rollie Fingers, somebody?" Tadlock said, smiling.

No worries. Reliever Hayden Howard, backed by one of the nation's best defenses, got the job done, and Texas Tech stayed alive in the College World Series with a 3-2 victory over the No. 1 national seed Tuesday.

For the Gators (52-16), it was a devastating and surprising ending to the season. They were heavy favorites to win their program's first national championship, and they scored just three runs in 18 innings to become the first Southeastern Conference team since 2007 to go two-and-out.

In a CWS where runs have been at a premium, Texas Tech's biggest came on botched infield play by the Gators in the top of the ninth. Tyler Neslony scored from first after third baseman Jonathan India threw in the dirt trying to get Eric Gutierrez at first. Alonso, the first baseman, bounced a throw past third trying to get Neslony, allowing him to go home.

TCU 6, Coastal Carolina 1: Luken Baker is showing no signs of cooling off.

TCU's freshman star homered to right in his first time at bat to start the Horned Frogs off in a victory over Coastal Carolina that put them within one win of next week's finals. On Sunday, Baker won the Frogs' CWS opener against Texas Tech with a ninth-inning homer to left.

The Big 12 freshman of the year singled in his other two at-bats. He has hit seven of his 11 homers in the last 13 games and is 29 of 52 (.558) over that stretch.

The Chanticleers (50-17), who beat No. 1 national seed Florida 2-1 in their first CWS game on Sunday, pushed across a run in the sixth inning but otherwise didn't do much against Brian Howard and Ryan Burnett.

Mets turn to bullpen to beat KC

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bartolo Colon's early injury put the New York Mets in a major bind, but they won a battle of bullpens against the best relief corps in baseball and defeated the Kansas City Royals 2-1 on Tuesday night in a World Series rematch.

Yoenis Cespedes hit his 18th home run and Asdrubal Cabrera also connected for New York, which had lost three straight and six of eight.

Held to one hit and no other baserunners Sunday as lowly Atlanta capped a sweep at Citi Field, the Mets again had trouble generating offense. This time, however, a gritty Hansel Robles (1-3) and four other relievers bailed them out by combining for 8²/₃ stellar innings.

Dodgers 3, Nationals 2: Yasmani Grandal hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning off starter Tanner Roark (6-5), lifting host Los Angeles to a come-from-behind victory over Washington.

Indians 6, Rays 0: Corey Kluber (7-7) threw a three-hitter, and host Cleveland

got its fifth straight win by shutting out Tampa Bay.

Cardinals 4, Cubs 3: Matt Carpenter and Matt Holliday homered to back Adam Wainwright (6-4), and visiting St. Louis won its second straight game over Chicago.

Giants 15, Pirates 4: Angel Pagan hit a grand slam during a seven-run fourth inning and San Francisco's Johnny Cueto (11-1) shut down host Pittsburgh.

Astros 3, Angels 2: Carlos Correa hit a two-run single to right-center field with no outs in the ninth inning to cap host Houston's rally over Los Angeles.

Tigers 4, Mariners 2: Mike Aviles drove in the tiebreaking run with an infield single in the eighth inning to left host Detroit over Seattle.

Diamondbacks 4, Blue Jays 2: Yasmany Tomas and Peter O'Brien homered, and Patrick Corbin (4-6) threw 6¹/₃ solid innings to help visiting Arizona win its fifth straight.

Padres 10, Orioles 7: Matt Kemp doubled to spark a four-run seventh in-

ning against the bullpen, and visiting San Diego overcame two home runs and five RBIs by Pedro Alvarez to beat Baltimore.

Reds 8, Rangers 2: Jay Bruce hit a three-run homer, Zack Cozart homered along with a two-run triple and visiting Cincinnati ended Texas' season-best winning streak at seven games.

Rockies 8, Yankees 4: Charlie Blackmon led off the game with a home run and later connected for another solo drive in visiting Colorado's victory.

Athletics 5, Brewers 3: Yonder Alonso hit a two-out, tiebreaking single in the seventh inning and Marcus Semien followed with a two-run triple to lead host Oakland past Milwaukee.

Twins 14, Phillies 10: Kurt Suzuki went 4-for-5 with a career-high six RBIs and host Minnesota gave Philadelphia its eighth straight defeat.

Braves 3, Marlins 2: Jace Peterson hit a tying two-run home run in the eighth inning and a go-ahead RBI single in the 10th to lift host Miami over Atlanta.

NHL salary cap makes for trade opportunities

Associated Press

The echoes of a Stanley Cup parade in Pittsburgh have only just faded and NHL teams are already getting down to business preparing for next season.

There are still a few days left before the draft and the free agent negotiating window that follows, and general managers are wasting no time making trades to prepare for the jockeying that's about to come. On Monday, the Toronto Maple Leafs, Buffalo Sabres and Florida Panthers all made moves to address their immediate future.

With the salary cap going up just \$1.6 million to \$73 million for next season, the Maple Leafs and Panthers were opportunistic in giving up draft picks to acquire NHL-caliber help.

The Maple Leafs traded first- and second-round picks to the Anaheim Ducks for Frederik Andersen and signed the 26-year-old goaltender to a \$25 million, five-year deal. The Panthers sent a sixth-rounder and a conditional fourth-round pick to the New York Rangers for the rights to pending unrestricted free agent defenseman Keith Yandle.

The Panthers could have talked to Yandle for nothing beginning Saturday, but general manager Tom Rowe wanted to get a head start.

"I thought it was a risk worth taking, given the ability of the player and the way the game's going," Rowe said Monday. "It gives us a few extra days before free agency starts (on July 1) to pitch him on the type of program that we have, the type of ownership we've got, the type of players we have."

Yandle had 47 points last season, 15th among defensemen, and over 50 in the previous two years. If the Panthers sign Yandle, perhaps as a replacement for the smooth-skating Brian Campbell, it would make them much more serious contenders in the Eastern Conference, even before free agency.

The Maple Leafs aren't ready to contend for the playoffs yet and are picking first in the draft Friday night. But that didn't stop them from acquiring a legitimate No. 1 goaltender.

Andersen was sought after, especially by the Calgary Flames, but Toronto GM Lou Lamoriello jumped at the opportunity to give up two picks to acquire him.

Young players on cheap, entry-level contracts are more valuable than ever for teams, no matter their status. It's what led the Chicago Blackhawks to trade 21-year-old potential star Teuvo Teravainen to the Carolina Hurricanes last week along with Bryan Bickell, whose contract they had to shed to stay afloat.

"It's hard these days when you have young guys that are entering the final year of his first contract and then things get tricky when players get raises and you're always looking to have that next wave of young guys coming in," said GM Stan Bowman, who turned around and signed 2014 first-rounder Nick Schmaltz to a contract as a potential replacement.

This time of year is all about calculated risks. Florida didn't give up much for Yandle, but Rowe hopes the acquisition pays big dividends because patience isn't at a premium.

"We want to win, and we want to win now and we want to follow our blueprint and stay with it," Rowe said. "All the moves that we do going forward every single move is going to be predicated on us winning a Stanley Cup."

Mcllroy opts out of Rio due to Zika concern

DUBLIN — Golfer Rory Mcllroy became one of the most high-profile sports stars to opt out of the Rio de Janeiro Olympics because of concerns about the Zika virus, saying Wednesday it is "a risk I am unwilling to take."

"After speaking with those closest to me, I've come to realize that my health and my family's health comes before anything else," the four-time major winner said in a statement released by his management company.

The fourth-ranked Mcllroy was scheduled to play for Ireland as golf makes its return to the Olympics for the first time since 1904.

The Olympic Committee of Ireland (OCI) said it was "extremely disappointed" not to have Mcllroy on its team.

"However, as we have always said, it is down to the individual and of course we respect his decision, which he has taken for personal reasons," the OCI said in a statement.

From The Associated Press