

STARS AND STRIPES®

Thursday, June 23, 2016

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Iraqis gain ground in Fallujah fight

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Iraqi security forces have pushed Islamic State militants out of about 70 percent of Fallujah in an operation that moved more swiftly than the U.S.-led coalition had expected, a British general said Thursday.

On Tuesday, U.S. Army Col. Christopher Garver, spokesman for the coalition, told reporters that Iraqi forces had cleared only about 30 percent of Fallujah and other parts of the city were contested.

But after intense fighting in the early stages of the offensive, Iraqi soldiers have faced only light resistance from the mili-

itants remaining there, British Army Maj. Gen. Doug Chalmers, the Baghdad-based deputy commander for strategy and sustainment for Operation Inherent Resolve, said.

He said Iraq's elite force known as the Counter Terrorism Service has worked its way into the northern sections of the Islamic State group's last remaining stronghold in Anbar province, displaying much improved confidence and coordination with other units of the country's military.

"We are surprised at how quickly it is going," Chalmers told reporters Thursday at the Pentagon.

He declined to say how many

militants remained in the city.

It's been only about two years since the Islamic State group swept into power, capturing nearly one-third of Iraq's land as the Iraqi military dropped its weapons and fled. In the last year, Iraqi security forces have mounted several victories, leaving only Fallujah and Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, in the militants' hands.

Iraqi security forces are now on the verge of recapturing the entirety of Fallujah while simultaneously moving up the Tigris River valley toward Mosul. Both advances, Chalmers said, have been "deeply impressive."

A lot of work remains for

the Iraqi security forces, the general said. The Islamic State group held Fallujah, about 40 miles west of Baghdad, for two years and has set up extensive networks of explosives, including rigging entire buildings to explode.

Iraqi soldiers have been focused largely on eliminating the militants and clearing roads of improvised explosive devices. Clearing those potentially bomb-laden houses will be done in the weeks ahead.

Chalmers said individuals are being screened as they leave the city and any suspicious people or suspected Islamic State group fighters are being detained.

Roadblock seen for repeal of ban on VA fertility treatment

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Congress was poised Thursday to lift a 24-year ban on wounded veterans receiving fertility treatment through the Department of Veterans Affairs following a landmark agreement between the House and Senate.

But repeal of the ban, which would be a hard-fought victory for thousands of veterans hoping to start families, was still in danger of fizzling during a final Senate vote due to political wrangling over an attached plan to fight the Zika virus.

Lawmakers from both chambers agreed to a final VA budget bill for 2017 that lifts restrictions on in vitro fertilization — the culmination of years of work by advocates in Congress. The treatment is provided by the Defense Department but

was banned in 1992 at the VA due to conservatives' concerns over discarded embryos.

Now, even supporters of the measure might vote against the final agreement in the Senate due to what they consider are "poison pill" riders attached to the budget bill at the last moment. The House gave its final approval Wednesday.

"I will not support the Republican Zika-Military Construction-VA conference report that limits needed birth control services for women in the United States and Puerto Rico and includes a troubling pesticides policy rider that endangers clean water protections," said Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., who has been a backer of IVF for veterans.

Groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Paralyzed Veterans of America have pressed Congress for a repeal.

Fort Hood GIs OK to roll sleeves

BY WILLIAM HOWARD

Stars and Stripes

Soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas, have been allowed to roll up their uniform sleeves for a 10-day trial that ends on Sunday.

The decision came after a re-enlistment ceremony during which Army Spc. Cortne K. Mitchell asked Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley whether soldiers could roll up their sleeves to cool off in the Texas heat, the Army said in a statement.

The uniform exemption was only for the Operational Camouflage Pattern or Army Combat Uniform, while in garrison and with commander approval.

Lt. Col. Jerry Pionk, personnel policy division spokesman, said the Army would review feedback from the Fort Hood trial before deciding whether to change the policy.

Opinion on the uniform change was mixed among 1st

Cavalry Division soldiers interviewed by Stars and Stripes.

Younger members embraced the opportunity to show off their arms.

"It's a good step towards a modern army," said Pfc. Adrian Duczak, a rifleman. "And with the 'sun's out, guns out' thought process, it's going to not only boost morale but cause soldiers to take more pride in themselves and their appearance, thus helping our combat readiness. Because who wants to be the one with the smallest arms?"

Others remain skeptical.

Staff Sgt. Philemon Kimball said the current uniform with rolled sleeves just doesn't support a professional image.

"I personally, in one week, have seen sleeves rolled about eight different ways with varying appearances — none of which were neat and presented a professional appearance," he said.

DOD: Navy reservist is killed in Africa

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Navy reservist died Tuesday of an injury not related to combat while deployed to Djibouti, the Pentagon announced Wednesday afternoon.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Andrew J. Clement, 38, of Massachusetts, died at Camp Lemonnier where he'd been deployed after he was mobilized to support the ongoing Opera-

tion Enduring Freedom-Horn of Africa, the American-led mission to combat terrorism and piracy in eastern Africa.

Clement was assigned to Navy Reserve Unit Tactical Air Control Squadron 22, Navy Operational Support Center in Quincy, Mass.

The incident is being investigated, the Pentagon said. A request to a Navy spokesperson for additional information about the incident was not immediately replied to on Wednesday.

Police driver acquitted in death of Freddie Gray

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — A judge acquitted a police driver of all charges Thursday in the death of arrestee Freddie Gray, 25, whose broken neck on the way to the station set off Baltimore's worst riots in decades.

Six officers were charged in Gray's death, but only Officer Caesar Goodson, 46, was accused of "depraved heart" murder. Gray was fatally injured after officers bound his hands and feet and Goodson left him unprotected by a seat belt that prosecutors say would have kept him from slamming into the van's metal walls.

Baltimore Circuit Judge Barry Williams also found Goodson not guilty of manslaughter, assault, misconduct in office and reckless endangerment.

Williams said the state failed to show that Goodson knew he'd harm Gray by leaving him unbuckled, or that he was aware of the injury.

The judge also said the state failed to prove Goodson gave Gray a "rough ride."

Outside the courthouse, a small group of protesters chanted: "We can't stop. We won't stop, till killer cops are in cell blocks."

Protests and rioting after Gray's death on April 19, 2015, set the city on fire, forcing Maryland to bring in the National Guard. The unrest led the city's mayor to abandon her re-election campaign, and the Department of Justice opened an investigation into allegations of widespread police abuse.

In a statement, state Sen. Catherine Pugh, the Democratic nominee to become Baltimore's next mayor, said: "Protests are a vital part of democracy, but to destroy the homes and businesses many people have worked very hard to build is unacceptable. Although people may disagree with the verdict, it is important to respect each other and to respect our neighborhoods and our communities."

Prosecutors said Goodson was criminally negligent when he failed to buckle Gray into a seat belt or to call for medical aid after Gray indicated that he wanted to go to a hospital.

Last month, the same judge acquitted Officer Edward Nero of misdemeanor charges, and in December he declared a mistrial after a jury failed to agree on manslaughter and other charges against Officer William Porter.

Senate fight imperils repeal of VA IVF ban

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Congress was poised Thursday to lift a 24-year ban on wounded veterans' receiving fertility treatment through the Department of Veterans Affairs following a landmark agreement between the House and Senate.

But repeal of the ban, which would be a hard-fought victory for thousands of veterans who hope to start families, was still in danger of fizzling during a final Senate vote due to political wrangling over an attached plan to fight the Zika virus.

Lawmakers from both chambers agreed to a final VA budget bill for 2017 that lifts restrictions on in vitro fertilization — the culmination of years of work by advocates in Congress. The treatment is provided to troops by the Defense Department but was banned in 1992 at the VA due to concerns among conservatives over discarded embryos.

Now, even supporters of the measure might vote against the final agreement in the Senate due to what they consider are "poison pill" riders attached to the budget bill at the last moment. The House gave its final approval Wednesday.

"I will not support the Republican Zika-Military Construction-VA conference report that limits needed birth control services for women in the United States and Puerto Rico and includes a troubling pesticides policy rider that endangers clean water protections," said Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., who has been a backer of IVF for veterans.

The response was muted from Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., a leading advocate for veteran access to the fertility treatment who has spent the past three years trying to repeal the ban.

"There are some provisions

Republicans included that I need to look into, but at the end of the day, the most important thing is that this provision seems to give veterans the care they deserve in their service to our country," Murray said in a written statement to Stars and Stripes.

The senator indicated she also might vote against the bill due to the attached legislation.

"Unfortunately, Republicans have chosen to pick a partisan fight on the overall bill that includes Zika funding — but I am going to keep working to get this done, one way or another," Murray said.

The White House slammed the budget agreement for playing "political games" by cutting money from programs that supply birth control as part of the plans to combat the new illness, which is spread by mosquitoes and is spreading to the United States. It has been linked to severe birth defects in babies.

Meanwhile, Republicans pushed ahead with the VA budget bill as the Senate considered whether to schedule a final vote before the long summer recess begins in mid-July.

"We've negotiated a conference agreement that will provide additional resources to fight the public health threat of the Zika virus," said Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., chairman of the Appropriations Committee. "I am pleased that the Zika package will be considered along with important funding for veterans and defense facilities."

Cochran said the final agreement includes language on in vitro fertilization that prevents three-parent embryos — or eggs fertilized by more than one sperm — and human cloning, which likely was added to allay concerns among conservatives. The bill also allows funding to be used for child adoption services.

Bulls trade Rose to Knicks

Associated Press

CHICAGO — It was once the ultimate feel-good story, with the electrifying Derrick Rose leading his hometown Chicago Bulls to heights they had not reached since Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen were racking up championships.

But instead of parades, there was unfulfilled promise.

The Rose Era officially closed in Chicago on Wednesday with the 2011 MVP getting traded to the New York Knicks, bringing one of the more successful yet disappointing periods in franchise history to a finish.

"That's where it's hard," general manager Gar Forman said. "Derrick has meant a lot to this organization and to this city and to this team and has had to overcome a lot over the years with all the injuries to get back to the point he was. But in putting our plan together, we felt as a first step this really made sense for us."

The Chicago product rose from one of the roughest neighborhoods in the city to No. 1 pick to Rookie of the Year to All-Star to MVP in his first three seasons, only to get derailed by season-ending injuries to each knee and never bring home the ultimate prize. Now, he's headed to New York along with guard Justin Holiday and a 2017 first-round pick. In exchange, the Bulls got center Robin Lopez and guards Jose Calderon and Jerian Grant.

Fans in Chicago can debate the merits of the deal, whether the Bulls would have been better off waiting until the deadline or simply letting Rose go as a free agent next summer if they were not going to retain him. But there is no arguing that management made

good on its promise not to sit still by pulling the trigger on a major trade, something the Bulls rarely do.

Team executives John Paxson and Forman said at the end of the season that no player was safe. Not after Chicago went 42-40 and missed the playoffs for the first time since 2008 — right before the Bulls drafted Rose after bucking 1.7-percent odds to win the lottery.

Whether Jimmy Butler stays in Chicago remains to be seen. The two-time All-Star was openly critical of new coach Fred Hoiberg and did not click with Rose last season. He did, however, represent the Bulls at the lottery last month.

"Jimmy's obviously got great value to us," Forman said when asked if the Bulls will build around Butler. "We said, I think John Paxson said that night the only player that he's been around that was totally untradeable was Michael Jordan. It's our job to listen to different scenarios and make decisions. But obviously we value Jimmy and we think he fits in the direction we're headed."

The Rose trade leaves the Bulls with a hole at point guard heading into Thursday's draft. Chicago holds the 14th pick along with a second-round.

More than anything, Wednesday's trade represents a turn-the-page moment for the fan base and the franchise. The Bulls were never the same after Rose tore the ACL in his left knee in the 2012 playoff opener against Philadelphia.

A team that had its eyes on a rematch with LeBron James and the Heat after losing to Miami in the conference finals the previous year bowed out in the first round, and what happened after that was well-documented.

Rose sat out a year even though he began practicing without restrictions. His long awaited comeback got cut short in the 10th game of the 2013-14 season by a torn meniscus in his right knee.

He had a minor procedure on the knee the following year, and he was limited by blurred vision the first half this past season.

Everything changed with that torn ACL. "In putting together a team, one of the first questions we would ask as a front office is does it fit Derrick Rose?" Forman said.

In recent years, Rose has shown occasional glimpses of the explosiveness that made him one of the top players. A player who once defied physics with his freakish athleticism often settles for jumpers.

Fans who once chanted "MVP! MVP!" also started questioning Rose's commitment, because of his conservative approach to rehab along with comments about listening to his body and preparing for free agency in 2017.

Yet, he was also seen as a symbol of hope because he made it out of the rough Englewood neighborhood on Chicago's South Side — particularly around Murray Park near his childhood home.

On Wednesday evening, Tyrone Malloy sat listening to music. He said his granddaughter used to play basketball with Rose on the park's courts. A few years ago, the now former Bulls star worked with Powerade, Adidas and McDonald's to have them restored.

"I wanted to write him a letter of thanks for the park, but I don't know how to get in touch with him," Malloy said.

He might try mailing it to New York.

NHL set to expand to Vegas

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The NHL is making a big bet on Las Vegas.

The league will expand to Las Vegas for the 2017-18 season after awarding its 31st franchise to billionaire businessman Bill Foley on Wednesday. Commissioner Gary Bettman announced the decision after the league's board of governors met on a 109-degree day and voted to put an ice hockey team in the Mojave Desert's gambling mecca.

Foley is expected to pay \$500 million to the NHL's other owners as an expansion fee. The new team will play in T-Mobile Arena, the \$375 million building that opened just off the Las Vegas Strip in April.

The NHL is expanding for the first time since 2000, when Minnesota and Columbus each paid \$80 million to join the league.

With nearly 2.2 million people in the last census, Las Vegas is the largest population center in the U.S. without a team in the major professional sports. Vegas was an economic boomtown in the previous decade, and the NHL is betting that its slowed growth hasn't curbed the city's appetite for sports and spectacles.

The NHL is also confident in the ownership group led by Foley, a financial services tycoon who mounted a strong bid for ownership along with minority partners Joe and Gavin Maloof, the former owners of the NBA's Sacramento Kings.

Foley's bid had the enormous advantage of an NHL-ready arena built with private funding and eager for a flagship tenant. Foley has already accepted more than 14,000 season ticket deposits and sold out all 44 suites in the 17,500-seat rink built by MGM Resorts International and Anschutz Entertainment Group, which owns the Los Angeles Kings.

Although ice doesn't last long in the desert, Las Vegas has had an appetite for hockey since the Kings and New York Rangers played a memorable outdoor exhibition game here in 1991. The IHL's Las Vegas Thunder sometimes drew more fans than UNLV's beloved basketball team at the Thomas and Mack Arena in the 1990s, and the Minnesota Wild's Jason Zucker leads a handful of locals who went on to hockey careers.

The endurance of that appetite will depend on Foley's ability to keep fans excited about the newest show in town, but the NHL seems confident it's getting in early to a growing market.

Sports leagues once rejected the city outright due to concerns about corruption from Vegas' massive sports betting economy, but the NHL and the NFL don't appear to share those worries now.

A Quebec City bid also was considered earlier in the expansion process. Concerns about the small market, the Canadian dollar's fluctuation and the league's resulting geographical imbalance prompted the governors to go with Las Vegas alone.

Blackhawks' Kane named league MVP

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — After Patrick Kane added three more awards to his overflowing trophy case, he took a moment to appreciate his new place in American hockey history.

The Chicago Blackhawks' NHL scoring champion won the Hart Trophy on Wednesday night, becoming the first player born and trained in the U.S. to be named the league's most valuable player.

Kane also claimed the Ted Lindsay Award after his fellow players recognized him as the game's most outstanding player at the league's annual postseason awards show in Las Vegas. He even accepted the Art Ross Trophy in recognition of leading the league with his 106-point season — another first for an American player.

"I definitely feel very fortunate," Kane said. "It's amazing to me that there's no American that's ever won the scoring title or the MVP award, because there's been so many great American players. Guys like (Chris) Chelios, Brian Leetch, Mike Modano, Joe Mullen, Jeremy Roenick. Guys that have had great careers. I don't know if I was lucky or fortunate to be in that position, but it's pretty amazing to

see some American record you hold now. It's pretty exciting."

Kane began his remarkable season under the cloud of a sexual assault allegation made against him in his native Buffalo area last summer. The Erie County District Attorney's office eventually declined to move forward on the case in November, saying it was rife with reasonable doubt.

After running away with the scoring title in a season that included a 26-game scoring streak, Kane was the runaway winner of the Hart, getting 121 of the 150 first-place votes. Sidney Crosby finished second with 11 first-place votes, while Dallas' Jamie Benn was third.

At just 27 years old, Kane is already a hockey great after winning three Stanley Cups with the Blackhawks, who lost in the first round of the postseason this year.

Braden Holtby of Washington finished fourth in the Hart voting, but won the Vezina Trophy as the NHL's top goalie after tying Martin Brodeur's league record with 48 victories.

"I'm not a big guy on awards or records, but the wins record, we got to share as a team," Holtby said. "The commitment it took to make that possible was definitely cool to be a part of."

His coach, Barry Trotz, won the Jack Adams Award for the first time in 17 seasons behind an NHL bench, recognizing the Capitals' league-best regular season.

Los Angeles Kings captain Anze Kopitar won the Selke Trophy as the NHL's best defensive forward and the Lady Byng Trophy for his gentlemanly play. His teammate, Drew Doughty, took home his first Norris Trophy as the NHL's top defenseman.

Kane's linemate in Chicago, Artemi Panarin, won the Calder Trophy as the NHL's top rookie after scoring 77 points in 80 games. The 24-year-old Russian beat out No. 1 draft pick Connor McDavid of Edmonton, whose outstanding debut was shortened by a broken collarbone.

Kane and Panarin credited each other for their statistical success, along with linemate Artem Anisimov.

Jaromir Jagr, the Florida Panthers' 44-year-old leading scorer, was awarded the Bill Masterton Trophy for perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to hockey. He didn't attend the ceremony while tending to his ailing father.

Pittsburgh's Jim Rutherford was named the NHL's general manager of the year after building the Stanley Cup champions.



Ship's Store official new car program

Exclusive Navy at-sea offers:

www.navyauto.com or nasinfo@navyauto.com

Yankees overtake Rockies

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Starlin Castro had never hit a walkoff home run at any level of baseball.

The Yankees second baseman led off the bottom of the ninth with the game-winning shot to cap a 9-8 come-from-behind victory over Colorado on Wednesday.

New York trailed 8-4 going into the seventh, when Carlos Beltran's three-run homer helped bail out CC Sabathia after his worst outing of the season.

Castro turned on the second pitch he saw from Jason Motte (0-1), who took the loss on his 34th birthday. Looking for something soft, Castro smashed a changeup to left field to split a two-game series.

"It's a really emotional win," Castro said.

He might not have been in position to end things if not for his hustle play in the seventh — when he legged out an infield single to keep the inning alive after Beltran's blast pulled the Yankees within 8-7. Didi Gregorius followed with the game-tying hit.

Castro, who had been in a 6-for-33 slump, went 3-for-5 on Wednesday.

Sabathia, who had allowed just four earned runs total over his previous seven starts, gave up five in 4¹/₃ innings Wednesday. He turned his right ankle in the third inning and again in the fifth, and manager Joe Girardi said he took the big lefty out both because of concern about his injury and his struggles. X-rays were negative, with Girardi hopeful Sabathia won't miss his next start.

Chase Headley also had a second-inning grand slam for the Yankees. Aroldis

Chapman (1-0) pitched a perfect ninth for the win.

"It's getting that time of year where we need to start putting some good baseball together," Headley said. "It seems like every time we've put a good stretch together, we've kind of backed that up with three or four losses in a row. We needed to stop the bleeding today."

The Yankees batted around in the seventh, which all started when No. 9 hitter Rob Refsnyder reached base on catcher's interference by Hundley. Beltran's 19th homer of the season matched his total for all of last year. He has seven in his past 16 games.

Sabathia allowed six runs and seven hits with two walks and three strikeouts. It was his shortest outing and most runs allowed all season.

Dodgers top Nats on 3-base error

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Yasiel Puig raced home for the winning run on his own single after center fielder Michael Taylor let the ball skip by him for a three-base error, and the Los Angeles Dodgers rallied to beat the Washington Nationals 4-3 on Wednesday night.

Puig broke into a sprint at first base after Taylor overran the rolling single to left-center field. Howie Kendrick scored easily from first base, and Puig dove home even though there was no throw to beat. The Dodgers have won six straight — five in comeback fashion — and completed a sweep of the NL East-leading Nationals.

Taylor was also 0-for-5 with five strikeouts from the leadoff spot.

Wilson Ramos hit a solo homer in the eighth inning to put Washington ahead 3-2.

Chris Hatcher (5-3) got one out in the ninth inning and the win.

Shawn Kelley (1-1) allowed the singles to Kendrick and Puig in the ninth.

Mets 4, Royals 3: Matt Reynolds snapped a sixth-inning tie with his first major league home run, leading Noah Syndergaard (8-2) and host New York past Kansas City to a two-game sweep in

their World Series rematch.

Cardinals 7, Cubs 2: Michael Wacha (3-7) pitched into the seventh inning for his first win in nearly two months and visiting St. Louis waited out Jake Arrieta before roughing up Chicago's bullpen.

Astros 3, Angels 2: Jose Altuve homered and Marwin Gonzalez's tiebreaking RBI triple in the eighth inning helped host Houston to its fifth straight win.

White Sox 8, Red Sox 6: Brett Lawrie hit a go-ahead homer in the eighth inning after Melky Cabrera had a tying, two-run shot to lift visiting Chicago over Boston.

Giants 7, Pirates 6: Buster Posey threw out John Jaso attempting to steal second base to end the game after Joe Panik's two-run double capped a three-run sixth inning that helped visiting San Francisco rally from an early five-run deficit to beat Pittsburgh.

Orioles 7, Padres 2: Ubaldo Jimenez (4-7) interrupted his exile to the bullpen with a sharp performance in a starting role, and Baltimore got its 1,000th win at Camden Yards with a victory over San Diego.

Indians 6, Rays 1: Trevor Bauer (5-2) threw a three-hitter for his second career complete game, Jason Kipnis hit a two-run homer and host Cleveland got its sixth straight win by beating Tampa Bay.

Rangers 6, Reds 4: Cole Hamels (8-1) struck out eight in six solid innings, Prince Fielder had a two-run single and host Texas got a split in the two-game interleague series with Cincinnati.

Blue Jays 5, Diamondbacks 2: Russell Martin hit a three-run homer, Edwin Encarnacion and Troy Tulowitzki added solo shots and host Toronto snapped Arizona's five-game winning streak.

Tigers 5, Mariners 1: Steven Moya homered twice, and host Detroit withstood a shaky fifth inning from right-hander Michael Fulmer to beat Seattle.

Brewers 4, Athletics 2: Scooter Gennett and Kirk Nieuwenhuis homered to back Junior Guerra's (4-1) first victory in more than a month, and visiting Milwaukee earned a split of its quick two-game interleague series against Oakland.

Marlins 3, Braves 0: Adam Conley (4-4) pitched a career-high eight innings and host Miami broke Atlanta's six-game winning streak.

Twins 6, Phillies 5: Max Kepler made up for a costly error with a tying single in the fifth inning and the go-ahead sacrifice fly in the seventh as host Minnesota handed Philadelphia its ninth straight loss.

Chile tops Colombia to reach Copa final

Associated Press

CHICAGO — When Chile saw an opening, it pounced. When its defense broke down, Claudio Bravo was there. When the rain stopped, it finished the job.

Just another meticulous performance for Chile in Copa America.

Charles Aranguiz and Jose Pedro Feunzalida scored in the first half, and defending champion Chile returned to the final of South America's championship with a soggy 2-0 victory over Colombia on Wednesday night.

"This is a winning team. They are winners. ... Before we play a tournament, they are convinced they are going to win," Chile coach Juan Antonio Pizzi said.

Led by Bravo's stellar effort in goal, Chile earned its fourth straight win since a 2-1 loss to top-ranked Argentina in their Group D opener. Next up is a rematch with La Albiceleste on Sunday night in New

Jersey.

Chile also faced Lionel Messi and Argentina in last year's championship, with La Roja winning 4-1 in a penalty shootout after a 0-0 extra-time draw. Argentina was the last country to repeat as Copa champions in consecutive years, accomplishing the feat in 1946 and 1947.

James Rodriguez and Colombia got off to a slow start and their push for a comeback was hampered by a strong line of thunderstorms that delayed the start of the second half by more than two hours, drenching the playing surface and forcing the players to tread carefully for the last part of the night at Soldier Field, home of the NFL's Chicago Bears.

Colombia, which will face the United States in the third-place game on Saturday night in Arizona, also had to play with 10 men after Carlos Sanchez received his second yellow card in the 57th minute.

"We made some mistakes, and Chile was very effective, as they usually are," Colombia coach Jose Nestor Pekerman said. "This is one of the keys to their win."

Rodriguez got open for a low, hard shot in the second half that Bravo knocked down before pouncing on the ball before Colombia could get to it. Rodriguez pounded the wet turf in frustration after the play.

Chile played without Arturo Vidal after the skilled midfielder was suspended for a second yellow card, and defensive midfielder Marcelo Diaz was sidelined by injury. The defending champions lost another midfielder in the first half when Pedro Pablo Hernandez departed with a knee injury following a collision near midfield.

Pizzi said he was hopeful about Hernandez playing in the final, but it was too early to say anything for sure.

Arizona blanks UCSB

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — JC Cloney gave Arizona yet another strong start in the College World Series, and he did it after his worst outing of the year.

The junior left-hander pitched seven strong innings to lead Arizona to a 3-0 victory over UC Santa Barbara in an elimination game Wednesday night, sending the Wildcats to the Bracket 1 final.

"I don't think we've had a performance that good all year, the one he gave us to-night," coach Jay Johnson said. "Character off the charts. His last outing was a little bumpy. He's only had two bumpy ones this year. Both times, he responded in a Hall of Fame manner."

Cloney, who allowed seven runs in 3²/₃ innings in a loss to Louisiana-Lafayette in regionals, was more like his usual self against the Gauchos. He allowed just five singles and became the eighth straight Arizona starter to go at least seven innings at TD Ameritrade Park since the 2012 national championship season.

"I don't know about being more motivated than usual," Cloney said. "Coach Johnson has talked about (these) Super Bowls all year and to give my best effort. I moved past Lafayette the day after."

Jared Oliva homered for the first time since April 4 for the Wildcats (46-22) and has driven in four of his team's eight runs in Omaha.

"The past month, I've become more developed as a hitter, and I try to stay relaxed and don't do too much," Oliva said. "I stick to my game plan, and whatever happens happens. I got a good pitch to hit and got a good swing on it."

The Gauchos (43-20-1), who went 1-2 in their first CWS appearance, threatened in the ninth against Cameron Ming after Clay Fisher doubled and Devon Gradford walked with no outs. Ming struck out Austin Bush, JJ Muno and Dempsey Grover to end the game.

Santa Barbara senior left-hander Justin Kelly (2-1) allowed seven hits in three-plus innings. Arizona scored its first run on a sacrifice fly, and Oliva followed with his fourth homer of the season, and first since April 4, to make it 3-0.

Trevor Bettencourt settled things down for the Gauchos after Kyle Lewis singled leading off the fourth against Kelly. Bettencourt retired 13 in a row — striking out a career-high seven — before Bobby Dalbec singled in the eighth.

"You watch the College World Series when you're a little kid and you're not sure how you'll feel when you're out there," Bettencourt said. "After the warmup pitches, I was going to take a deep breath and look around the stadium and embrace it. I couldn't help but smile. It was intense, but I looked around and felt lucky to be here."

Santa Barbara was shut out twice and batted .202 in three CWS games. So ended an excited postseason run highlighted by freshman Sam Cohen's walk-off pinch grand slam to beat No. 2 national seed Louisville in the super regionals.

"When people go home, they get emotional, and I promised myself I wouldn't, but for these kids to get us here, to get this opportunity for our program, is unique," coach Andrew Checketts said. "I hate using the term 'overachieved.' I think they achieved as a group and ended up being a real good baseball team."