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N. Korea a 'clear and present danger'

Associated Press

SINGAPORE — U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis turned up the heat on North Korea and its main benefactor, China, on Saturday, calling the North Koreans a “clear and present danger” and chastising the Chinese for coercive behavior in the South China Sea.

His sharp words for both countries suggest he believes China will, out of self-interest, exert leverage on North Korea to halt its nuclear and missile programs even as Washington pushes Beijing to change course in the South China Sea.

Speaking at an international security conference in Singapore, Mattis said the Trump administration is encouraged by China's renewed commitment to working with the U.S. and others to rid North Korea of its nuclear weapons. He also said he thinks China ultimately will see it as a liability rather than an asset.

China blocked tough, new sanctions against North Korea that the U.S. pushed in the U.N. Security Council on Friday. However, the Security Council did vote unanimously to add 15 individuals and four entities linked to the North's nuclear

and missile programs to a U.N. sanctions blacklist.

In his speech to the Shangri-La Dialogue, sponsored by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Mattis sought to balance his hopeful comments on China with sharp criticism of what he called Beijing's disregard for international law by its “indisputable militarization” of artificial islands in disputed areas of the South China Sea.

“We oppose countries militarizing artificial islands and enforcing excessive maritime claims unsupported by international law,” he said. “We cannot and will not accept unilateral, coercive changes to the status quo.”

Rep. Mac Thornberry, a Republican from Texas and chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, told a news conference later that he believed Mattis had effectively stressed the U.S. commitment to allies in the Asia-Pacific region.

“He was very clear, very strong,” said Thornberry, who led a bipartisan congressional delegation on an Asia tour and attended Saturday's Singapore conference.

Overall, Mattis' speech struck a positive, hopeful tone for coop-

eration and peace in the Asia-Pacific region, where he and his predecessors have made it a priority to nurture and strengthen alliances and partnerships.

“While competition between the U.S. and China, the world's two largest economies, is bound to occur, conflict is not inevitable,” he said. “Our two countries can and do cooperate for mutual benefit. We will pledge to work closely with China where we share common cause.”

He was, however, unrelentingly critical of North Korea, a politically and economically isolated nation whose leaders have long viewed the U.S. as a military threat, in part because of periodic U.S. military exercises with South Korea, which the North sees as preparations for attacks aimed at destroying its ruling elite.

He called North Korea an “urgent military threat.” In a question-and-answer session with his audience of national security experts from across the globe, Mattis was asked whether the U.S. might attack the North pre-emptively and without warning South Korea in advance.

“We're working diplomatically, economically, we're trying to

exhaust all possible alternatives to avert this race for a nuclear weapon in violation of ... the United Nations' restrictions on North Korea's activities,” he said.

“We want to stop this. We consider it urgent,” he added.

The U.S. has about 28,500 troops permanently based in South Korea, a defense treaty ally.

“North Korea's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them is not new,” Mattis said in his prepared remarks.

“But the regime has increased the pace and scope of its efforts,” he added, alluding to the North's series of nuclear device tests in recent years and an accelerated pace of missile tests seemingly aimed at building a rocket with enough range to hit the U.S.

“While the North Korean regime has a long record of murder of diplomats, of kidnapping, killing of sailors and criminal activity, its nuclear weapons program is maturing as a threat to all,” Mattis said. “As a matter of national security, the United States regards the threat from North Korea as a clear and present danger.”

Trump nominates former Marine captain as Navy chief

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump will nominate Richard Spencer as the next secretary of the Navy, the White House said in a statement Friday.

Spencer, if confirmed by the Senate, will be the 76th secretary of the Navy and will take on the responsibility of helping Trump achieve his lofty goal of a 350-ship Navy.

A businessman and former

Marine captain, Spencer has been Trump's rumored choice for months following the last candidate's withdrawal from consideration in February.

Philip Bilden, a former Army officer who had a career managing private equity funds in Hong Kong, stepped down because his numerous business ties would likely not meet the Pentagon's ethical standards.

Spencer's background in-

volves more than a decade in the financial industry and leadership positions in multiple companies, according to the White House. He also spent five years on a defense business board as vice chairman. Spencer attended Rollins College as an undergraduate and received a degree from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, the statement said.

While the senate has ap-

proved Trump's choice for Air Force secretary, there is currently no one in the running for Army secretary.

Two candidates for the job have withdrawn in recent months. Vincent Viola withdrew because of divestment concerns, while Mark Green, a Republican state senator from Tennessee, stepped down after his past comments about gay rights and the LGBTQ community came under intense scrutiny.

Bombers target funeral for son of Afghan lawmaker

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least six people were killed Saturday when a trio of suicide bombers struck a funeral attended by senior government officials, just three days after a powerful truck bomb in one of the most heavily guarded parts of the capital killed 90 people and wounded more than 450.

The string of high-profile attacks has raised serious concerns about the ability of Afghan authorities and security forces to provide even the most basic levels of protection for its citizens.

Wahid Mujro, spokesman for the Public Health ministry, said 87 people were wounded when three explosions rocked a cemetery where Salim Ezadyar, the son of a senior Afghan parliamentarian, was about to be buried. Ezadyar was one of several people killed Friday when police clashed with protesters who were demanding better security in the capital.

Afghanistan's chief executive Abdullah Abdullah was in attendance at the funeral and

appeared live on television afterward. He said the explosions came from a trio of suicide bombers and demanded an investigation into how the attackers were able to get so close to a funeral attended by senior government officials.

He said the suicide bombers detonated their vests just as mourners were beginning to offer their prayers. Abdullah also called for an investigation into whether police used live fire against protesters on Friday.

The nature of Friday's demonstration shifted when protesters — many calling for the country's leadership to resign — attempted to move closer to the palace and some rushed police, who fired warning shots and used water cannons and eventually tear gas in an attempt to disperse the crowd. The city's police chief said some demonstrators fired weapons in the direction of his men.

A member of Parliament said Friday that eight protesters had been shot dead, while a hospital official said four corpses were

brought to his facility. Police said Friday two protesters were killed and 25 police injured but would not comment on the number of fatalities when asked to clarify the death toll Saturday.

Meanwhile on Saturday, Gen. Murad Ali Murad, the deputy interior minister, urged demonstrators to disperse because of a high security threat level in the country.

President Ashraf Ghani, meanwhile, met with senior security officials during an emergency security meeting. A statement from the president's office said the meeting called for an investigation into the nature of the deadly violence at the protest.

Most of the casualties from the truck bombing were civilians, including women and children, officials have said. But the dead also included Afghan security guards at multiple facilities, including the U.S. Embassy.

A U.S. State Department official said 11 American contractors were wounded, none with life-threatening injuries.

Putin: Assad didn't use chemical weapons

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — Russian President Vladimir Putin insisted Friday that the Syrian leader didn't use chemical weapons against his people, saying the recent attack that killed scores of civilians was a "provocation" against President Bashar Assad.

Speaking at an economic forum in St. Petersburg on Friday, Putin made one of his strongest rejections of blaming Assad's forces for the chemical attack in April. The attack in northern Syria killed at least 90, including many children. It was followed by an unprecedented U.S. strike on a Syrian air base from which aircraft suspected of being involved in the chemical raid took off.

"We are absolutely convinced that it was a provocation. Assad didn't use the weapons," Putin said. "It was done by people who wanted to blame him for that."

The attack in the town of Khan Sheikhoun caused an international uproar as images of the aftermath, including quivering children dying on camera, were widely broadcast.

Russia, one of Assad's closest allies, and the Syrian government have repeatedly denied using chemical weapons. Following an equally fatal chemical attack in 2013, Syria agreed to destroy its chemical weapons under a deal brokered by Russia and the United States and declared a 1,300-ton chemical arsenal when it joined the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

This year, the new U.S. administration led by Donald Trump was quick to react. In a one-off, the U.S. struck a Syrian air base with cruise missiles only days after the April 4 attack after accusing Assad's military of killing scores of civilians with a nerve agent launched from the base.

DOD admits more civilian deaths in ISIS fight

The Washington Post

The Pentagon acknowledged in a statement Friday that it had killed more than 100 additional civilians in the nearly 3-year-old air war against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, bringing the admitted total deaths caused by the coalition to 484.

The new tally includes the 105 civilians killed by a U.S. airstrike in Mosul on March 17. The strike was the subject of a two month investigation that resulted in the Pentagon

admitting to the bombing but blaming Islamic State explosives for the majority of the casualties.

Monitoring groups, such as the U.K.-based Airwars.org, puts the number of civilians killed by the U.S.-led coalition in the thousands. In a tweet Friday, Airwars.org said the U.S.-led coalition needs more resources to track the deaths based off an apparent backlog of civilian casualty claims facing the coalition.

The statement released by the Pentagon on Friday said

that from August 2014 until April 2016, it has tracked 440 civilian casualty reports in Iraq and Syria. Airwars, however, said it had tracked 1,300 in the same amount of time.

While the Pentagon's report only spans until April, Airwars has said May appeared to be the deadliest month for civilians yet in the campaign because of U.S.-led airstrikes. The spike in deaths is likely in part because of the intense fighting in the Iraqi city of Mosul and around Islamic State's de-facto capital of Raqqa in Syria.

UN adding to blacklist 15 more people tied to N. Korean nukes

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously Friday to add 15 individuals and four entities linked to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs to a U.N. sanctions blacklist, but Chinese opposition blocked tough new sanctions.

While the resolution will impose a global travel ban and asset freeze on a range of North Koreans including the man believed to head its overseas espionage operations and foreign intelligence collection, it will not target oil deliveries or include other tough sanctions.

The U.S. and its allies disagreed with China and Russia on how to rein in North Korea's rapidly escalating nuclear and ballistic missile program, which Pyongyang says is aimed at developing a long-range missile capable of reaching the United States with a nuclear warhead.

In a speech after the vote, U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley said "the Security Council is sending a clear message to North Korea today: Stop firing ballistic missiles or face the consequences."

She also reiterated tough conditions for talks with North Korea: A halt to all ballistic missile launches and nuclear tests and "concrete steps" toward getting rid of its nuclear weapons program.

Haley urged all countries to break diplomatic ties with North Korea, stop illegal trade and do more to break up smuggling rings and cut off funding for the country's nuclear and missile programs.

By contrast, China's U.N. Ambassador Liu Jieyi stressed that the resolution reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and expressed the council's commitment to a peaceful diplomatic and political solution, and to the impor-

tance of reducing tensions.

In addition to the foreign intelligence chief, the resolution imposes sanctions on officials who control the media and key government and military appointments. The Vietnam representative of a bank and the heads of two companies will also face sanctions. All countries are now required to freeze the assets of two trading companies, a bank and the Strategic Rocket Force of the Korean People's Army, which is in charge of all ballistic missile programs.

The Security Council has already imposed six rounds of sanctions on North Korea, and the U.S. and its allies have pushed for tougher measures in response to a wave of missile tests by Pyongyang. But China's Liu made clear last week that Beijing's top priority is to restart talks with North Korea and reduce tensions.

10K fans lie in attempt to get free tickets to benefit concert

The Washington Post

Music fans in Britain will come together Sunday for the event "One Love Manchester," featuring Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber and Usher, plus many more.

The event was announced after a suicide bombing shortly after a Grande concert in Manchester last month left 22 people dead. Proceeds from the concert will go to a fund designed to help those affected by the attack and their families.

But planning for the event has been hindered by allegations that 10,000 people have fraudulently applied for tickets.

Thousands of tickets for the concert went on sale Thursday, but organizers had also set aside a substantial number of free tickets for those who had been at the Grande concert where the attack occurred. Later that day, Ticketmaster announced more than 25,000 people had applied for those tickets, when only about 14,000 people are thought to have been at Grande's concert May 22.

In addition to the 14,200 places set aside for attendees of the original concert, about 35,000 additional tickets had been available for sale through Ticketmaster. These tickets are reported to have sold out in just 20 minutes. The BBC reported that some tickets have appeared for sale on eBay, where they were listed at inflated prices.

Both eBay and Ticketmaster are working to block any reselling of the tickets, but that has slowed the process of getting tickets to genuine attendees of the first concert and has led to some frustration among fans. On Friday, Ticketmaster announced that it had processed 12,000 tickets for fans from the first concert.

Sunday's show is due to take place at the Emirates Old Trafford cricket ground, which can house about 50,000 people for a music event. Grande had pledged to return to Manchester to raise money and honor the victims of the attack.

Driver queried in casino attack probe

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — Police in the Philippines said Saturday that they are questioning a taxi driver who may have details about the suspect in a casino attack in Manila that left at least 38 people dead.

Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the rampage, but authorities say it looked like a botched robbery by one person.

According to police, the man stormed into the Resorts World Manila complex early Friday and used gasoline to torch gambling tables. The fire caused clouds of smoke that killed 37 people from smoke inhalation, said Metropolitan Manila police chief Oscar Albayalde.

The gunman fled to an adjoining hotel and killed himself.

Police described the suspect as an English-speaking, fair-complexioned man in his 40s who was at least 6 feet tall. He was armed with an assault rifle but did not shoot anyone, police said.

Many in Manila feared after the attack began that it was linked to ongoing battles with Muslim militants aligned with ISIS in the southern city of Marawi. The fighting has placed much of the country on edge and raised fears that ISIS

was gaining a foothold in the country. The Philippines has faced Muslim insurgencies for decades, though much of the violence has occurred in the troubled south.

But police were emphatic that there appeared to be no links to terrorism in Friday's attack.

Albayalde said police were getting more closed circuit television pictures and questioning the taxi driver who dropped the suspect off at the casino.

"We have the taxi driver who could probably identify him," Albayalde said.

The attack occurred at a sprawling mall-like complex near the Manila airport that includes hotels, restaurants, stores and a multifloor gambling area. Police said that during the attack, the man stole more than \$2 million worth of casino chips, though he apparently abandoned them in a toilet soon after.

As the gunman left, he exchanged fire with a building guard who managed to shoot him in the leg after being wounded, police and casino officials said.

The attack sent hundreds of people fleeing through the complex and into the night. More than 70 people suffered mostly minor injuries in the stampede to escape.

Vet arrested at Trump hotel goes to court

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A Pennsylvania man arrested at Trump International Hotel in downtown Washington after a military-style rifle was found in his vehicle was ordered by a federal magistrate to undergo mental health treatment at a veterans hospital in Georgia, pending a trial on firearms charges.

Bryan Moles, 43, must report to the Atlanta Veterans Affairs Medical Center by 4 p.m. Monday after he told police that he had traveled to the District of Columbia — with an AR-15 rifle, a handgun and more than 90 rounds of ammunition in his 2017 black BMW — to meet with President Donald Trump.

In charging papers, prosecutors say Moles said he came to Washington to “bring down big medicine business and big pharmacy” and did not plan to leave 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue until he saw the president.

Moles is a licensed physician and former Navy corpsman. He told police, charging documents state, that he suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, had refused medication and was treating himself with marijuana, to which he was formerly addicted.

He was ordered Friday to remain under court supervision while living with an Atlanta friend, to keep out of the District except for court appearances, to stay away from the White House and Trump’s hotel,

and to surrender 20 weapons he kept at his home in Edinboro, Pa.

A friend of Moles’ for 25 years — Lisa Della Ratta, 44, a nurse in Gulf Breeze, Fla. — has described him as a hard-core Trump supporter who grew up with weapons and might have been unaware of the District’s strict gun laws.

Moles said little in court Friday. U.S. Magistrate Judge Robin Meriweather assigned him a federal defender and set his next hearing for June 21. Moles told the court he was suspended from his hospital job and that his financial profile includes a house with \$200,000 in equity but also more than \$6,000 per month in student, home and car loans.

Official: Tough-penalty push is ‘not about filling prisons’

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department’s new policy urging harsher punishments for most criminals is meant to target the worst gang members and drug traffickers, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said Friday in an effort to mollify critics who fear a revival of drug war policies.

“We’re not about filling prisons,” Rosenstein told The Associated Press in his first interview since becoming the Justice Department’s No. 2 official. “The mission is to reduce violent crime and drug abuse, and this helps us do that.”

Rosenstein emphasized the department’s plan to fight violent crime that includes prosecutors’ ability to decide

whether to level charges that carry mandatory minimum sentences — a carrots-and-sticks approach for gaining cooperation. He acknowledged that federal prosecutors sometimes will charge lower-level criminals to take down entire gangs but said, “That’s the exception, not the rule.”

The longtime top prosecutor in Maryland, Rosenstein came under intense criticism last month as the author of a memo that chastised then-FBI Director James Comey’s handling of the Hillary Clinton email case, which the Trump administration initially cited as justification for Comey’s sudden firing. The president later said he planned to fire Comey no matter what.

Pittsburgh: Trump doesn’t speak for city on climate

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — In announcing plans to pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate accord, President Donald Trump declared that he was “elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris.” But the Steel City is hardly in Trump’s corner on this one.

At City Hall and on the streets, Pittsburgh residents expressed support for efforts to combat global warming and complained that the president, in singling out this city of 300,000, seemed to be thinking of a smoke-belching, soot-choked Pittsburgh that no longer even exists.

The steel mills and other factories that once made Pittsburgh look like “hell with the lid

taken off” all but disappeared during the past generation, and the city has become known as a hub for technology, higher education, energy and health care. In recent years, in fact, it has worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In the wake of Trump’s decision, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto reaffirmed his city’s commitment to the 2015 Paris accord and called Trump’s move “reckless” and “unacceptable.”

“We have a history of pollution and industry, and we’re working really hard as a city to move past that through our growing industries,” said Isabella Sigado, 21, an art history student at the University of Pittsburgh. “Pittsburgh is turning into a green city.”

Nooses part of rising use of symbols in hate incidents in US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Nooses have appeared recently around the nation’s capital — including the Smithsonian’s new African-American history museum — in a rash of incidents that experts say shows the growing use of hate symbols in the U.S. to try to intimidate minorities.

“We’ve seen a spike in the use of symbols

of hate lately, and the noose is one more example,” said Denison University professor Jack Shuler, who has studied lynching and noose imagery in the U.S.

Two nooses were found at Smithsonian museums in less than a week, one outside the Hirshhorn Museum May 26 and one inside the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture on Wednesday.

Bananas tied to nooses were discovered at American University in Washington last month, while a noose was found at the nearby University of Maryland and a suburban middle school in Crofton, Md.

Two 19-year-old white men were arrested and charged with hate crimes on suspicion of hanging the noose at the Crofton school. No arrests have been made in the other cases.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Hiking trail marred by swastikas, graffiti

OR BEND — A horseback rider discovered swastikas and other offensive graffiti along a popular trail at Crooked River Ranch in Central Oregon.

Mona Steinberg told KTVZ she was appalled to see nearly 20 swastikas on public land that's also used by hikers and ATV riders.

The group Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area plans to help the U.S. Bureau of Land Management remove the spray-painted graffiti.

Man passes out in car, syringe near kid

NH MANCHESTER — Police have accused a New Hampshire man of endangering the welfare of a child, saying they found him passed out in an SUV with a syringe near a 4-year-old in the back seat.

WMUR-TV reported that Benjamin Philbrick, 34, of Milford, also was arraigned Friday on a charge of aggravated driving while intoxicated. He was held on \$5,000 bail.

Police said Philbrick was driving in Manchester on Thursday when he passed out. They said his car was running when officers arrived and smelled alcohol on Philbrick's breath.

They found two syringes, one of which was near the child, who wasn't restrained. The syringe, which was uncapped and contained a brownish liquid, was being tested.

2 men indicted in theft of Humvee

OH YOUNGSTOWN — Federal authorities

say two men have been indicted on charges in the theft of a Humvee from an Ohio National Guard Armory.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Friday that Austin Bolinger, 22, of Brookfield, was charged with theft of government property and receiving stolen government property, and Daniel Thompson, also 22, of Girard, was charged on one count of receiving stolen government property.

The indictment alleges Bolinger stole the Humvee, and the men concealed the vehicle, intending to convert it for Bolinger's use.

Authorities said a fence was cut, and the Humvee was stolen from the armory in Stow, about 35 miles southeast of Cleveland, in March. It was found days later in a garage at a vacant home in Trumbull County.

Driver denies tossing kittens from vehicle

NC NEW BERN — A North Carolina woman accused of throwing three kittens from a car and running over two of them says she is innocent.

WITN-TV reported Cecilia Martinez-Ramirez, 42, appeared in a Craven County courtroom on Friday, a day after she had been arrested on a charge of felony cruelty to animals. While the judge was reading the charges, Martinez-Ramirez said she was innocent.

Over a week ago, an eyewitness told local media outlets that he confronted the driver and said he was going to call the police. The woman drove away. The three kittens had to be euthanized.

Police said the kitten that wasn't run over had to be put down because of the injuries it suffered from being thrown

out of the car.

Park likely contains 40 to 50 unmarked graves

IA ELDRIDGE — An archaeologist says his analysis using ground-penetrating radar shows 40 to 50 graves in an eastern Iowa park.

City officials in Eldridge hired University of Iowa professor Glenn Storey to trace the park property that was the site of a Presbyterian church until a tornado destroyed the building in 1918, WQAD-TV reported.

Storey said he believes that many of the unmarked graves shown through the radar contain metal coffins because the technology causes them to stand out.

He said his work is rewarding because it brings the community's history to light.

Fake signs generate excitement, dismay

NM LAS CRUCES — A construction site in southern New Mexico, which sparked buzz with a fake sign announcing it as a future home of a Cheesecake Factory, is really a future emergency center.

The Las Cruces Sun-News reported that officials say pranksters put up the bogus sign on a gate as a joke.

Still, the fake sign announcing "The Cheesecake Factory Fall 2017" and another one saying "Dave and Busters Coming Soon" generated excitement on social media in Las Cruces, a city of 100,000 people near the U.S.-Mexico border.

City officials dashed those hopes Thursday by confirming the site is destined to be an emergency department for MountainView Regional Medical Center.

The Las Cruces Police Department said the pranksters could face charges.

Trump's tweeted typo to be license plate

ME AUGUSTA — President Donald Trump's mysterious tweeted typo "covfefe" is coming soon to a license plate near you.

The Maine Department of Motor Vehicles confirms someone claimed COVFEFE for a personalized license plate just hours after the Republican president's now-infamous tweet at 12:06 a.m. Wednesday. Local media report it's also happening in other states, including Nebraska and North Carolina.

The word took social media by storm after the president tweeted about "constant negative press covfefe." Trump later poked fun at it, saying, "Who can figure out the true meaning of 'covfefe' ??? Enjoy!"

Mayor's pictures used on Match.com profile

AZ MESA — Mesa Mayor John Giles is not a divorced dad looking for a date in Canada, but somebody using a Match.com profile with his pictures claims to be.

Giles says he has been tempted to make a joke out of the profile and ask how many dates he got.

The Arizona Republic reported that the dating profile is based out of British Columbia and claims to be looking for "another opportunity to find something special." The profile uses two pictures from Giles' Facebook page.

A woman was chatting with the person running the profile and noticed something fishy when a picture sent to her had Sen. John McCain in it. She found the man standing next to McCain to be a mayor from a city more than 1,500 miles away — Giles.

From wire reports

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Old rivalry paved way for Cavs-Warriors

Associated Press

By the time the Los Angeles Lakers met the Boston Celtics for the third time in the NBA Finals in the 1980s, defensive stopper Michael Cooper had enough with Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and the rest of the Celtics.

"It's respectful to acknowledge the person that you're playing, but I'm not taking you out to dinner," Cooper said, thinking back on those days. "I'll spit in your food before I eat with you."

Lakers vs. Celtics. Larry Bird vs. Magic Johnson. East Coast vs. West Coast.

It's the rivalry against which all others are measured, the one essentially responsible for the modern NBA evolving from a fringe sport that put its championship series on tape delay to a global sensation built around the most recognizable athletes in American sports. And as the Cleveland Cavaliers and Golden State Warriors face off in the Finals for the third straight season, the teams that have grabbed a stranglehold on the rest of the league over the

past three seasons are drawing comparisons to the game's greatest matchup.

"I think basketball-wise it's going to be great," said Celtics Hall of Famer Kevin McHale, now an analyst for NBATV. "That is going to lend itself to people talking about it years from now. But really, (the Lakers-Celtics) was the birth of the NBA and the average fan across the country was that Larry-Magic time. It was completely unique unto itself."

McHale was directly involved in one of the defining moments of the rivalry, when he clotheslined Lakers forward Kurt Rambis on a breakaway layup during Game 4 of the 1984 Finals in Los Angeles. It's a play that lives in Celtics lore, the gritty, Northern Minnesota forward blasting the Showtime Lakers right in front of Jack Nicholson. The play touched off a mini-brawl between the teams and helped spark a Boston comeback that leveled the series that the Celtics went on to win in seven games.

"We knew how dirty they could get. I loved it back then," said Cooper, who now coach-

es the Atlanta Dream in the WNBA. "In today's game, he would've got a two or three-game suspension. Back then, it made it fun. Rambis' neck wasn't broken? OK, get up. Kevin got dunked on a couple times and we made a big melee out of it. You come out and live to play another day."

The more often the teams met on the big stage, the more heated the rivalry became. Celtics forward Cedric Maxwell gave James Worthy a choke sign after he missed a free throw. Bird went toe-to-toe with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

It's the kind of edge and nastiness that is often said to be lacking in the modern NBA with the high salaries and player movement. But last year's series — won by Cleveland in seven games — had its share of tension, from LeBron James' dismissive scoff at Stephen Curry after blocking his shot in Game 6 to Klay Thompson suggesting James "got his feelings hurt" to James stepping over Draymond Green in Game 4, a confrontation that led to Green's suspension and the turning point of the series.

"I'm hoping there's some real fiery competitiveness and some dustups and guys willing to fight each other for it," McHale said. "I think that's fine. There should be that feeling."

The Lakers and Celtics met three times in four years, with Los Angeles winning in 1985 and 1987. The only thing that prevented four straight meetings was a Houston Rockets' upset of the Lakers in the 1986 Western Conference finals, something that McHale laments to this day. The Celtics desperately wanted the Lakers because they knew Magic and Worthy and Kareem would push them to their competitive limits.

"I think the Lakers were one of those teams that you knew you could play well and still lose. We had a good enough team where if we played well, normally it just took care of itself," McHale said. "We'd win. If we played well, the outcome was determined just by our play. Against the Lakers, you could play really well and still lose."

Key double-fault helps No. 1 Murray down del Potro

Associated Press

PARIS — Andy Murray benefited from a double-fault by Juan Martin del Potro in the opening tiebreaker and then looked more and more like the No. 1 player that he is during a 7-6 (8), 7-5, 6-0 victory at the French Open on Saturday.

The third-round match between a pair of past major champions was much tighter than the straight-set scoreline might indicate.

"Yeah, I expected a very tough match. And the first set was very, very important, I think, for the rest of the match. Whoever had won that first set had big momentum," Murray said. "In these conditions, when it's slow and heavy, to be coming back is difficult."

He needed nearly 3 hours to get past the 29th-seeded del Potro at Court Philippe Chatrier under a cloud-filled sky.

Del Potro had four set points in the opening set but lost each one, including that key double-fault while ahead 7-6 in the tiebreaker. After Murray converted a third set point of his own when his opponent's big forehand landed barely wide, del Potro rested his head on the net and stayed put for several seconds, the very picture of disappointment.

Stan Wawrinka, the 2015 champion, was a 7-6 (2), 6-0, 6-2 winner against 28th-seeded Fabio Fognini.

Wawrinka, owner of three major championships in all, will play for a quarterfinal berth against No. 15 Gael Mon-

files or No. 24 Richard Gasquet, a pair of Frenchmen whose third-round match was interrupted by rain Saturday.

Also on Day 7, 2014 U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic beat Feliciano Lopez 6-1, 6-3, 6-3, and next meets big-serving Kevin Anderson, who edged Kyle Edmund 6-7 (6), 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-1, 6-4. Fernando Verdasco easily got past No. 22 Pablo Cuevas 6-2, 6-1, 6-3.

Victories by Alize Cornet and Caroline Garcia gave France three women in the fourth round of this tournament for the first time since 1994. Kristina Mladenovic advanced to that round by winning Friday.

The unseeded Cornet was a surprisingly easy winner against No. 9 Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland, 6-2, 6-1,

while No. 28 Garcia edged Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan 6-4, 4-6, 9-7.

France, which last put a trio of women into the final 16 at any major at the 2008 U.S. Open, is guaranteed at least one quarterfinalist this time, because Garcia now meets Cornet.

Simona Halep, the 2014 runner-up, said the torn ligament in her right ankle is no longer an issue and proved that by defeating 26th-seeded Daria Kasatkina of Russia 6-0, 7-5.

In other third-round action, former No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki beat 18-year-old CiCi Bellis of California 6-2, 2-6, 6-3 in a match suspended late in the second set Friday night; and No. 21 Carla Suarez Navarro eliminated No. 14 Elena Vesnina 6-4, 6-4.

Davidson stuns UNC

Associated Press

Davidson College has played baseball for 115 years, generally with little success. The Wildcats made it to the NCAA Tournament for the first time this year, and they made a memorable debut Friday.

The No. 4 seed in the Chapel Hill Regional, Davidson pulled an upset by beating No. 2 national seed North Carolina 8-4.

Two other No. 4 regional seeds also won. Tennessee Tech beat Florida State 3-1 in Tallahassee and Iowa knocked off host Houston 6-3.

North Carolina became the highest national seed to lose its regional opener since a No. 2 Florida lost to College of Charleston in 2014. The Gators were eliminated the next day.

Davidson rocked ACC pitcher of the year J.B. Bukauskas, led 8-0 after five innings and moved to a winners' bracket game Saturday against Florida Gulf Coast, the other team that is in the national tournament for the first time. FGSU beat Michigan 10-6, putting the Wolverines into an elimination game against North Carolina.

Davidson and North Carolina have met every year since Mike Fox began coaching the Tar Heels. They had won 18 of 19 against Davidson under Fox before Friday. Carolina won this year's regular-season meeting 7-6 in 10 innings.

National seeds: In addition to North Carolina losing, No. 8 Stanford dropped its second-round game to Cal State Fullerton 4-1. No. 1 Oregon State, No. 3 Florida, No. 4 LSU, No. 5 Texas Tech and No. 7 Louisville won their openers. No. 6 TCU was rained out.

Conference call: Southeastern Conference teams went 7-1 and the Atlantic Coast Conference and Big 12 each opened 4-2. The Big Ten got off to 1-4 start, with Iowa posting the only win. The Pac-12 was 1-3 Friday, its only win being Oregon State's 8-2 victory over Holy Cross.

Game of the day: Missouri State 6, Oklahoma State 5, in Fayetteville, Ark. Jeremy Eierman's second homer of the game was a two-run shot in the ninth

for a walk-off win. Oklahoma State had taken a 5-4 lead in the top half on a wild pitch. With one man on and two outs in the bottom half, Eierman launched a 2-1 pitch from Trey Cobb far over the right-field fence.

Watch your step: Houston thought it tied its game against Iowa 4-4 in the bottom of the sixth when Lael Lockhart Jr. drove a ball into the left-center gap for what looked to be a double scoring Joe Davis from second.

Iowa appealed that Lockhart's left foot missed the bag as he rounded first base. Pitcher Kyle Shimp tossed the ball to Jake Adams, Lockhart was called out and the run was taken down.

Mound marvels

■ South Alabama workhorse Randy Bell pitched his second complete game of the season, holding Mississippi State to six hits in a 6-3 win.

■ Keegan Thompson of Auburn went eight innings to match his season high and allowed four hits and struck out nine in a 7-4 win over UCF.

■ Yale's Scott Politz threw his seventh complete game of the season in a 5-1 win over Nebraska but only his second in a game that went nine innings. The Ivy League plays seven-inning doubleheaders.

Big bats

■ Oklahoma State's Garrett Bengé hit for the cycle in the loss to Missouri State. He doubled in the first, homered in the fourth, singled in the seventh and tripled in the ninth.

■ West Virginia, in the tournament for the first time since 1996, got two homers apiece from Jimmy Galusky and Kyle Davis against Maryland.

■ Vanderbilt's Will Toffey has been torrid since missing five games in May because of a shoulder injury. He went 4-for-5 with a double, home run and three RBIs against St. John's. He's 19-for-34 (.559) with four homers, 13 runs and 15 RBIs over his last seven games.

■ Freshman Will Holland, who came in batting .210 out of the 9-hole for Auburn, doubled and hit a three-run homer against UCF.

Romero homers to lead Oklahoma past Washington

Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Sydney Romero bounced back from an atypical performance and helped Oklahoma take a critical step in its hopes for a repeat.

Romero hit a solo homer to help the defending national champion Sooners defeat Washington 3-1 on Friday night in the Women's College World Series.

In Thursday's win over Baylor, the normally unflappable Romero committed two errors at third base. Against Washington, things were back to normal — she went without an error and had the big hit.

"I knew I had to step up my game a lot more and I needed to help my team in any way I could, and I felt like I did that today," she said.

Paige Parker (25-5) gave up three hits and one run in 6¹/₃ innings for the win. Paige Lowary got the save for the Sooners (58-9), who advanced to Sunday's semifinals and now are one win from reaching the championship series again.

The Sooners have the day off Saturday, and they would have to lose twice on Sunday to be eliminated.

"I think going into Sunday, everybody else is going to beat each other up, and then we get into Sunday, and we'll be rested and ready for whoever comes our way," Oklahoma coach Patty Gasso said.

Oklahoma's Fale Aviu scored in the second inning when she avoided a tag from Washington catcher Morganne Flores at home. There was some concern as to whether Aviu strayed too far from the third-base line before scoring.

"Yeah, I wasn't expecting it," Flores said. "I thought she was a little far outside of the baseline, but that's not my call, that's the umpire's call, and I can't control that."

Oklahoma's Kelsey Arnold reached on an error in the fifth and scored on a single by Aviu. Romero's blast pushed the lead to 3-0.

Ali Aguilar's solo homer in the sixth put Washington on the scoreboard and made the crowd of mostly Sooners fans a bit nervous.

Lowary entered the game in the seventh and used her blistering fastball to help claim her ninth save of the season.

Washington pitcher Taran Alvelo (32-8) went six innings and gave up five hits and two earned runs for the Huskies (49-13).

"I thought Taran threw well enough to win, just collectively as an offense we can be better," Washington coach Heather Tarr said. "We can be tougher, and we'll be tougher."

Florida 7, LSU 0: At Oklahoma City, Kelly Barnhill threw a two-hitter and struck out eight in the top-seeded Gators' shutout victory over the Tigers.

Barnhill (26-3), USA Softball's Player of the Year, helped put the Gators (57-8) within a victory of a spot in the championship series. On Thursday, Florida opened with an 8-0 victory over Texas A&M.

Chelsea Herndon doubled to score two in the top of the fourth. Janell Wheaton hit a solo homer in the top of the sixth and Kayli Kvistad hit a two-run homer in the seventh.

Aleshia Ocasio made perhaps the play of the game in the second inning when she ran into foul territory and caught a fly ball as she fell over a barrier.

LSU starter Carley Hoover (15-8) allowed two runs in five innings, and Allie Walljasper struggled in relief.

The Tigers (48-21) played in an elimination game Saturday.

Dodgers' Kershaw notches 2,000th K

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Cody Bellinger had the biggest hit in a game that will be remembered more for so many swings and misses.

The rookie homered in the 12th inning off Milwaukee Brewers reliever Neftali Feliz, salvaging a 2-1 win Friday for the Los Angeles Dodgers on a night when ace left-hander Clayton Kershaw recorded his 2,000th strikeout.

It was just the start of a night full of whiffs, especially for the Brewers.

Los Angeles pitching had a franchise-record 26 strikeouts, handing the Brewers the dubious distinction of tying the major league mark for most

whiffs in a game.

Both teams combined for 42 strikeouts, a National League record.

"Strikeouts were a little bit contagious today. Sometimes you just kind of get on that roll," Kershaw said.

Kenley Jansen (3-0) pitched two scoreless innings for the win, stranding the potential tying run at third with one out in the speedy Jonathan Villar by striking out Orlando Arcia looking and getting Travis Shaw to pop out to short.

Jansen earned a milestone too. His strikeout of Hernan Perez in the 11th was his 36th of the season without having allowed a walk all year, setting a major league mark.

But Bellinger had the biggest hit after lining a 1-2 fastball from Feliz (1-5) into the right-field bleachers to break the 1-1 tie. Yasmani Grandal had tied the game with one out in the ninth by lining a 3-1 fastball from closer Corey Knebel over the wall in right-center.

Lost in the late-inning power surge was the duel between starting pitchers Kershaw and Jimmy Nelson.

Domingo Santana had the only run off Kershaw, hitting a 1-0 fastball down the middle of the plate deep to left-center in the seventh to end a stretch of 20 in a row retired by the lefty. It was a rare mistake in a game in which Kershaw fanned a season-high 14, one off his ca-

reer high.

"You're going to have a hard time winning a game striking out that many times but it was a very well-pitched game," Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. "Both sides pitched outstanding. ... They hit one more home run than us."

Nelson was just as effective for the Brewers, tying a career high with 11 strikeouts and allowing five hits over eight strong innings.

"His stuff is electric," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "In the zone, there's life in the zone. He really matched Clayton pitch by pitch. As a baseball fan, it was really fun to watch."

Keuchel earns 9th victory as Astros blast Rangers

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — After a long rain delay and six scoreless innings, Houston lefty Dallas Keuchel is still undefeated.

Keuchel earned his major league-leading ninth win in a place where he has struggled in the past, and the Astros won their eighth game in a row with a 7-1 victory over the Texas Rangers in a matchup of aces Friday night.

"A lot of unlucky breaks, but I don't really think about anything like that," said Keuchel, who was 1-4 in his previous eight starts at Texas. "I could have the best record against a team or the worst record against a team — I still think I'm going to go out and do my job correctly."

Carlos Correa and George Springer each hit a three-run homer for the Astros (39-16), who have the top record and longest current winning streak in the majors.

The Astros were ahead to stay after Correa's homer in the fifth off Rangers ace Yu Darvish (5-4), winless in his last eight starts against Houston.

"We put some pressure on Darvish from the beginning," Houston manager A.J. Hinch

said. "We had opportunities that we created for ourselves. Correa got the lesser end of those two battles, and then the third time's a charm. ... A really big, game-changing hit."

After striking out twice, Correa hit his 10th homer on a drive that cleared the 14-foot wall in left-center field to make it 3-0. That followed two-out hits by Josh Reddick and Jose Altuve.

After the start was delayed by rain for 2 hours, 6 minutes, Keuchel (9-0) struck out seven and walked two while limiting the Rangers to three hits. The 2015 AL Cy Young Award winner worked out of a bases-loaded jam in the sixth when he got Rougned Odor on an inning-ending groundout.

Texas is 3-9 since its 10-game winning streak that is still the longest in the majors this season. The Rangers, who won the AL West each of the past two seasons, dropped 13 games behind the Astros in the division.

Cubs 3, Cardinals 2: Jason Heyward hit a tiebreaking sacrifice fly in the eighth inning, and host Chicago broke a six-game losing streak with a victory over St. Louis.

Twins 11, Angels 5: Joe

Mauer, Robbie Grossman and Max Kepler each hit a two-run homer to power visiting Minnesota.

Tigers 15, White Sox 5: Miguel Cabrera had his 1,000th career extra-base hit, J.D. Martinez fell a single short of the cycle as host Detroit beat Chicago.

Nationals 13, Athletics 3: Daniel Murphy and Brian Goodwin each had four hits, including a home run, and Stephen Strasburg pitched seven strong innings as visiting Washington defeated Oakland.

Reds 3, Braves 2 (10): Eugenio Suarez scored the tying run in the ninth on Jim Johnson's wild pitch, and Devin Mesoraco led off the 10th with a homer, rallying host Cincinnati past Atlanta.

Giants 10, Phillies 0: Ty Blach tossed his first career shutout, Denard Span had five hits and visiting San Francisco routed skidding Philadelphia.

Marlins 7, Diamondbacks 5: Giancarlo Stanton matched a career high by scoring three times, and his 15th home run of the season put host Miami ahead for good against Arizona.

Pirates 12, Mets 7: Elias

Diaz hit his first major league homer and drove in six runs as a late addition to the lineup, lifting visiting Pittsburgh over New York.

Orioles 3, Red Sox 2: Seth Smith and Manny Machado hit first-inning home runs off Rick Porcello to back a redemptive pitching performance by Alec Asher and help Baltimore beat visiting Boston.

Blue Jays 7, Yankees 5: Josh Donaldson hit two solo home runs, Francisco Liriano won in his return from the disabled list as host Toronto beat New York.

Royals 4, Indians 0: Jason Vargas tossed his first shutout in nearly three years, outdueling Royals nemesis Josh Tomlin and sending Kansas City past visiting Cleveland.

Padres 8, Rockies 5: Austin Hedges, Yangervis Solarte and Wil Myers homered, leading host San Diego to a victory over Colorado for their season-high fifth straight win.

Mariners 12, Rays 4: Danny Valencia hit a three-run homer and tied a career high with five RBIs, Taylor Motter connected for a first-inning grand slam and Seattle routed visiting Tampa Bay.