

Marines train for jungle warfare in Japan

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Snakes, spiders and thick jungle added realism to training on Okinawa, where Marines spent last week honing skills they'd need to fight and win against a well-equipped enemy force on Pacific islands.

About 800 Marines participated in the Jungle Warfare Exercise in Okinawa's Northern Training Area from May 24 to 28.

The scenario pitted members of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., against an opposing force from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment out of Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

The training simulated the sort of engagements Marines might face going up against a peer-level adversary contesting key maritime terrain in the first island chain, which runs through Okinawa, Taiwan, the Philippines and Borneo.

The area is the focus of great power competition between the U.S. and China, which claims sovereignty over Taiwan and numerous other islands in the region, some of which are administered by neighboring countries.

China has been rapidly modernizing its military and building up amphibious forces that could be used to seize contested territory.

The event last week was the largest such event in the Northern Training Area in decades, said Maj. Kurt Stahl, a 3rd Marine Division spokesman, during a conference call Wednesday.

At the start of the exercise, 3rd Battalion Marines air assaulted into the jungle while others arrived in small boats to secure key maritime terrain, said Maj. Matthew Chomiak, 33, assistant operations officer for 4th Marine Regiment, which oversaw the exercise, during the same call.

Meanwhile Marines from 2nd Battalion arrived in helicopters to seize an objective, he said.

The Marines battled it out

with blank ammunition in engagements refereed by observer controllers before the larger 2nd Battalion force was victorious, Chomiak said.

The training tested the Marines' ability to insert, persist and establish command and control and situational awareness in a tough environment that replicates the conditions they would face fighting in the first island chain, he said.

The Marines traveled light, carrying items they could pack into a helicopter or move on golf-cart sized Utility Task Vehicles, Maj. William McCabe, 35, of York, Pa., operations officer for 3rd Battalion, said during the call.

Service leaders wary of changes in sex assault policy

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Military service leaders are privately expressing reservations about removing sexual assault cases from the chain of command, The Associated Press has learned, striking a note of caution as momentum builds toward changing a military justice system that has come under increasing criticism.

In memos to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, the service leaders laid out their concerns about the growing push to shift prosecution decisions on sexual assault and possibly other major crimes to independent judge advocates. They said the shift could decrease the number of prosecutions, delay cases and potentially provide less help for victims.

While they indicated they are open to changes and improvements in the justice system, most were worried about how that would be done while ensuring no unintended harm is done to unit leadership or readiness. Several said it would create additional bur-

densome bureaucracy, according to officials familiar with the memos.

Several officials described the memos to the AP on the condition of anonymity because they have not been made public. The memos submitted to Austin were from the civilian secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force and from the National Guard.

The reservations expressed by service leaders could provide a measure of ammunition for those in Congress who oppose taking the chain of command out of sexual assault prosecutions. Supporters of change, however, argue that the current system has failed to address to a problem that has long plagued the military.

Officials said that all service leaders recognize that change is virtually certain and that they agree more needs to be done to improve and professionalize the judge advocate corps. But they are concerned about how quickly changes are being made and whether there is room for negotia-

tion about how they are implemented.

Earlier this year, an independent review commission created by Austin recommended that the prosecution of sexual assaults be shifted to judge advocates reporting to a civilian-led Office of the Chief Special Victim Prosecutor. The independent judge advocates would decide two key legal questions: whether to charge someone and whether that charge should go to a court-martial.

Members of Congress are also pushing for a similar — and in some respects more expansive — change. Because any such change would amend military law, it will require an act of Congress and cannot be done unilaterally by Austin.

Officials said the Army expressed doubts about the accuracy of any data suggesting that removing commanders from the process will result in more sexual assault prosecutions. The acting Army secretary, John E. Whitley, in the memo, said that the change could reduce commander effectiveness

and accountability and may reduce criminal convictions, officials said.

The Navy offered some support for the change. Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Harker, in his memo, said the Navy agrees with the concept of having an independent judge advocate. But he said there are a number of questions and concerns about how the change is implemented. A key Navy and Marine Corps concern is that the shift may cause delays in prosecutions.

Acting Air Force Secretary John Roth also said the force was open to new approaches, including removing cases from the chain of command, officials said. But he cautioned that the change could inadvertently have a negative impact on commanders' leadership or accountability.

Several expressed opposition to the recommendation that the new special victim prosecutor office be under the jurisdiction of the Defense Department, rather than having offices overseen by each military service.

Reservist campaigns in uniform, faces probe

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Army is investigating a Reserve officer for wearing his uniform while promoting his campaign for Congress on a right-wing television network and making statements that denigrated President Joe Biden, service officials said.

First Lt. Alex Stovall, 26, is a chaplain candidate in the Army Reserve who has announced he is running as a Republican for a House seat representing Arizona's 9th Congressional District. A spokesman for the Army Reserve said Tuesday that the service was aware Stovall had appeared in his combat uniform during an interview about his campaign on the One American News Network last month and he

had publicly questioned Biden's legitimacy as commander in chief.

"We are aware of the situation and are investigating," said Army Lt. Col. Simon Flake, an Army Reserve spokesman. "The U.S. Army Reserve follows the Department of Defense's long-standing policy regarding service member involvement in partisan political campaigns to avoid the perception of DoD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of any partisan political candidate, campaign or cause. Standard procedural steps are being taken to ensure the investigation is conducted in a timely and thorough manner and appropriate rights will be afforded to all involved."

Service members serving in a Reserve capacity are allowed to

run for partisan political office, though they must not appear in uniform as part of their campaign or use their military service to imply Defense Department "sponsorship, approval or endorsement" of their activities, according to department directive 1344.10.

Stovall's appearance in uniform, which he told OANN during the interview occurred after he "got a last-minute call" to military duty, violated that directive, according to Mikey Weinstein, the founder and president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, which advocates for the separation of church and state within the military.

Stovall did not respond to a request for comment Wednesday. In an interview with Military-

.com, he defended his actions, telling the website that he had not broken any rules or regulations. Military.com reported Tuesday that Stovall ended the interview abruptly after he was asked about specific allegations.

Stovall also faces accusations of embellishing his service.

He has in several instances claimed to be an Army chaplain, but his service records show he is a chaplain candidate, essentially a chaplain-in-training. Stovall appears to have in recent days altered his campaign's Twitter profile to reflect he is a chaplain candidate and not a full chaplain. His campaign website's "About me" page, however, still reads that he was "a prior non-commissioned officer who served overseas as a chaplain," as of Thursday.

Lakenheath-based airman works to aid Kenya village

By KYLE ALVAREZ
Stars and Stripes

RAF MILDENHALL, England — An encounter with a Maasai tribesman during a deployment to Kenya created a lasting bond for Air Force Tech. Sgt. Fariht Gomez, who is spearheading a grassroots effort to get supplies to a village whose economy was hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

Gomez, who is based at RAF Lakenheath in England, first visited the Maasai Mara National Reserve in 2018 while deployed to Kenya on a civil engineering construction mission. The villagers there, many of whom lived in homes built from sticks and mud with grass-thatched roofs, made a deep impression.

At the time, the people living near the Oseki Mara Camp were trying to build a school. Gomez made a donation after talking

with Dennis Shinka, the camp's co-owner and host.

"His drive and need resonated with me on a personal level," Gomez said.

Now the village, which relies on tourism as a main source of income, is trying to rebound again.

"2020 was an especially bad year for us," said Shinka, whose camp helps support multiple villages. "Apart from the total shut-down of tourism, we also lost thousands of livestock to a foot and mouth (disease) outbreak."

The donations "slowly but surely helped us rebuild our lives," Shinka said.

The Maasai villages in the area are grateful for Gomez's help, Shinka said.

"From his (first) visit, Gomez did promise to support the community," Shinka said. "We are very happy he kept his promise."

States struck by disasters seek larger Guard forces

By SARAH CAMMARATA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Dozens of House lawmakers from Florida, Texas and California want to increase the size of National Guard forces in their states as years of growing extreme weather events has put a strain on troops who are helping to respond.

In a letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin dated June 1, 59 House members from some of the most populated U.S. states expressed concern over a lack of resources to fulfill the range of missions facing the National Guard.

"Strain on the National Guard has been building for years as hurricane response in Florida, winter storm and flood rescue in Texas, and combating wildfires in California has been persistent," the lawmakers wrote in the letter.

Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of

the National Guard Bureau, testified to Congress last month that Guard members from 22 states supported 22 severe weather events in 2020 and a record of 12 storms.

"The extraordinary circumstances of the past year have highlighted the strain our Guard units have been under for too long, potentially hurting recruitment, retention and readiness," the lawmakers wrote.

The states represented by the lawmakers have the lowest Guard member-to-civilian ratios in the country, they wrote.

The bipartisan effort was mostly led by members of the House Armed Services Committee, including Reps. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla., Ken Calvert, R-Calif., Jimmy Panetta, D-Calif., Ronny Jackson, R-Texas, and Marc Veasey, D-Texas.

Afghan pilot once denied refuge finally in the US

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — An Afghan air force pilot who had been promised refuge in America last fall, only to be rejected at the last minute, finally arrived on U.S. soil Wednesday with his family.

Mohammed Naiem Asadi, his wife, Rahima, and their daughter Zainab, 5, have been conditionally approved for parole, a temporary status for noncitizens to come to America, U.S. immigration services said in a letter to the family.

"This is a real recognition that this man's life is in significant danger in Afghanistan," said the family's lawyer, Kimberly Motley, who came to Kabul to escort the family to America.

The family passed through immigration and plans to file for asylum in the United States, Motley said in an interview Monday.

Asadi, a helicopter pilot reputed to have killed more insurgents than anyone else in the Afghan air force, received a rare endorsement by the Pentagon last fall to move to the U.S. with his family because he was in "imminent danger of being killed by the Taliban."

But the Defense Department later withdrew its approval, saying that senior officials had not been consulted.

The decision angered former advisers who vouched for Asadi's bid to come to America. As a major in the Afghan air force, Asadi protected the life of a downed U.S. pi-

lot last year and, by one former chief warrant officer's estimate, had been in the cockpit for 70% of all missions in southern Afghanistan in recent years.

"It's shameful what happened on that last day, that someone changed their mind in the DOD," said Andy Miller, a retired Army chief warrant officer who helped train Asadi. "At the last minute, the rug was yanked out from under them."

Asadi and his family received death threats from the Taliban that were determined credible by U.S. investigators last fall.

The Taliban have launched attacks all over the country as U.S. and NATO troops withdraw from Afghanistan, with assassinations killing politicians, journalists and military personnel. The continuing violence has raised calls for the U.S. to protect or evacuate Afghans under threat for working with them.

A Pentagon spokesman told The Wall Street Journal last year, however, that so many military personnel are under threat that letting them all seek refuge in America would "absolutely gut the Afghan security forces."

Some advisers who supported Asadi's bid to come to America acknowledged that helping one of the country's few elite pilots leave the country weakens its ability to stave off the Taliban.

Asadi also feared retribution from the Afghan military for trying to leave the country.

Droughts ravage Calif. reservoirs ahead of summer

Associated Press

OROVILLE, Calif. — Each year, Lake Oroville helps water a quarter of the nation's crops, sustain endangered salmon beneath its massive earthen dam and anchor the tourism economy of a Northern California county that must rebuild seemingly every year after unrelenting wildfires.

But now, the mighty lake — a linchpin in a system of aqueducts and reservoirs in the arid U.S. West that makes California possible — is shrinking with surprising speed amid a severe drought, with state officials predicting it will reach a record low later this summer.

While droughts are common in California, this year's is much hotter and drier than others, evaporating water more quickly from the reservoirs and the sparse Sierra Nevada snowpack that feeds them. The state's more than 1,500 reservoirs are 50% lower than they should be this time of year, according to Jay Lund, co-director of the Center for Watershed Sciences at the University of California-Davis.

Over Memorial Day weekend, dozens of houseboats sat on cinderblocks at Lake Oroville because there wasn't enough water to hold them. Blackened trees lined the reservoir's steep, parched banks.

In nearby Folsom Lake, normally bustling boat docks rested on dry land, their buoys warning phantom boats to slow down. Campers occupied dusty riverbanks farther north at Shasta Lake.

But the impacts of dwindling reservoirs go beyond luxury yachts and weekend anglers. Salmon need cold water from the bottom of the reservoirs to spawn. The San Francisco Bay needs fresh water from the reservoirs to keep out the salt water that harms freshwater fish. Farmers need the water to irrigate their crops. Businesses need reservoirs full so people will come play in them and spend money.

And everyone needs the water to run hydroelectric power plants that supply much of the state's energy.

If Lake Oroville falls below 640 feet — which it could do by late August — state officials would shut down a major power plant for just the second time ever because of low water levels, straining the electrical grid during the peak demand of the hottest part of the summer.

Candidate interrupted by sex toy on drone, also punched at event

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A New Mexico sheriff who is running for mayor of Albuquerque was interrupted while on stage at a campaign event by a flying drone with a sex toy attached to it and a man who punched him.

Bernalillo County Sheriff Manuel Gonzales' campaign said the Democrat was unharmed and "will not be intimidated."

The Albuquerque Journal reported that a video posted on Facebook shows Gonzales answering questions from the audi-

ence while standing on a stage at an events center when the drone bearing the sex toy started buzzing near the stage.

A sheriff's office report said the owner of the event center grabbed the device and that 20-year-old Kaelan Ashby Dreyer unsuccessfully tried to grab it.

The report said Dreyer turned his attention to Gonzales, swinging his fist and calling him a "tyrant." A deputy wrote that Dreyer punched Gonzales' hands and was then removed from the event by deputies.

GOP senator, Biden discuss infrastructure

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For nearly an hour, President Joe Biden and the top Senate Republican negotiating infrastructure met behind closed doors — two seasoned legislators engaged in another round of conversations, but emerging with few outward signs of tangible progress ahead of a deadline next week.

The White House billed the private meeting Wednesday as more of a conversation with West Virginia GOP Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, rather than a formal negotiation. No new offers were expected to be presented. More than anything, the session in the Oval Office was seen through the political lens of the president and Republicans trying to show the public what Americans say they want — a willingness to work together, even if no deal is within reach.

Biden and Capito had a “constructive and frank conversation,” according to a White House official granted anonymity to discuss the private talks. The senator’s office said she is encouraged by the ongoing conversations. The two agreed to reconnect Friday.

Still, talks over Biden’s top legislative priority have been moving slowly, a daunting undertaking given the massive infrastructure investment, and time for a deal is running out. The administration has set a June 7 deadline to see clear direction and signs of progress.

“The fact that the president is having Sen. Capito here today and has been having ongoing discussions with Republicans in the Senate and that he’s eager to find a path forward on bipartisanship work certainly tells you, I think, what you need to know about what he thinks about working with people

even when there’s disagreement,” White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said ahead of the afternoon session.

Privately, the president has sized up the GOP’s latest \$928 billion offer as unworkable, in large part because it taps unused COVID-19 funds. Instead, Biden wants to hike the corporate tax rate — a nonstarter for Senate Republicans — to generate revenue for his \$1.7 trillion package.

Friday’s next round of talks between Biden and the Republican senator would overlap with the release of the May jobs report, as private economists estimate a meaningful increase from the disappointing April figures. May’s jobs figures could provide evidence as to whether Biden’s earlier \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package has helped put the country on track to recover the jobs lost to the pandemic.

US jobless claims drop to 385K, another pandemic low

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell last week for a fifth straight week to a new pandemic low, the latest evidence that the U.S. job market is regaining its health as the economy further reopens.

The Labor Department reported Thursday that jobless claims dropped to 385,000, down 20,000 from the week before. The number of weekly applications for unemployment aid, which generally reflects the pace of layoffs, has fallen steadily all year, though it remains high by historical standards.

The decline in applications reflects a

swift rebound in economic growth and the job market’s steady recovery from the coronavirus recession. More Americans are venturing out to shop, travel, dine out and congregate at entertainment venues. All that renewed spending has led companies to seek new workers.

Employers have added 1.8 million jobs this year — an average of more than 450,000 a month — and the government’s May jobs report Friday is expected to show that they added an additional 656,000 last month, according to a survey of economists by the data firm FactSet. The economy remains down 8.2 million jobs from its level in February 2020, just before the virus tore

through the economy.

AnnElizabeth Konkel, economist at the Indeed Hiring Lab, noted that the number of people who are collecting traditional state unemployment benefits rose by 169,000 in the week of May 22 to nearly 3.8 million.

“Reviving a labor market after a deadly pandemic is complicated,” she said. “Not all indicators move at the same speed or take the same recovery path. Hopefully, the COVID-19 cases continue to decline as the number of fully vaccinated individuals rises. Fully returning to pre-COVID normal is essential to a full labor market recovery.”

Netanyahu’s foes pushing for quick vote to end his rule

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s opponents pushed Thursday for a quick parliament vote to formally end his lengthy rule, hoping to head off any last-minute attempts to derail their newly announced coalition government.

The latest political maneuvering began just hours after opposition leader Yair Lapid and his main coalition partner, Naftali Bennett, declared they had reached a deal to form a new government and muster a majority in the 120-member Knesset, or

parliament.

The coalition consists of eight parties from across the political spectrum with little in common except the shared goal of toppling Netanyahu after a record-setting 12 years in power. The alliance includes hardliners previously allied with Netanyahu, as well as center-left parties and even an Arab faction — a first in Israeli politics.

Netanyahu lashed out at his foes on Thursday, signaling that he will continue to exert pressure on former allies who joined the coalition.

“All members of Knesset who were elect-

ed with right-wing votes need to oppose this dangerous leftist government,” he wrote on Twitter.

The drama riveted Israelis at a time when tumult has not been in short supply: four inconclusive elections in two years followed by an 11-day war in the Gaza Strip last month that was accompanied by mob violence between Jews and Arabs in cities across the country. The country is also emerging from the coronavirus crisis that caused deep economic damage and exposed tensions between the secular majority and the ultra-Orthodox minority.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Driver hits headstones at cemetery

CO DENVER—Authorities in Colorado have launched an investigation after a woman drove her car into multiple headstones at Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver on Memorial Day.

The Denver Police Department said the woman sideswiped two vehicles parked in the cemetery parking lot before continuing on and crashing into the headstones, KMGH-TV reported.

"It just got worse and worse," said Antonio Moran, who was at the cemetery during the incident honoring his veteran family members. The car drove through the lawn, hit other vehicles and slid into multiple gravestones, Moran said.

Elvis' name taken off sign at his birthplace

MS TUPELO — Elvis Presley's birthplace in Mississippi is offering a \$1,000 reward to figure out who took the word "Elvis" off the landmark's sign.

The museum discovered the first name taken from the "Elvis Presley Birthplace, Museum & Chapel" sign over the weekend. The word "Elvis" had been written as the rock 'n' roll pioneer's signature.

Man banging skateboard sends shoppers fleeing

TX DALLAS — Panicked shoppers rushed out of Dallas mall on Memorial Day after a man banged a skateboard on the ground in the food court and made hand

gestures as if he was shooting, police said.

Dallas Police Chief Eddie Garcia said police got a call at 1:27 p.m. Monday reporting an active shooter at NorthPark Center. He said that within three minutes, off-duty officers at the mall had confronted the man. On-duty officers responded a minute later.

Police said that the man was taken into custody and transported to an area hospital for a medical evaluation. Garcia said the man did not have a gun.

Woman treated for burns after attacked

MD ABINGDON — A Maryland woman was treated for apparent chemical burns after she said two people yelled homophobic remarks and threw liquid at her, the Harford County Sheriff's Office said.

The woman told deputies that it happened in the Home Goods store parking lot in Abingdon on May 27, according to a news release posted on social media. The woman said two people in a small black car yelled homophobic remarks at her, then threw an unknown liquid at her before driving off.

At first, the woman believed the liquid was water and she continued with her day, but an hour later, her skin began itching and she went to an urgent care for treatment of what appeared to be chemical burns.

Firefighters save over 100 rabbits from blaze

NE HOLDREGE — Firefighters in south-central Nebraska saved

more than 100 rabbits from a fire that threatened their large hutch in Holdrege, officials there said.

The fire broke out about 4 p.m. Monday on a property in southwest Holdrege, the Kearney Hub reported. The fire began in a workshop and spread to a lean-to livestock shelter.

Holdrege Assistant Fire Chief Jim Wagner said the fire was only a couple of feet from the structure that housed between 100 and 150 rabbits when firefighters were able to pull the animals to safety.

Ex-postal worker fined for destroying mail

KS WICHITA — A former postal worker in eastern Kansas has been ordered to pay \$1,100 in fines and restitution for destroying mail and presumably stealing cash contained in that mail.

Dennis Tapscott, 24, of Emporia, was fined Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Wichita, the Wichita Eagle reported.

Prosecutors said that between August 2019 and January 2020, Tapscott opened and destroyed mail containing cash that was intended for 12 other people in Greenwood and Lyon counties.

Court documents did not explicitly state whether Tapscott kept the money from the mail he destroyed, but he was ordered to repay the victims for the cash they never received.

Boy shot after paintball gun mistaken for real

FL MIAMI — Thinking his home was under attack, a Florida homeowner

shot and wounded a 10-year-old whose father had driven him to participate in a drive-by shooting with a paintball gun, police said.

Michael Williams, 26, told Opa-locka police his son begged him to drive by a home where young people were gathered Sunday night so he could fire his paintball out the window, according to a police report released Tuesday.

Williams drove by the home as his son fired off several rounds, police said. The homeowner confused the paintball for real gunfire, telling police he thought his family was being attacked. He fired one shot, which struck the child. The boy then lost his balance and was run over by his father's vehicle, police said.

The Miami Herald reported that the father was charged with child neglect with great bodily harm.

Car crashes through wall of historic building

ME YORK — A historic Maine home that has been converted into a museum suffered extensive structural damage when a car crashed through an outside wall.

The car struck the Emerson-Wilcox House in York at about 11 p.m. Saturday, Old York Historical Society Executive Director Joel Lefever said in a Facebook post on Sunday. No one was hurt.

Because the house was not scheduled to open to the public this season, nothing was on display in the room where the car entered, he said.

—From The Associated Press

STARS AND STRIPES®

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

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Captains lead way to second round

Associated Press

Right about the time the Boston Bruins made a “C” change by naming Patrice Bergeron captain, the Vegas Golden Knights decided to have a captain for the first time and knew Mark Stone was the only man for the job.

“It became clear that he is the leader of the team,” Vegas general manager Kelly McCrimmon said. “Him wearing the ‘C’ allowed him to take another step both as a player, as a teammate and then of course as a leader on our team.”

The next step is the second round, and every team to advance did so in large part because of a captain leading the way. Bergeron scored twice in Boston’s first-round series clincher, Stone had five points to help the Golden Knights survive Minnesota in seven games, Colorado’s Gabriel Landeskog put up eight points in a sweep of St. Louis and Carolina’s Jordan Staal scored an overtime winner in a hard-fought series against Nashville.

After the Tampa Bay Lightning won the Stanley Cup last year despite Steven Stamkos playing just one playoff game — and scoring a memorable goal in the Final — this NHL postseason is showing the value of captains at the most important time of the year.

“There’s obviously a lot of responsibility that comes with being a captain,” said Stamkos, who

had two points in Tampa Bay’s clinching game against Florida to give him eight in the series. “You want to go out there and do whatever it takes to win, and the teams that are advancing, usually their leadership group and the guys that need to step up have stepped up.”

Every healthy captain of a team that won in the first round recorded at least four points, and those who couldn’t take the ice — like New York Islanders captain Anders Lee, a fixture around the rink as he rehabs his season-ending knee injury — became rallying points.

“We’re playing for each other and he’s obviously a key part,” Islanders forward Mathew Barzal said of Lee. “He’s been doing everything he can on the sidelines to be a great teammate and great captain on the outside.”

Stamkos knows all about that after becoming the first captain in more than 50 years to hoist the Cup after not playing in the final game. Lee could join that rare company if New York wins its first title since 1983.

The rest of the captains who are playing are making good on the sports cliché of leading by example.

Nowhere is that more true than Colorado. At 19 years and 286 days, Landeskog became the youngest captain in NHL history in 2012, and in his ninth season with the “C,” he took exception to a hit from Blues forward Bray-

den Schenn on linemate Mikko Rantanen in the Avalanche’s playoff opener and set the tone for the series with a Gordie Howe Hat Trick: a goal, an assist and a fight.

“The way he played, the way he showed up for every game, that’s a sign of a real true leader,” teammate Andre Burakovsky said. “He’s huge for this team.”

Staal was huge for the Hurricanes beyond his OT heroics against the Predators, showing the same leadership tendencies of brother Eric, who was the franchise’s captain from 2009-2016.

“When you have a guy like that as your leader who does it each and every shift, doesn’t take any shifts off, it’s easy for the other guys to look at that and react the same way,” GM Don Waddell said.

That’s Bergeron, too. He succeeded Zdeno Chara as captain when the defensemen left for Washington, and it’s easy to forget Bergeron didn’t have the “C” on his chest the entire time.

“He plays a game that you need to play to win,” linemate Brad Marchand said. “We love when he scores some big goals and he does it a lot, but his game is measured a lot more by the way he plays and his defensive game and two-way game and his responsibility, so don’t let that get lost with the goals that he scores. But we love when he does that, too.”

Rantanen's OT winner lifts Avalanche to 2-0

Associated Press

DENVER — Mikko Rantanen found himself in the middle of an on-ice swarm from teammates after scoring the winner.

Wonderful and all, but he wanted to make sure the real star of the show received his fair share of the credit, too — goaltender Philipp Grubauer.

Rantanen scored a power-play goal 2:07 into overtime, Grubauer outdueled fellow Vezina Trophy finalist Marc-Andre Fleury and the Colorado Avalanche beat the Vegas Golden Knights 3-2 on Wednesday night to take a 2-0 lead in their second-round playoff series.

“Grubi bailed us out today. He had a really, really good game,” Rantanen said. “He’s basically the reason why we got to OT.”

Rantanen was the reason it ended in quick fashion. He took a cross-ice pass from Nathan MacKinnon and sent a liner over the shoulder of Fleury to set off a celebration in front of a boisterous crowd. The goal came with Reilly Smith in the penalty box for slashing Rantanen.

“Not our best game, but still found a way,” Rantanen said. “That’s what we’ve been doing the whole year. Sometimes we haven’t been feeling it and Grubi’s been awesome and stealing some wins for us — like today. That’s what you need if you want to win the Cup.”

It was Rantanen’s second career overtime winner in the playoffs. The first came in a Game 5 victory over Calgary on April 17, 2019, in a first-round series.

The Golden Knights weren’t pleased with the slashing call.

“Just a soft call,” Vegas coach Pete DeBoer said. “I can’t even blame the refs. Because they’re fighting the embellishment of grabbing your face, or falling down, or dropping your stick every period. I can’t even blame the referee on it. They fooled them on it.”

Canadiens’ Game 1 win marred by late hit

Associated Press

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Eric Staal scored early goals and Montreal beat the Winnipeg Jets 5-3 on Wednesday night in Game 1 of the second-round series, a victory tempered by a scary late-game hit on Canadiens center Jake Evans.

Playing on his 25th birthday, Evans was taken off the ice on a stretcher with 57 seconds left after being crushed in the head

and shoulder area by Jets center Mark Scheifele an instant after tucking in an empty-net goal.

Evans chased down the puck behind the net, tightly circled back around the goal cage and scored just before Scheifele’s sent him crashing to the ice.

Scheifele was given a major for charging and a game misconduct.

Montreal interim coach Dominique Ducharme called the hit “vicious” and “useless,” and

said Evans had not yet been taken to a hospital.

“No, he’s still here, he’s being evaluated,” Ducharme said. “He’s doing better, but before I came here he was still being evaluated.”

In 2018 during a Canadiens’ rookie showdown game, Evans was hit and taken off the ice on a stretcher to a hospital and then put in concussion protocol.

Game 2 of the best-of-seven series is Friday in Winnipeg.

Without Embiid, 76ers oust Wizards in 5

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Ben Simmons challenged Seth Curry during an afternoon “Call of Duty” session to score 30 points and send the 76ers into the next round of the playoffs. With Joel Embiid hurt, Simmons told Curry he would do his part and get a triple-double.

Maybe there’s something to this pregame gaming hobby.

“Clearly Seth listens to Ben, so we’re going to use Ben as a translator for Seth from this point forward,” Philadelphia coach Doc Rivers said.

Fire up the console for another round.

Curry scored a playoff career-high 30 points and the Sixers beat Washington 129-112 on Wednesday night to end the Eastern Conference series in

five games, overcoming Embiid’s absence because of a knee injury.

Atlanta awaits after beating New York in Game 5 later Wednesday. Game 1 is Sunday in Philadelphia. Sixers fans couldn’t wait, chanting “We want Brooklyn!” as the seconds ticked off in Game 5.

Tobias Harris added 28 points and teamed with Curry and Simmons to carry the offensive load with Embiid out. Simmons had 19 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds to keep top-seeded Philadelphia in the hunt for its first championship since 1983.

Embiid is day to day with a small lateral meniscus tear in his right knee and he was reduced to the Sixers’ biggest cheerleader as they put the mi-

sery of last season’s first-round sweep behind them.

Mavericks 105, Clippers 100: Luka Doncic scored 42 points, Tim Hardaway Jr. hit two free throws with eight seconds left, and visiting Dallas Mavericks beat Los Angeles to take a 3-2 lead in the first-round playoff series.

It’s the third playoff series in NBA history — and first since 1995 — in which the road team won the first five games, according to Elias Sports Bureau.

The Mavs can close out their first series victory since winning the 2011 NBA championship in Game 6 at home Friday in front of a full house.

Hawks 103, Knicks 89: Trae Young put the finishing touches on his impressive first playoff series with 36 points

and nine assists and visiting Atlanta beat New York in Game 5.

Clint Capela backed up his confident words from a day earlier with 14 points and 15 rebounds for the Hawks, who will play the top-seeded Philadelphia 76ers in their first trip to the Eastern Conference semifinals since 2016. That series begins Sunday.

Jazz 126, Grizzlies 110: Donovan Mitchell scored 26 of his 30 points in the first half and host Utah advanced to the second round, beating Memphis in Game 5.

Mitchell also had 10 assists and six rebounds in 29 minutes, getting a little rest before facing the winner of the Los Angeles Clippers-Dallas Mavericks matchup.

Top-ranked Barty departs French Open with hip injury

Associated Press

PARIS — Bothered by a painful hip, top-ranked Ash Barty retired Thursday from her second-round match at the French Open, leaving the clay-court Grand Slam tournament without any of the top three women in the rankings.

The 2019 champion trailed 6-1, 2-2 when she signaled that she couldn’t continue against Polish opponent Magda Linette on Court Philippe Chatrier.

“I was battling the pain and it just became too severe, and like I said, was becoming unsafe,” Barty said of the injury that had flared up during training before the tournament.

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer, both former champions, advanced to the third round.

Federer beat Marin Cilic 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (4), 6-2 for his ninth win in 10 meetings against the big-serving Croat and fifth in majors.

“I think I played a really good match, I surprised myself a bit. I didn’t think I could play at this level for 2½ hours against Marin,” Federer said. “I still think the level was high, I tried everything and I had some very good moments, notably in the tiebreak. I finished by serving really well. It shows I have something in reserve, I have some energy left and that’s really good for my confidence.”

The eighth-seeded Federer next faces un-

seeded Dominik Koepfer.

Federer looked sharp, and could even afford to get a little distracted, arguing with chair umpire Emmanuel Joseph after being given a time warning for slow play during the second set on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Federer even asked Cilic for his opinion.

“Marin, am I playing too slow?” he asked.

Cilic suggested he was.

But after winning in the first round on Monday, Federer spoke about the strange feeling of having to handle his own towel, because of coronavirus rules, and how it upset his rhythm. He argued the point to Emmanuel, and to Cilic.

“I understand the rule,” Federer protested to Cilic. “(But) I’m going from one corner to the next trying to get my towel. I’m not doing it on purpose.”

Federer, whose 40th birthday is Aug. 8, hadn’t appeared on the Grand Slam stage since Jan. 30, 2020, when he lost to Djokovic in the Australian Open semifinals.

They could meet here, since they are in the same side of the draw along with defending champion Rafael Nadal — who is level all time on 20 major titles with Federer.

Djokovic made brief work of beating clay-court specialist Pablo Cuevas 6-3, 6-2, 6-4, saving eight of the nine break points he faced. The 18-time Grand Slam champion

next plays unseeded Lithuanian Ricardas Berankis.

Nadal was set to play during the night session on his 35th birthday, with fans having to leave the grounds by 9 p.m. because of coronavirus rules.

In addition to Barty’s departure, No. 2 Naomi Osaka withdrew after the first round — she said she is going to take a break from competition for mental health reasons — and No. 3 Simona Halep pulled out before the tournament began because of a leg injury.

This is only the third time at any Grand Slam tournament in the professional era, which began in 1968, that the top two women’s seeds are gone before the third round. It also happened at the French Open in 2014 (No. 1 Serena Williams and No. 2 Li Na) and the U.S. Open in 2018 (No. 1 Halep and No. 2 Caroline Wozniacki).

After ending a four-match losing streak on clay in the previous round, 2020 runner-up Sofia Kenin advanced to the third round with a 7-5, 6-3 win over Hailey Baptiste.

Coco Gauff is living up to her career-best ranking at the French Open.

Ranked 25th at age 17, Gauff advanced to the third round by beating Wang Qiang 6-3, 7-6 (1). Gauff earned her first clay-court final when she beat Wang in Parma, Italy, less than two weeks ago.

Dodgers score 11 runs in 1st, rout Cards

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Cody Bellinger had a grand slam and six RBIs as the Dodgers scored 11 times in the bottom of the first — their most runs in one inning of a regular-season game since moving to Los Angeles — during a 14-3 blowout of the St. Louis Cardinals on Wednesday night.

Bellinger led the onslaught with a franchise-record six RBIs in the inning. After Paul Goldschmidt homered to put St. Louis ahead 1-0, Bellinger's two-run single gave Los Angeles a 3-1 lead. Later in the inning, he hit his sixth career slam.

The 11-run inning surpassed the previous mark of 10, which had been done at least four times, most recently in the first inning on April 25, 2008, at Colorado. It was the second time in less than a year the Dodgers had an 11-run first. They put up the same number in Game 3 of last year's NL Championship Series against Atlanta.

Mookie Betts also had two hits as Los Angeles sent 14 batters to the plate in the first.

Zach McKinstry, who had a two-run single, Justin Turner and Betts also had RBIs in the inning. The Dodgers had seven of their 10 hits in the first and led 11-1 at the end of the inning.

"I felt we were in position 10 days ago to hit a good run. We hit a lull this past series, but guys are coming back," manager Dave Roberts said. "It doesn't matter who we are playing. If we are lined up and playing good baseball we can go on a run."

Cubs 6, Padres 1: Javier Báez lined a

two-run homer, Anthony Rizzo had two doubles among three hits and surging Chicago beat visiting San Diego for its third straight win and ninth in 10 games.

Baez's shot to the left-field bleachers was his 14th homer and third in three games, and it capped a three-run seventh that allowed the Cubs to put it away. Rizzo drove in two runs in the fifth with his first double to snap a 1-1 tie.

Orioles 6, Twins 3: DJ Stewart and Ryan Mountcastle homered as host Baltimore beat Minnesota for its second straight win following a 14-game skid.

Mountcastle broke open the game with a three-run shot in the seventh off Alex Colomé that boosted the lead to 6-1.

Mets 7, Diamondbacks 6: Pete Alonso scored Francisco Lindor with a go-ahead single in the ninth inning, James McCann homered and drove in four, and New York won at Arizona.

Miguel Castro (2-1) got the win with two scoreless innings, and Edwin Díaz recorded his 10th save. Joakim Soria (0-1) took the loss.

Nationals 5, Braves 3: Yan Gomes hit a go-ahead homer in the eighth inning and Jon Lester gave Washington's thin rotation a boost in a win at Atlanta.

Gomes' drive to left-center off A.J. Minter (1-2) with two outs broke a 3-all tie and helped the Nationals earn their second consecutive win over the Braves.

Yankees 4, Rays 3: Gio Urshela homered early, Clint Frazier drove in two a night after his walk-off homer and New

York overcame several sloppy moments to beat visiting Tampa Bay.

The Yankees had lost six of seven before winning their past two games against the AL East-leading Rays. Tampa Bay dropped two in a row for the first time since May 11-12, also against the Yankees.

Astros 2, Red Sox 1: Framber Valdez pitched seven strong innings and Kyle Tucker had two hits as Houston handed Nick Pivetta his first loss of the season in a win over visiting Boston.

Valdez (1-0) yielded five hits and one run while striking out 10.

Blue Jays 6, Marlins 5: Vladimir Guerrero Jr. scored the winning run on Joe Panik's sacrifice fly, capping a three-run rally in the bottom of the ninth inning that gave Toronto a victory over visiting Miami.

Bo Bichette tied it with a two-run triple in the ninth, and Randal Grichuk hit two solo homers to help the Blue Jays improve to 2-0 this season in their temporary Buffalo home.

Rockies 6, Rangers 3: Joshua Fuentes homered to back a strong outing from Antonio Senzatela as host Colorado dealt Texas its 14th straight road loss.

Fuentes also doubled, singled and scored three runs to rally the Rockies to their third consecutive win. Raimel Tapia had two doubles and an RBI single.

Athletics 6, Mariners 0: Sean Manaea pitched a four-hitter with eight strikeouts for his second shutout this season, and Oakland won at Seattle.

Coach K retiring after one final season at Duke

Associated Press

Mike Krzyzewski will make a final run at a national championship with Duke.

The Hall of Famer and winningest coach in the history of Division I men's basketball announced Wednesday that next season will be his last with the Blue Devils program he has built into one of college basketball's bluebloods. The school also named former Duke player and associate head coach Jon Scheyer as Krzyzewski's successor for the 2022-23 season.

"My family and I view today as a celebration," Krzyzewski said in a statement released Wednesday evening.

Stadium first reported news of the 74-year-old Krzyzewski's final season with Duke,

which he has led to five national championships, most recently in 2015. He has 1,170 career wins going back to his time at Army, with 1,097 wins coming during 41 years with the Blue Devils and their frantic fans who have made playing at famously hostile Cameron Indoor Stadium so difficult.

Now Krzyzewski will take a final lap — "The Last Ride," as the program billed it in a social-media post — around the Atlantic Coast Conference and the sport where he has piled up an incredible run of success before handing off to Scheyer, currently 33.

"He is clearly ready for this opportunity and has shown it repeatedly throughout his playing career and as a coach on our staff the past eight seasons," Krzyzewski said. "Jon is a rising star in our profession and Duke basketball could

not be in better hands in the future."

Krzyzewski has led the Blue Devils to 12 Final Four appearances and a record 15 ACC Tournament championships, while his teams have spent a record 126 weeks ranked at No. 1 in the AP men's college basketball poll.

Hired at Duke in March 1980, "Coach K" won national championships in 1991, 1992, 2001, 2010 and 2015. He broke Army mentor Bob Knight's career victory record in November 2011.

He took over the U.S. men's national team — with NBA All-Star rosters featuring names such as the late Kobe Bryant and LeBron James — and led it to Olympic gold in Beijing in 2008, London in 2012 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016.