

‘Make ourselves better’: Fort Liberty era begins

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

FORT LIBERTY, N.C. — The U.S. military’s largest base is now called Fort Liberty, as officials at the North Carolina Army post known for more than a century as Fort Bragg gathered Friday to mark the official change.

In an intimate ceremony just off the post’s main parade grounds, Lt. Gen. Chris Donahue, the commander of the 18th Airborne Corps and Fort Liberty, joined Col. John Wilcox, the garrison commander, in unveiling the new Fort Liberty colors. The ceremony marked the latest step in a controversial three-year effort spearheaded by Congress to strip the military of ties to the Confederacy, including the post’s name held since its 1918 inception in honor of Gen. Braxton Bragg.

Donahue, an officer who has spent much of his career at the post and commanded some of its most storied units, noted changing the name was just the Army following orders. But, he said, the name Fort Liberty — named for an American value instead of history makers and Medal of Honor recipients as the other eight Army

posts ordered to change this year have done — should inspire those who serve there to aim “to be better.”

“We were given a mission to redesignate our installation — no small task with its history,” Donahue said. “We seized this opportunity to make ourselves better and to seek excellence — as we always have done and always will do.”

Fort Liberty, which stretches across 172,000 acres in eastern North Carolina, boasts a population of some 282,000 people, including 50,000 active-duty service members. Known as the “Home of the airborne and special operations,” it hosts some of the Army’s most-deployed units, including its immediate response force — an 82nd Airborne Division unit tasked with always being prepared to deploy quickly.

The installation is also home to key units such as the 18th Airborne Corps, Army Forces Command, Army Special Operations Command, 1st Special Forces Command, 3rd Special Forces Group, Army Reserve Command, the Army’s most elite unit known as Delta Force and the multiservice Joint Special Oper-

ations Command. Officials said the installation boasts the second-largest population of general officers in the world after the Pentagon.

To those who have served there, the installation is “the center of the universe,” Donahue said. Future generations, the general said, will know it as Fort Liberty, unique in the Army where most posts are named after war heroes. Donahue said local officials who worked on recommending a new name for the post considered dozens of people known as heroes for the new moniker. Among them were Medal of Honor recipients with ties to the base, such as World War I’s Sgt. Alvin York, and Delta Force operators Master Sgt. Gary Gordon and Sgt. 1st Class Randy Shughart, who were killed in the Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia in 1993.

“Ultimately, any of them could have been chosen,” Donahue said. “A consensus could not be reached on just one. How could you choose any and then leave any of those others behind? There was no right answer.

“There were no names that define what this post is all about.”

As those local officials debated the issue, one local Gold Star mother spoke up in a meeting discussing the name change. Patti Elliott, whose son Army Spc. Daniel Lucas Elliott was killed in Basra, Iraq, in 2011, told the group that Daniel had “died for liberty.”

Name the post Fort Liberty, she urged them.

Elliott, who attended the ceremony Friday, said she was uncomfortable taking credit for the decision, but Donahue and other officials said the name would not have come to fruition without her.

“I’m just an ordinary person put in an extraordinary circumstance and given the opportunity to make a difference,” said Elliott, who serves as North Carolina’s state president for the nonprofit support group American Gold Star Mothers. “I felt that it was important to do something that honored every single one of the thousands and thousands of soldiers who have come through Fort Bragg before and who are yet to come to make us the greatest Army that ever was — the greatest military force in the whole world.

“I’m just honored to have been a small part of that.”

China says it stands by buzzing of US warship in Taiwan Strait

Associated Press

SINGAPORE — China’s defense minister defended sailing a warship across the path of an American destroyer and Canadian frigate transiting the Taiwan Strait, telling a gathering of some of the world’s top defense officials in Singapore on Sunday that such so-called “freedom of navigation” patrols are a provocation to China.

In his first international public address since becoming defense minister in March, Gen. Li Shangfu told the Shangri-La Dialogue

that China doesn’t have any problems with “innocent passage” but that “we must prevent attempts that try to use those freedom of navigation (patrols), that innocent passage, to exercise hegemony of navigation.”

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told the same forum Saturday that Washington would not “flinch in the face of bullying or coercion” from China and would continue regularly sailing through and flying over the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea to emphasize they are inter-

national waters, countering Beijing’s sweeping territorial claims.

That same day, a U.S. guided-missile destroyer and a Canadian frigate were intercepted by a Chinese warship as they transited the strait between the self-governed island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, and mainland China. The Chinese vessel overtook the American ship and then veered across its bow at a distance of 150 yards in an “unsafe manner,” according to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Additionally, the U.S. has said a

Chinese J-16 fighter jet last month “performed an unnecessarily aggressive maneuver” while intercepting a U.S. Air Force reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, flying directly in front of the plane’s nose. Those and previous incidents have raised concerns of a possible accident occurring that could lead to an escalation between the two nations.

Li suggested the U.S. and its allies had created the danger, and should instead focus on taking “good care of your own territorial airspace and waters.”

Guard chief says data leaks won't happen again

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The chief of the National Guard Bureau on Thursday assured lawmakers that the monthslong leak of classified military documents by a Massachusetts Air National Guard member was an individual act that will never be repeated.

Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson told members of the Senate Appropriations Committee that the National Guard will put in place safeguards to prevent the kind of breach that allowed 21-year-old Airman 1st Class Jack Teixeira to access and share some of the nation's most secret information.

"I'm very confident this will never happen again," Hokanson said. "This one individual took an individual action and is not indicative of the entire system."

Hokanson promised to implement recommendations immediately from multiple investigations into the leak, including a probe by the Air Force's inspector general that is nearly completed.

Senators were not entirely satisfied with

that vow, noting Teixeira had raised suspicion within the National Guard long before he was arrested in April for posting on social media classified intelligence on the war in Ukraine and other sensitive national security issues.

Court documents released last month showed Teixeira had been admonished by supervisors at least twice over "concerning actions" that he took with classified information.

"This was not a deviation that came out of the blue, but in fact he had been reprimanded and he had been instructed to 'stop any deep dives into classified intelligence information and focus on his job,'" Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said, quoting from an Air National Guard 102nd Intelligence Wing memo. "These reports are very concerning because it appears that this serious breach might have been prevented or stopped much sooner."

Teixeira is accused of violating the Espionage Act and remains in custody awaiting trial. He could face up to 15 years if convicted and has not yet entered a plea.

Guam is still weeks from full recovery after Typhoon Mawar

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Ten days after Typhoon Mawar left Guam in shambles, the power and water were finally restored Friday morning at the home of Megan Relihan-Perez and her family in Tamuning village, 12 miles from Naval Base Guam.

Conditions were so bad that her family spent several days camping in their yard and sleeping in their van due to the heat, Relihan-Perez told Stars and Stripes by email Friday.

"It was rough — especially because we have three kids and I'm 37 weeks pregnant," she said.

Mawar, now a tropical storm, lashed southern and central Japan on Friday, bringing periodic downpours to the Tokyo area after pummeling Okinawa with strong winds as it passed overnight Thursday, ac-

cording to The Associated Press.

The strongest storm to strike Guam since Typhoon Pongsona in 2002, Mawar's 140 mph winds uprooted trees, damaged buildings and left much of the 210-square-mile U.S. territory without power or access to water.

Guam has no shortage of fuel, although it had distribution issues early last week that are since resolved, according to Krystal Pacho-San Agustin, spokeswoman for Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero.

Guam is still facing significant problems. Just 41.5% of the island had power as of Friday, and only 53% of its wells were online, Guam's Joint Information Center said in a news release that day.

The island is likely four to six weeks away from 100% recovery of its power and water systems, the governor said at a news conference Wednesday.

Navy will remove fuel pipelines at Red Hill facility

BY DOUG G. WARE
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy will take out the fuel pipelines at the Red Hill facility in Hawaii as part of its shutdown of the site, a move the service said Thursday will prevent storing hazardous liquids there and avoid more leaks into nearby water supply.

"This key update demonstrates [our] commitment to never use the tanks for storage of fuel or other hazardous substance storage," the Navy said.

The service's Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Facility on Oahu, about 5 miles northwest of downtown Honolulu, was closed a year ago after jet fuel was found in a well that supplies water to tens of thousands of people in military communities in the area, such as Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. Some military families said they became sick after drinking contaminated water and filed legal complaints against the Navy, which are still ongoing.

Closing the facility, however, will be a lengthy process that includes removing several million gallons of fuel from the tanks.

In December, the Defense Department decided to close Red Hill "in place," which means the tanks will simply remain empty and dormant after the fuel is removed. But some members of the Oahu community and advocates are still concerned the military might reopen the site and store fuel there in the future, especially with the U.S. commitment to a "free and open Indo-Pacific region" and potential national security threats from China.

The Navy on Thursday filed an update to the closure plan that promised to also dismantle Red Hill's three fuel pipelines, which carried fuel to and from a pump room at Pearl Harbor a few miles away. Taking out those pipelines would make it much more difficult for the Navy to resume fuel storage at Red Hill. Previously, the Navy was planning only to clean out the pipelines.

"With the pipelines removed, the tanks cannot be refilled with fuel," the 12-page update to the Navy plan states. "Thus, pipeline removal is a clear and tangible demonstration of [our] commitment to the public, regulatory agencies, and other stakeholders that the Red Hill facility will never be used again for storage of fuel or hazardous chemicals."

Biden signs bill, avoids unprecedented default

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With just two days to spare, President Joe Biden signed legislation Saturday that lifts the nation's debt ceiling, averting an unprecedented default on the federal government's debt.

It was a decidedly low-key denouement to a monthslong drama that unnerved financial markets at home and abroad and caused anxious retirees and social service organizations to make contingency plans in case the country was unable to pay all its bills.

Instead of holding a public ceremony with lawmakers from both parties — showcasing the bipartisanship that Biden had cited in an Oval Office address on Friday evening — the president signed the legislation in private in a reflection of the

tight deadline facing the nation's leaders.

The Treasury Department had warned that the country would start running short of cash on Monday, which would have sent shockwaves through the U.S. and global economies.

The White House released a picture of the president signing the legislation at the Resolute Desk. In a brief statement, Biden thanked Democratic and Republican congressional leaders for their partnership, a cordial message that contrasted with the rancor that initially characterized the debt debate.

"No matter how tough our politics gets, we need to see each not as adversaries, but as fellow Americans," Biden said in a video message released after the signing. He said it was important to "stop shouting,

lower the temperature and work together to pursue progress, secure prosperity and keep the promise of America for everybody."

The standoff began when Republicans refused to raise the country's borrowing limit unless Democrats agreed to cut spending. Eventually, the White House began weeks of intense negotiations with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., to reach a deal.

The final agreement, passed by the House on Wednesday and the Senate on Thursday, suspends the debt limit until 2025 — after the next presidential election — and restricts government spending. It gives lawmakers budget targets for the next two years in hopes of assuring fiscal stability as the political season heats up.

Raising the nation's debt limit, now at \$31.4 trillion, will ensure that the government can borrow to pay debts already incurred.

After Congress passed the legislation, Biden used the occasion to deliver his first speech from the Oval Office as president Friday.

"No one got everything they wanted, but the American people got what they needed," he said, highlighting the "compromise and consensus" in the deal. "We averted an economic crisis and an economic collapse."

Biden praised McCarthy and his negotiators for operating in good faith, and all congressional leaders for ensuring swift passage of the legislation. "They acted responsibly, and put the good of the country ahead of politics," he said.

\$1.2B settlement reached for 'forever chemicals' in water

The Washington Post

Three U.S. chemical companies said they have reached a \$1.185 billion settlement deal over complaints about toxic pollutants known as "forever chemicals" in drinking water systems.

The pollutants, polyfluoroalkyl and perfluoroalkyl substances — commonly known as PFAS — can be found in many industrial and cosmetic products and have been linked to conditions such as infertility, thyroid disorders and several types of cancer. The chemicals have been found in drinking water consumed by thousands of U.S. communities and in products used by millions of Americans.

The substances are called "forever chemicals" because they do not naturally degrade in the environment. They also move easily through soils, contaminating drinking water sources and affecting fish and wildlife.

An agreement was reached Friday by DuPont de Nemours Inc., the Chemours Company and Corteva Inc., to "comprehensively resolve all PFAS-related drinking water claims of a defined class of public water systems that serve the vast majority of the United States population," the companies said in a joint statement.

PFAS chemical components are found in commercial and industrial products including fire extinguishing foam, food packaging, household cleaning products, shampoos and cosmetics, and nonstick cookware.

Several U.S. states and other countries have banned certain types of PFAS, and many major companies have said they will discontinue their use, but the compounds have shown up in the water supplies of communities across the world.

The deal still requires approval by the judge overseeing the claims, the AP reported.

Conn. to pass most sweeping gun laws since Sandy Hook

Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — A slate of gun control measures was headed Saturday to Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont's desk, after an all-night state Senate debate and early morning vote to approve the state's most wide-ranging gun legislation since the laws that followed the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting.

Lamont, a Democrat, plans to sign the measure. He said in a statement that the legislation would "modernize our firearm safety laws in a smart and strategic way to help prevent tragedy from happening."

Among other things, the changes would ban openly carrying firearms and prohibit selling more than three handguns within 30 days to any one person, with some exceptions for instructors and others.

Other provisions include expanding Connecticut's current assault weapon ban to include

some other similar weapons; stiffening penalties for possession of large-capacity magazines; expanding safe-storage rules to more settings; and adding some domestic violence crimes to the list of disqualifications for having a gun.

The measure passed the Senate 24-11, following a 96-51 House vote last week. Democrats control both chambers.

Republican lawmakers have complained that majority Democrats are punishing law-abiding gun owners, not targeting criminals who commit gun violence.

Lamont, however, maintained that "the overwhelming majority of Connecticut residents" supports the changes.

"They want to live in a community that has common-sense measures that encourage gun safety and prevent harm from impacting our neighborhoods and homes," he said.

Zelenskyy: War killed at least 500 children

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday that Russia's war, now in its 16th month, has killed at least 500 Ukrainian children.

Zelenskyy provided the number hours after rescue workers found the body of a 2-year-old girl who died in one of the latest Russian strikes.

The president said in a statement that "Russian weapons and hatred, which continue to take and destroy the lives of Ukrainian children every day," killed the hundreds who had perished since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine started on Feb. 24, 2022.

"Many of them could have become famous scholars, artists, sports champions, contributing to Ukraine's history," he said.

Zelenskyy said it was impossible to establish the exact number of children who were casualties due to the ongoing hostilities and because some areas are under Russian occupation.

"We must hold out and win this war!" the Ukrainian president said. "All of Ukraine, all our people, all our children, must be free from the Russian terror!"

Rescuers found the 2-year-old's body early Sunday while combing through the rubble of an apartment building in the suburbs of the central city of Dnipro.

The regional governor, Serhiy Lysak, said five children were among 22 people injured by Saturday's attack, which damaged two residential buildings.

The Russians launched more

strikes with drones and cruise missiles Sunday, targeting multiple areas of the country, including the capital, Kyiv.

The Ukrainian air force said the country's air defenses downed three of the five Shahed self-exploding drones and four of the six cruise missiles fired.

Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said two missiles struck a military air base in Kropyvnytskyi, a city in central Ukraine's Kyrovohrad province. He did not report what damage they caused.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the military destroyed Ukrainian warplanes and ammunition depots in strikes on Ukrainian airfields, but didn't give further specifics.

The Russian military has reported a series of strikes in recent days on Ukrainian air de-

fense batteries, air bases and troops depots. The long-range strikes come as Ukraine prepares for a long-expected counteroffensive in which it hopes to reclaim more ground.

In what was seen as part of operations to facilitate the planned counterattack, Ukrainian forces maintained pressure on Russian forces in the eastern city of Bakhmut, which Moscow claimed control of last month after the war's longest and bloodiest battle.

Elsewhere, groups of Russians fighting alongside Ukrainian forces declared that they launched new attacks in recent days on Russia's Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. One of the groups, the Russian Volunteer Corps, released a video Sunday showing a purported raid on the region.

Signaling error cited in India train crash

Associated Press

BALASORE, India — The derailment in eastern India that killed 275 people and injured hundreds was caused by an error in the electronic signaling system that led a train to wrongly change tracks and crash into a freight train, officials said Sunday.

Authorities worked to clear the mangled wreckage of the two passenger trains that derailed Friday night in Balasore district in Odisha state in one of the country's deadliest rail disasters in decades.

An Odisha government statement revised

the death toll to 275 after a top state officer put the number at over 300 on Sunday morning. The officer spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to reporters. Jaya Verma Sinha, a senior railway official, said the preliminary investigations revealed that a signal was given to the high-speed Coromandel Express to run on the main track line, but the signal later changed, and the train instead entered an adjacent loop line where it rammed into a freight loaded with iron ore.

The collision flipped Coromandel Ex-

press' coaches onto another track, causing the incoming Yesvantpur-Howrah Express from the opposite side also to derail, she said. The passenger trains, carrying 2,296 people, were not overspeeding, she said. Trains that carry goods are often parked on an adjacent loop line so the main line is clear for a passing train.

Verma said the root cause of the crash was related to an error in the electronic signaling system. She said a detailed investigation will reveal whether the error was human or technical.

Kim's sister vows 2nd attempt to launch spy satellite

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed again Sunday to push for a second attempt to launch a spy satellite as she lambasted a U.N. Security Council meeting over the North's first, failed launch.

The North's attempt to put its first military spy satellite into orbit last Wednesday failed as its rocket crashed off the Korean Peninsula's western coast. An emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council was

still convened at the request of the U.S., Japan and other countries to discuss the launch because it had violated council resolutions banning the North from performing any launch using ballistic technology.

On Sunday, Kim's sister and senior ruling party official, Kim Yo Jong, called the U.N. council "a political appendage" of the United States, saying its recent meeting was convened following America's "gangster-like request." She accused the U.N. council of being "discriminative and rude" because

it only takes issue with the North's satellite launches while thousands of satellites launched by other countries are already operating in space. She said her country's attempt to acquire a spy satellite is a legitimate step to respond to military threats posed by the U.S. and its allies.

"(North Korea) will continue to take proactive measures to exercise all the lawful rights of a sovereign state, including the one to a military reconnaissance satellite launch," Kim Yo Jong said in a statement.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teen from Florida wins national spelling bee

MD OXON HILL—Fifteen months ago, Dev Shah spent a miserable five hours spelling outdoors in chilly, windy, damp conditions at a supersize regional competition in Orlando, Fla., only to fall short of his dream of returning to the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

“Despondent is the right word,” Dev said. “I just didn’t know if I wanted to keep continuing.”

Look at him now.

Soft-spoken but brimming with confidence, Dev asked precise questions about obscure Greek roots, rushed through his second-to-last word and rolled to the National Spelling Bee title Thursday.

For Dev, a 14-year-old from Largo, Fla., the winning word was “psammophile,” a layup for a speller of his caliber.

“Psammo meaning sand, Greek?” he asked. “Phile, meaning love, Greek?”

Dev asked for the word to be used in a sentence, something he described a day earlier as a stalling tactic. Then he put his hands over his face as he was declared the winner.

Baby swans rescued after mother stolen, then eaten

NY MANLIUS—The village of Manlius in upstate New York is mourning the loss of Faye, a swan who was stolen from the town’s pond over the weekend along with her four cygnets. The cygnets, or baby swans, were recovered, but officials say the mama swan was eaten.

Three teenagers were arrested on charges including grand

larceny and criminal mischief in connection with the swan-napping, Manlius police Sgt. Ken Hatter said.

Hunting swans is legal in a few U.S. states but not in New York.

Southeast of Syracuse, Manlius has a swan insignia on its website, as well as on merchandise.

Man pleads guilty to assaulting representative

DC WASHINGTON—A man pleaded guilty last week to assaulting Democratic Rep. Angie Craig, of Minnesota, in the elevator of her Washington apartment building in February, according to court records.

Kendrid Khalil Hamlin, 26, pleaded guilty to charges of assaulting a member of Congress and assaulting law enforcement officers, according to the court docket. Hamlin was also accused of assaulting two officers as they attempted to arrest him.

Hamlin’s attorneys said in an emailed statement that he “accepted responsibility for his actions today with the earnest hope of moving towards rehabilitation and the mental health treatment he very much wants and needs.”

Woman on beach finds ancient mastodon tooth

CA APTOS—A woman taking a Memorial Day weekend stroll on a California beach found something unusual sticking out of the sand: a tooth from an ancient mastodon.

Jennifer Schuh found the foot-long tooth sticking out of the sand at the mouth of Aptos Creek on Rio Del Mar State Beach.

Schuh wasn’t sure what she had found. So she snapped some photos and posted them on Facebook, asking for help.

The answer came from Wayne Thompson, paleontology collections adviser for the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History. Thompson determined that the object was a worn molar from an adult Pacific mastodon, an extinct elephant-like species.

Retired USAF officer gets 3 years in document case

FL TAMPA—A former Air Force intelligence officer was sentenced to three years in federal prison for keeping classified documents at his home and other unauthorized locations.

Robert Birchum, 55, was sentenced in Tampa federal court, according to court records. He pleaded guilty in February to unlawfully possessing and retaining classified documents relating to the national defense of the United States. Birchum was also fined \$25,000.

In 2017, law enforcement officers discovered that Birchum, who retired in 2018 as a lieutenant colonel, knowingly removed more than 300 classified files or documents, including more than 30 items marked top secret, from authorized locations, prosecutors said. Birchum kept these classified materials in his home, his overseas officer’s quarters and a storage pod in his driveway.

Coalition requests delay for porn website law

UT SALT LAKE CITY—Attorneys representing adult entertainers, erotica authors and sex educators on Wednesday asked a judge to put

on hold a Utah law requiring porn and other adult websites verify user ages.

The Free Speech Coalition and its co-plaintiffs argued the new state law violates their clients’ First Amendment rights and intrudes on the privacy of individuals who want to view sexually explicit materials. Their request to put the law under injunction comes less than a month after Utah’s age verification law took effect and prompted them to file a lawsuit.

Dems vote to fine absent senators amid walkout

OR SALEM—Oregon Senate Democrats plan to start fining their absent colleagues amid a monthlong Republican walkout, a move they hope will pressure boycotting lawmakers to return to the chamber as hundreds of bills languish amid the partisan stalemate.

In a procedural move Thursday, Democrats voted to fine senators \$325 every time their absence denies the chamber the two-thirds quorum it needs to conduct business. The amount reflects lawmakers’ average daily pay, according to the office of Democratic Senate President Rob Wagner.

The monthlong Republican walkout once again prevented the Senate from reaching a quorum on Thursday. But Democratic Senate Majority Leader Kate Lieber, citing an article in the state constitution, requested that the Senate compel absent members to attend and fine absentees \$325 for every day a quorum isn’t reached. Her request was approved by the other Democrats present on the Senate floor.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

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

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Knights overtake Panthers in Game 1

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Back in the Stanley Cup Final for the first time in five years and trailing the Florida Panthers less than 10 minutes into Game 1, the Vegas Golden Knights sent a very clear message.

"We were ready," Jonathan Marchessault said.

Ready and relentless. Vegas rallied from an early deficit, got the go-ahead goal from Zach Whitecloud with just over 13 minutes left and arguably the best save of the playoffs from Adin Hill and beat Florida 5-2 Saturday night to take the lead in the best-of-seven series.

"We kept our composure, and it was good," said Marchessault, one of six original Knights players left from the start of the franchise in 2017 who scored the tying goal in the first period. "We just wanted to play the right way and be disciplined, and tonight we were able to be the better team."

Whitecloud put Vegas ahead, a crucial penalty kill followed

and captain Mark Stone scored an insurance goal that was reviewed for a high stick and confirmed. Reilly Smith sealed it with an empty-netter to make the score look more lopsided than the game.

The combination of that offense and Hill's 33 saves put Vegas up after a feisty opener between Sun Belt teams who wasted little time getting acquainted with big hits during play and plenty of post-whistle pushing and shoving.

"It's exactly what we expected," said Vegas defenseman Shea Theodore, who scored his first goal of the playoffs and ended a 27-game drought dating to March 7. "That's how they wanted to play. We were just trying not to play into it."

That stuff is just beginning. Game 2 is Monday in Las Vegas.

Before the Panthers even got a chance to respond, they ratcheted up the physical play late after falling behind by two. A handful of penalties resulting

from a fracas with 4:24 remaining left the Florida bench well short.

The outcome was determined long before that.

After falling behind on a short-handed goal by Eric Staal that sucked the life out of the crowd of 18,432, the Golden Knights rallied for their ninth comeback win this playoffs. Marchessault — known since arriving in Las Vegas for scoring big goals — answered before the end of the first period.

Early in the second, Hill made a desperation stick save to rob Nick Cousins of what would have been a sure goal. The save was reminiscent of the one Washington's Braden Holtby made against Vegas — in the same crease — five years ago.

"That's an unreal save — it's a game-changer," coach Bruce Cassidy said. "You need those saves at key moments."

Giving up a tying goal to Anthony Duclair with 10.2 seconds left in the second did not slow the Golden Knights' momen-

tum much. Whitecloud's goal, with two-time Vezina Trophy-winning goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky screened and unable to see, fired up fans once again.

Bobrovsky, in the final for the first time, downplayed any reason for concern after stopping 29 of 34 shots and losing for just the second time in 12 games this postseason.

"I played a good game," Bobrovsky said. "I played a solid game. They created some good chances other than goals. They had lots of good scoring chances, and that was fun."

Part of the fun came when play was stopped.

Less than 10 minutes in, Hill was none too happy about Nick Cousins crashing into his crease and gave the agitating Panthers winger a jab that incited a handful of scums. During the second period, Matthew Tkachuk let Vegas' Nic Hague know he wasn't thrilled about a hit in the corner on Cousins and a collision with Brandon Montour after the whistle.

Once a risky pick, Porter pays dividends for Nuggets

Associated Press

DENVER — All those smooth-looking, long-range jumpers Michael Porter Jr. hits have definitely been a reward for Denver.

Easy to forget just how much of a risk he was early on for the Nuggets.

They rolled the dice at No. 14 in the 2018 draft on a 6-foot-10 forward with a balky back to go with a tremendous set of skills. He's gone through three back procedures since college and missed basically two of his five NBA seasons, but still showed enough flashes of talent to earn a max extension.

Without taking that gamble on Porter, the Nuggets might not be here, starting their first NBA Finals on Thursday night

with a 104-93 win over Miami. He's become their X factor — the third part of a hard-to-contain trio that also includes Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray. Porter had 14 points and 13 rebounds against the Heat.

"It's just cool looking back on the journey," said Porter, who turns 25 on June 29. "You try not to spend too much time looking back right now, just stay focused on getting this ring. But you've got to take moments to just look back."

Rewind a few years: Porter was a senior at Nathan Hale High School in Seattle and learning from a coach who wasn't just a coach. This was former NBA All-Star guard Brandon Roy — someone who had been in the league and

done the things Porter was hoping to do.

"He really helped me take my game to the next level," Porter said.

A top recruit, he chose Missouri. It was home, with Porter growing up in Columbia. His brother, Jontay, joined him at Missouri. His dad was added to the staff after coaching at the University of Washington.

But his time with the Tigers was cut short by his ailing back. Two minutes into his inaugural college game, he went out. He later underwent microdiscectomy surgery to fix herniated discs but made it back for the SEC Tournament — a loss to Georgia — and then the NCAA Tournament, where the Tigers fell to Florida State.

Despite his back issues, the Nuggets selected him in a draft that included Deandre Ayton (No. 1), Luka Doncic (No. 3) and Trae Young (No. 5).

Porter missed his first season in Denver after undergoing another back procedure. The following year, he showed what he could do in the 2020 NBA bubble when the Nuggets made it to the Western Conference finals before losing to the Los Angeles Lakers. In 2020-21, he averaged 19 points in the regular season over 61 games.

Porter is averaging 14.6 points and 8.3 rebounds through the playoffs, while also holding his own on the defensive end of the floor. He had two blocked shots against Miami.

Djokovic in 17th French Open quarterfinals

Associated Press

PARIS — Novak Djokovic broke a tie with rival Rafael Nadal by reaching the French Open quarterfinals for the record 17th time, never truly in trouble during a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Juan Pablo Varillas on Sunday.

Djokovic is closing on betting Nadal in a more prestigious category: Grand Slam singles championships. Both currently sit at 22. For Djokovic, that total includes two at Roland Garros, in 2016 and 2021, and he can become the first man to own at least three trophies from each major tournament.

Nadal is a 14-time champion in Paris but is missing this time because of a hip injury; he had arthroscopic surgery Friday night.

Against the 94th-ranked Varillas, who had never won a Slam match until this event

and then took three in a row in five sets, Djokovic was, not surprisingly, at his dominant best at Court Philippe Chatrier on a warm, sunny day.

The 36-year-old from Serbia finished with more than twice as many winners, 35-15, and fewer unforced errors. He went 15-for-17 on trips to the net. He put in 80% of his first serves. He converted six of 12 break points while dropping his serve only once.

All in all, a no-drama showing in under two hours from Djokovic, who hasn't ceded a set yet through four matches. He's had his less-than-amiable back-and-forths with some spectators over the past week in Paris, but when this one ended, Djokovic gestured as though to hug everyone as he heard some chants of his two-syllable nickname, "No-le!"

In his 55th career major quarterfinal — Roger Federer,

who retired with 58, is the only man to reach more — and 14th in a row at Roland Garros, the No. 3-seeded Djokovic will face No. 11 Karen Khachanov on Tuesday.

Khachanov, who is 1-8 against Djokovic, made it this far at a Slam for the fifth time by defeating Lorenzo Sonego 1-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7), 6-1.

Top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz kept pace with Djokovic as they head toward a semifinal showdown, beating No. 17 Lorenzo Musetti in straight sets, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

The other men's fourth-round match Sunday was No. 5 Stefanos Tsitsipas vs. Sebastian Ofner.

For the second year in a row, there will be zero American men in the fourth round. Frances Tiafoe was the last of the 16 entrants from the United States, and he lost to Alexander Zverev in four sets Sat-

urday night.

Tiafoe kept coming close to extending his match against Zverev: 12 times the American was two points from forcing things to a fifth set.

Yet the 12th-seeded Tiafoe never got closer than that.

Instead, the 22nd-seeded Zverev finished out his 3-6, 7-6 (3), 6-1, 7-6 (5) victory after more than 3½ hours in Court Philippe Chatrier to reach the fourth round.

Two unseeded women moved into the quarterfinals and will play each other next: Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, the 2021 runner-up at Roland Garros, and Karolina Muchova.

Pavlyuchenkova, who missed last year's tournament as part of a lengthy absence with a knee injury, got past a third consecutive seeded opponent, No. 28 Elise Mertens, by a 3-6, 7-6 (3), 6-3 score.

Super regionals in focus as college baseball teams advance

Associated Press

Penn State has given the Ivy League a team in an NCAA Tournament regional final for the second straight year and another surprise, Oral Roberts, extended its nation-best winning streak to 20 games Saturday night to move a step closer to the super regionals.

No. 2 national seed Florida, meanwhile, is a loss away from getting eliminated on its home field for a third straight year. The Gators are among seven national seeds that entered Sunday in the loser's bracket; two others have been knocked out.

Penn held off Samford 5-4 thanks to a reliever who hadn't pitched in three weeks and a game-ending play in which the tying run was thrown out at third base.

Oral Roberts, the pride of the Summit League, wiped out an early 8-0 deficit and matched

its season high with 24 hits in a 15-12 victory over Washington.

Florida will need to win three games to make it out of its regional after losing 5-4 to Texas Tech. The Red Raiders, looking to make the super regionals for the fourth time since 2018, got a tiebreaking, two-run homer from Gavin Kash in the eighth inning and Brandon Beckel got Gators star Jac Caglianone to pop out with a man on base to end the game.

"We are disappointed, but have to flush it," Florida coach Kevin O'Sullivan said. "We put ourselves in this position, but it's certainly doable. We have enough pitching to do it."

No. 1 Wake Forest beat Maryland 21-6 after a nearly five-hour weather delay, with Rhett Lowder retiring the first 11 batters he faced and striking out 11 in six innings. No. 3 Arkansas' game against TCU and No. 5 LSU's game against Ore-

gon State were postponed.

Tennessee reached the final at No. 4 Clemson, beating the Tigers 6-5 in 14 innings to end their 17-game winning streak. The Volunteers will play Clemson or Charlotte for a third straight trip to super regionals.

No. 14 Indiana State, hosting a regional for the first time, moved within a win of its first super regional by beating Iowa.

But it's Penn that's turned into the darling of the tournament. The Quakers, in a regional for the first time since 1995, won a tournament game for the first time since 1990 when they upset No. 13 Auburn on Friday.

They looked to be in full control against Samford with Cole Zaffiro holding the Bulldogs to four hits and striking out eight before leaving after the eighth with a 5-2 lead.

David Shoemaker came on with the bases loaded in the

ninth for just his 10th appearance of the season, and first since May 13. Shoemaker got three ground ball outs, the last leading to an off-target throw that pulled first baseman Ben Miller off the bag. But Miller threw to third to get Aaron Walton, who dived trying to get back to the base. Walton was called out, and the game ended with the play upheld on video review.

Last year, Columbia of the Ivy League made the regional final at Virginia Tech. Samford or Southern Mississippi would have to beat Penn twice in order to deny the Quakers a spot in super regionals.

Oral Roberts, which made its only super regional in 2006, got a home run and six RBIs from Jonah Cox and prevailed in a slugfest with Washington that saw the teams combine for 38 hits, including eight home runs.

Judge stars as Yankees beat Dodgers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Aaron Judge hit his 19th homer and made an outstanding catch in the corner in right, Jake Bauers had a pair of two-run homers and Gerrit Cole stayed unbeaten with six innings of four-hit ball before leaving early in the New York Yankees' 6-3 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers on Saturday.

Judge put a line drive into the short left-field porch in the sixth inning for the Yankees, who rebounded from an 8-4 loss Friday night in the opener of the high-profile interleague series.

The AL MVP then hung onto J.D. Martinez's line drive in the eighth inning despite knocking open the door to Dodger Stadium's visiting bullpen at the end of his sprint into the right field corner. The play might have prevented a run or more for the Dodgers, who trailed 5-3 with Max Muncy on first when Judge came up big.

"I'm feeling good," Judge said. "The fence got most of it. Thankfully it was that part of the wall where it had some give, so I think that saved me quite a bit. If it was a solid wall, it might be a different story, but (I) made the play."

Oswaldo Cabrera hit a solo homer in the ninth for the Yankees, who have won five of seven. Cabrera began the day with a cross-country flight from Newark to rejoin the roster in place of injured Greg Allen.

Cole (7-0) was sharp back in his native Southern California, striking out five with two walks and only allowing a run on David Peralta's bloop RBI single. The Yankees pulled Cole after a season-low 80 pitches because the ace's legs cramped up.

"It was tough," Cole said. "I guess it was just one of those days. Tough work, tough lineup making me execute a lot of pitches. So we managed it well, but getting into the later innings, didn't want to risk any-

thing."

Red Sox 8-2, Rays 5-4: Harold Ramírez hit a tiebreaking two-run double in the ninth inning and Jose Siri made a diving catch for the final out, helping visiting Tampa Bay to a split of the day-night doubleheader.

Ramírez collected five hits on the day and drove in four runs for the major league-leading Rays (41-19), who won for just the third time in seven games.

In the opener, Justin Turner's three-run double highlighted Boston's six-run sixth inning that carried the Red Sox to an 8-5 victory. Corey Kluber (3-6) got the win, and Kenley Jansen pitched the ninth for his 12th save.

The nightcap was tied at 2 when Francisco Mejía and Yandy Díaz opened the ninth with consecutive singles against Jansen (1-3). Mejía and Díaz advanced on Brandon Lowe's fly to right and scored on Ramírez's liner into the gap in right-center.

White Sox 2, Tigers 1 (10): Yoán Moncada scampered home on a 10th-inning wild pitch that knocked down umpire Cory Blaser, sending host Chicago to the victory.

All three runs in the game were scored on wild pitches.

The White Sox had the bases loaded with two out when José Cisnero (2-1) threw a first-pitch fastball to Tim Anderson that hit Blaser right in the face mask.

Andrew Benintendi had two hits for the White Sox, who have won three of four. Reynaldo López (1-4) threw a scoreless 10th.

Rangers 16, Mariners 6: Marcus Semien, Leody Taveras, Nathaniel Lowe and Mitch Garver homered, and host Texas won for the fourth time in five games.

Semien had four hits, scored four times and drove in three runs. He extended his career-best hitting streak to 22 games, longest in the majors this season.

Corey Seager had three hits and three RBIs as the Rangers scored at least 10 runs in a majors-leading 15th game. Josh Sborz (2-2) got the win.

Braves 5, Diamondbacks 2: Ronald Acuña Jr. hit a 464-foot home run, Spencer Strider struck out seven in six effective innings and visiting Atlanta ended Arizona's six-game winning streak.

Marcell Ozuna and Eddie Rosario had run-scoring singles against Rhyne Nelson (2-4) to help the Braves go up 3-0 through five innings. Atlanta scored another run on a double play in the sixth inning and Acuña followed by hitting his 12th homer onto the concourse behind the seats in left-center.

Strider (6-2) allowed two runs on three hits with four walks. Raisel Iglesias worked around a single in the ninth for his sixth save in seven chances.

Padres 6, Cubs 0: Yu Darvish struck out nine in seven dominant innings, Fernando Tatis Jr. homered twice and host San Diego beat Chicago.

Darvish (4-4) had a masterful bounce-back game after a bad outing May 28 when he gave up seven runs in 2½ innings of a 10-7 loss at the New York Yankees. Against the Cubs, Darvish was in complete command and kept the hitters off-balance all night, giving up just two singles — Chicago's only hits of the game — and one walk.

Blue Jays 2, Mets 1: Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit an RBI double in the ninth inning, leading visiting Toronto to the victory.

Guerrero's big hit came three pitches after Blue Jays manager John Schneider was ejected for arguing balls and strikes. Umpire Charlie Ramos called the first pitch of Guerrero's at-bat, which appeared to land low and out of the strike zone, a strike. Schneider shouted at Ramos from the dugout and was tossed before coming out and

arguing at the plate.

Astros 9, Angels 6: Alex Bregman hit a grand slam and Chas McCormick homered to help host Houston to its third straight win.

The Astros broke it open with a five-run fourth, capped by Bregman's eighth homer. Martín Maldonado, Mauricio Dubón and Jeremy Peña loaded the bases on three straight singles before Yordan Alvarez had an RBI infield hit to end Angels starter Patrick Sandoval's day.

Guardians 4, Twins 2: Will Brennan hit the first homer allowed this season by Sonny Gray in the seventh inning and Logan Allen pitched six strong innings for visiting Cleveland.

Brennan drove in three runs and Andrés Giménez and Gabriel Arias each reached base three times in front of him. Steven Kwan added a solo homer in the ninth for Cleveland, which had lost three of four.

Pirates 4, Cardinals 3: Ke'Bryan Hayes homered for the second straight game, leading host Pittsburgh to its fourth consecutive victory.

Brewers 10, Reds 8: Blake Perkins hit a grand slam for his first career homer and drove in five runs, helping visiting Milwaukee top Cincinnati.

Phillies 4, Nationals 2: J.T. Realmuto hit a tiebreaking homer in the sixth inning, and visiting Philadelphia snapped a five-game losing streak.

Marlins 12, Athletics 1: Luis Arraez had a career-high five hits and five RBIs, sending host Miami to the win.

Rockies 6, Royals 4: Elehuris Montero hit a two-run triple in visiting Colorado's five-run first inning.

Giants 4, Orioles 0: Alex Cobb struck out seven over 7½ scoreless innings to bounce back from his worst outing of the season, Wilmer Flores hit a two-run single and also doubled, and host San Francisco topped Baltimore.