

Wagner leader defiant after mutiny

Associated Press

The leader of the Wagner mercenary group defended his short-lived insurrection in a boastful audio statement Monday, but uncertainty still swirled about his fate, as well as that of senior Russian military leaders, the impact on the war in Ukraine and even the political future of President Vladimir Putin.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu made his first public appearance since the uprising that demanded his ouster, in a video aimed at projecting a sense of order after the country's most serious political crisis in decades.

In an 11-minute audio statement, Yevgeny Prigozhin said he acted "to prevent the destruction of the Wagner private military company" and said he acted in response to an attack on a Wagner camp that killed some 30 of his fighters.

"We started our march because of an injustice," Prigozhin said in the recording that gave no details about where he is or what his future plans are.

A feud between the Wagner Group leader and Russia's military brass that has festered throughout the war erupted into a mutiny that saw the mercenaries leave Ukraine to seize a military headquarters in a southern Russian city and roll seemingly unopposed for hun-

dreds of miles toward Moscow, before turning around after less than 24 hours on Saturday.

The Kremlin said it had made a deal for Prigozhin to move to Belarus and receive amnesty, along with his soldiers. There was no confirmation of his whereabouts Monday, although a popular Russian news channel on Telegram reported he was seen at a hotel in the Belarusian capital, Minsk.

In his statement, Prigozhin taunted the Russian military, calling his march a "master class" on how it should have carried out the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. He also mocked the Russian military for failing to protect the country, pointing out security breaches which allowed Wagner to march 500 miles without facing resistance and block all military units on its way.

The bullish statement made no clearer what would ultimately happen to Prigozhin and his forces under the deal purportedly brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Though his mutiny was brief, it was not bloodless. Russian media reported that several military helicopters and a military communications plane were shot down by Wagner forces, killing at least 15. Prigozhin expressed regret for downing the aircraft, but

said they were bombing his convoys.

Russia's Defense Ministry has denied attacking Wagner's camp, and the United States had intelligence that Prigozhin had been building up his forces near the border with Russia for some time, suggesting the revolt was planned.

Russia's RIA Novosti state news agency cited unidentified sources in the Prosecutor General's office as saying the criminal case against Prigozhin hasn't been closed, despite earlier Kremlin statements. The Interfax news agency carried a similar report.

Should the case continue, Prigozhin's presence in Belarus — a staunch Kremlin ally — would offer little protection against arrest and extradition.

Some Russian lawmakers called for his head.

Andrei Gurulev, a retired general and current lawmaker who has rowed with the mercenary leader, said Prigozhin and his right-hand man Dmitry Utkin, a former military officer who runs Wagner, deserve "a bullet in the head."

"I firmly believe that traitors in wartime must be executed," he said.

It was unclear what resources Prigozhin has to draw on, and how much of his substantial wealth he can access.

Top NATO official hails German base deal in Baltics

BY JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

A brief mutiny in Russia over the weekend exposed the fragility of President Vladimir Putin's government, NATO's top official said Monday during a stop in Lithuania, where he also heralded a new pledge by Germany to base several thousand infantry troops permanently in the Baltic state.

Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Berlin's decision to station an army brigade in Lithuania will enhance allied security along the eastern flank.

"This demonstrates German leadership, German commitment to our trans-Atlantic bond," said Stoltenberg, who was in Lithuania to observe military drills.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius,

speaking alongside Stoltenberg, said the Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are "very much exposed" because of their geographic proximity to Russia. For that reason, Berlin is willing to take on greater security responsibilities given Germany's status as Europe's largest economy, he said.

"Germany is ready to deploy a robust brigade in Lithuania on a permanent basis," he said.

A timeline was not announced for the establishment of a brigade of 4,000 troops, which Pistorius said was contingent on Lithuania's construction of the required infrastructure.

The move would expand and make permanent a smaller rotational force that has

been operating in Lithuania for the past several years.

The United States also regularly trains in the region and earlier this month took a lead role in the multinational BALTOPS sea exercise.

Allies should remain vigilant even after the internal dispute between Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of the private army known as the Wagner Group, and the Russian military, Stoltenberg said.

The mutiny "demonstrates how difficult and dangerous this is for President Putin to be reliant on mercenaries that have actually turned against him," Stoltenberg said. "And it also demonstrates that it is hard to predict exactly what will now happen in the next days and weeks."

US carrier makes rare stop in Vietnam

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The USS Ronald Reagan and two escort ships steamed into Da Nang Bay on Sunday, marking the third visit of a U.S. aircraft carrier to Vietnam since hostilities ended and the first since the COVID-19 pandemic has ebbed.

The Ronald Reagan — escorted by the guided-missile cruisers USS Antietam and USS Robert Smalls — pulled into port in Da Nang, where their crews are scheduled to take part in cultural and professional exchanges, community service projects and other events, the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam said in a Sunday news release.

“More than 5,000 sailors aboard USS Ronald Reagan are eager to visit [Da Nang] and experience Vietnamese culture,” the carrier’s skipper, Capt. Daryle Cardone, said in the release. “The entire crew and I are grateful for this opportunity as well as the hospitality of the Vietnamese.”

The Ronald Reagan joins the aircraft carriers USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Carl Vinson as the only ships of their class to make port calls in the country since the Vietnam War ended in 1975. The Carl Vinson made the first visit in 2018, followed by the Theodore Roosevelt in 2020.

The Theodore Roosevelt soon made for Guam after COVID-19 broke out aboard the carrier in March 2020, eventually sickening hundreds and ending the command of its skipper, Capt. Brett Crozier. A Navy investigation later suggested U.S. sailors picked up the virus at a hotel in Da Nang.

The Ronald Reagan’s visit comes less than a week after the Japanese helicopter carrier JS Izumo made its own stop in Vietnam at Cam Ranh Bay, approximately 350 miles south of Da Nang, and just a month after the Chinese training ship Qi Jiguang stopped in Da Nang for a goodwill visit that concluded May 25.

The Izumo went on to train with the Vietnamese navy frigate HQ Ly Thai To on Friday in the South China Sea, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force announced Monday.

China’s training ship continued on to Thailand and later the Philippines, the Chinese state-sponsored website China Military Online reported May 26.

Relations between Vietnam and China have been strained in recent months with a Chinese research vessel and a “number of Chinese Coast Guard and fishing vessels” entering Vietnam’s exclusive economic zone, Vietnam’s Foreign Ministry said May 25.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam and competent authorities have been in contact with their Chinese counterparts on numerous occasions and are implementing appropriate measures in accordance with Vietnamese and international law to ensure Vietnam’s lawful and legitimate rights and interests,” said spokeswoman Pham Thu Hang, according to a transcript of a May 25 press conference.

Japan reminds Navy neighbors to obey beach rules

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — The Navy on Monday reminded its service members and civilians in Japan to be “good ambassadors” on beaches in Kanagawa prefecture, where authorities allege a U.S. sailor injured several people at a Zushi city beach last year.

The city itself is on guard this summer as thousands more visitors are expected now that COVID-19 restrictions have ended.

Just 8 miles from the homeport of the U.S. 7th Fleet, Zushi has one of 22 separate beaches in Kanagawa prefecture and remains a popular destination for sailors and dependents.

More than 250,000 people visited Zushi’s beach last year, out of 2.3 million who sunned and swam on Sagami Bay beaches across Kanagawa, according to the prefecture’s website.

Beach season in Kanagawa begins Friday and runs through Sept. 3, and the prefecture expects a “larger turnout” than last year, according to a spokesman for the prefecture’s Community Health Division.

The city is increasing security measures in a manner similar to last year, when Japanese police alleged U.S. sailor Daniel Krieger charged into a group of people, injuring several.

Those measures include security cameras, on-site interpreters during holidays and weekends, security patrols and a request for the base to remind everyone to follow the rules, a spokesman from the city Finance and Tourism Division told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday.

The same request was made to area factories, which employ many foreigners, he said.

Many Japanese government spokespeople are required to speak to the media on condition of anonymity.

“It will be the first time in four years that we will open the beaches without COVID restrictions,” he said.

“We will keep working hard to maintain our reputation as a safe and secure beach for families.”

Kanagawa prefecture itself will not be taking any special security measures, the spokesman said.

Krieger was charged with bodily injury

of four people on Nov. 10. Prosecutors allege he body slammed a group of five people from behind and knocked them down on July 9.

According to an indictment, Krieger allegedly kicked a 33-year-old man in the back, knocked another 33-year-old down and kicked them in the face and knocked a 58-year-old woman down.

The victims’ injuries included spinal sprains, abrasions and broken bones, according to the indictment.

Yokosuka Naval Base spokesman Randall Baucom declined to identify Krieger’s rank, but said in a Monday email that the sailor is awaiting a trial date.

No additional charges have been levied and a court date has not been set, a spokeswoman for the prosecutor’s office said by phone Monday.

The Navy reminded sailors and civilians from Yokosuka to be “good ambassadors and follow the local beach guidelines,” Baucom said.

General rules include no barbecues, no loud music, no consumption of alcoholic beverages and tattoos covered appropriately.

Tornado causes damage, outages in Indiana

Associated Press

SHOALS, Ind. — A tornado struck an Indiana home, killing a man and injuring his wife while two people died in Arkansas after a tree fell onto a house there as severe weather rumbled through several states.

The tornado that struck the home Sunday evening was part of a storm system that pushed through a rural area of southern Indiana's Martin County. A tornado also touched down Sunday afternoon in the southern Indianapolis suburbs of Johnson County, damaging at least 75 homes, authorities said.

High winds caused tens of thousands of homes and businesses to lose electricity in Tennessee, Arkansas and Michigan.

The Indiana man was killed when the tornado hit the home in

an isolated wooded area. His injured wife was flown by helicopter to a hospital, said Cameron Wolf, Martin County's emergency management director. The newer log cabin-style house was destroyed as a storm that also had large hail and other strong winds raked the area about 85 miles southwest of Indianapolis.

"The home that was totally destroyed, just a few feet away they had a shop building that is perfectly good," Wolf said. "I mean, didn't even touch it."

Another tornado touched down Sunday afternoon in the suburban Indianapolis communities of Greenwood and Bargersville, officials said.

Bargersville Fire Chief Erik Funkhouser said at least 75 homes suffered moderate to severe damage in a 3-mile area as

the tornado crossed Indiana State Road 135 in the vicinity of Interstate 69. Crews did not find any deaths or injuries from the tornado, which officials estimated was on the ground for about 15 minutes.

Kimber Olson, 42, told her 8-year-old son to sit in the bathtub while she stood outside and recorded video of what looked like two cyclones circling toward her apartment in Bargersville.

"The sound is deafening," Olson told The Indianapolis Star. "You'll never forget the sound. Your ears pop in such a strange way. You get a ring in your ear."

After the tornado got closer, she went inside, closed all the doors and jumped in the bathtub with her son. She said she heard glass explode as her window shattered.

Sheriff's officials said two people were killed and a third was injured Sunday night in the central Arkansas community of Carlisle when a tree fell onto a home, KTHV-TV reported.

In the city of Millington, located north of Memphis, officials reported multiple rescues from homes and cars and planes overturned at the city's small airport. No injuries were immediately reported. The fire department reported extensive wind damage that knocked down trees, leading to road closures.

The storm caused more than 120,000 power outages in the Memphis area, with most of those homes and businesses still without electricity on Monday, utility officials said. More than 80,000 outages were reported in Michigan, mostly in the Detroit area.

No sign of threat after train falls into Yellowstone River

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Mont. — Preliminary testing of water and air quality along a stretch of the Yellowstone River where train cars carrying hazardous materials fell into the waterway following a bridge collapse did not indicate any threat to the public, state and federal officials said Sunday.

The seven mangled cars that carried hot asphalt and molten sulfur remained in the rushing river a day after the bridge gave way near the town of Columbus, about 40 miles west of Billings, Mont. The area is in a sparsely populated section of the Yellowstone River Valley, surrounded by ranch and farmland.

Preliminary results of water quality sampling did not show petroleum hydrocarbons, which would have come from the asphalt, or sulfur, said Kevin Stone, a spokesperson for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. Both do not dissolve when they enter water, he ex-

plained.

"Water quality testing will continue until the cleanup is complete, and at this time there are no known risks to the public drinking water," he said.

The water testing is being done by contractors working for the train's operator, Montana Rail Link, while the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the federal Environmental Protection Agency are overseeing it, Stone said.

Meanwhile, contractors monitoring the air downwind of the derailment for the EPA have not detected any toxic gases, said Rich Mylott, a spokesperson for the agency's regional office.

Water testing began Saturday and will continue throughout the cleanup of the derailment site, Montana Rail Link spokesperson Andy Garland said in a statement.

"Montana Rail Link remains committed to addressing any potential impacts to the area as a result of this incident," he said.

Trump honored in Michigan county where he lost twice

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. — Former President Donald Trump was honored as the Man of the Decade in a Michigan county he lost twice, as he returned to the state looking to reclaim territory that helped propel him to the White House but that slipped from his grasp four years later.

Campaigning for a return to the presidency while facing a federal indictment for allegedly mishandling classified documents, Trump spoke Sunday in suburban Detroit, where he lost ground between 2016 and 2020 and would need to win it back if he becomes the 2024 Republican nominee. He would have to reverse the recent trend in Michigan that has seen Democrats make some of their biggest gains nationally since Trump's reelection loss.

Trump spoke at the Oakland County GOP's Lincoln Day Dinner, where he was honored

by the party as its Man of the Decade. Trump frequently attacked President Joe Biden throughout his speech Sunday, saying the Democrat was a "catastrophe" for Michigan and auto production in the state. Trump also criticized Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a co-chair of Biden's reelection campaign, for approving state funds for a foreign company.

It was Trump's first campaign appearance in Michigan, one of three states, along with Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, that flipped in 2016 to put him in the White House and Biden four years later.

Trump's popularity in Michigan has taken a hit since 2016.

"By Trump's calculations, he needs to win Michigan again to be the president. But he's been very disruptive here," said Dave Trott, a former GOP congressman. "Trump largely is the reason why the Michigan Republican Party is dead."

Daily pill may work as well as shots to treat obesity

Associated Press

What if treating obesity could be as easy as popping an effective pill?

That's a notion that has long fueled hope for many of the more than 40% of Americans who are considered obese — and fueled criticism by those who advocate for wider weight acceptance. Soon, it may be a reality.

High-dose oral versions of the medication in the weight-loss drug Wegovy may work as well as the popular injections when it comes to paring pounds and improving health, according to final results of two studies released Sunday night. The potent tablets also appear to work for people with diabetes, who notoriously struggle to lose weight.

Drugmaker Novo Nordisk plans to ask the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to approve the pills later this year.

"If you ask people a random question, 'Would you rather take a pill or an injection?' People overwhelmingly prefer a pill," said Dr. Daniel Bessesen, chief of endocrinology at Denver Health, who treats patients with obesity but was not involved in the new research.

That's assuming, Bessesen said, that both ways to take the medications are equally effective, available and afford-

able. "Those are the most important factors for people," he said.

There have been other weight-loss pills on the market, but none that achieve the substantial reductions seen with injected drugs like Wegovy. People with obesity will be "thrilled" to have an oral option that's as effective, said Dr. Katherine Saunders, clinical professor of medicine at Weill Cornell Health and co-founder of Intellihealth, a weight-loss center.

Novo Nordisk already sells Rybelsus, which is approved to treat diabetes and is an oral version of semaglutide, the same medication used in the diabetes drug Ozempic and Wegovy. It comes in doses up to 14 milligrams.

But results of two gold-standard trials released at the American Diabetes Association's annual meeting looked at how doses of oral semaglutide as high as 25 milligrams and 50 milligrams worked to reduce weight and improve blood sugar and other health markers.

Medical experts predict the pills will be popular, especially among people who want to lose weight but are fearful of needles. Plus, tablets would be more portable than injection pens and they don't have to be stored in the refrigerator.

COVID-19 report rejects some of lab leak theory

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. officials released an intelligence report Friday that rejected some points raised by those who argue COVID-19 leaked from a Chinese lab, instead reiterating that American spy agencies remain divided over how the pandemic began.

The report was issued at the behest of Congress, which in March passed a bill giving U.S. intelligence 90 days to declassify intelligence related to the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Intelligence officials have been pushed by lawmakers to release more material about the origins of COVID-19. But they have repeatedly argued China's official obstruction of independent reviews has made it perhaps impossible to determine how the pandemic began.

The newest report angered some Republicans who have argued the administration is wrongly withholding classified information and researchers who accuse the U.S. of not being forthcoming.

John Ratcliffe, who served as director of national intelligence under former President Donald Trump, accused the Biden administration of "continued obfuscation."

"The lab leak is the only theory supported by science, intelligence, and common sense," Ratcliffe said in a statement.

There was newfound interest from researchers following the revelation earlier this year that the Department of Energy's intelligence arm had issued a report arguing for a lab-related incident.

But Friday's report said the intelligence community has not gone further. Four agencies still believe the virus was transferred from animals to humans, and two agencies believe the virus leaked from a lab.

Located in the city where the pandemic is believed to have begun, the Wuhan Institute of Virology has faced intense scrutiny for its previous research into bat coronaviruses and its reported security lapses.

The lab genetically engineered viruses as part of its research, the report said, including efforts to combine different viruses.

But the report says U.S. intelligence "has no information, however, indicating that any WIV genetic engineering work has involved SARS-CoV-2, a close progenitor, or a backbone virus that is closely-related enough to have been the source of the pandemic."

Biden to detail distribution of money for expanding broadband internet

Associated Press

President Joe Biden was expected to announce on Monday his administration's plans to distribute billions of dollars appropriated by Congress to deliver the internet to every household and small business in the United States.

Likening the push for universal connectivity to the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, when the federal government installed the electric utility lines that brought light to the countryside all across the U.S., White House chief of staff Jeff Zients said access to high-speed internet is as imperative to day-to-day life as electricity.

"We all know how difficult life is when electricity goes down after a storm or for other reasons," Zients said on a Friday call

with reporters to preview the announcement. "For millions of Americans in rural communities in particular, the internet is down a lot. Sometimes there's not even any access."

The amount each state, territory and Washington, D.C., will receive from the \$42.5 billion program depends primarily on the number of unserved locations in each jurisdiction or those locations that lack access to internet speeds of at least 25 megabits per second download and 3 Mbps upload.

More than 7% of the country falls under the underserved category, according to maps recently completed by the Federal Communications Commission to set the course for the massive undertaking.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Skateboarder shot after crashing into BMW

NY NEW YORK — A skateboarder was shot in the leg after crashing into a BMW in Queens, sparking a fight with the driver and passenger, police said.

The 25-year-old victim collided with a BMW sedan about 11:40 p.m. Tuesday, police said.

The small impact sparked a big argument between the skateboarder and the two men in the BMW. As the quarrel escalated, the BMW passenger whipped out a gun and opened fire, blasting the skateboarder once in the leg, police said. Medics took the victim to Elmhurst Hospital, where he was expected to recover.

The shooter and his accomplice sped off in the BMW and have not been caught.

Microreactor assembly plant site selected

AL MONTGOMERY — A Seattle-based nuclear energy company has selected Gadsden as the site of a microreactor assembly plant.

Ultra Safe Nuclear Corp. said the facility will manufacture and assemble modules needed to construct the company's microreactors.

Unlike nuclear power plants, with their conspicuous cooling towers, microreactors are small and can be shipped to users, while also providing a substantial amount of nuclear power — nearly enough to run a hospital or a small campus. Ultra Safe Nuclear Corp.'s microreactor vessel is about 40 feet tall and 12 feet in diameter, and each unit can produce 15-30 megawatts of

thermal energy, a company spokesman said.

Election official sues Lake for defamation

AZ PHOENIX — A top Republican election official in Arizona filed a defamation lawsuit Thursday against Kari Lake, who has falsely claimed she lost the 2022 race for governor because of fraud.

Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richer said he's faced "violent vitriol and other dire consequences" because of lies spread by Lake, including death threats and the loss of friendships.

Lake is a former Phoenix television news anchor who quickly built an enthusiastic political following as a loyal supporter of former President Donald Trump and his lie that the 2020 election was stolen from him. She went on to narrowly lose her own race for Arizona governor last year along with a lawsuit challenging the results.

Man guilty of importing ancient Syrian mosaic

CA LOS ANGELES — A California man has been found guilty of illegally importing an ancient mosaic from Syria, federal prosecutors said.

Mohamad Yassin Alcharihi, 56, of Palmdale, was convicted by a jury Wednesday on one count of "entry of falsely classified goods," the U.S. attorney's office said in a news release.

The mosaic, which depicts a tale from mythology in which Hercules rescues Prometheus, dates to the Roman Empire, prosecutors said. Authorities

believe it was looted from war-torn Syria.

According to prosecutors, Alcharihi purchased the mosaic for \$12,000 and falsely classified its value and quality when it was imported through the Port of Long Beach, Calif.

Planned Parenthood set to close some centers

IA DES MOINES — Planned Parenthood plans to close three Iowa locations but provide more services at others in response to more demands for abortions, staff shortages and increasing costs.

The consolidation at Planned Parenthood North Central States, which provides abortions in Minnesota, Nebraska and Iowa, comes as states that provide abortions have seen a sharp increase in people coming from states that have prohibited or sharply restricted the procedure, The Des Moines Register reported.

Leaders of the organization said they've performed 9% more abortions since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade last summer.

Changes to trans birth records may be halted

KS TOPEKA — Transgender people born in Kansas could be prevented from changing their birth certificates to reflect their gender identities if the state's conservative Republican attorney general is successful with a legal move he launched late Friday.

Attorney General Kris Kobach filed a request in federal court asking a judge to end a requirement for Kansas to allow

transgender people to change their birth certificates. He is not seeking to undo past changes, only prevent new ones.

U.S. District Judge Daniel Crabtree imposed the requirement in 2019 to settle a lawsuit filed by four transgender Kansas residents against three state health department officials. The suit challenged a policy that critics said prevented transgender people from making changes even after transitioning, legally changing their names and obtaining new driver's licenses and Social Security cards.

Court: Engineers made flooding worse, must pay

NE OMAHA — The U.S. government may have to pay tens of millions of dollars to landowners along the Missouri River after a court ruled it worsened flooding there since 2007 that killed crops and wrecked homes and businesses.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit upheld a lower court's 2020 ruling that the federal government must pay for the landowners' loss of value to the land. But the appeals court went even further in its decision last Friday, saying that the government must also pay them for crops, farm equipment and buildings lost to the flooding and finding the government contributed to the devastating flood of 2011.

Courts have found the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers responsible for recurrent flooding since 2007, three years after it changed how it manages the Missouri River's flow to better protect the habitat of endangered fish and birds.

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Arraez chases .400, Marlins remain hot

Associated Press

When Luis Arraez steps up to the plate, Miami Marlins fans are already on their feet expecting a hit. More often than anyone in years, Arraez delivers.

Traded from Minnesota to Miami in January, the modestly built left-handed hitter is putting together one of the greatest stretches of pure hitting in decades. After going 5-for-5 against Toronto on June 19, Arraez's batting average reached .400 in Miami's 73rd game of the season — matching Chipper Jones in 2008 for the furthest into a season a player has been at .400 since Nomar Garciaparra's 91 games in 2000.

Already, Arraez is in a realm few players have touched since Hall of Famer Ted Williams hit .406 in 1941.

"I believe in myself. I trust myself. I just come here and play hard," Arraez said.

Arraez leads baseball in batting average (.399), hits (111), on-base percentage (.451), and

in April became the first Marlin to ever hit for the cycle.

More importantly to him, Arraez has the Marlins surging. Miami (45-34) is 11 games over .500 and second in the NL East behind the 50-27 Braves. It's Miami's best start to a season through the first 79 games since the club's 1997 World Series team.

The Marlins are finally finding success, a year after finishing with their 11th losing record in 12 seasons (they were 31-29 during the pandemic-shortened 2020 season) and four years after losing 105 games.

"This is my family. My team, we play like a team," Arraez said. "We just do the little things. We play defense. We've got really good relievers. We've got really good starting. We've got everything. Now everybody trusts this team. And I trust this team."

After winning the AL batting title in 2022, Arraez became the first reigning batting champion to be traded the following off-season since Rod Carew after

the 1978 season. The Twins shipped Arraez to Miami for a package featuring starting pitcher Pablo López, who has looked like a potential All-Star for Minnesota.

Arraez had a breakout season for Minnesota last year, making his first All-Star team while batting a league-best .316.

He leads NL second basemen in All-Star votes with 1,056,439 after the first phase of voting.

In an era in which power is an increasingly popular metric by which hitters are judged, the 5-foot-10 Arraez is an outlier. He's not a power hitter — he has three home runs this season — but he hits just about everything.

Going into the weekend, the 26-year-old was hitting .396 against four-seam fastballs, .333 against sinkers, .360 against cutters, .438 against sliders and .450 against changeups.

When Williams hit .400, the league-wide average was .261, and four other players hit .340

or better. The league-wide average this season is .247, and Arraez is the only qualified player batting better than .330.

"He's really unique," said Pittsburgh Pirates manager Derek Shelton. "He does something with the barrel of the bat that very few people can do in the game and that's why he has the batting average he has. The thing that's most impressive is he doesn't run great. It's not like he's getting a ton of infield hits. He's truly getting hits."

Shelton was a bench coach with the Twins when Arraez was called up to the majors in 2019 and said he's happy for his success.

"It's great for the game. I don't know for how long he'll be able to sustain it, but if he sustains it into August or September, that's awesome," Shelton said. "That'll be fun to watch."

The Marlins, for right now, sit atop the NL wild-card race with the All-Star break coming in July, and could reach the playoffs for the first time in a full season since 2003.

Gators set runs record, force Game 3 in CWS finals

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Florida had been involved in more close games than any other team at the College World Series this year.

That changed in a big way Sunday, when the Gators unleashed an offensive barrage of historic proportions.

Florida scored the most runs in a CWS game and came up one short of the record for largest margin of victory in a 24-4 rout of LSU that forced a deciding Game 3 of the finals.

The Gators (54-16) hit six home runs on a windy day at Charles Schwab Field and pounded LSU (53-17) pitching for a CWS record-tying 23 hits a day after Ty Floyd struck out 17 in the Tigers' 4-3, 11-inning win

in Game 1.

"We did exactly what we said we were going to do — flush last night and come in today ready to play," outfielder Wyatt Langford said. "The balls were falling for us today. And that's just kind of how it went."

The teams played the final game of the College World Series on Monday night, with the winner earning the national championship.

"Obviously we can't take any of these runs into (Monday)," Gators coach Kevin O'Sullivan said. "We'll have to reset, reboot. But awfully proud of the way they responded from last night's tough loss."

LSU coach Jay Johnson said he and his players must quickly forget what happened Sunday.

"So we're going to stick to how we prepare and roll it out tomorrow and give it everything we have," Johnson said. "One game for the national championship. I think coach O'Sullivan probably feels great about his team, as he should with the players they have."

"I feel great with my team, with the players we have."

Two-way star Jac Caglianone will pitch for the Gators. Johnson didn't announce a starter or comment on the availability of ace Paul Skenes, who has thrown 15½ innings over two CWS starts and would be coming off three days' rest if he were to pitch.

Florida came into Sunday having played in four of the CWS record-tying eight one-

run games. The Gators had totaled 17 runs in those games before the offense broke loose.

Ty Evans and Caglianone each homered twice, with Evans' grand slam breaking things open early. Langford and BT Riopelle also went deep.

Florida's 24 runs broke Notre Dame's CWS record, set in a 23-2 win over Northern Colorado in 1957. The 20-run win over the Tigers ranks second to that game for largest margin.

The Gators hadn't scored so many runs since a 28-5 win over Winthrop on March 3, 2019.

LSU hadn't given up so many in any of its 245 NCAA Tournament games or in any game since a 28-2 loss to Alabama in 1997.

Astros top Dodgers in 11; Freeman at 2K hits

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Freddie Freeman of the Los Angeles Dodgers joined some exclusive company, collecting his 2,000th hit and becoming the 98th player in major league history with that milestone and 300 home runs.

The only thing missing on Sunday was a victory.

Alex Bregman drove in the game-winning run in the 11th inning and the Houston Astros beat Los Angeles 6-5 to take a bit of luster off Freeman's accomplishment.

"I seem to get these milestones in losses," Freeman said, noting that manager Dave Roberts pointed out his 300th homer also came in a loss to St. Louis on May 18. "But, no, just seeing how happy my dad, my stepmom, my wife, my kids were for me, it just makes it special."

Bregman's leadoff single to left field scored Mauricio Dubón from second. Ryan Pressly (2-2) got the win, and Houston avoided a three-game sweep.

Jeremy Peña and José Abreu hit two-run homers, Hunter Brown threw six strong innings, and the Astros won for just the second time in nine road games.

Freeman had two doubles to reach the hits milestone and Mookie Betts led off the bottom of the first with a home run, but the Dodgers couldn't rally for the second straight game. Yency Almonte (3-1) took the loss.

Los Angeles tied it up with three runs in the eighth off reliever Rafael Montero, starting their push when Freeman drove in Betts by becoming the 295th player in major league history to record 2,000 hits.

"Hits mean a lot to me," Freeman said. "Everyone views success differently in their careers and how they go about it, but hits and average, that is what I care about. If I have a lot of hits and I have a good average, that means I'm getting on base a lot for me and the team, and we're able to score a lot of runs. ...

Hits, yeah, I like hits, and hopefully we get a lot more."

Blue Jays 12, Athletics 1: George Springer moved into second place on baseball's career list with his 55th leadoff home run, Yusei Kikuchi (7-2) pitched a season-high seven innings and host Toronto routed Oakland.

Springer went 2-for-3 with a walk and two RBIs, including a sacrifice fly. His game-opening drive broke a tie with Alfonso Soriano and gave the 2017 World Series MVP sole possession of second place on baseball's all-time list. Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson leads with 81 leadoff homers.

Cavan Biggio hit a three-run homer for the Blue Jays, who won for the 10th time in their past 12 home meetings with the Athletics.

Tony Kemp hit a solo home run, his third, but Oakland lost for the 10th time in 11 games following a seven-game winning streak. The Athletics are 40 games below .500 at 20-60.

Braves 7, Reds 6: Matt Olson hit a go-ahead three-run homer in the sixth inning and visiting Atlanta held on for another wild victory over Cincinnati.

The Braves, who snapped the Reds' longest winning streak in 66 years with a 7-6 win on Saturday, have won 17 of their last 20. Charlie Morton (7-6) needed 103 pitches to get through five innings, but left with the score tied.

The Reds had runners on first and third in the ninth when Raisel Iglesias got Kevin Newman to roll into a game-ending double play. It was Iglesias' 11th save.

Cincinnati lost despite a big day from Matt McLain, who went 4-for-5 with three doubles, a homer and five RBIs. McLain is the first Reds rookie to have four extra-base hits in a game since Chris Sabo in 1988.

Rays 3, Royals 1: Jose Siri homered, Wander Franco had a

sacrifice fly in a two-run seventh, and MLB-leading Tampa Bay beat visiting Kansas City for a split of a four-game series against the lowly Royals.

The Rays (54-27) are 6-7 over their last 13 games, including a four-game split with Oakland, which has the worst record in the majors. Kansas City dropped to 22-56.

The game was delayed approximately 15 minutes in the fifth when plate umpire and crew chief Mark Wegner took a hard foul tip by Tampa Bay's Randy Arozarena off the mask. After being checked out behind the plate, Wegner walked off with a Rays trainer.

Rockies 4, Angels 3: Ezequiel Tovar had two hits and two RBIs, Austin Gomber earned his first win in more than a month and host Colorado edged Los Angeles, less than 24 hours after being routed 25-1.

The Rockies entered the series mired in a season-worst eight-game losing streak, but took two of three from the Angels, who had a 32-12 scoring advantage.

Gomber (5-7) gave up five hits, a walk and two runs, with three strikeouts, through five innings.

Phillies 7, Mets 6: New York reliever Jeff Brigham (0-2) hit Kyle Schwarber and Trea Turner with pitches with the bases loaded in the eighth inning to force in the tying and go-ahead runs after third baseman Brett Baty committed a key throwing error in host Philadelphia's comeback win.

Trailing 6-3 in the eighth, the Phillies scored four times against the bullpen and rebounded to take two of three against their division rivals. Philadelphia walked three times, was hit twice, reached on an error and had just one hit in the four-run inning.

Orioles 3, Mariners 2: Anthony Santander robbed Julio Rodríguez with a super catch in right field in the first, then ho-

mered two innings later to help host Baltimore edge Seattle.

Santander homered for the fifth time in six games and made an early contribution with his glove. Rodríguez, the game's second batter, hit a drive to right, but Santander reached above the fence to make the catch.

Yankees 5, Rangers 3: Harrison Bader hit a go-ahead two-run double in the eighth inning and host New York overcame Gerrit Cole's shortest start of the season to rally past Texas.

Cole allowed three runs and a season-high nine hits in 4⅓ innings. It was his shortest start since lasting 2⅓ innings June 9, 2022, at Minnesota when he allowed five homers.

Twins 6, Tigers 3 (10): Royce Lewis scored the tying run in the eighth inning and drove in the go-ahead run in the 10th as visiting Minnesota rallied to beat Detroit and win the series.

Brewers 5, Guardians 4 (10): Owen Miller hit a tiebreaking double in the 10th against his former team, lifting visiting Milwaukee over Cleveland.

Marlins 2, Pirates 0: Rookie Eury Pérez scattered four hits and struck out nine in six dominant innings to lead host Miami past Pittsburgh.

White Sox 4, Red Sox 1: Luis Robert Jr. had two home runs among his three hits to lead host Chicago over Boston.

Diamondbacks 5, Giants 2: Ryne Nelson struck out six in seven innings in his strongest start of the season, Ketel Marte added two hits and homered for the second consecutive game, and visiting Arizona avoided a series sweep.

Nationals 8, Padres 3: MacKenzie Gore pitched five strong innings against his former team, Jeimer Candelario homered and drove in three runs and visiting Washington took advantage of San Diego's bullpen meltdown to take two of three.

Chastain holds off Truex at Nashville

Associated Press

LEBANON, Tenn. — Ross Chastain has been criticized as reckless and too aggressive, a driver seen as giving no respect and not deserving any from competitors.

His hard-driving style paid off Sunday night as Chastain held off Martin Truex Jr. to win the Ally 400 at Nashville Superspeedway, his first win in more than a year and the third NASCAR Cup Series victory of his career.

Chastain said everyone has to deal with criticism. His approach? Just keep working.

"I got to tell you, a lot of self-reflection through all this, but I had a group that believed in me and they didn't let me get down," Chastain said. "And they bring rocket ships, and I just try to point them to victory lane."

This was Chastain's first win since Talladega in April 2022, and he drove his Trackhouse Racing Chevrolet to the team's first victory this year at its home track. Chastain had started on

the pole for the first time in his career.

Trackhouse owner Justin Marks said he talked with Rick Hendrick and Roger Penske for advice on handling a hard-charging driver after Chastain's late crash off a restart at Darlington took both him and Hendrick star Kyle Larson out of contention.

Marks compared Chastain's learning curve to that of Brad Keselowski, Kevin Harvick and Tony Stewart — aggressive drivers who had to learn how to compete at the Cup level. Marks called this a "huge win" for Trackhouse and a big moment for Chastain, who went three-wide during a critical four-lap stretch.

"It says we have an opportunity to win so many races and compete and win ... championships in the series and such a bright future ahead of us," Marks said. "And we're all just like super motivated and inspired for the future."

Chastain was fourth in the season points race entering the race and wound up leading a

race-high 100 laps at the 1.33-mile, D-shaped concrete oval. That included the final 34 laps as he had to weave by some slower traffic to hold off Truex by 0.789 seconds.

The driver known as "Melon Man" celebrated clinching a playoff berth with a burnout before smashing a watermelon onto the start-finish line. Chastain shared some of the watermelon with fans, keeping a piece on top of his car and bringing it into the media center with him.

Truex led 50 laps as the season points leader tried to string together back-to-back wins. He won at Sonoma going into NASCAR's lone break in the 38-race season.

"Just that close again," said Truex, who notched his sixth top-five finish and extended his points lead. "We keep doing that, we'll be OK."

Truex finished ahead of Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Denny Hamlin, both in Toyotas. Chase Elliott was fourth and Hendrick Motorsports teammate Kyle Larson was fifth.

Hamlin led 81 laps and said he

thought he had a third-place car with Truex a little better.

"The 1 (Chastain) obviously came on strong there at the end," Hamlin said. "We gave ourselves a chance, just didn't have quite a fast enough car to go up and contend."

Tyler Reddick started beside Chastain on the front row and won the first stage.

As they began the second stage, Truex went three-wide at the front with Chastain and William Byron for some thrilling racing on a track known for having boring competition for years after opening in 2001.

The Xfinity Series race on Saturday was chaotic, with cautions starting on the opening lap.

The second caution on Sunday didn't come until lap 138 when Reddick lost his right rear tire as he tried to steer onto pit road just after having pitted. His car got loose, and he spun into the grass with the tire coming off at the entrance to pit road.

Bradley wins Travelers, breaks tournament record

Associated Press

CROMWELL, Conn. — Growing up in New England, Keegan Bradley says he wasn't invited to the big junior events that youngsters from Florida got to play.

That made it all the more special for the Vermont native to win in front of a New England crowd.

Despite a shaky finish, which he said came from the nerves of wanting so badly to win, the 37-year-old broke the tournament record at the Travelers Championship on Sunday for his sixth tour victory.

Bradley closed with a 2-under 68 to finish three shots ahead of Zac Blair, who shot 62, and Brian Harman, who closed with

a 64.

"This is for all the kids, like me, that grew up in winters and can't play and would watch the kids from Florida, down South get better, compete, and get invited to the biggest tournaments in the country that I was never invited to," he said. "I hope that they know that they can come from this area ... and still make it in golf."

Bradley, who went 62-63-64 in the first three rounds, finished at 23-under 257 at TPC River Highlands, a shot better than Kenny Perry's previous record from 2009.

With fans chanting his name, the 37-year-old walked up to his ball on the 18th green, sank a 2-foot par putt and threw his arms

into the air and let out a yell.

"I can't even describe what that felt like," Bradley said. "I dreamt my whole life of playing in Fenway Park, Gillette Stadium, and to feel pretty close to what that would feel like. I had a bunch of people say they never heard the 18th hole sound like that."

Bradley had only made one bogey for the week before dropping three shots in his final six holes as the nerves seemed to get to him. This was the first PGA Tour event he attended, and the one he said he most wanted to win, other than the majors. This was his second victory this season; he won the Zozo Championship in Japan in October.

Bradley birdied the par-4 12th hole to move for 5 under for the day and take a six-shot lead. But he sliced his tee shot into the water on the next hole, leading to bogey. He also bogeyed the 14th and 16th holes.

He settled down with a par on the 17th to all but guarantee himself a triumphant walk up the last hole.

"I played great until the last like five or six holes and luckily I had a big enough lead to coast home," Bradley said.

He became the first New Englander to win the title since Connecticut's J.J. Henry in 2006.

Bradley moved to seventh in the U.S. Ryder Cup standings; the top six qualify for the team.