

Navy relaxes career-ending fitness rule

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

The Navy will no longer automatically end the careers of sailors who fail two consecutive fitness tests, according to a service policy released last week.

Previously, sailors who failed one physical fitness assessment would be placed in their command's mandatory fitness program. They would also be restricted from advancing until they passed the next fitness test. A second consecutive failure would prohibit sailors from advancing or reenlisting, according to a prior policy.

The new policy, which became effective Tuesday, relaxes the career-ending mandate, instead leaving the decision to a sailor's commanding officer.

"Commanding officers are able to evaluate a sailor's physical readiness progress or lack of progress in performance evaluations, giving them the ability to manage risk, recognize earnest effort and best take

care of their people," Vice Adm. Rick Cheeseman, chief of naval personnel, said in the administrative message.

While sailors will still be ineligible for advancement if they fail a fitness assessment, the failure will no longer be noted on annual evaluations. Additionally, sailors who fail a second consecutive fitness assessment will not automatically receive the lowest possible score in the "Military Bearing/Professionalism" category of their annual evaluations.

Instead, the policy encourages commanding officers to document a sailor's progress and initiative in meeting physical fitness standards.

In determining a sailor's retention eligibility, commands should consider the sailor's qualification for continued service based on the ability to perform the functions of their rate without physical or medical limitation at sea, shore or isolated duty. They should also con-

sider a sailor's overall ability to contribute to Navy missions and a sailor's likelihood of improvement in meeting fitness standards within 12 months.

The policy change is part of the Navy's "Culture of Excellence 2.0," a service-wide effort to improve leadership principles and standards, according to the administrative message.

"Building the bodies of great people is more than annual (or biannual) testing and includes ensuring healthy food, adequate sleep, opportunities to exercise (especially outside) and medical readiness," Cheeseman said in the message.

The latest change comes as the Navy struggles to meet its recruitment goal for the second year in a row, with service officials having predicted a shortfall of approximately 6,000 sailors.

But Navy officials have said the service surpassed its retention goal for 2024, retaining 16,967 active-duty sailors, Task

and Purpose reported.

The Navy made changes to its fitness test in 2015, altering its policy at the time from discharging sailors who failed three fitness assessments in four years to kicking out sailors who failed two in three years, Stars and Stripes reported. The Navy abandoned that policy in 2017, replacing it with the two consecutive fitness-assessment failures mandate. At the time, the Navy was seeking to recruit 4,000 members.

In February 2023, the service wiped the slate clean for active-duty and Reserve sailors who failed fitness tests, resetting their records to zero, in a bid to retain members.

Between the two policy changes, in 2021, the Navy shifted to a single annual fitness testing cycle. Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the service had two annual testing cycles. The new policy upholds the single annual fitness cycle through November 2025.

US carrier in S. Korea as show of force to North

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — A nuclear-powered U.S. aircraft carrier arrived Saturday in South Korea for a three-way exercise involving Japan as they step up military training to cope with North Korean threats, which have escalated following a security pact with Russia.

The arrival of the USS Theodore Roosevelt strike group in Busan came a day after South Korea summoned the Russian ambassador to protest a major deal between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North

Korean leader Kim Jong Un last week.

The agreement pledges mutual defense assistance in the event of war. South Korea said the deal poses a threat to its security and warned that it could consider sending arms to Ukraine to help fight off the Russian invasion as a response — a move that would surely ruin its relations with Moscow.

Following a meeting between their defense chiefs in Singapore earlier in June, the United States, South Korea and Japan announced the Freedom Edge drills.

The Roosevelt strike group will participate in the exercise expected to start by the end of June. South Korea's military didn't immediately confirm specific details of the training.

Rear Adm. Christopher Alexander, commander of Carrier Strike Group 9, said the exercise is aimed at sharpening tactical proficiency of ships and improving interoperability between the countries' navies "to ensure we are ready to respond to any crisis and contingency."

South Korea's navy said in a statement that the arrival of the carrier demonstrates the

strong defense posture of the allies and "stern willingness to respond to advancing North Korean threats." The carrier's visit comes seven months after another U.S. aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, came to South Korea in a show of strength against the North.

Following completion of the exercise, the Roosevelt strike group will leave for the Middle East to "continue promoting regional stability, deter aggression, and protect the free flow of commerce in the region," Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said in a statement.

EUCOM drives base project in Norway

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A \$200 million upgrade is in store at an air station used by American troops in Norway, where a separate mountainside military hideout also is back in action 40 years after being shut down.

U.S. and Norwegian officials last week said the moves are part of an effort to support rapid troop deployments and larger air force formations in the High North, a region where countering Russia has become a top priority for NATO and U.S. European Command.

At the Rygge Air Station in southern Norway, EUCOM's European Deterrence Initiative, which is focused on improving military infrastructure that U.S. forces may need in a crisis, will fund the major overhaul.

The actions at Rygge and others like it "are key to deterring aggression against NATO and ensuring readiness," Paul Audije, program manager for the Army Corps of Engineers in Europe, said in a statement Thursday.

Work at Rygge is slated to begin later this year. It involves security improvements, expanded munitions storage, a quick reaction alert facility to store fighter jets and shelter for hundreds of airmen should they need to be quickly dispatched to the air station.

Meanwhile, the Norwegian air force said Wednesday that it had returned to an abandoned mountain hangar at Bardufoss Air Station in the north, taking back facilities inside a hideout that had been deactivated for four decades.

The natural features of the site will help shield Norway's advanced F-35 fighters in the event of an attack, the country's air force said.

Brig. Gen. Tron Strand, head of Norway's Joint Air Operations Center, said in a statement Wednesday that Russia's war in Ukraine and a deteriorating security situation in Europe prompted the reopening of the mountain hangar.

"Powerful stealth fighters are not enough. In a war situation, the planes are vulnerable on the ground," Strand said.

West Point colonel charged with drinking with cadets

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A colonel who served as an academic program director and a chaperone for the West Point women's tennis team faces charges that he made sexual comments to cadets, provided alcohol to one cadet and then asked the student to lie about it during an investigation, according to court records.

Col. William Wright, director of the Geospatial Information Science Program at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., is also accused of violating an order to stay away from the tennis team.

He pleaded not guilty to five charges Tuesday during his arraignment before military judge Lt. Col. Alan Nef at Fort Drum, N.Y., about 270 miles northwest of West Point, according to online court records. The charges include conduct unbecoming of an officer, failure to obey an order or regulation, soliciting someone else to commit an offense, wrongful interference with an adverse administrative proceeding and making a false statement.

The allegations against Wright, who graduated from West Point in 1999, begin in

June 2023 and stretch until Feb. 2, according to his charge sheet.

He is accused of providing alcohol to a cadet and drinking with a student on "a personal social basis" on June 15, 2023, in Hilo, Hawaii, and again June 19, 2023, in Greely, Alaska. The name of the cadet is redacted from the charge sheet, and it is unclear whether it is the same cadet in both instances.

Wright would travel with cadets for research as part of his work at the Geospatial Information Science Program, according to his LinkedIn account. A photo of Wright with cadets on such a trip is displayed on the academy's website describing the summer trips, which last for three weeks and included visits to Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington and California.

Wright is also accused of making at least one sexual remark Jan. 20 to three cadets somewhere between West Point and Syracuse, N.Y., according to his charge sheet. On that day, the women's tennis team played against Syracuse University, according to the schedule.

West Point said Tuesday Wright was an "officer representative" for the women's tennis team.

Army unit shows its focus on Africa with new patch

By REBECCA HOLLAND
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — The U.S. Army Southern European Task Force — Africa has a new look for shoulder sleeves that makes a point of where its mission lies.

The word "Africa" is now displayed on a bar underneath the task force's symbolic lion patch.

"It seems like a small thing, but it means a lot to us and our African partners," SETAF-AF spokesman Col. Michael Weis-

man said about the patch change, which took effect Friday across the command.

The patch has gone through many iterations since the command's founding in 1955, but this one is particularly meaningful, said Maj. Gen. Todd Wasmund, who leads the task force.

"We say that we are the Army command that wakes up every day thinking about Africa," Wasmund said. "Changing our

shoulder sleeve reflects that focus and continues the legacy."

The command received Army authorization for the new bar on April 1 and members have been wearing it while in Africa, where it's made a distinct impression.

"On a trip to Ghana last year, the then-army commander, Maj. Gen. Thomas Opong-Peprah, stopped mid-sentence during a briefing to say how much it meant to see us change

our symbols to emphasize Africa and our partnership," Wasmund said in an email.

The SETAF-AF patch features the Lion of St. Mark against a red-white-and-blue shield, resting a paw on a book that says "pax," Latin for "peace," and holding a dagger that represents peace through strength.

The lion is the symbol of the Italian region of Veneto, where SETAF-AF is based.

Floods force many out of homes amid heat wave

Associated Press

Floodwaters forced people out of their homes in parts of Iowa, the result of weeks of rain, while much of the United States longed for relief Saturday from yet another round of extraordinary heat.

Sirens blared at 2 a.m. in Rock Valley, Iowa, with a population of 4,200, where people in hundreds of homes were told to get out as the Rock River could no longer take rain that has slammed the region. The city lacked running water because wells were unusable.

Mayor Kevin Van Otterloo said a state helicopter was on its way to help, but was called off when boats were able to

reach stranded residents.

"We've had so much rain here," he said. "We had 4 inches last night in an hour and a half time. Our ground just cannot take anymore."

Gov. Kim Reynolds declared a disaster for 21 counties in northern Iowa, including Sioux County, which includes Rock Valley. In drone video posted by the local sheriff, no streets were visible, just roofs and treetops poking above the water.

In South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem declared an emergency after the southeastern part of the state received heavy rainfall. The town of Canton, 30 miles southeast of Sioux Falls,

has received 18 inches of rain.

Several highways were closed, including a key stretch of Interstate 29 south of Sioux Falls that later reopened. Sioux Falls, the state's largest city, had more than 7 inches of rain in three days.

"Even though the rain is slowing down, we need to keep vigilant," said Noem. "The worst of the flooding along our rivers will be Monday and Tuesday."

Elsewhere in the U.S., the miserable grip of heat and humidity continued. The National Weather Service said roughly 15 million people were under a heat warning — the highest level of alert — while another

90 million were under a heat advisory. Millions across the country have had their lives disrupted by stretches of unusually high temperatures.

Last year the U.S. experienced the most heat waves since 1936, experts said. An AP analysis of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that excessive heat contributed to more than 2,300 deaths, the highest in 45 years of records.

Temperatures around 100 degrees Fahrenheit were predicted for Washington, D.C., and Richmond, Va., while Philadelphia; Newark, N.J.; Columbus, Ohio; and Detroit were bracing for the high 90s.

Police: 4th victim dies day after shooting in Arkansas

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Police said a fourth victim has died a day after a shooter opened fire at an Arkansas grocery store, wounding nine others and riddling cars with bullet holes as panicked bystanders scrambled for cover.

The person died Saturday evening, Arkansas state police said in a statement, listing a total of 14 people as hit by gunfire: "11 civilians, two law enforcement officers and the suspect."

The dead were identified as Shirley Taylor, 62, Callie Weems, 23, Roy Sturgis, 50, and Ellen Shrum, 81 — "all civilians," according to the statement.

The wounded range in age between 20 and 65, police said. Four were still hospitalized, including a woman who was in critical condition.

The wounded agents were identified as Fordyce Police Officer James Johnson, 31, who was released from a hospital Saturday evening, and Stuttgart Police Officer John Hudson, 24, whose injuries were said to be minor.

Police said the suspect is Travis Eugene Posey, 44, of New Edinburg, and he will be charged with four counts of capital murder.

"He was treated for non-life-threatening injuries after exchanging gunfire with law enforcement" and was then released to police custody and taken to the Ouachita County Detention Center, police said in the statement.

Police have not released a motive. A media briefing to update about the shooting was scheduled for 2 p.m. Sunday.

The shooting took place around 11:30 a.m. Friday at the Mad Butcher grocery store in Fordyce, a city of about 3,200 people located 65 miles south of Little Rock.

Images from reporters on the scene showed a slew of bullet holes in the store's window, and spent shell casings strewn throughout the parking lot. In video images, local and state agencies could be seen responding with at least one medical helicopter landing nearby.

FBI offers reward for info on deadly New Mexico wildfires

Associated Press

RUIDOSO, N.M. — Federal authorities offered a reward for information about those responsible for igniting a pair of New Mexico wildfires that killed two people and destroyed hundreds of homes in the past week.

The FBI on Saturday offered up to \$10,000 for information in connection with the South Fork Fire and Salt Fire in southern New Mexico, which forced thousands to flee.

An agency statement said it was seeking public assistance in "identifying the cause" of the fires near Ruidoso, N.M., that were discovered June 17. But the notice also pointedly suggested human hands were to blame, saying the reward was for information leading to arrest and conviction of "the person or persons responsible for starting the fires."

The South Fork Fire, which reached 26 square miles, was 26% contained Saturday, while the Salt Fire, at 12 square miles, was 7% contained as of Saturday morning, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Full containment was not expected until July 15.

Recent rains and cooler weather have assisted more than 1,000 firefighters working to contain the fires. Fire crews on Saturday took advantage of temperatures in the 70s Fahrenheit, scattered showers and light winds to use bulldozers to dig protective lines while hand crews used shovels in more rugged terrain to battle the fires near the mountain village of Ruidoso.

Elsewhere in New Mexico, heavy rain and flash flood warnings prompted officials to order some mandatory evacuations Friday in the city of Las Vegas, N.M., and communities near Albuquerque, about 200 miles north of Ruidoso. Las Vegas set up shelters for displaced residents, and some evacuation orders remained in place there on Saturday.

Flash flood warnings were canceled Saturday, though the National Weather Service said afternoon storms could produce excessive runoff and more flooding in the area.

Philippines won't start war or back off to China

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The president of the Philippines said Sunday that his country would not yield to “any foreign power” after Chinese forces injured Filipino navy personnel and damaged at least two military boats with machetes, axes and hammers in a clash in the disputed South China Sea, but added the Philippines would never instigate a war.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. flew with his top generals and defense chief to the western island province of Palawan, which faces the South China Sea, to meet and award medals to navy personnel who came under as-

sault by the Chinese coast guard last Monday as they attempted to deliver food and other supplies to an outpost on the hotly contested Second Thomas Shoal.

Videos and pictures of the chaotic faceoff made public by the military showed Chinese coast guard personnel hitting a Philippine navy boat with a wooden bar and seizing a bag while blaring sirens and using blinding strobe lights. The Chinese government said its coast guard had to take action after Filipino forces defied warnings not to stray into what China has called its own offshore territory, a claim long rejected by rival

claimant governments and international arbitrators.

The violent confrontation sparked condemnation and alarm from the United States, the European Union, Japan, Australia and other Western and Asian nations, while China and the Philippines blamed each other for instigating it. Marcos's key advisers said Friday that his administration has no plan to invoke the country's mutual defense treaty with the U.S.

“We are not in the business to instigate wars,” Marcos told Filipino forces. “In defending the nation, we stay true to our Filipino nature that we would like to settle all these issues peaceful-

ly.”

In Monday's faceoff at the shoal, Marcos said “we made a conscious and deliberate choice to remain in the path of peace.” The Filipino navy special operations group personnel who came under attack used only their bare hands to push back the Chinese, some of whom pointed knives at them, said Philippine military chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr.

“We stand firm. Our calm and peaceful disposition should not be mistaken for acquiescence,” Marcos said. “History itself can tell that we have never, never in the history of the Philippines yielded to any foreign power.”

Drone likely from Houthi rebels hits ship in Red Sea

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — An aerial drone likely launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels struck and damaged a vessel in the Red Sea on Sunday, officials said, the latest attack by the group targeting the vital maritime corridor.

The attack comes as the United States has sent the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower back home after an eight-month deployment which saw it lead the American response to the Houthi assaults. Those attacks have seen shipping drastically drop through the route crucial to Asian, Middle Eastern and European markets in a campaign the Houthis have said will continue as long as the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip rages on.

The drone attack happened around dawn off the coast of the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. It said the vessel sustained damage, but its mariners on board “were reported safe.” It did not elaborate on the extent of the damage, but

said an investigation was ongoing.

The private security firm Ambray identified the ship involved as a Liberia-flagged container ship bound for Qingdao, China.

The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack, but it can take the rebels hours or even days to acknowledge their assaults.

The Houthis have launched more than 60 attacks targeting specific vessels and fired off other missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed a total of four sailors. They have seized one vessel and sunk two since November. A U.S.-led airstrike campaign has targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels have said.

The Houthis have maintained that their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the United States or Britain. Many of the ships attacked, however, have little or no connection to the Israel-Hamas war — including those bound for the Houthis' main benefactor, Iran.

Netanyahu claims US denying arms after Washington rebuff

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his Cabinet on Sunday that there had been a “dramatic drop” in U.S. weapons deliveries for Israel's war effort in Gaza, doubling down on a claim the Biden administration has denied and underscoring the growing strains between the two allies.

Netanyahu told his Cabinet the drop had occurred four months ago, without specifying which weapons, saying only that “certain items arrived sporadically, but the munitions at large remained behind.”

The spat highlights how high tensions have surged between Israel and Washington over the war in Gaza, particularly surrounding the Israeli military's conduct in the beleaguered territory and the harm to civilian life there. President Joe Biden has delayed delivering certain heavy bombs since May over those concerns, but his administration fought back last week against Netanyahu's charges that other shipments had also been affected.

Netanyahu told the Cabinet he was driven to release a video in English last week after weeks of unsuccessful pleas with American officials to speed up deliveries. He said a resolution appeared close.

“In light of what I have heard over the past day, I hope and believe that this matter will be solved soon,” he said, without elaborating.

Netanyahu's video last week sparked an uproar among critics in Israel and was met with denial and confusion from White House officials. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the United States was “perplexed” by Netanyahu's claims. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, “We genuinely do not know what he's talking about.”

His remarks came hours after Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant traveled to Washington for meetings with senior officials. A statement from Gallant's office said he would discuss “maintaining Israel's qualitative edge in the region” but made no mention of the weapons issue.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Battleship returns to Camden after repairs

NJ CAMDEN — The Battleship New Jersey has returned home to the Camden waterfront, after a \$10 million facelift in South Philadelphia.

“This ship’s in its best shape since it was deactivated in the early 1990s, so we’re really proud that the ship is going to keep floating open as a museum here in Camden for the next 30 years,” Battleship New Jersey CEO Marshall Spevak said at an event celebrating the return.

The ship — 887 feet long, four stories tall, and weighing 45,000 tons — arrived in Camden Thursday to a crowd of more than 300 people, including mascots like the Phanatic, Gritty, Swoop, Franklin the Dog, Phang, and the battleship’s very own Black Dragon.

Philadelphia Ship Repair workers repainted and repaired the hull, in addition to replacing anticorrosion technology. The hull project also included an inspection and sealing of about 160 through holes that drew in seawater to cool the engines when the ship was operational. Carpenters installed a new teak deck.

Glass mugs break when filled with hot liquid

NY NEW YORK — About 580,000 glass coffee mugs are being recalled across the U.S. after dozens of burn and laceration injuries were reported by consumers.

According to a Thursday notice from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the

JoyJolt-branded “Declan Single Wall Glass Coffee Mugs” can crack or break when filled with hot liquids. To date, the CPSC added, there have been 103 incidents of these glasses breaking at the base — resulting in 56 injuries.

The 16-ounce coffee mugs, distributed by New York-based MM Products Inc., were sold online at the company’s JoyJolt website as well as Amazon.com from September 2019 through May 2022 in sets of six for between \$20 and \$25. The recalled glasses have model number JG10242 — which can be found on the side of the products’ packaging and order confirmation.

Officials: Doc accessed trans patient records

TX DALLAS — A Texas doctor and self-described whistleblower on pediatric transgender care is facing federal charges of illegally accessing information of patients not under his care, the Department of Justice announced.

Eithan David Haim, 34, has publicly outed himself as a whistleblower who leaked information on transgender patients at Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston to a conservative activist, according to The Associated Press.

Haim appeared Monday in a Houston federal court, pleaded not guilty to four counts of wrongfully obtaining individually identifiable health information and was released on \$10,000 bond.

The indictment said Haim accessed the personal information of three patients and provided the information to a media con-

tact, who then published the information on X and other online media sites.

The indictment said the release of information resulted in delays to patient care, financial loss to the hospital and threats and harm to the hospital’s patients and staff.

Editor won’t take Post job after backlash

DC WASHINGTON — The Washington Post said Friday that newly named editor Robert Winnett has decided not to take the job and remain in Britain instead, another upheaval at a news outlet where a reorganization plan has gone disastrously wrong.

The Post’s CEO and publisher, Will Lewis, announced Winnett’s decision to withdraw in a note to staff on Friday morning, and said a recruitment firm would be hired to launch a search for a replacement immediately.

Several published reports had raised questions about the journalistic ethics of Lewis and Winnett stemming from their work in England. For example, both men worked together in a series of scoops about extravagant spending by British politicians fueled by information that they paid a data information company for — a practice frowned upon by American journalists.

Tree falls on cabin, trapping counselor

MI BENONA TOWNSHIP — A tree crashed onto a cabin with 14 people, mostly girls, inside, trapping a counselor in her bed

for 90 minutes early Thursday at a camp in northern Michigan, police said.

“Thankfully, the adult counselor walked out of the destroyed cabin and appears to be just fine,” state police said.

Authorities were summoned around 2 a.m. to Camp Ao-Wa-Kiya in Oceana County.

“One of the counselors was pinned into her bed with the tree on top of her,” state police said on X. “Troopers arrived on scene and began moving debris and glass from a broken window away from the trapped individual.”

No other injuries were reported among campers inside the cabin.

Seattle cop fired for off-duty racist remarks

WA SEATTLE — A Seattle police officer was fired for calling his Chinese American neighbor racist and sexist slurs while off duty in 2022, The Seattle Times reported.

Officer Burton was fired by then-police Chief Adrian Diaz on May 2, police spokesperson Eric Muñoz said.

The termination stemmed from an altercation with his neighbor, Zhen Jin, over the disposal of dog bones at the condominium complex where they lived in suburban Seattle.

The former police chief himself was removed from his post in late May by Mayor Bruce Harrell after lawsuits alleging Diaz’s police force was unwelcoming and discriminatory toward women and people of color. Diaz has vehemently denied the allegations.

—From wire reports

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'Better' Richardson wins 100 in 10.71

Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. — Two steps before she reached the finish line, Sha'Carri Richardson started pounding her chest.

She knew she had it won. Anyone who doesn't see her as the sprinter to beat later this summer at the Paris Olympics should probably think again.

Richardson notched the latest stop on her "I'm Not Back, I'm Better" tour with a 10.71-second sprint in the 100 meters at the U.S. track trials on Saturday that makes her the fastest woman in the world this year and officially earned her a trip to France where the women start racing Aug. 2.

The final marked the third time in this meet that Richardson did not get off to a stellar start. It also marked the third time in the meet she finished well in the clear.

She was .09 seconds ahead of training partner Melissa Jefferson, the 2022 U.S. champion. Another sprinter in coach Dennis Mitchell's camp, Twanisha Terry, finished third and also earned a spot on the women's

100-meter team.

"I feel honored," Richardson said. "I feel every chapter I've been through in my life prepared me for this moment."

A few seconds after her line-crossing celebration, she was down on a knee, clearly caught up in emotion.

"The emotion was just joy because of the hard work I put in, not just physically on the track, but mentally and emotionally to grow into the mature young lady I am today," she said.

It has been quite a ride for the 24-year-old Texan. Three years ago, she won this race, too (in 10.86 seconds), only to see the victory stripped because of a positive marijuana test that laid bare everything from her own struggles with depression to an anti-doping rulebook that hadn't changed with the times.

That's when the hard work began. What emerged, Richardson said, was a better and more in-tune person than the one who lit up this same Hayward Field back in 2021 — her orange hair flowing, looking like this sport's breakout star.

It took nearly two years for the results to show up on the track again. But she won the national championship in 2023 and declared "I'm not back, I'm better," then backed that up a month later with the world title.

"I'd say the message I'm sending out is to believe in yourself no matter what," Richardson said, echoing much the same thoughts from last year in Budapest. "You want to remain solid in yourself. Stay grounded in yourself and your hard work."

It's risky business to hand her the gold medal in Paris given the competition she'll face. Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Sherricka Jackson and two-time defending champion Elaine Thompson-Herah have 19 Olympic medals between them — Richardson has never been to the Games — and all are slated to run at next weekend's Jamaican trials.

A recent injury to Thompson-Herah has mixed up that math. Meanwhile, Fraser-Pryce has been a rarely seen commodity in 2024 and Jackson is the two-

time world champion at 200 meters — a race Richardson finished third in at worlds and is entered in next week at trials.

Back in the U.S., the Americans are feeding off each other, and Mitchell, a huge name in sprinting in the 1990s, pulled off a rarity by placing all three of his best sprinters in the Olympics.

"The odds of getting all three is probably a point-zero-zero-zero-zero-zero-something," Mitchell said. "But those girls didn't care about those odds. They went out there and had a plan and they executed well and they deserve everything they got."

Given she bettered the season's best time despite a mediocre start and after pounding her chest and pulling up before the end of the race, it's hard to argue that Richardson is the favorite. Asked if she had a time in mind for the Olympics, she did not bite.

"I just know that if I execute and run the race I'm trained to prepare for that the time will come with it," she said.

Dressel, Ledecky add to Olympic berths at swim trials

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Caeleb Dressel locked up his second individual race in Paris, giving him another chance to shine after his stellar performance at the last Olympics.

Keep an eye on Kate Douglass, too. She could be one of the biggest American stars at the pool.

And, of course, Katie Ledecky will be swimming a whole bunch of events.

Dressel, the winner of five gold medals at the Tokyo Games, touched first in the men's 100-meter butterfly at the U.S. Olympic swimming trials Saturday night.

Dressel followed up his triumph in the 50 freestyle with a

winning time of 50.19 seconds, giving him a chance to defend another of the gold medals he captured in Tokyo.

"I think all of my swims, I executed as well as I could," he said.

Douglass locked up her third individual event at the Olympics with a victory in the 200-meter individual medley.

She was neck and neck with Alex Walsh at the final turn, but no one could keep up with Douglass on the freestyle leg.

She finished in 2:06.79, while Walsh held on for the second Olympic spot in 2:07.86.

Douglass has lived up to her billing as one of the world's most versatile swimmers, also claiming trials victories in the 200

breaststroke and 100 freestyle.

"I'm really happy with that," Douglass said. "I was coming into the meet trying to win all three events, but I didn't think I'd be able to achieve that. So I'm happy I did."

Ledecky romped to her fourth victory of the trials, winning the 800 freestyle in 8 minutes, 14.12 seconds. Paige Madden took the second spot in 8:20.71.

Ledecky plans to drop the 200 freestyle from her Olympic program, but will be competing in the 400, 800 and 1,500 free, as well as the 4x200 free relay.

Dressel didn't come close to his world record of 49.45, which he set at the last Olympics. But he led all the way and touched about a half-body length ahead

of 17-year-old Thomas Heilman, who earned the second spot for Paris in 50.80.

Dressel will also swim up to three relays at the Summer Games, which would put him close to the six-event program he had in Tokyo. The only event he didn't win three years ago was the mixed relay.

"It's tough making it through the trials," Dressel said. "This truly is the hardest part."

The only individual gold that Dressel won't get to defend in Paris is the 100 freestyle. He missed out with a third-place showing in his first event of these trials.

Heilman will also compete in the 200 butterfly, winning that event at the trials.

Aggies jump on Vols early, win Game 1

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Great start. Great finish.

And now, after beating Tennessee 9-5 in the College World Series finals opener Saturday night, Texas A&M faces its most difficult task of the season. The Aggies must knock off the high-powered No. 1 national seed one more time Sunday to claim their first national championship.

The Aggies (53-13) put themselves in position with Gavin Grahovac homering to begin the game, breaking it open with a five-run third inning and bringing in Evan Aschenbeck to pitch 2½ innings of shutout relief to turn back a Tennessee offense that was starting to get cranked up.

"We all know what's at stake," Texas A&M coach Jim Schlossnagle said. "There's no Lombardi speech. We just try to keep them as loose as we can."

Tennessee (58-13), trying to become the first No. 1 seed since 1999 to win the championship, will go into Sunday's Game 2

having lost consecutive games just once this season and not since March 16-17 at Alabama.

"You find out different ways to respond, and you can either get frustrated that tonight went the way that it did, or you can get more determined," Vols coach Tony Vitello said. "We've got guys that have done that a lot in the past where determination kicks up, play kicks up."

The No. 3 Aggies capitalized on a couple of errors that led to two runs — Tennessee has committed eight in four CWS games — and on the inability of pitchers Chris Stamos (3-1) and AJ Causey to consistently hit their spots.

Grahovac drove Stamos' 0-2 fastball out to right for the first leadoff homer in a CWS finals since Sam Fuld did it for Stanford against Rice in Game 2 in 2003.

Causey walked Jace LaViolette leading off the third, Jackson Appel's comebacker deflected off Causey's foot for a base hit and Hayden Schott fol-

lowed with an RBI single to start the Aggies' five-run outburst.

Kaeden Kent, son of ex-major leaguer Jeff Kent, made it a seven-run game in the seventh with his homer into the right-field bullpen.

"Rounding the bases, I was able to take it in," Kent said. "The bullpen was going crazy. The fans were so loud; these fans are amazing. I love playing in front of these fans. They help us out so much and so much credit to them."

Kent, who entered the starting lineup two weeks ago after star Braden Montgomery broke his ankle in the super regionals, had three hits and four RBIs.

The Vols, the nation's most prolific home-run hitting team in three decades, used the long ball to create some anxiety for the Aggies in the bottom of the seventh.

Dylan Dreiling's two-run shot to right ended the night for reliever Josh Stewart (2-2), and Hunter Ensley's high fly over

the left-field fence off Brad Rudis made it 9-5. The Vols have 180 homers this season, eight behind LSU's NCAA record set in 1997.

Ensley was the only batter Rudis faced. Schlossnagle brought in Aschenbeck, and the left-hander retired six in a row before back-to-back singles put runners on the corners with one out in the ninth. The National Stopper of the Year struck out Ensley and Kavares Tears to end the game.

"It's just something I've been doing all year, just kind of try to give my team the best chance to win," Aschenbeck said. "That's what pitchers are there for. Our job as a relief pitcher is to come in and pick up the guys in front of us. To come into that opportunity, it was awesome because the atmosphere was crazy."

"It's the College World Series. Everything's cool about it."

The Vols were 2-for-13 with runners in scoring position, 2-for-11 with two outs and they left 10 runners on base.

Verstappen holds off Norris at Spanish Grand Prix

Associated Press

MONTMELÓ, Spain — Max Verstappen steered his Red Bull to victory at the Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday to increase his lead in the Formula 1 drivers championship.

Verstappen started from second on the grid behind pole-sitter Lando Norris. But the three-time champion whipped past the McLaren driver by the first turn and then overtook George Russell on lap three of 66 and never looked back.

Norris tried to mount a late challenge, but Verstappen upped the pace to cross first. Norris was second, followed by Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes in third.

Verstappen said his moves to get past Norris and Russell so

early proved crucial so he could build an advantage and keep the hard-charging Norris at bay.

"I think what made the difference in the race was the beginning," Verstappen said. "I took the lead and had my buffer. After that we had to drive a defensive race."

Verstappen got his seventh win in 10 races this season and claimed his third straight victory at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalonia.

Verstappen has 219 points. Norris moved into second place with 150, overtaking Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who fell into third place with 148 points after finishing fifth.

Norris put the blame on his poor start — when he lost two

spots — for having to settle for second. The British driver got his first win at Miami in May and was gunning for a second victory.

"I should have won," Norris said. "I got a bad straight, it is as simple as that."

Hamilton's third place was the first podium of the season for the seven-time world champion, who is in his last season for Mercedes before joining Ferrari next season.

Norris was beaten from the starting line by Verstappen and Russell, who whipped around both rivals from his start from fourth on the grid to take a surprise lead after the nearly 600-yard run to the first corner.

Verstappen was right behind

Russell, however, and within two laps he swerved past him just after his team told him "(this) might be our best opportunity now."

Once ahead, Verstappen managed his tires on the tough Barcelona track, and his Red Bull team pulled off two clean pit stops to avoid any mistakes.

Norris showed his great form by chasing down both Mercedes after a tire change. He got past Hamilton and then featured in a long duel with Russell midway through the race. Norris swerved past, Russell counterattacked to edge ahead, before Norris finally got in front.

But the jousting also favored Verstappen, who added to his lead.

White Sox's Thorpe gets 1st career win

Associated Press

DETROIT — Drew Thorpe pitched six scoreless innings and got his first major league win in his third start, pitching the Chicago White Sox over the Detroit Tigers 5-1 on Saturday.

Thorpe (1-1) allowed two hits and four walks while striking out five.

"This is me. I'm pretty even-keeled, super calm, relaxed," said Thorpe, who was given a beer shower by his teammates. "That's just how I've always been."

The 23-year-old right-hander didn't get a decision in his debut at Seattle on June 11, then lasted 3½ innings in a 12-5 loss at Arizona on June 16.

"You just flush it, right? They're going to happen, it's probably going to happen again," he said. "It's just how you move past it and get ready for the next one."

A second-round pick by the Yankees in the 2022 amateur draft, Thorpe was dealt to San Diego in the December trade that brought Juan Soto to New York, then was traded to Chicago in March as part of a package for right-hander Dylan Cease.

"What I like about him, he's a great competitor," manager Pedro Grifol said. "Through the nerves, through how he hides everything, he competes and he doesn't shy away from contact."

Korey Lee homered, Nicky Lopez had three hits and an RBI, and Andrew Vaughn, Paul DeJong and Lenyn Sosa drove in runs as the major league-worst White Sox (21-57) stopped a three-game losing streak.

Detroit (35-41) has lost five of six, scoring six runs during that span.

"We're just not stringing some hits together," said Matt Vierling, who scored the Tigers' only run. "I feel like offensively we're in a little bit of a lull."

Cardinals 9, Giants 4: Alec

Burleson had a career-high five RBIs with his first multi-homer game and host St. Louis overcame a three-run, first-inning deficit to beat San Francisco and move back over .500.

Paul Goldschmidt and Brendan Donovan also homered for the Cardinals, who at 38-37 matched their season high of one game over .500.

Cubs 8, Mets 1 : Jameson Taillon pitched seven crisp innings, Christopher Morel homered and host Chicago cooled off New York with a victory.

Taillon (4-3) struck out a season-high 10 in his first win since May 4. The right-hander allowed one run and six hits.

Pirates 4, Rays 3: Jared Jones struck out eight, Oneil Cruz homered into the Allegheny River and host Pittsburgh beat Tampa Bay.

Jones (5-6) overcame some early control issues to allow two runs over seven solid innings to bounce back from a pair of recent shaky starts.

Astros 5, Orioles 1: Ronel Blanco (8-2) pitched seven strong innings and Chas McCormick homered twice to lead host Houston to a win over Baltimore.

Yordan Alvarez added a two-run shot to help Houston extend its winning streak to four games.

Rangers 6, Royals 0: Jon Gray (3-3) allowed two hits over five innings to rebound from his worst major league start and Wyatt Langford hit an eighth-inning grand slam that led host Texas over Kansas City.

Langford, a rookie who debuted on opening day, connected off Angel Zerpa for the Rangers' first grand slam this season.

Guardians 6, Blue Jays 3: José Ramírez and Bo Naylor hit two-run homers and Steven Kwan added a solo shot while pushing his average back near .400, leading host Cleveland to a win over Toronto.

All three homers came off Jo-

sé Berríos (6-6) as the AL Central-leading Guardians (48-26) moved 22 games over .500 for the first time this season.

Phillies 12, Diamondbacks 1: Zack Wheeler allowed only one run and two hits in seven innings of work while Bryce Harper, Alec Bohm, Nick Castellanos and David Dahl all homered as host Philadelphia cruised past Arizona for its 50th win of the season.

Castellanos had a season-high five RBIs and hit his second homer in as many days in the victory. Harper added three RBIs and hit his 18th of the season into the second deck in right field in the third inning during a 4-for-5 day at the plate. Bohm followed Harper's shot with his eighth of the second to left-center field.

Mariners 9, Marlins 0: Logan Gilbert pitched eight scoreless innings for the second straight start and visiting Seattle beat Miami.

Gilbert (5-4) scattered four hits, struck out six and was aided by three double-play grounders, lowering his ERA to 2.71. The 27-year-old right-hander walked one, ending a string of three straight outings without allowing a base on balls.

Twins 10, Athletics 2: Bailey Ober struck out 10 in a four-hitter for his first career complete game and visiting Minnesota used a seven-run second inning to rout Oakland.

Ober (7-4) needed just 89 pitches to finish the game while tying a career high in strikeouts and walking none. He allowed two runs on solo homers by JJ Bleday and Tyler Soderstrom in the first two innings.

Red Sox 4, Reds 3: Rafael Devers drove in the go-ahead run with a sacrifice fly in the eighth inning and Jarren Duran made a game-saving defensive play in the ninth as visiting Boston rallied to beat Cincinnati.

Pinch-hitter Rob Refsnyder singled home the tying run before Duran tagged on Devers'

fly ball and slid home just ahead of left fielder Stuart Fairchild's throw.

Padres 6, Brewers 4: Rookie Jackson Merrill hit a 440-foot, three-run homer to the base of the batter's eye in center field and had a bat flip to match as host San Diego beat Milwaukee for its fourth straight win.

Ha-Seong Kim and Kyle Higashioka also homered for the Padres, who popped back above .500 and went for a four-game sweep on Sunday.

Yankees 8, Braves 3: Aaron Judge hit his major league-leading 28th home run and host New York stopped a three-game losing streak with a win over Atlanta.

Judge had three RBIs for a major league-high 70, Juan Soto reached base four times on a single and three walks, and Marcus Stroman won for the fifth time in six decisions. The big league-best Yankees (52-27) had lost five of their previous six games.

Rockies 8, Nationals 7: Ryan McMahon drew a bases-loaded walk on a full-count, pitch-clock violation by Kyle Finnegan, and host Colorado scored two runs in the ninth inning for a victory over Washington.

Colorado had four straight singles to open the ninth off Nationals closer Finnegan (2-4) to bring up McMahon, who fell behind 0-2. Finnegan had converted 21 of his previous 23 save chances.

Dodgers 7, Angels 2: Tyler Glasnow (8-5) pitched seven strong innings, Shohei Ohtani homered for the second straight game against his old team and the host Dodgers beat the Angels to split the Freeway Series.

Ohtani blasted a 455-foot, two-run shot in Friday's 10-inning, 3-2 loss. He went even farther in the third inning Saturday night, his 23rd homer traveling 459 feet to right for a 3-0 lead. Gavin Lux led off with a solo shot against Zach Plesac (1-1).