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Okinawa interferes with base relocation

The Associated Press

TOKYO — The governor of the southern Japanese island of Okinawa ordered a Defense Ministry branch to suspend all work in the area where a key U.S. military air base is to be relocated, in a growing confrontation between the island and the central government.

Gov. Takeshi Onaga said Monday that a concrete anchor thrown into the sea for a drilling survey at the site is believed to have damaged coral.

It was his first specific action to interfere with the relocation since taking office four months ago. His predecessor's approval of the plan had allowed the Defense Bureau to begin preparing the site in Henoko for

the relocation of U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Onaga told a news conference that the use of concrete blocks had not been authorized. He said the prefecture needs to assess the damage, and demanded the Defense Bureau stop all activity related to the relocation within one week or lose its license for the drilling work, which could put the entire relocation on hold.

The central government's effort to gain Okinawa's understanding of the relocation is "insufficient," he said. "I urge the Defense Bureau to take the order seriously and take a responsible step."

It was not immediately clear whether his order would be followed.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a news conference that officials are studying the suspension order but the survey should proceed regardless of it. He criticized Onaga for altering the concession that Okinawa had made under its previous leader.

"I don't see any reason why we should halt the operation," Suga said. "This is a law-abiding nation. It is extremely regrettable that [Onaga] submitted the document (ordering the suspension) at this stage."

The current Futenma base is in a densely populated part of the island, and its relocation is intended to address safety and nuisance concerns. But many people on Okinawa want Futenma moved completely off the

island. Opponents also say the construction would endanger the coral reef, tropical fish and other marine life.

The underwater drilling, which had been halted before last November's election in an apparent attempt by the central government to avoid controversy, resumed earlier this month to prepare for the land reclamation needed to build an airstrip over the water from Camp Schwab, another American military base.

The Futenma relocation is part of a broader realignment of the U.S. military presence on Okinawa. The relocation plan, agreed upon in 1996, has been repeatedly delayed.

Services probing threat posed by terrorists' list of GIs

BY TRAVIS J. TRITTEN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military on Monday was urging caution on social media while completing notifications of 100 troops who were publicly targeted for execution over the weekend by Islamic State extremists.

Officials said they were still weighing the threat but that it appeared the names, photos and identifying details — mostly of airmen and sailors — released by the "Islamic State Hacking Division" was information gleaned from Internet sites such as Facebook and was not hacked from government sources.

The group called for followers inside the United States to kill, behead and stab the servicemembers in "lone wolf" attacks, according to media reports. In January, hackers aligned with the Islamic State briefly seized control of U.S.

Central Command's Twitter and YouTube accounts, posting similar threats and Internet documents that embarrassed the Pentagon but revealed little sensitive data.

The Air Force on Monday had completed notification of its 58 personnel on the list, spokeswoman Lt. Col. Holly Slaughter said.

The terrorist organization may have been attempting to target branches of the military waging the U.S. air offensive on Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria. The extremists have been adept at using the Internet and social media for propaganda while also waging bloody terrorist attacks, such as the recent killing of tourists in Tunisia and bombings in Yemen.

A division calling itself the Cyber Caliphate threatened troops and released a list of email addresses and phone numbers for top military brass and former officials in January

during the CENTCOM social media hacking incident.

Slaughter said the Air Force believes the new list was compiled using social media and the service was warning airmen and personnel about privacy settings to keep identifying information from public view.

It would not say whether airmen based in Europe and Africa were under threat.

"We're trying to encourage everyone to be vigilant about what they're putting online and how they're interacting online, and just to secure their information," said Maj. Sheryll Klinkel, a spokeswoman for U.S. Air Forces in Europe-U.S. Air Forces Africa.

The service branches were working with the FBI on Monday to weigh the threat and additional security measures, though officials would not publicly discuss whether there were moves to secure bases or to provide additional security

for targeted servicemembers and their families. The FBI did not immediately return a request for comment.

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service "is actively evaluating this threat reporting and working with law enforcement and U.S. intelligence partners to address this incident," Navy spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Sarah Flaherty wrote in an email statement. "NCIS has met with almost all named Navy and Marine Corps service members to notify them of this threat and discuss their concerns."

The Army was trying to "determine the validity of any potential threats" while its Criminal Investigation Division worked with the FBI and local units were notified, spokeswoman Cynthia Smith said in a written statement.

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Cruz kicks off White House run

The Associated Press

LYNCHBURG, Va. — Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, opened the first major campaign of the 2016 presidential season Monday with a kickoff speech courting cultural conservatives and declaring that he will devote himself to “reigniting the promise of America.”

One of several Republican hopefuls to rise from the tea party movement, Cruz spoke at Liberty University, the college founded by the late Rev. Jerry Falwell, hours after a wee-hours tweet announcing his White House bid. The choice of the college founded by Falwell was meant as a marker against potential rivals who are also counting on Christian conservatives to fuel their candidacies.

Cruz, 44, addressed his religious faith, his father’s Cuban roots and his unquestioned conservative credentials, saying “for so many Americans, the promise of America seems more and more distant.”

Marine’s murder trial begins in Philippines

OLONGAPO CITY, Philippines — On the first day of Pfc. Joseph Scott Pemberton’s murder trial, a witness identified the U.S. Marine as the last person seen with a transgender Filipina whose body was found in an Olongapo City hotel on Oct. 11.

The receptionist at the Celzone Lodge — named in court documents as Elias Aran Galamos Jr. — was the first witness called in Pemberton’s trial, which began Monday at Olongapo’s Hall of Justice.

Pemberton is accused of murdering Jeffrey “Jennifer” Laude, 26, after the pair checked into the hotel. Laude’s body was discovered later that evening in a hotel bathroom.

From staff reports

Afghan leader thanks US troops

By JON HARPER
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visited the Pentagon on Monday to thank U.S. troops and veterans who served and sacrificed in Afghanistan.

About 850,000 servicemembers deployed to Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014. More than 20,000 were wounded and 2,215 died fighting America’s longest war.

“It’s a rare pleasure to be with you today ... to say ‘thank you’ on behalf of a grateful nation to people in this building and the larger U.S. community who have sacrificed continuously since September 11th to bring us freedom and hope,” Ghani told hundreds of servicemembers, veterans, military families and officials gathered in the courtyard of the Pentagon, where almost 200 people died after terrorists crashed a plane

into the building in 2001. “Each one of you has left a legacy.”

In the audience was retired Army Col. Susan Myers, the widow of Army Maj. Gen. Harold Greene. Greene was killed last year in an insider attack at the Marshal Fahim National Defense University in Afghanistan, making him the first general officer killed overseas since the Vietnam War.

Also in attendance was Army Capt. Jeremy Haynes, who was severely wounded in the same attack that took Greene’s life. After multiple operations and a recovery period at Walter Reed, Haynes defied expectations and was able to walk again.

After pointing out the physical toll that the war has taken on the U.S. military, Ghani referenced the psychological wounds that many troops have suffered.

“I also understand that Afghanistan has marked you,” he said. “When you wake up

at night, sometimes you’re not sure whether you’re back there or here.”

In addition to the price paid in blood, the American war effort cost nearly \$700 billion, and more than \$100 billion has been allocated for reconstruction projects.

Ghani highlighted the development efforts that U.S. troops and other Americans made, and thanked American taxpayers for contributing their “hard-earned dollars” to his country.

“You were not there just to fight,” he said. “You built schools, you built dams, you built roads ... The physical infrastructure is great and it’s changed lives.”

He ended his remarks by saying he hopes Afghanistan War veterans will someday return to his country in a much different role.

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VA rule decried as hindering veterans

By HEATH DRUZIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Beginning today, veterans filing or appealing claims must use standardized forms, a controversial move that the Department of Veterans Affairs says will streamline the process, but some advocates say it will cost tens of thousands of veterans their benefits.

“This change is largely unnecessary and it’s been made solely for the convenience of

the VA,” said Gerald Manard, Veterans of Foreign Wars National Veterans Service deputy director.

Until now, veterans have been able to begin the claims or appeals process by submitting a letter or even a scrap of paper. That informal system preserved the initial date of their claim, meaning any benefits awarded would go back to the date that the VA received the note. Under the new system, benefits will still go back to the date of claim or appeal, but the clock starts

only when a veteran files standardized VA paperwork.

If the VA receives a handwritten note, department officials will send back a response informing the veteran of the proper paperwork and where to find it, though they will not send the paperwork itself. Replacing the informal claim is an “intent to file” form, for those who want to file a claim but still need to gather more information or documentation.

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US carrier Roosevelt makes visit to UK coast

NAPLES, Italy — The USS Theodore Roosevelt steamed off the British coast on Sunday, a rare visit to the region by an American aircraft carrier.

Defense ministers from the

United Kingdom, Sweden and Finland visited the Roosevelt on Sunday to observe flight operations off the coast near Portsmouth, according to a news release from the Navy 6th Fleet, which commands American ships in European waters. Adm. Mark Ferguson, commander of U.S. Naval For-

ces Europe-Africa, greeted each minister aboard the carrier.

U.S. carriers have spent limited time in Europe in recent years, mostly moving through the region on their way to or from operations in the Middle East.

From staff reports

Keselowski capitalizes on caution

The Associated Press

FONTANA, Calif. — While Kevin Harvick chased Kurt Busch down the stretch in a battle of the best cars in the Fontana field, Brad Keselowski was buried in 17th place — until the yellow flags started flying.

A caution for debris allowed Keselowski to move up to sixth. When a second flag went up, he took four new tires while Harvick and Busch got two.

Keselowski burned that extra rubber all the way to Victory Lane.

Keselowski roared past Busch on the final lap and held off the streaking Harvick to win at Fontana on Sunday, earning his first NASCAR victory of the

season in a wild finish.

"I knew [Harvick] and [Busch] had been the class of the weekend and deserved to win on speed," Keselowski said after his 17th career Sprint Cup victory. "Maybe we kind of stole one today."

Although their Team Penske Ford led one lap, Keselowski and crew chief Paul Wolfe concocted a strategy to capitalize on the green-white-checked finish after a caution for debris prevented Busch from cruising to a probable victory. They made up track position under the first yellow flag, and Wolfe then made the winning decision after Kyle Larson's bumper flew off to cause another caution.

"Paul made the call to come down pit

road and put four tires on, and I said, 'Well, this could either go really good or really bad,'" Keselowski said. "I didn't know which one it was going to be. Some guys stayed out, some guys took two tires, all kinds of different strategies."

"On the restart, we were just able to find our way through the lanes and get to the front there and somehow end up in Victory Lane leading the last lap there," he added. "That's kind of a race car driver's dream. This is one we're going to sit back and go, 'Wow,' for a while."

Keselowski slipped underneath Busch for the decisive pass, taking advantage of the California speedway's wide racing surface. He had never finished better

than 18th on this track, which he thinks is the best in NASCAR.

Although Greg Biffle crashed behind them during that final lap, NASCAR let the field keep racing while Biffle got his car off the track, and Keselowski finished strong.

"At the end, we caught some breaks and made the most of the breaks we caught," Keselowski said.

Harvick fell just short of a three-race West Coast sweep, but finished second to extend his remarkable streak of top-two Sprint Cup finishes to eight races dating to last season. Only Richard Petty ever did it better, setting the NASCAR record with 11 straight in 1975.

Sharper sentenced for sex assault

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Former NFL All-Pro safety Darren Sharper was sentenced to nine years in federal prison Monday immediately after he pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting a woman in Arizona, marking the first change of plea of the day for the former safety accused of drugging and assaulting women in four states.

Sharper on Monday admitted to charges of sexual assault and attempted sexual assault arising from the 2013 Arizona case. It is very unusual to sentence defendants immediately after a guilty plea, which normally takes weeks or months.

Sharper appeared in the Phoenix courtroom by video-conferencing from Los Angeles. He also is expected to change his plea in person in Los Angeles on similar allegations. Similar hearings will follow in Las Vegas this week and in New Orleans in the next month.

In each state, he's accused of drugging and sexually assaulting women when they were unconscious or otherwise unable to resist or consent.

Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Warren Granville said Sharper will serve his time in federal cus-

tody and that the Louisiana case will be resolved through a federal court.

In Arizona, Sharper admitted sexually assaulting one victim, though police say he drugged and sexually assaulted three women, at an apartment in the Phoenix suburb of Tempe in November.

Authorities say a search of the Tempe apartment turned up a shot glass with a white residue that turned out to be zolpidem, and California investigators discovered that Sharper had a prescription for the drug.

Last year, Sharper's attorneys said their client did not make the drinks that authorities say he used to drug the women.

One of the women told police she hadn't had any alcohol that night until Sharper insisted she drink a shot. Another young woman said she had been drugged, then went to bed, locked her door and wasn't attacked.

The next day, one of the women confronted Sharper, who denied wrongdoing, according to the reports.

The reports said Sharper was in Arizona to visit a woman who lived at the apartment. The two had met about a year earlier in Las Vegas.

Spurs cruise past Hawks

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Tony Parker can't really explain why the San Antonio Spurs have been mediocre on the road this season.

In Sunday's game, at least, Parker liked how the Spurs took a big lead on the Eastern Conference-leading Atlanta Hawks and never let up.

"For whatever reason, we haven't had the same rhythm like in years past," said Parker, a four-time NBA champion. "It felt good to get one against a very good team."

Tiago Splitter scored a season-high 23 points, Kawhi Leonard added 20 points and the Spurs won their third straight game with an easy 114-95 victory over the Hawks. Atlanta dropped three in a row for the first time this season.

Clippers 107, Pelicans 100: Blake Griffin scored 23 points, Chris Paul had 23 points and 11 assists, and host Los Angeles put a crimp in New Orleans' playoff hopes with a victory on Sunday.

Thunder 93, Heat 75: Russell Westbrook had 12 points, 10 rebounds and 17 assists for his 10th triple-double of the season to lead host Oklahoma City.

Cavaliers 108, Bucks 90: LeBron James scored 28 points and sparked a key second-half run with an emphatic dunk to lead visiting Cleveland.

Raptors 106, Knicks 89: DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points, Tyler Hansbrough added a season-high 18 and host Toronto won for the third time in four games.

Pistons 105, Celtics 97 (OT): Andre Drummond had 18 points and 22 rebounds, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored seven of his 27 points in overtime and visiting Detroit beat Boston.

Suns 98, Mavericks 92: Archie Goodwin sank the go-ahead three-pointer, Markieff Morris added a critical jumper in the final 30 seconds for host Phoenix.

Nuggets 119, Magic 100: Danilo Gallinari scored a career-high 40 points and former Orlando guard Jameer Nelson came off the bench to ignite a big rally for visiting Denver.

Kings 109, Wizards 86: Rudy Gay scored 26 points and host Sacramento led most of the way in beating Washington for its second straight victory.

Hornets 109, Timberwolves 98: Mo Williams scored 24 points, Michael Kidd-Gilchrist and Al Jefferson each added 18 and visiting Charlotte moved into eighth place in the Eastern Conference.

Lakers 101, 76ers 87: Jeremy Lin scored a season-high 29 points, and host Los Angeles won the first meeting of the season between two of the NBA's worst teams.

Stepan helps NY blow out Anaheim

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Derek Stepan broke out of a long slump with two goals and an assist, and the New York Rangers caught the Western Conference-leading Anaheim Ducks atop the NHL standings with a 7-2 rout Sunday night.

Stepan, who had no points in his previous 12 games, scored a goal in each of the first two periods as the Rangers found their missing offense while playing the second of back-to-back games. They snapped the Ducks' four-game winning streak as Anaheim (46-21-7) began a five-game trip.

Chris Kreider, Carl Hagelin, J.T. Miller, Jesper Fast and Derick Brassard also scored for New York. The Rangers (46-18-7), Ducks, and Montreal Canadiens all have 99 points, but New York has played fewer games than both.

Cam Talbot got off to a rare slow start, allowing two goals to Anaheim's Corey Perry in the first period when the Ducks had 17 shots. Talbot was perfect the rest of the way.

Lightning 5, Bruins 3: J.T. Brown and Anton Stralman scored 15 seconds apart soon after Tampa Bay cap-

tain Steven Stamkos got into a fight, and the Lightning stopped a 10-game losing streak against visiting Boston.

Tampa Bay also got goals from Vladislav Namestnikov, Jason Garrison and Ondrej Palat. The Lightning's last win over Boston was on Mar. 13, 2012, a 6-1 victory.

Red Wings 2, Blues 1 (OT): Justin Abdelkader's power-play goal 24 seconds into overtime lifted host Detroit.

The teams reignited their old Western Conference rivalry, accumulating 36 penalty minutes in a third period that included multiple skirmishes on the ice. The Red Wings had a man advantage for the final 1:21 of regulation and the opening moments of overtime.

Canucks 3, Coyotes 1: Alexander Edler's shot glanced off the post and bounced off goaltender Mike Smith's back and in with 3:13 left to snap a tie for visiting Vancouver.

A day after a stirring win in Los Angeles, the Canucks had hit the post four previous times while Smith stopped 41 shots in a remarkable performance a day after inadvertently banking a clearance pass off Brandon Sutter's backside and into his own net. But Edler's goal on the power play helped the second-place Canucks move four points ahead of idle Calgary in the Pacific Division.



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East regional

Michigan St. ousts No. 2 UVA

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Travis Trice received a text message Sunday from Golden State Warriors forward and former Michigan State player Draymond Green that read: "Don't let this be your last game."

The Spartans' senior guard texted back, "It won't."

Trice made sure of that Sunday, scoring 23 points and helping Michigan State knock second-seeded Virginia out of the NCAA tournament for the second straight year, 60-54.

The 6-foot, 175-pound Trice scored 13 of his team's first 15 points on 5-for-5 shooting, including three three-pointers, to help the Spartans build a 15-4 lead.

Branden Dawson added 15 points and nine rebounds for the seventh-seeded Spartans,

who advanced to the Sweet 16 for the seventh time in the last eight seasons under coach Tom Izzo. The Spartans will play Oklahoma in Syracuse, New York, on Friday.

"Big-time players make big-time plays [and] that's what Travis did," said Dawson, who started playing with Trice in AAU ball.

With top seed Villanova having lost Saturday, it is the first time a No. 1 and 2 seed from the same region didn't advance to the Sweet 16 since Kentucky and Gonzaga in 2004.

The Cavaliers (30-4), the first Atlantic Coast Conference team to lose after a 9-0 start in the tournament, were led by Anthony Gill's 11 points and Darion Atkins' 10 points and 14 rebounds.

No. 3 Oklahoma 72, No. 11 Dayton 66: Facing a deficit and a

fired-up Dayton team, fueled by its fans who packed the house in Columbus, Ohio again, Oklahoma went on lockdown.

A steal, then another, and then a third helped Oklahoma get the lead. A block by Buddy Hield put Dayton away.

Hield and Jordan Woodard led a second-half defensive surge as Oklahoma quieted the Flyers and their fans to advance to the second weekend of the NCAA tournament with a 72-66 victory Sunday.

Coach Lon Kruger said it wasn't a matter of doing anything differently on defense — just doing it better.

"I thought we just took on some individual challenges a little bit within the team concept at that point," said Kruger, who became the second coach to take four schools (Kansas State, Florida and UNLV) to the round of 16.

South regional

No. 2 'Zags cruise past No. 7 Iowa

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Kyle Wiltjer and Kevin Pangos met at halfcourt for a hug and a high five while coach Mark Few pumped his fists on the sideline.

Gone are the questions about Gonzaga's five-year run of failing to advance from the first weekend of the NCAA Tournament.

The second-seeded Bulldogs are back in the Sweet 16 after racing past No. 7 seed Iowa 87-68 on Sunday in the South Region.

Now the question now is just how far these Bulldogs will go.

"There's no greater feeling than this, because I haven't been able to experience it, and most of the guys in the locker room haven't," Pangos said. "So for us to be able to get past this is definitely a great feeling. But it's not like we were stressing over what people were talking about. We just wanted to do it selfishly for ourselves and our fan base."

Wiltjer scored 13 of his 24 points during Gonzaga's flawless first half, Domantas Sabonis added 18 points and the Bulldogs advanced to the round of 16 for the first time since 2009.

After five straight departures on the first weekend, the Bulldogs (34-2) are back in the regional semifinals, thanks to an efficient offensive performance in the first 20 minutes that Iowa could never overcome.

Waiting in Houston on Friday night is No. 11 seed UCLA, the same Bruins program Gonzaga fell short against in the round of 16 in 2006.

"It is kind of a weight off because a lot of people doubted us to even get to the 16 this year and we have a great team," Gary Bell Jr. said.

Gonzaga will make just its third appearance on the second weekend of the tournament since 2001. After looking unimpressive in an opening victory over 15th-seeded North Dakota State, the Bulldogs dominated Iowa.

Wiltjer made his first six shots before finally missing a three-point attempt midway through the second half. He made 10 of 12 shots and 4 of 6 three-pointers. His 24 points came in just 25 minutes, slowed by early foul trouble.

No. 1 Duke 68, No. 8 San Diego State 49: Jahliil Okafor

showed off all the moves — a spin, a dribble drive, a short jumper — that has made Duke's freshman big man possibly the nation's top player.

When he's playing like that, the Blue Devils have a shot to finish as the nation's best team right alongside him.

Okafor scored 18 of his 26 points in a dominating first half for top-seeded Duke, sending the freshmen-led Blue Devils back to the Sweet 16 to continue their push for coach Mike Krzyzewski's fifth national title.

Duke — holding a No. 1 seed for the 11th time in 18 seasons but its first since 2011 — advanced to face fifth-seeded Utah in Houston's South Regional semifinals. The Blue Devils (31-4) reached the Sweet 16 for the 22nd time under Coach K, who said this group featuring four freshmen among its eight scholarship players is still improving.

"They're together," Krzyzewski said. "We have talent, we're getting older by experience, and so we just — we got better here these two games."

Midwest regional

Wichita St. knocks off No. 2 Kansas

The Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — The boys from Wichita State had been hearing it in text messages from friends, and on social media from total strangers: Don't let the chance to stick it to Kansas slip away.

The Shockers would never dream of it. Finally getting a chance to play the school that continually spurns them, Fred VanVleet and the rest of the Missouri Valley champs rolled to a 78-65 victory over the second-seeded Jayhawks on Sunday, earning a trip to the Sweet 16 in the sweetest way possible.

"There's so much to be said about this rivalry with Kansas," VanVleet said, "but really, it's all about the fans. What better story is there for Wichita State?"

The Shockers have tried for years to schedule a game against Kansas, but the dominant school in the Sunflower State has always refused, arguing it would have nothing to gain from it.

After the beating they got Sunday, it's no wonder the Jayhawks never want anything to do with Wichita State.

Tekele Cotton scored 19 points for the seventh-seeded Shockers (30-4), and VanVleet finished with 17. Evan Wessel hit four three-pointers and scored 12, helping his team advance to Cleveland for a Midwest Regional semifinal against Notre Dame.

"We don't have McDonald's All-Americans, we don't have guys that have been in the spotlight, and been given that pedestal," VanVleet said. "We work for everything we've got, from managers to coaches to our preacher to, you know, whoever. We've scrapped and fought our whole lives."

They didn't stop on Sunday. If anything, they scrapped harder.

"We'd been playing anybody else, it would have meant the same, advancing to the Sweet 16," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "It just so happens we played an in-

state team to go where we wanted to go, and they were much better than us."

No. 5 West Virginia 69, No. 4 Maryland 59: It's OK if others think it

looks like wrestling on hardwood. Coach Bob Huggins believes West Virginia's style of play is a work of art.

"Everywhere we go people say, 'Well, it's not pretty,'" Huggins said after his Mountaineers manhandled Maryland at Columbus, Ohio, in the NCAA tournament on Sunday night. "I think it's beautiful."

Devin Williams had 16 points and 10 rebounds, and the Mountaineers scored 16 second-chance points and forced 23 turnovers in a masterpiece of defense and determination.

The reward for their strength and sweat is a trip to Cleveland to take on undefeated Kentucky in the Sweet 16. The fifth-seeded Mountaineers (25-9) get their shot at Kentucky on Thursday night.

West regional

No. 1 Wisconsin tops No. 8 Oregon

The Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Wisconsin wasn't at its best against Oregon. Fortunately for the Badgers, they didn't have to be to earn a return trip to the Sweet 16.

The Badgers beat the Ducks for the second straight year in the NCAA tournament's round of 32, this time 72-65 at CenturyLink Center on Sunday night.

Wisconsin had its worst shooting game in a month and got outrebounded by the smaller Ducks, and Big Ten player of the year Frank Kaminsky was quiet offensively for long stretches.

Still, the Badgers (33-3) were able to get out to a quick lead and hold on, and now they're headed to the regional semifinals.

The West's No. 1 seed will play No. 4 North Carolina on Thursday in Los Angeles.

"We're definitely excited and thrilled to be there, but we're not as in awe or shocked as we were last year," Nigel Hayes said. "Last year, we were jumping around up and down on the court, celebrating. This time, it was 'Hoo-rah, good job guys. We have the next game to take care of.'"

Sam Dekker scored 17 points, hitting a couple big baskets after Oregon (26-10) had tied it late. Kaminsky had 16 points, with no shot bigger than his putback of Hayes' missed free throw to make it a 10-point game with 44 seconds left.

Hayes had 14 points. Pac-12 player of the year Joseph Young

had 30 points for Oregon.

"We had ourselves in a position against an experienced, well-coached and very good team," Ducks coach Dana Altman said. "I'm sorry we couldn't get it finished off for these guys so we could keep playing."

Oregon outrebounded the Badgers 34-32, outscored them 30-24 in the lane and had four blocks to Wisconsin's three.

"Oregon made their run to fight back," Dekker said, "just as a good team always does. And good teams respond to those runs. We settled in, and guys weren't going to get too riled up. We got a big 6-0 run there and opened up the lead and held on from there. It's a game of runs, and you've got to respond at the right time."