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Iraq forces push into militant-held Fallujah

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraqi forces started pushing into the city of Fallujah on Monday as a wave of bombings claimed by the Islamic State group in Baghdad and near the Iraqi capital killed at least 24 people.

The advance is part of an offensive to rout militants from Fallujah and recapture the city, which has been held by the Islamic State group for over two years. The offensive on Fallujah, backed by paramilitary troops and aerial support from the U.S.-led coalition, was first launched about a week ago.

The battle for the strategic city is likely to be protracted, with Iraqi forces advancing slowly to minimize civilian casualties. Tens of thousands of civilians are believed to be inside the city, trapped by the fighting.

Meanwhile, the bombings by the Islamic State group, which has been behind

several recent deadly attacks in Baghdad and beyond, are seen as an attempt by the militants to distract the security forces' attention from the front lines.

The deadliest of Monday's attacks took place in the northern, Shiite-dominated Shaab neighborhood of Baghdad, where a suicide bomber rammed his explosives-laden car into a checkpoint next to a commercial area, killing eight civilians and three soldiers. The explosion also wounded up to 14 people, a police officer said.

A suicide car bomber struck an outdoor market in the town of Tarmiyah, about 31 miles north of Baghdad, killing seven civilians and three policemen, another police officer said, adding that 24 people were wounded in that bombing.

And in Baghdad's eastern Shiite Sadr City district, a bomb motorcycle went off at a market, killing three and wounding

10, police said. Medical officials confirmed casualty figures. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to release information.

In an online statement, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attacks, saying they targeted members of the Shiite militias and a government office. The Associated Press could not verify the authenticity of the statement, but it was posted on a militant website commonly used by extremists.

Since launching the Fallujah offensive and until Monday, Iraqi government troops mostly have been fighting the Islamic State group in the outskirts of the city to tighten the siege ahead of a planned final push into its center. By Sunday, the troops had recaptured 80 percent of the territory around Fallujah, according to Iraqi Maj. Dhia Thamir.

Drone strikes target Taliban in Afghanistan

By Chad Garland

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A series of U.S. drone strikes killed at least 17 Taliban fighters, officials said Monday, as heavy fighting in southern Afghanistan left dozens of policemen dead.

In a separate operation, government forces arrested a prolific Pakistani bomb maker for the Taliban, a police spokesman said.

The U.S. drone strikes were carried out Sunday "against individuals threatening the force" in the Shah Wali Kot district of southern Kandahar province, U.S. Air Force Capt. Matthew Chism, a spokesman in Kabul for the NATO-led mission, said in a statement.

The international coalition transitioned from a combat mission to a train-advise-assist mission known as Resolute Support in January 2015. Pub-

licly disclosed rules of engagement and agreements with the Afghan government generally allow international advisers to attack Taliban targets in self-defense.

Kandahar police spokesman Zia Durrani told Stars and Stripes that U.S. forces carried out the Sunday night airstrike in cooperation with Afghan forces. He said at least 22 militants were killed, but a separate statement from the Defense Ministry put the death toll at 17.

Durrani said the airstrikes targeted Taliban hideouts in the Kata Sang area of the district. No civilian casualties were reported from the airstrike, he said. There was no immediate comment from the Taliban.

The drone attacks follow a series of high-profile U.S. and Afghan operations that have killed top Taliban leaders.

On May 21, U.S. drone strikes killed the supreme Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour

in Pakistan, near the Afghan border.

Mansour was killed nearly a year after officially taking charge of the insurgent group after it was revealed that his predecessor, the one-eyed founder of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammad Omar, had died in 2013. Mansour's successor, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, was announced last week.

Omar's son, Mullah Yaqoub, and the head of the deadly Haqqani network, Sirajuddin Haqqani, were named Akhundzada's deputies.

Yaqoub is leading the fight in the south, The Associated Press reported.

Fighting has intensified across the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan as the Taliban shift their offensive to the south, where the opium poppy harvest — the Taliban's main source of revenue — has ended.

Military officials have pre-

dicted fighting would intensify in recent weeks, but they also have said Afghan government forces are taking a more offensive posture against the Taliban compared with last year, when they suffered heavy losses and major setbacks.

In the past week, Afghan security forces have killed the shadow governors in Helmand and neighboring Uruzgan province, as well as the military commission chief in Uruzgan.

Durrani also said a separate effort by the Kandahar police led to the arrest of a Pakistani mine maker in the district Monday, during a special military operation.

Mohammad Amin, a resident of Pakistan's Punjab province, has been making improvised explosive devices for the Taliban for five years, Durrani said, and has admitted to making hundreds of bombs.

China lashes out at defense secretary

Associated Press

BEIJING — China on Monday accused U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter of harboring a Cold War mentality and saying Beijing has no interest in “playing a role in a Hollywood movie” of Washington’s design.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told re-

porters that Carter’s comment last week about China creating a “Great Wall of self-isolation” was merely an attempt to provide cover for U.S. plans to deploy additional military forces to the Asia-Pacific region.

“China has no interest in any form of Cold War, nor are we interested in playing a role in a Hollywood movie written and

directed by certain U.S. military officials. However, China has no fear of and will counter any actions that threaten and undermine China’s sovereignty and security,” Hua said.

In a commencement speech Friday at the U.S. Naval Academy, Carter said China wants and enjoys the benefits of free trade and a free Internet but

sometimes chooses to restrict both. He said the U.S. also continues to be concerned about Beijing’s actions in the disputed South China Sea, where Beijing has sought to strengthen its claim to almost the entire region by building new islands atop coral outcroppings and adding airstrips, harbors and military infrastructure.

Boy rescued after gorilla shot at zoo

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Panicked zoo visitors watched helplessly and shouted, “Stay calm!” while one woman yelled, “Mommy loves you!” as a gorilla weighing more than 400 pounds loomed over a 4-year-old boy who had fallen into a shallow moat at the Cincinnati Zoo.

The boy sat still in the water, looking up at the gorilla as the animal touched the child’s hand and back. At one point, it looked as though the gorilla helped the youngster stand up.

Two witnesses said they thought the gorilla was trying to protect the boy at first before getting spooked by the screams of onlookers. The animal then picked the child up out of the moat and dragged him to another spot inside the exhibit, zoo officials said.

Fearing for the boy’s life, the zoo’s dangerous-animal response team shot and killed the 17-year-old ape, named Harambe.

The child, whose name was not released, was released from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center on Saturday night, hours after the fall.

His family said in a statement on Sunday that the boy was home and doing fine.

“We extend our heartfelt thanks for the quick action by the Cincinnati Zoo staff. We know that this was a very difficult decision for them, and that they are grieving the loss of

their gorilla,” the family said.

Zoo Director Thane Maynard said the gorilla didn’t appear to be attacking the child but was “an extremely strong” animal in an agitated situation. He said tranquilizing the gorilla wouldn’t have knocked him out immediately, leaving the boy in danger.

“They made a tough choice and they made the right choice because they saved that little boy’s life,” Maynard said.

Zoo officials said the 4-year-old climbed through a barrier at the Gorilla World exhibit and dropped 15 feet into the moat Saturday afternoon. He was in there for about 10 minutes.

Two female gorillas also were in the enclosure. They both complied with calls from zoo staff to leave the exhibit, but Harambe stayed, Maynard said.

Witness Kim O’Connor said she heard the boy say he wanted to get into the water with the gorillas. She said the boy’s mother was with several other young children.

“The mother’s like, ‘No, you’re not. No, you’re not,’” O’Connor told WLWT-TV.

O’Connor shared video that she and her family recorded of the boy and Harambe. The two appear in a corner of the exhibit while visitors yell, “Somebody call the zoo!” and “Mommy’s right here!” The station did not air portions of the video showing the gorilla dragging the

boy.

Another woman said that just before the boy fell, she saw him in bushes beyond a fence around the exhibit. “I tried to grab for him. I started yelling at him to come back,” Brittany Nicely told The Cincinnati Enquirer. “Everybody started screaming and going crazy. It happened so fast.”

Zoo staff cleared the area, and visitors heard gunfire a few minutes later. Firefighters then rushed into the enclosure and picked up the boy.

Lt. Steve Saunders, a Cincinnati police spokesman, said there are no plans to charge the parents.

Maynard called the killing a tragic death of a critically endangered species and a huge loss for the zoo and the gorilla population worldwide. The gorilla came to Cincinnati in 2015 from the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas.

Visitors left flowers at a gorilla statue Sunday. Gorilla World remained closed, but the rest of the zoo was open.

One father said he was shocked that the boy was able to get past the fence and bushes that surround the exhibit. He expects the zoo will take a close at it. “They probably thought the moat and the fence was good enough,” said Alex Salcedo. “Unfortunately, it doesn’t seem like it was if a 4-year-old can get through.”

Obama marks holiday at Arlington

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. — President Barack Obama laid a wreath Monday at the Tomb of the Unknowns to honor members of the military who died serving their country.

Obama’s appearance at Arlington National Cemetery carries on a longstanding presidential tradition and comes as the U.S. struggles to end various conflicts in the Middle East.

In his remarks, Obama called for Americans to honor the fallen by caring for those they leave behind — their families and their battle buddies who come home.

Special operations forces continue to serve in dangerous missions in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, even as the U.S. military presence in the latter two countries has been greatly reduced under Obama’s watch.

The focus in Iraq and Syria is on defeating the Islamic State group. In Afghanistan, U.S. troops work with Afghan forces battling the Taliban.

Prior to traveling to Arlington, Obama held a breakfast at the White House for family members of fallen servicemembers and veterans’ groups.

Rossi stretches final drops of gas to win the Indy 500

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Alexander Rossi spent the biggest weekend in auto racing last year in Monaco, looking for a television that was broadcasting the Indianapolis 500. Back then, American was still hoping he could land a full-time ride in Formula One.

He eventually ran out of time.

On Sunday, in the biggest race of his life and as a rookie driver to boot, Rossi almost ran out of gas.

Almost.

Instead, the 24-year-old outlasted his faster rivals and his fuel tank for a stunning victory in the historic 100th running of the Indianapolis 500, landing him atop the biggest podium in motorsports after his car ran out of gas on the victory lap. This was a win no one — not even Rossi — could have predicted when he decided to return the United States and give IndyCar a chance.

"He had no idea. He honestly had no idea," said team co-owner Michael Andretti. "He was 100 percent Europe, the way he was training and everything. He never even saw an oval except for Phoenix before this."

Indeed, Rossi decided at age 10 he wanted to be an F1 driver. He left California for Europe six years later and spent a frustrating time bouncing around as a test driver.

But his options had grown cold, and when Bryan Herta needed a miracle to remain in IndyCar, he signed Rossi and merged his team with Andretti Autosport. That partnership gave Rossi four teammates to work with at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and the 24-year-old California native needed help from all of them to make Sunday's win possible at the centennial edition of "The Greatest Spectacle In Racing."

"We've had our struggles. It's been

a new experience for me," said Rossi. "We've worked very hard every day to try to improve and get things better. It's just a huge testament to the great people I have around me."

Rossi's win allowed the long-suffering Andretti family to celebrate in the biggest race of their storied careers and it left the top drivers in the field fuming over Rossi's good fortune.

Rossi, a 66-to-1 long shot, stretched his final tank of gas 90 miles to cycle into the lead as others had to duck into the pits for a splash of fuel in the waning laps. He was sputtering on the final lap, working his clutch and getting screamed at by Herta to conserve fuel. He made it — barely.

His victory celebration came only after his Honda was towed in so he could climb out to take that sweet sip of milk.

"I have no idea how we pulled that off," he declared.

"The only actual site of an oval that I'd ever been to was Phoenix in February, I'm definitely a rookie on ovals," he said. "Obviously street courses I have an understanding about. But IndyCar is a whole different can of worms than anything I've been a part of. It's incredibly competitive and incredibly close. You have to be perfect all three days, everyone around you, drivers and teams."

Rossi didn't have the speed of Carlos Munoz, who was charging hard over the final 50 miles. But Munoz also had to stop for gas and didn't have a chance to race his teammate for the victory, even though Rossi was running on fumes and completed the final lap at a snail's pace of 179.784 mph.

The Colombian settled for second in a 1-2 finish for Andretti Autosport and for Honda. Munoz seemed devastated after his second runner-up finish in four years.

"I was really disappointed when it comes with fuel and you lose the race because of that," he said. "Half a lap short. What can I say?"

Rossi became just the ninth rookie to win the Indy 500 and the first since Helio Castroneves in 2001.

Although he's a relief driver for Manor Racing in F1, Rossi has no scheduled F1 races and he described his role as a reserve driver: "I sit around and pretend to look important. There is no driving involved. I drive to the track in a rental car."

He was important Sunday, particularly for an organization that was hoping Marco Andretti would give them their first Indy 500 title since patriarch Mario Andretti won in 1969.

Instead, Marco Andretti never contended on a day at least three of his teammates were among the best in the field. Ryan Hunter-Reay and Townsend Bell combined to lead 64 of the first 119 laps, but the Americans were knocked from contention when Bell clipped Castroneves as he left pit road. The contact caused Bell to crash into Hunter-Reay.

Herta decided to gamble with Rossi on fuel strategy, and it's the only thing that made him a late contender.

As the laps wound down, American Josef Newgarden and Munoz repeatedly swapped the lead. Both had to stop for gas, Rossi moved into the lead and it was all his from there. Michael Andretti earlier this month was voted by the 27 living winners as the best driver never to win the race, but he has now won the 500 four times as a car owner.

Newgarden finished third and was followed by Tony Kanaan, Charlie Kimball and JR Hildebrand as Chevrolet drivers took spots three through six.

Dominant Truex wins in Charlotte

Associated Press

CONCORD, N.C. — Martin Truex Jr. didn't avoid ladders or black cats, never worried about cracking mirrors or stepping on cracks. He knew his bad luck on the Sprint Cup circuit would change.

Truex showed that in a big way Sunday night, leading a NASCAR-record 588 of 600 miles to win the Coca-Cola 600 — and break free of the bad luck that seemed to hit him when dominating races.

"The whole weekend was one of those fairytale weekends," said Truex, who started from the pole. "But even leading at the end, I thought, 'All right, when's the caution going to hit.' And it didn't."

Especially when things have gone as wrong as they had for Truex and his single-car Furniture Row team the past year.

He led 141 laps at Texas, yet got strung up by poor pit strategy and finished sixth. In Kansas this month, he was out front for 172 laps until a loose wheel knocked him back to 14th.

A year ago here, Truex led the most laps at 131, but fell to fifth when he pitted for fuel late and four cars, including winner Carl Edwards, stayed out.

Truex never let it get to him.

"I had confidence. I had faith," Truex said.

Truex won the fourth time on the series and the first time since last June at Pocono.

"We're going to keep pushing hard and work toward that championship goal," Truex said.

Kevin Harvick was second, followed by Jimmie Johnson, Denny Hamlin, Brad Keselowski and Kurt Busch.

Truex's win finished Memorial Day weekend's mega-day of high-end racing that began with Lewis Hamilton's win at the Monaco Grand Prix and continued with American rookie Alexander Rossi's surprise triumph in the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500.

Truex took the surprise out of this one early and was barely touched by the field. He was passed by Johnson on a restart 55 laps from the end, but Truex went back in front a lap later and was not pushed again.

He bettered Jim Paschal's mark of leading 335 laps to win at Charlotte in 1967.

Truex's single-car Furniture Row Racing team outclassed the armada of multi-car Sprint Cup powerhouses.

Four-time Coca-Cola 600 winner Johnson was on Truex's door a handful of times on restarts, then would fade back. Harvick, who won here in 2011 and 2013, was the best of rest as he got by Johnson 44 laps from the end — yet never made a serious run at the top.

"I mean they have had a few runs where they have just been the class of the field and things have kept them from Victory Lane," Johnson said. "Tonight he wasn't going to be denied there was no way around that."

Hamlin, who won the Xfinity event Saturday, topped the Joe Gibbs Racing entries, with Matt Kenseth in seventh.

IndyCar hopes interest from 500 carries into future races

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Even before Alexander Rossi sputtered across the finish line to win the Indianapolis 500, race organizers and IndyCar officials were looking to seize the momentum from the historic 100th running of the showcase event.

They've put together a new ad campaign, kicked off a ticket renewal effort and have drivers urging everyone in the series to promote the sport.

"It's time to take that, maximize it, to get these fans, get them excited," American driver Graham Rahal said. "Get them to re-up on their tickets for next year. Are

you going to see 400,000 here next year? No. Is it going to be as big as this year? Probably not. But I do think we can sustain it."

That is the hope, but there's no time for rest.

Race organizers have already released a sleek new logo for next year, which is tilted upward to signify that the race is moving forward. Ticket holders from this year's race have until June 19 to renew their tickets and receive special benefits including an invitation for a private party 101 days before the 2017 race.

The series is getting to work, too.

With 12 races left on the schedule, IndyCar will be airing new commercials

with a new message.

"The creative theme is that this is an epic season and while it doesn't mention anything specifically about the 500, that we're coming to their tracks with the same heroes, the same champions, the same cars and during the same season," Miles said.

All of it is giving IndyCar a high-profile chance to grow its fan base.

"I think this is a great opportunity to showcase what we have on track, our on track product and how great all these drivers are, how tight the competition is," driver Ryan Hunter-Reay said. "Hopefully we'll gain a lot of new followers."



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Kershaw misses win to cap May

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Clayton Kershaw did just about everything except win. And when his Los Angeles Dodgers came out on top anyway, that was good enough for him.

Adrian Gonzalez broke a ninth-inning tie with a two-run single off suddenly struggling closer Jeurys Familia, sending Los Angeles past the New York Mets 4-2 on Sunday night.

Curtis Granderson hit a tying triple for the Mets immediately after Kershaw was lifted with two outs in the eighth. But the Dodgers quickly regrouped for their sixth victory in seven games since losing four straight.

"There's no emotional letdown," Gonzalez said. "It's a tie game. First team to score for the most part is going to win that game. So that was our mentality."

Los Angeles took two of three at Citi Field before a trio of sellout crowds on a weekend when the NL champion Mets celebrated the 30th anniversary of their 1986 World Series crown.

The Dodgers won the season series 4-3 after New York captured a tense, five-game playoff between the teams in October.

"There were some fortunate things that happened obviously tonight, but, take it," Kershaw said. "Just celebrate tonight. We beat the Mets."

Kershaw struck out 10, walked none and capped a magnificent May with another sublime performance. He was in position to win his sixth consecutive start when manager Dave Roberts made a double-switch with a runner on first in the eighth, pulling Kershaw after 114 pitches.

The three-time Cy Young Award winner and 2014 NL MVP didn't look happy about it, handing the ball to Roberts and briskly walking off the mound without appearing to make much eye contact.

"It's a tough situation. That's why I'm not the manager," Kershaw said. "I think managers appreciate when you don't want to come out of the game and obviously I didn't want to and never really do. But you know what? He's making the decisions and you've just got to respect it."

Roberts went to lefty Adam Liberatore, who had limited left-handed batters to a .107 average this season (3-for-28). But the move backfired when Granderson hit an RBI triple to the right-field fence over a leaping Yasiel Puig.

"I made the decision and I've got to live with it," Roberts said. "I believe in the other guys, too."

Liberatore (1-0) struck out Asdrubal Cabrera, who homered earlier off Kershaw, to end the inning.

Familia blew a four-run lead in the ninth inning of the series opener only to get bailed out by Granderson's game-winning homer. This time, the reliever wasn't so fortunate.

"He's one of the best in baseball. This is very uncharacteristic of him ever since he's taken over the closing job. So we're in as big a shock as anybody," Mets manager Terry Collins said.

Familia (2-1) allowed more runs in the Dodgers series (six) than he previously had all season (five).

Kenley Jansen worked a perfect ninth for his 15th save in 17 chances.

Gonzalez had an RBI single and Justin Turner drove in Chase Utley with a groundout to help the Dodgers build a 2-0 lead against Bartolo Colon, who pitched six solid innings in his first outing since his 43rd birthday.

Kershaw yielded four hits and finished 5-0 with a 0.91 ERA in six May starts. He had 65 strikeouts and two walks during the month. The left-hander leads the majors with 105 strikeouts and has walked only five. That's the best ratio for any major league pitcher when he reached 100 strikeouts in a season, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Royals 5, White Sox 4: Cheslor Cuthbert drive in the go-ahead run with an infield hit in a three-run eighth inning, and the host Kansas City Royals rallied for the third straight game in a win over the Chicago White Sox on Sunday.

Chicago wasted a 4-2 lead in the eighth after failing to protect a 5-2 seventh-inning advantage on Friday and a 7-1 ninth-in-

ning margin on Saturday. White Sox relievers allowed 17 runs, 15 hits and eight walks over 6 1/3 innings in the three-game series, and Chicago has lost 14 of its last 18 games.

Seeking to become the major leagues' first 10-game winner, Chris Sale left with a 4-2 lead after seven innings.

Yankees 2, Rays 1: Starlin Castro's two-run, seventh-inning homer off Jake Odorizzi was the Yankees' only hit of the game, enough to give visiting New York a victory over Tampa Bay.

According to Baseball Reference data going back to 1913, the Yankees' only other one-hit win was when Charlie Mullen had an RBI single to beat Cleveland in six innings in a doubleheader nightcap on July 10, 1914.

Red Sox 5, Blue Jays 3: Dustin Pedroia hit an RBI double off Drew Storen in the 11th as visiting Boston avoided a three-game sweep.

Orioles 6, Indians 4: Hyun Soo Kim's first major league home run broke a seventh-inning tie against Jeff Manship (0-1), and Nolan Reimold added a leadoff homer in the ninth for visiting Baltimore.

Nationals 10, Cardinals 2: Stephen Strasburg (9-0) won his 12th consecutive decision dating to last season, pitching six innings of one-run ball as host Washington salvaged a four-game split.

Strasburg improved to 12-0 in 15 starts since losing to the Mets on Sept. 9, and the Nationals have won all 15 of those games. The 12 consecutive winning decisions is a franchise record for a starter, breaking a mark shared by Livan Hernandez (2005) and Dennis Martinez (1989).

Marlins 7, Braves 3: Derek Dietrich hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer and drove in four runs before getting hurt on a foul ball hit into host Miami's dugout.

Dietrich's homer landed deep in the lower section of the right-field seats in the sixth, giving Miami a 3-1 lead. A former Georgia Tech star, Dietrich added a two-run double off Eric O'Flaherty in the seventh inning, then was hit by a foul ball off the bat of Christian Yelich in the ninth.

The team said X-rays were negative and Dietrich was to remain in Atlanta on Sunday night for further evaluations.

Brewers 5, Reds 4: Jonathan Lucroy drove in three runs, giving him nine RBIs in the series and sending visiting Cincinnati to its 12th loss in 13 games. Jonathan Villar scored three runs and drove in another and Milwaukee won for the fifth time in six games.

Cubs 7, Phillies 2: Ben Zobrist hit a three-run homer off Vince Velasquez (5-2) for a 5-0 lead in the third as host Chicago completed a three-game sweep and won its fifth straight.

Rangers 6, Pirates 2: Struggling sluggers Prince Fielder and Mitch Moreland homered during a four-run fourth inning for host Texas.

Twins 5, Mariners 4: Joe Mauer and Miguel Sano homered for his fourth straight game and Joe Mauer for his third as visiting Minnesota completed a three-game sweep.

Athletics 4, Tigers 2: Pinch-hitter Billy Butler had a two-run single in the sixth as host Oakland rallied.

Diamondbacks 6, Padres 3: Archie Bradley (4-5) struck out a career-high nine in 7 1/3 innings and host Arizona had its second straight five-run second inning.

Recalled from Triple-A, Bradley (2-0) allowed three runs, four hits and a walk. His innings total was his big league high.

Giants 8, Rockies 3: Hunter Pence had three of a record-tying eight doubles for visiting San Francisco.

Pence's double in the eighth helped equal a mark accomplished four times since the Giants moved to San Francisco after the 1957 season. Denard Span hit his first homer since April 4 as part of a 17-hit attack.

Astros 8, Angels 6 (13): Pinch-hitter Carlos Correa had a three-run homer off Mike Morin (1-1) in the 13th inning for visiting Houston.

Complete washout in Paris

Associated Press

PARIS — Persistent rain forced the cancellation of all matches Monday at the French Open, the first wash-out in 16 years at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament.

Organizers said abandoned matches would be rescheduled for Tuesday. But after a first week of often poor weather and with more rain forecast, they now must fit dozens of unfinished and postponed matches into an ever-smaller window for the tournament to have finals over the weekend as initially planned.

In women's singles, two fourth-round matches — Simona Halep vs. Samantha Stosur and Tsvetana Pironkova vs. Agnieszka Radwanska — were pulled off the court unfinished on Sunday evening because of rain and darkness. Initially rescheduled for Monday, the earliest they can now be completed is Tuesday, when quarterfinals are scheduled to start.

Those two will now be added to eight other fourth-round matches — four men's and four women's — that didn't even get started Monday before organizers announced in the early afternoon that there would be no let-up in the rain, washing out the entire day.

And there was no guarantee that Tuesday would be better: Weather bureau forecasts for coming days were grim, with more downpours expected Tuesday before a hoped-for break in the clouds on Wednesday.

The French Open is the only major tournament without a structure for play to continue under rain.

No roof is expected over Roland Garros' Court Philippe Chatrier before 2020, pushed back from 2018.

The last total wash-out in Paris was May 30, 2000, according to organizers.

The schedule, weather permitting, for Tuesday has top-ranked Novak Djokovic against 14th-seeded Roberto Bautista Agut in the first match on Chatrier, playing for a place in the quarterfinals.

They will be followed by defending champion Serena Williams in her fourth-round match against 18th-seeded Elina Svitolina. Venus Williams' match against 2015 semi-finalist Timea Bacsinszky was supposed to have been played on Chatrier on Monday but was rescheduled as the third match Tuesday on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Five of the first 10 times Venus Williams entered the French Open, she made it to at least the quarterfinals, including a run to the final in 2002.

Her most recent trip to Roland Garros of that length? That came all the way back in 2006.

Venus Williams can return to the round of eight at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament for the first time in a decade if she can beat Bacsinszky of Switzerland.

"I love Paris, so it's a good excuse to stay a little bit longer, right?" she joked. "I want to continue to play well. Each player is going to get better each round, naturally, so I can't take anything for granted."

She first competed at the French Open as a teen in 1997. Nearly 20 years later, the American is the oldest woman in the field, a few weeks shy of her 36th birthday.

Venus Williams owns seven major singles titles — five at Wimbledon, two at the U.S. Open — but has not been much of a factor at Roland Garros in recent years. She didn't participate in the 2011 tournament, then lost in the first or second round every year from 2012-15.

Spieth earns first PGA win in Texas

Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Jordan Spieth found the perfect cure for his Masters misery.

With an impressive back nine at Colonial, Spieth won at home in Texas for the first time on the PGA Tour. He had three consecutive birdies after making the turn, and three more in a row to finish his 5-under 65 on Sunday, including a chip-in birdie from behind the 17th green after a fortunate bounce off a marshal.

"In our third tournament back, to come back and close this one out the way we did is really, really special," Spieth said. "This day is a moment that'll go down, no matter what happens in the next 30 years of my career, this will be one of the most important days that I've ever had."

The second-ranked Spieth punctuated his eighth career victory with a 34-foot birdie putt when he needed only a bogey to

win the Dean & DeLuca Invitational.

At 17-under 263, Spieth finished three strokes ahead of Harris English (66). Colonial member Ryan Palmer and Webb Simpson tied for third at 13 under, both shooting 68 in the final group.

Last month at Augusta, Spieth blew a five-stroke lead on the back nine when trying to win the Masters for the second year in a row. There was then an extended break before he missed the cut at The Players Championship and then finished tied for 18th a week ago at the Byron Nelson before finally winning in the Lone Star State after three runner-up finishes there.

"The significance of it happening now ... because I wasn't sure how long it would take to get over the hurdle of having to come in to every single interview room, having to listen to crowds only talk about what happened a month ago," he said. "And it's very difficult, and I'm 22. It's not like I hadn't won, and we've won two majors."