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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Report: US could deploy 120K if attacked

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon has drafted plans to send up to 120,000 troops to the Middle East in the event Iran launches an attack on U.S. forces in the region or restarts its nuclear weapons program, The New York Times reported.

President Donald Trump dismissed the report as “fake news,” but added: “Would I do that? Absolutely.” He insisted the White House has not signed off on a troop increase but if it does “we’d send a hell of a lot more troops than that.”

The size of the purported force — 120,000 troops is roughly the number the U.S. used to invade Iraq in 2003 — has shocked some officials inside the Trump administration, the Times reported Monday, citing unnamed national security officials. The Times did not say the plan had been accepted but reported that it had been presented by acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan at a meeting of Trump’s top aides last week.

The report comes as tensions between Washington and Tehran have risen following what officials citing classified intelligence said were signs of possible threats to U.S. forces or interests in the region. It is not clear whether Trump himself has been briefed on the Pentagon plan. The Trump administration has warned that “Iran or its proxies” could be targeting ships in the Persian Gulf region. Saudi Arabia said this week that two of its oil tankers were sabotaged off the United Arab Emirates in attacks that caused “substantial damage.”

In Europe, there are concerns that the U.S. and Iran could stumble into a military confrontation.

“We are very worried about

Saudi Arabia: Drones attacked oil sites

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Saudi Arabia said drones attacked one of its oil pipelines as other assaults targeted energy infrastructure elsewhere in the kingdom on Tuesday, shortly after Yemen’s rebels claimed a coordinated drone attack on the Sunni power.

The assaults marked the latest incidents challenging Mideast security after the alleged sabotage of oil tankers off the coast of the United Arab Emirates earlier this week amid heightened tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

Yemen’s Houthi rebels, whom Saudi Arabia has been fighting since March 2015,

said they launched a series of drone attacks on the kingdom, across the border from Yemen. The spokesman of the rebels, Mohammed Abdel-Salam, told The Associated Press, “This is a message to Saudi Arabia; stop your aggression.”

“Our goal is to respond to the crimes they are committing every day against the Yemeni people,” he added.

The attack on Saudi oil targets comes after four oil tankers anchored in the Mideast were damaged by what Gulf officials described as sabotage, though satellite images obtained by The Associated Press on Tuesday showed no major visible damage to the vessels.

The U.S. already had

warned ships that “Iran or its proxies” could be targeting maritime traffic in the region. America is deploying the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf to counter alleged, still-unspecified threats from Tehran.

On Tuesday, Spain temporarily pulled one of its frigates that was part of a U.S.-led combat fleet from near the Persian Gulf because of mounting U.S.-Iran tensions. The Ministry of Defense said the Mendez Nunez, with 215 sailors on board, will not cross the Strait of Hormuz into the Gulf together with the USS Abraham Lincoln. The Spanish frigate was the only non-U.S. vessel in the fleet.

the risk of a conflict happening by accident, with an escalation that is unintended really on either side but ends with some kind of conflict,” British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt told reporters in Brussels.

European diplomats and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg convened with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday to discuss the Trump administration’s concerns over Iran.

“What we need is a period of calm to make sure that everyone understands what the other side is thinking,” Hunt said.

While Washington has upped the pressure, it’s still unclear whether Trump, who campaigned on an anti-interventionist platform and repeatedly denounced the Iraq War as a blunder, is willing to get drawn into another military confront-

tation in the Middle East.

Some analysts say the chances of a large-scale conflict are still remote.

“Public support for major U.S. interventions in the region has clearly declined over the past decade and the U.S., no matter what administration is in office or what is its policy toward Iran, is not likely to further intervene militarily in any regional conflict for the sole reason of blunting the impact of Iran’s regional strategy,” said an analysis by the Soufan Center, a New York-based security firm.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has expedited deployments to the region in connection with increased concerns about potential Iranian aggression. Last week, the Pentagon ordered a Patriot missile battery and an amphibious transport dock

warship to the Middle East. That follows the deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group and a task force of B-52 bombers into the region.

U.S. military officials have said there is an elevated threat level facing U.S. troops deployed in Iraq and Syria — primarily emanating from Iran-controlled Shiite militias. There also are threats at sea in the Persian Gulf region, where U.S. officials have observed Iran-controlled vessels transporting military hardware including missiles.

Over the weekend, four commercial ships anchored near the United Arab Emirates were damaged in what U.S. military investigators believe may have been attacks carried out by Iran or its proxies, The Associated Press reported. Iran has denied involvement.

Cultural change helps Navy retain moms

The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK, Va.— Lt. Cmdr. Karen Sankes-Ritland never imagined life outside the military.

Her father was a Marine. Her husband is an explosives ordnance disposal officer. She's a Naval Academy graduate.

But more than a decade into her career, the strains of family life and a dual-military household were taking a toll. Her father had recently died, her third child needed open-heart surgery and she was pregnant with her fourth child. Meanwhile, her husband was scheduled to deploy soon.

"I just felt like I was starting to drown," she said.

Something had to change. She needed a break. But she didn't want to leave the Navy.

So after her fourth child's arrival in 2016, she took advantage of a program that lets enlisted sailors and officers take a sabbatical. For a year, she was a stay-at-home mom.

"I will forever be grateful for that year off because that was a very important time for me to be able to spend that time with my very young children," she said. "And I can tell you stay-at-home moms definitely have a really tough job. Very tough, but very rewarding."

She returned to the Navy in 2017 and now serves as the training officer aboard the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush. The time off rejuvenated her. She said it made her a better officer.

"If I had stayed in, I honestly don't think I would be where I'm at right now," she said. "And that's due to needing the ability to take care of my family. And if I can't take care of my personal life, it would be very hard for me to perform in my professional life."

Sankes-Ritland is one of 217 sailors who have used or are using the Career Intermission Program since it was first offered as a pilot program in 2009, with 79 of those choosing

to take time off for family reasons that could include having or adopting a child or taking care of an ill parent, according to Naval Personnel Command. Sailors can take up to three years off but must serve an additional month after they return for every month they've been gone.

The program is one of a series of changes the Navy has recently made to be more accommodating to working parents in an effort to retain talented sailors. Surveys show the top reasons people leave the service are the Navy's impact on the family, on their ability to have or adopt children and work-life balance.

Navy's shift

But some working mothers say they've seen a cultural shift over the past 20 years in how leadership treats sailors with children. A 2018 survey indicated that women planning to remain in the Navy were more likely to have children than those who are undecided or planning to separate from the service.

In recent years, the Navy has extended the hours child care is available, doubled its maternity leave to 12 weeks and removed the 40-person cap on the number of people who can go on sabbatical each year. Leaders — many of whom are women with children — are being taught the importance of making sure those they're in charge of are taking care of their home lives so they're not distracted on a job where lives are at stake. Sometimes, the Navy now says, a family issue needs to take priority.

"The bottom line is that women can be wives, mothers and sailors all at the same time," said Lt. Cmdr. Jessica McNulty, a spokeswoman for Navy Recruiting Command, which is specifically targeting women to join the service.

Other efforts to be more supportive include an update to the

Navy's Pregnancy and Parenthood Mobile App, the creation of a "Breastfeeding in the Navy" campaign and a new Command Advisor on Pregnancy and Parenthood that's designed to support parents and normalize conversations on parenthood in the Navy, according to Chief of Naval Personnel spokesman Lt. j.g. Stuart Phillips.

Chief Petty Officer Renea Powers, a Virginia Beach, Va.-based Riverine with three children ages 17 to 4, said the Navy treated working mothers much differently when she had her first child.

"It wasn't very conducive to women wanting to stay in. A lot of the females around me who were pregnant, like as soon as they had their baby and their time was up, they were getting out," Powers said.

Powers had praise for the extended hours and level of care offered at the Navy's child development centers, as well as how affordable they are. Sailors are charged on a sliding scale based on their pay, but it's not uncommon for sailors to pay half the price for day care that they would at a comparable accredited private facility.

Powers sends her youngest child to one of the Navy's centers. The only problem is that the centers can't handle more children, she said. Wait lists to get in are common. Each center maintains low caretaker-to-child ratios and they're limited in how many children they can accept.

Limited day care slots

The one for Naval Station Norfolk, Va., can handle 300 children and is at capacity. The wait list has 300 names on it. The children of active-duty sailors and single parents get priority.

The Navy also offers a 24/7 care program for sailors who work overnight watches. That program can handle 20 children and offers to certify in-home caretakers that may allow

children to have more personal attention closer to where they live.

Chief Petty Officer Sheri Bergeman, who works at Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk, was someone who thought about getting out of the Navy after she had the first of her three children. But she stayed in largely because she and her husband still had contracts to serve and she was able to transfer to shore duty. When she had her first two children, she got only six weeks off.

But for her third child, she got 12 weeks.

"It's important to have that additional time for bonding. So six weeks, you're going back to work, you kind of have a little bit of resentment, like, 'Oh, my gosh, I don't spend this time with my baby.' Your mind is not at work," she said. "You're there, but you're really not focused."

Bergeman would spend her lunch hours at the day care with her baby "because that's where my heart was. That's where my mind was."

For her, the Navy's new extended-leave policy also came with another benefit: paternity leave. For her third child, her husband was also able to take time off work and take some of the burden off her.

"You have a baby and you're tired," she said. "You're up all that time. So having them there to be able to care for the baby and, you know, be awake — that's huge."

Since June, the Navy also has offered more flexibility in its parental leave policy by allowing the primary caregiver to take six weeks off even if it's not the birth parent. It also increased time off for the secondary caregiver from 10 days to 14.

The service "recognizes the diversity of our Navy families," Phillips said. "As our dual-military, dual-income, same-sex and single-parent families continue to grow, so must our focus on family friendly policies."

Source: Barr opens 2nd investigation into Russia probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Attorney General William Barr has appointed a U.S. attorney to examine the origins of the Russia investigation and determine if intelligence collection involving President Donald Trump's campaign was "lawful and appropriate," a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Monday.

Barr appointed John Durham, the U.S. attorney in Connecticut, to conduct the inquiry, the person said. The person could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Durham's appointment comes about a month after Barr told members of Congress he believed "spying did occur" on the Trump campaign in 2016. He later said he didn't mean anything pejorative and was gathering a team to look into the origins of the special counsel's investigation.

Barr provided no details about what "spying" may have taken place but appeared to be alluding to a surveillance warrant the FBI obtained on a former Trump associate, Carter Page, and the FBI's use of an

informant while the bureau was investigating former Trump campaign foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos.

Trump and his supporters have seized on both to accuse the Justice Department and the FBI of unlawfully spying on his campaign.

The inquiry, which will focus on whether the government's methods to collect intelligence relating to the Trump campaign were lawful and appropriate, is separate from an investigation by the Justice Department's inspector general. The agency's watchdog is also examining the Russia probe's origins, and Barr has said he expects the watchdog report to be done in May or June.

Congressional Republicans have also indicated they intend to examine how the investigation that shadowed Trump's presidency for nearly two years began and whether there are any legal concerns.

The recently concluded investigation from special counsel Robert Mueller did not find a criminal conspiracy between the campaign and the Kremlin to tip the outcome of the 2016 presidential election.

Judge blocks release of Coast Guard lieutenant

Associated Press

GREENBELT, Md. — A federal judge in Maryland on Monday blocked the release of a Coast Guard lieutenant accused of stockpiling combat gear and compiling a hit list of prominent Democrats and TV journalists.

U.S. District Judge George Hazel agreed to revoke a magistrate's order to free Christopher Hasson, 50, from custody while he awaits trial on firearms and drug charges. Prosecutors had appealed and asked Hazel to review the magistrate's order.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Charles Day decided on May 7 that Hasson could be released from custody and supervised by relatives in Virginia. But Day didn't order Hasson's immediate release. Instead, he gave prosecutors time to appeal.

Hazel said "reasonable judges can disagree" in a case like this. And in this instance, Hazel said he can't leave it to Hasson's relatives to serve as his custodians and ensure the public's safety.

"So I will put that job in the hands of the U.S. Marshals (Service)," the judge said.

Prosecutors have called Hasson a domestic terrorist intent on carrying out a killing spree, but they haven't filed any terrorism-related charges against him since his Feb. 15 arrest.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Windom said the government has no doubt that

Hasson's arrest prevented bloodshed.

"Nothing is more serious than murder. And, plain and simple, that's what the defendant was going to do," Windom told Hazel.

Hasson can appeal Hazel's decision. His attorney, assistant public defender Liz Oyer, declined to comment after the hearing.

Day's order called for releasing Hasson to the custody of in-laws at a home in Virginia, with 24-hour monitoring by global positioning system equipment. His wife moved out of their Silver Spring, Md., apartment after his arrest and has been staying with her mother in Virginia.

Hasson has pleaded not guilty to charges of unlawful possession of firearm silencers, possession of firearm by unlawful user or addict of a controlled substance, and illegal possession of tramadol, an opioid painkiller.

Oyer has said prosecutors haven't filed terrorism-related charges against Hasson because they haven't found any evidence to back up those allegations. She accused prosecutors of seeking to punish Hasson for "private thoughts" that he never shared.

"They're asking the court to go with a gut feeling," she told Hazel.

Former President Carter has surgery for broken hip

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Former President Jimmy Carter broke his hip Monday at his south Georgia home when he fell while leaving to go turkey hunting, a spokeswoman for the Carter Center said.

The 94-year-old former president was treated in Americus, Ga., near his home in Plains, and was recovering comfortably after successful surgery, spokeswoman Deanna Congileo said in a statement.

His wife of 73 years, Rosalynn, was with

him, Congileo said.

In an indication Carter was in good spirits, Congileo said Carter's main concern was that he had not reached his limit on turkeys with the shooting season ending this week.

"He hopes the State of Georgia will allow him to roll over the unused limit to next year," the statement said.

In a tweet, President Donald Trump wished Carter a speedy recovery, saying the former president was in great spirits when they spoke recently.

"He will be fine," Trump said.

In March, Carter became the longest-living chief executive in U.S. history, exceeding the lifespan of former President George H.W. Bush, who died Nov. 30 at the age of 94 years, 171 days.

Carter's legacy since leaving office has long overshadowed his rocky White House tenure, where he lost after one term amid a U.S. hostage crisis with Iran. He and Rosalynn founded the Carter Center in Atlanta in 1982 to focus on global human rights issues.

Huffman pleads guilty in admissions scheme

Associated Press

BOSTON — “Desperate Housewives” star Felicity Huffman pleaded guilty Monday in the college admissions bribery scheme, the biggest name to do so in a scandal that has underscored the lengths to which some wealthy parents will go to get their children into top universities.

The Emmy-winning actress, 56, could face prison time after she admitted to participating in the nationwide scam, in which authorities say parents bribed coaches, rigged entrance exams or both to game the admissions system.

Huffman pleaded guilty in federal court to paying an admissions consultant \$15,000 to have a proctor correct her older daughter’s answers on the SAT. She also consid-

ered going through with the plan for her younger daughter before ultimately deciding not to, authorities say.

The consultant, Rick Singer, arranged for the cheating by having students obtain permission for extra time on the exams through diagnoses for things like learning disabilities, then take the exams at his testing center, prosecutors say.

In court, Huffman explained her daughter had been seeing a neuropsychologist for years and been getting extra time on tests since she was 11 — an apparent attempt to explain that her daughter’s doctor had no part in the scheme.

“I just didn’t want to create the impression that neuropsychologists have any part in this,” a tearful Huffman said before

stopping to collect herself.

Sentencing was set for Sept. 13. Because she agreed to plead guilty, prosecutors said they would recommend four months in prison, but the judge could choose not to put her behind bars at all.

She arrived at court holding the hand of her brother, Moore Huffman Jr., and did not say anything to journalists. In court, she wore a gray dress and a sweater and sat flanked by her attorneys while her brother watched from the front row. Her husband, actor William H. Macy, didn’t attend.

Huffman had apologized in a statement last month and said she will accept the consequences. She said she “betrayed” her 18-year-old daughter, who was not aware of her plan.

Sightseeing planes collide in Alaska; 4 dead

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A team of federal accident investigators is expected to arrive in Alaska on Tuesday to try to piece together what caused a deadly midair collision between two sightseeing planes.

Four people were killed when the floatplanes carrying cruise ship tourists collided Monday near the southeast Alaska town of Ketchikan, the Coast Guard said. Two others were missing, said Petty Officer Jon-Paul Rios, a Coast Guard spokesman.

The Washington, D.C.-based investigative team from the National Transportation Safety Board was expected to arrive in Ketchikan on Tuesday afternoon, agency spokesman Peter Knudson said.

He said board member Jennifer Homendy also is traveling with the so-called “Go Team,” which investigates major accidents.

The floatplanes collided under unknown circumstances, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Allen Kenitzer said in an email to The Associated Press. Floatplanes have pontoons mounted under the fuselage so they can land on water.

The passengers were from the cruise ship Royal Princess and were on sightseeing flights, one of which was operated by flightseeing company Taquan Air.

Eleven people were inside Taquan’s single-engine de Havilland DHC-3 Otter when it went down as it returned from Misty Fjords National Monument, which

is part of the Tongass National Forest, the nation’s largest. Ten people were taken to a Ketchikan hospital.

All patients were in fair or good condition, according to Marty West, a spokeswoman for PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center.

Three people who died were among five people aboard the second plane, a single-engine de Havilland DHC-2 Beaver, according to Coast Guard Lt. Brian Dykens. It’s unclear which plane carried the fourth victim, whose body was recovered during a Monday night search, Rios said.

Local emergency responders worked with state and federal agencies and good Samaritan vessels to help rescue and recover victims.

US targets \$300B of Chinese goods for new tariff hikes

Associated Press

BEIJING — U.S. officials listed \$300 billion more of Chinese goods for possible tariff increases while Beijing vowed Tuesday to “fight to the finish” in an escalating trade battle that is fueling fears about damage to global economic growth.

The U.S. Trade Representative’s Office issued its target list after Beijing announced tariff increases Monday on \$60 billion of American goods in their spiraling dispute over Chinese technology ambitions

and other irritants. Chinese authorities were reacting to President Donald Trump’s surprise decision last week to impose punitive duties on \$200 billion of imports from China.

“China will fight to the finish,” said a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Geng Shuang.

“We have the determination and capacity to safeguard our interests,” Geng said. “China’s countermeasures have shown our determination to safeguard the multilateral trade system.”

The latest U.S. list of 3,805 product categories is a step

toward carrying out Trump’s May 5 threat to extend punitive 25% duties to all Chinese imports, the USTR said. It said a June 17 hearing would be held before Washington decides how to proceed.

The list “covers essentially all products” not already affected by punitive tariffs, the USTR said.

It includes laptop computers, saw blades, turbine parts, tuna and garlic. The USTR noted it excludes pharmaceuticals and rare earths minerals used in electronics and batteries.

“The risk of further escalation is far from over,” Timme Spakman, of ING, said in a report.

Also Tuesday, China’s tightly controlled social media were filled with comments lambasting Washington following weeks of little online discussion of the dispute. That suggested official censors might have blocked earlier comments but started allowing those that favor Beijing to deflect potential criticism of President Xi Jinping’s government.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Long-missing woman found in man's freezer

FL MARGATE — The case of a missing Florida woman has been solved six years later after her body was found inside a freezer at a scrap warehouse.

The business owner said Friday she opened the freezer and found the body of Heather Lacey, 35, last month.

Lacey's dad told the Sun Sentinel he hadn't heard from her since Thanksgiving 2013.

The discovery came after Jonathan Escarzaga was found dead inside his apartment in February. The freezer had been in his apartment and was moved to the scrap warehouse after the apartment manager hired a company to remove the appliances.

Police have not said whether Escarzaga played a role in her death or if the two knew each other.

Police: Fleeing driver said 'I don't think so'

NM LAS CRUCES — A New Mexico woman is facing charges after police say she fled an officer during a traffic stop and told him, "I don't think so."

Dona County court documents show Ricci Barnett was arrested April 21 following the exchange.

According to court documents, an officer tried to pull over Barnett, 41, for driving the wrong way on a one-way street in Las Cruces, but she refused to stop. The documents say the officer made contact with Barnett as she stopped at a red light.

When the officer showed Barnett his badge, court documents say she responded, "I

don't think so," and drove off. She was eventually taken into custody and charged with aggravated fleeing from a law enforcement officer and reckless driving.

Man held after flag burned at memorial

CA CITY OF INDUSTRY — A transient has been arrested for allegedly setting an American flag on fire at a memorial for a fallen California Highway Patrol officer.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said the incident occurred Sunday in the City of Industry.

The memorial honors motorcycle Officer David Romero, who was struck and killed there in 2005.

The Sheriff's Department said the flag burning was witnessed by a CHP officer. The officer took Scott Kennard, 41, into custody but was unable to save the flag.

The American flag at the memorial has been replaced.

Court may rule on pet custody for ex-couple

ME PORTLAND — A Maine woman is calling for the state's highest court to give domestic partners custody rights to pets after a relationship fizzles.

The Maine Supreme Judicial Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments in the case Tuesday. Jessica Sardina, 25, of Bangor, wants shared custody of Honey, a lab-shepherd mix.

The Bangor Daily News reported Sardina is appealing a finding by a district court judge last year that Kelvin Liriano, 25, of Old Town was the dog's sole owner because only his signature was on Honey's adop-

tion papers. The judge said he was "stuck with the laws of property."

Maine law states a judge may order married couples to share custody of animals, but that standard doesn't apply to unmarried couples.

Woman escapes with cat as car hits water

MA BLACKSTONE — A woman was able to save herself and her cat after the car they were riding in plunged into a Massachusetts river.

Blackstone Fire Chief Michael Sweeney said the woman had just picked up her cat from the groomer on Saturday when she crashed the car into the Blackstone River.

Sweeney said the woman grabbed the cat, which was in a pet carrier, and climbed out the window before the car sank.

The woman in her 60s was taken to the hospital for cuts on her hand. She and the cat were expected to be OK.

School drops 'God bless America'

PA SPRINGFIELD — A Pennsylvania school principal will no longer say "God bless America" after leading students in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Peter Brigg's practice at Sabold Elementary School in Springfield led at least one parent to complain to the Freedom From Religion Foundation, whose attorney contacted the district. The group claimed it violated the U.S. Constitution's prohibition of government-sponsoring religious messages.

The district decided to cease the practice after consulting with its lawyer. In a statement,

the district says it is not prohibiting students from reciting "God bless America" after the pledge on their own.

Horse dies after fall into family pool

FL LAKE WORTH — A horse died after falling into a family's swimming pool in Florida.

Owner Erica Lucas said the animal was already in distress when it tried to drink from the pool and fell in. First responders found the large brown horse standing in about three feet of water. At one point, the owner of Shine, 23, said the animal was actually swimming in the pool.

A Palm Beach County Sheriff's deputy walked into the water, sat down on the steps and calmed Shine. According to the Palm Beach Post, rescuers then rigged 2-by-4s and a carpet to lead the animal out.

Shine had a seizure and died later that night. Lucas said the horse died from colic and an intestinal obstruction, not from falling into the pool.

Spider sculpture to 'guard' pest business

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A giant creature has a new job guarding a Utah business.

The St. George Spectrum reported that the "Giant Spider" sculpture will be the new mascot of Morgan Pest Control in St. George starting this week.

Artist Deveren Farley said he built the 17-foot sculpture from steel and Utah license plates he had bought from the Salt Lake City evidence department.

From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES

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Bucks raise city's title hopes

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Hunter Trimmel couldn't give away his season tickets to Milwaukee Bucks games five years ago.

Losing season after season made the Bucks almost an afterthought in Wisconsin, where most teams live in the shadow of the Green Bay Packers. But now the Bucks are the hottest ticket in town, with a glittery new arena and a young superstar who has the team knocking on the door of the NBA Finals. Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals against Toronto is Wednesday night.

Trimmel, 37, was among hundreds of fans flocking to the plaza outside Fiserv Forum last week before the Bucks faced Boston in Game 5 of the conference semifinals. The plaza, with plenty of bars and jumbo TV screens for fans who can't get inside, is part of an atmosphere that Trimmel — a Bucks fan since 1992 — said is a new experience.

"I hate to say it but we felt like a minor league team for a while," Trimmel said.

It's a golden era in Milwaukee: The Bucks are in contention just a year after the Brewers came within one game of going to the World Series, shifting the focus of this sports-crazed state from the beloved Packers to two long-neglected teams suddenly on the rise.

The last Wisconsin professional sports team to win it all was the Packers in 2011.

The Bucks' success has been a long time coming. Their only NBA title came in 1971, when a team featuring legends Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Oscar Robertson beat the Baltimore Bullets.

The Bucks were solid in the 1980s, putting up several 50-win seasons behind stars like Sidney Moncrief, Marques Johnson and Junior Bridgeman before things got brutal in the '90s — six losing seasons, including four where they didn't win more than 30 games.

"There was a generation

when they stumbled through the wilderness, and a lot of fans lost interest," said Drew Olson, a long-time Milwaukee sports reporter who now hosts a sports talk radio show. "It was almost to the point that people went to the Bucks games to see the other team."

Olson traced the turnaround to Herb Kohl selling the team in 2014 to Wes Edens and Marc Lasry, two hedge fund managers from New York, and said it paralleled the Selig family's sale of the Brewers to Los Angeles investor Mark Attanasio in 2005.

"In both cases the locals were skeptical whether we should trust these guys — whether they're buying the team to move the team," Olson said. "As it turns out, they've been really good stewards of these franchises."

Leading the Bucks' resurgence is MVP candidate Giannis Antetokounmpo, a fan favorite and a source of pride for Milwaukee's Greek community. Antetokounmpo was born in Athens, Greece. He is just 24.

"It's important for the Greek community to be able to gather together as a unit and celebrate him. And he in turn celebrates us," said Tim Stasinoulis, 61, a Bucks fan since the team came to Milwaukee in 1968.

The Bucks host an annual "Greek Night" event where fans get a Q&A session with Antetokounmpo. Since his arrival in Milwaukee in 2013, Antetokounmpo's been known to sing the Greek national anthem during those events.

"It's a bit of a renaissance in Milwaukee sports, just in general with the success recently of the Brewers and now we have the Bucks," said Stasinoulis. "Who would have thought that the Packers would be third on the totem pole at this point?"

Rather than ranking each team's success, others take another view.

"This is the best Wisconsin sports has ever been as a whole," said Steven Slack, 35, a resident of Sun Prairie who

was waiting for the game outside the arena.

"We've never had three teams actually in contention before simultaneously. Because we have, we literally have the MVP in all three leagues," he said, referring to reigning National League MVP Christian Yelich, Antetokounmpo's potential to win it this year, and Aaron Rodgers, the Packers quarterback who has won two MVPs and is in frequent contention.

The Bucks' success is also a financial boon for the city. Each playoff game is estimated to have a \$3 million economic impact on downtown businesses — everything from hotels to transportation and food and beverage, according to Visit Milwaukee, an agency that promotes tourism to the city. It only helps that the Bucks are playing in their new half-billion-dollar arena for the first time this year, attracting dedicated and casual fans alike to the restaurants and bars in the plaza outside the stadium. Taxpayers contributed about \$250 million to the arena's construction.

Away from the arena, the city has been expressing its pride for the team, too, with buses and streetcars flashing "Fear the Deer" and "Go Bucks" on their digital displays. The city's Public Market has a banner under its name with the same phrase, which is the team's rallying cry. Billboards on the highway are counting down the number of victories needed to win the championship.

Longtime season-ticket holder Rod Johnson, 55, went to games with his father back when tickets cost \$5 and the Bucks played in what was called the MECCA Arena. He saw Abdul-Jabbar play and remembers the 1971 championship season. It's been an agonizing wait for another title.

"We're hoping for one more now," he said. "This could be the year."

Thomas withdraws from PGA

Associated Press

FARMINGDALE, N.Y. — Justin Thomas withdrew from the PGA Championship on Monday, saying he was not willing to risk more pain in his right wrist by returning before it's fully healed.

Thomas, who won the PGA Championship two years ago at Quail Hollow, will miss a major for the first time since his rookie season in 2015.

He is dealing with a bone bruise first suffered in the Honda Classic when he intentionally struck a tree on his follow-through. He felt he aggravated it during the final round of the Masters, though he said it wasn't on any particular shot.

"I've seen too many people come back too early," Thomas said from his home in Jupiter, Fla. "I plan on doing this successfully for a long time, and I don't want a dumb decision to set me back."

He said he could have played the PGA Championship this week at Bethpage Black, but without guaranteeing there wouldn't be a setback.

Thomas, the No. 5 player in the world, was replaced by Kelly Kraft.

Thomas tied for 12th at the Masters, where he made a hole-in-one on the 16th hole in the final round. He had not hit balls since then and withdrew from the Wells Fargo Championship two weeks ago to give his wrist every chance to heal.

He started hitting 50 balls a day over the weekend and was up to a 5-iron on Sunday. His plan was to try a driver on Monday, play a full 18 holes at home on Tuesday and then fly up to Bethpage on Wednesday.

"It hurt on a couple of shots and I felt like it wasn't worth it," he said.

Thomas believes if his club had snapped in half when he hit the tree at Honda that he would have been fine, but that he felt a shock up his right arm when it didn't break.

St. Louis evens series with San Jose

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — After the San Jose Sharks relied on a usual suspect to tie the game, the St. Louis Blues took back momentum with a tiebreaking goal from a most unlikely source.

Defenseman Robert Bortuzzo scored his first career postseason goal late in the second period that helped the Blues overcome another big game from San Jose's Logan Couture with a 4-2 victory over the Sharks on Monday night that tied the Western Conference finals at one game apiece.

"It's not really my game but it's something that goes in the back of your mind," said Bortuzzo, who had scored only 14 goals in 365 regular-season and playoff games before breaking through against the Sharks.

"Jaden (Schwartz) will remember, I told him if I do score a playoff goal you'll like the celebration. You never can plan what you're going to do. It's

just a rush of emotion. It's an intense game out there. That's all it is, emotion coming to the surface."

After the surprising goal, Bortuzzo pumped his fist, let out a yell, and held his arms out wide for the embrace from his appreciative teammates, who needed the momentum back in their favor after Couture scored twice in a span of less than two minutes to erase a 2-0 deficit for San Jose.

Schwartz, Vince Dunn and Oskar Sundqvist also scored and Jordan Binnington made 23 saves to send the Blues home for Game 3 on Wednesday night tied in the series.

"Pretty solid game tonight," Binnington said. "We had a good start, we were disciplined. When they tied it up, we stayed composed. That's really important, this time of year especially. We enjoyed the moment and competed hard until the end."

Couture scored his goals in a span of 1:59, giving him an NHL-leading 13 this postsea-

son but the Sharks couldn't get anything else and lost their third straight Game 2 after winning the series opener.

Martin Jones made 21 saves for San Jose.

"The story of the game was we didn't have enough participants across the board," coach Peter DeBoer said. "I thought Logan Couture was pretty good, a couple of other guys ... It's tough to win this time of year if you don't have everybody going, and I thought they got contributions from everybody, like we did in the first night."

Couture tried to take over the game for the sluggish Sharks after they fell behind 2-0 in the second period on Dunn's point shot that beat Jones through a screen. The Blues were in position to add onto that lead after a questionable interference call against Marcus Sorensen when Couture single-handedly turned things around.

He took the puck from Alex Pietrangelo at the blue line and

skated in on Binnington for the short-handed goal just 16 seconds into St. Louis' man advantage, waking up the crowd.

Couture struck again shortly after the penalty was killed, taking a stretch pass from Timo Meier and firing a shot between the pads for the equalizer, giving him 100 career postseason points.

The Blues answered late in the period, thanks to Bortuzzo. He passed the puck from the point to Tyler Bozak and skated in behind Joe Thornton. He then took a pass from Joel Edmundson and beat Jones with a backhander into the top corner for his first goal in 31 playoff games.

"That was unbelievable, that whole play, the way it developed," teammate Ryan O'Reilly said. "Guys were moving, in motion, he gets it on his stick. So calm and makes that shot, one of the hardest backhands I've ever seen. We were all very impressed. That was a huge goal."

Commentary

IndyCar, NASCAR roar into showcase month of May

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The most prolific month in motorsports arrived with two strong races, with IndyCar and NASCAR both opening May with momentum-grabbing entertaining events that should carry the series through their Memorial Day showcases.

Simon Pagenaud, his future with Team Penske shaky because of a 21-race losing streak, stalked five-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon in the rain around Indianapolis Motor Speedway in the closing laps of its road course race. Then the Frenchman completed a phenomenal late pass to win the Grand Prix and prove he's fighting hard for his job.

Hours later at Kansas Speedway, Brad Keselowski closed out one of the more entertaining

NASCAR races of the season with an overtime victory that gave team owner Roger Penske a sweep of the day. More specifically, six different Penske drivers tallied five victories in four series spanning nine days to open May — The Captain's favorite time of the year.

Penske, a 17-time winner of the Indianapolis 500, this year celebrates the 50th anniversary of his first Indy entry.

This is a celebratory month for motorsports, a time for series to shine leading into the Sunday before Memorial Day, considered the biggest single day of racing in the world. Formula One will scream through the streets of Monaco early May 26, then IndyCar and "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing" take the stage at IMS. NASCAR closes the day with the Coca-Cola 600, a grueling race

of attrition and one of the few remaining crown jewel events on the schedule.

The stage is set for IndyCar and NASCAR to dazzle a new audience, make new fans, and prove racing isn't a dying sport.

Both series got strong starts with last Saturday's doubleheader, a Pagenaud and Keselowski sweep, and the anticipation carried into Tuesday, when Indianapolis officially opened for the 500. IndyCar is enjoying a resurgence and slow, steady growth in both the series and its spotlight event.

McLaren is entering the 500 as an independent entry — the first McLaren at Indy since 1976 — and Fernando Alonso, the popular retired Formula One champion, is back for a second attempt at winning the "Triple Crown." Oriol Servia

was expected to become the 36th entrant, which means real bumping in this weekend's qualifying. Three drivers won't make the 500, and Penske has joined Michael Andretti and Chip Ganassi among the heavy-weight owners wondering if IndyCar's full-time teams should be exempt from bumping.

A new qualifying format will make for a tense Sunday session, all played out live as NBC rehearses for the 500.

NASCAR, meanwhile, has its \$1 million All-Star event Saturday night at Charlotte Motor Speedway and with it comes a chance for the series to string together consecutive competitive events. A snoozer of a race two weeks ago at Dover created the feeling a driver mutiny was looming over a rules package that has so far failed to meet expectations.

MLB roundup

Ohtani hits first home run of season

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — One week into Shohei Ohtani's return to the Los Angeles Angels, the lineup is looking sharp.

Minnesota ace Jose Berrios bore the brunt of their batting success on Monday night.

Ohtani hit his first home run of the season, a towering two-run shot in the third inning against Berrios, and Tommy La Stella hit the go-ahead homer in the sixth to give the Angels a 5-4 victory over the Twins.

"I've been hitting the ball in the air recently," Ohtani said through an interpreter. "I think it showed today that I'm improving."

The Angels are 5-2 on this nine-game trip that started with Ohtani's 2019 debut following Tommy John elbow surgery that has shelved the two-way Japanese sensation's pitching prowess for now.

"We've been waiting to get him back. You see how different the lineup is when he's in there and, hopefully, he's starting to get his timing," La Stella said.

Ohtani reached base on four of his five plate appearances. His 429-foot drive off the video-board facade beneath the second deck in left-center field was the highlight of the three-run, five-hit third.

The AL Rookie of the Year homered 22 times in 326 at-bats in 2018.

"We all know the power's there, and that was a no-doubt-er to the opposite field," Angels manager Brad Ausmus said. "You don't see a lot of balls hit the other way from many people in this game that way."

La Stella hit his team-leading 10th homer of the season, in 36 games, and went 3-for-5. The 30-year-old second baseman, who came to the Angels in a largely unnoticed trade with the Chicago Cubs, had 10 home runs in 396 major league games entering this season.

Just as impressive as the power was the way the Angels continually beat the shifts employed by the Twins. Albert Pujols, who went 3-for-5, poked a single off an 0-2 curveball past the glove of Berrios (6-2)

and through the empty right side of the infield in the fifth for a 4-2 lead.

Jorge Polanco and Marwin Gonzalez each hit two-run homers off Angels starter Tyler Skaggs (4-3), but the Twins weren't able to overcome this uncharacteristic vulnerability by their All-Star right-hander.

Mariners 6, Athletics 5 (10): Domingo Santana hit a tying two-out RBI double in the bottom of the 10th inning and scored the winning run on Omar Narvaez's single as host Seattle rallied past Oakland.

White Sox 5, Indians 2: Yoan Moncada hit two of Chicago's four solo homers and Reynaldo Lopez pitched 7²/₃ effective innings in a win over visiting Cleveland.

Astros 8, Tigers 1: Aledmys Diaz, Robinson Chirinos, Jake Marisnick and Alex Bregman homered for visiting Houston, which extended its winning streak to six games with the win.

Brad Peacock (4-2) allowed a run and three hits in five innings for Houston, which has

won nine of its last 10 games. The AL West-leading Astros knocked Matthew Boyd (4-3) out of the game in four innings, the shortest start of the season for the Detroit lefty. He allowed three runs and five hits and threw 96 pitches.

Phillies 7, Brewers 4: J.T. Realmuto doubled in the go-ahead run in the seventh inning, Cesar Hernandez hit a two-run homer and host Philadelphia beat Milwaukee.

Lorenzo Cain had a career-high five hits and Mike Moustakas homered for Milwaukee.

Bryce Harper struck out three times and was hitless in four at-bats.

Diamondbacks 9, pirates 3: Eduardo Escobar homered, tripled and drove in three runs, Christian Walker also went deep and host Arizona cruised.

Robbie Ray (3-1) allowed one earned run and six hits over five innings. He recorded his 800th career strikeout when he fanned Pirates pitcher Nick Kingham (1-1) to end the top of the fourth.

Owners, politicians battling over Pimlico

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Aptly nicknamed Old Hilltop, antiquated Pimlico Race Course has finally reached the point where its illustrious past might not be enough to assure a vibrant future.

The 144th Preakness will be run Saturday at Pimlico, and will be back next year, too. After that, well, nobody can predict the fate of a track where Man o' War, Seabiscuit, Secretariat and many others pranced to the winner's circle. There continues to be a push to have Laurel Park host the second leg of the Triple Crown.

Pimlico is in need of a major overhaul, and Baltimore city officials, the owners of the track and many trainers disagree on whether it's smart to spend nearly a half-billion dollars in upgrades. But while they are haggling, the track continues to fall into further disarray.

Citing the "safety and security of all guests and employees," the Maryland Jockey Club closed off 6,670 seats in the Pimlico grandstand last month. Many of the barns are dilapidated, and no amount of paint can mask the decrepit facade.

It's not a good look for horse racing, which is reeling from horse deaths, a historical Kentucky Derby disqualification and no Derby winner in the Preakness for the first time in 23 years.

Despite Pimlico's problems, the historical landmark still has its supporters.

"The Preakness belongs to Baltimore, and we're going to do everything we can to make sure Preakness stays right here," said Baltimore Mayor Bernard C. "Jack" Young, who's seeking state funding to redevelop Pimlico.

Meanwhile, the Stronach Group — which owns Pimlico and Laurel Park, as well as California tracks Santa Anita Park and

Gulfstream — believes turning Laurel Park into a state-of-the-art facility worthy of hosting the Preakness is a better option.

Located just 27 miles southwest of Pimlico, Laurel Park already gets the lion's share of racing dates in Maryland — 168 to 12 for Pimlico — and the owners believe it's time for Maryland to choose one track or the other.

"Both of the facilities need pretty substantial upgrades in order to be competitive in sports entertainment," Bill Hecht, CEO and president of the Stronach Group, told The Associated Press. "We just don't see there being any state, city or private interest in fully upgrading two. It's clear to us that the cost of the upgrades is not comparable. It's approximately \$80 million to \$100 million at Laurel."

Opened in 1870, Pimlico is the second-oldest track in America behind iconic Saratoga in upstate New York.