

Taliban, Afghans declare cease-fires for Eid

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Afghan government and the Taliban each announced three-day cease-fires Monday to mark this week's Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, following weeks of heavy bloodshed across Afghanistan.

The holiday marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan and is expected to begin Wednesday or Thursday when the next new moon is observed.

"All Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate are instructed to halt all offensive operations against the enemy countrywide from the first till the third day of Eid," the Taliban said in a statement. "But if the enemy conducts any assault or attack against you during these days, stand ready to robustly protect and defend yourselves and your territory."

Hours later, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced that all government forces would lay down their arms over Eid. Instead of welcoming the Taliban's announcement, he chided the group for recent violence.

The attacks "only cause more disgust and hatred of the Afghan people" toward the Tali-

ban, Ghani said in a statement.

News of the cease-fires came after at least 85 people were killed Saturday outside a girls' school in Kabul's Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood, the deadliest attack in over a year, the Afghan Interior Ministry said Monday.

The government blamed the Taliban for the violence, but the group denied any involvement. The local Islamic State affiliate claimed past attacks in the neighborhood, which is largely populated by ethnic Shiite Hazaras.

Clashes between Afghan forces and Taliban fighters have also intensified in the past week around Lashkar Gah, the capital of southern Helmand province, one of several flashpoints testing Afghan troops as international forces withdraw their remaining troops from the country.

The government's reconciliation council chairman said the Taliban declaration falls short of what is needed.

"Temporary cease-fires on such occasions provides short-term opportunities for our people but are not seen as a durable solution for our country," Abdullah Abdullah said Monday on Twitter. "In our view, the solution to today's crisis in the country lies in engaging in

accelerated talks, and announcing a permanent cease-fire and end the war."

Government and Taliban cease-fires to mark the same holiday were successful in 2018, when insurgents entered cities and posed for selfies with residents. It was the first time during the nearly two-decade war that both sides laid down their arms, proving that Taliban leaders were capable of stopping their followers from fighting at the time. Since then, the government has repeatedly called on the group to observe a permanent cease-fire. Kabul has said a cease-fire would help facilitate peace talks that began in Qatar in September, but have so far yielded no substantial results.

Despite the slow progress of the peace process, U.S.-led international forces officially began fully withdrawing from Afghanistan on May 1. The final 2,500-3,500 U.S. soldiers and roughly 7,000 NATO partner forces will leave by Sept. 11, President Joe Biden and allied leaders have said.

The Taliban will celebrate Eid with Afghanistan "on the verge of attaining complete freedom and independence," Taliban leader Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada said in a separate statement Sunday.

Leaders of brigade involved in strip club incident under probe

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The 18th Airborne Corps is investigating various misconduct allegations aimed at the leadership of the 101st Airborne Division's Combat Aviation Brigade, which recently came under scrutiny after soldiers on an official trip visited a Polish strip club where a senior battalion officer went missing.

Other problems reported include bullying and instances of suicidal thoughts at the brigade's headquarters company, documents provided to Stars and Stripes show.

The Fort Bragg, N.C.-based corps is dispatching a senior officer to Fort Campbell, Ky., to investigate the allegations, which they declined to disclose because of the ongoing probe. Lt. Gen. Michael E. Kurilla, leader of the 18th Airborne Corps and former commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, ordered the investigation.

"As a result of allegations made involving the command at the 101st Airborne Division

(Air Assault) Aviation Brigade, the commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps has initiated a formal investigation led by a Colonel from outside of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)," 18th Airborne Corps spokesman Col. Joseph Buccino said in the statement.

Col. Travis Habhab, who leads the 101st CAB, on Friday briefed his battalion commanders, senior noncommissioned officers and other leaders that an outside review was being launched, a soldier who attended the meeting said.

Some of the allegations under review were determined to be unfounded during an earlier probe, said an Army official familiar with the situation, who insisted on anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the matter.

The probe suggests that issues within the brigade extend beyond the notorious "No Mercy" 1st Battalion staff ride last year in Poland that ended with numerous officers facing the possible end of their military careers.

Revelations emerged last month about the battalion trip, which was approved as a tour of World War II sites, according to an Army investigation report obtained by Stars and Stripes.

On the first night of the trip, soldiers drank heavily and went to the off-limits Club Obsession in the seaside city of Gdansk. The battalion's executive officer went missing for a day after he was likely drugged and was charged thousands of dollars on his credit card, the investigation report said.

The battalion commander who organized the September staff ride was issued a General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand and will retire, while the executive officer faces separation, Army officials said last month. Other members of the unit also were punished.

The brigade returned to Fort Campbell in April after completing a nine-month rotation in Europe as part of Atlantic Resolve, the U.S. campaign to deter Russian aggression along NATO's eastern flank.

New leader takes over at Guam Marine base

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

A new commander has taken charge of a new Marine Corps base on Guam, where 5,000 members of the III Marine Expeditionary Force are set to move over the next five years from Okinawa.

Camp Blaz, near Andersen Air Force Base, was commissioned in September as the first new Marine installation since Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany opened in Georgia on March 1, 1952.

Its new leader, Col. Christopher Bopp, took command Friday from Col. Bradley Magrath at the Camp Blaz Aviation Maintenance Hangar, the Marines said in a statement posted Saturday on Facebook.

Magrath oversaw the transition of forces from Marine Corps Activity Guam to the new base, according to the Marines.

The command change comes at a time

of rising tensions in the Pacific as China presses claims to sea territory and builds military strength that threatens U.S. forces in the region.

Camp Blaz is named in honor of the late Marine Brig. Gen. Vicente "Ben" Tomas Garrido Blaz, a Guam native.

The base is still under construction in an area known as Finegayan on land that, until recently, was covered in a thick jungle full of snakes and littered with World War II-era bombs and bullets.

The Japanese government is funding \$3 billion worth of projects for the Marines' relocation, with the U.S. government spending another \$5.7 billion.

Only 1,300 Marines will be permanently stationed on Guam, with another 3,700 coming to the island as a rotational force in the same way a Marine Air Ground Task Force deploys to Australia's Northern Territory to train each summer.

USAF reinstates hundreds of ROTC cadets after backlash

The Washington Post

The Air Force reversed its decision to dismiss hundreds of reserve officer training cadets and restored nearly 130 scholarships, officials said, after a lobbying effort assailed the decision as a punishment for many qualified cadets that would create catastrophic financial problems.

The pandemic's wave of economic and social uncertainty triggered the initial decision, officials said. The natural cycle of departing officers creating room for the younger ranks has been disrupted, and service members, wary of leaving jobs and health care, are staying at the highest rate in two decades.

To rebalance the numbers, the Air Force rejected far more cadets than in past years. The cuts were so drastic that they swallowed up cadets with excellent grades and high fitness marks, according to current

and former Air Force officials, sending scores of families into financial panic after scholarships vanished.

Kaili Glasser, a 20-year-old studying mechanical engineering at MIT, said she has flawless grades and rows for the crew team. But her future career and scholarship imploded on a Zoom phone call with her commander on April 20 when she learned of her rejection.

"It was heartbreaking to feel I wasn't wanted after I put so much in," she told *The Washington Post*.

Congressional representatives, retired officers and a wave of parents and students pressed the Air Force behind closed doors to re-examine decisions to reject 1,000 cadets, an Air Force official said. Policy officials relented Thursday evening, reinstating 400 cadets, about 130 of whom won back scholarships.

Instructor killed, soldier injured in skydiving accident in Italy

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — An Italian instructor was killed and an experienced 173rd Airborne Brigade paratrooper was seriously injured after their parachutes became entangled in a skydiving accident near Vicenza, Army officials and news reports said.

The accident around noon Sunday at Thiene Airport killed Emiliano Basile, 38, originally of Argentina and a resident of Schio, near Vicenza, Italian media reported.

The soldier was being treated at San Bortolo hospital in Vicenza, brigade spokesman Maj. Chris Bradley said.

"He has serious injuries, but we are very hopeful," Bradley said Sunday. "We're praying for his safety. He's a tough guy."

An update on the unnamed soldier's status was not available Monday.

Basile appeared to be knocked unconscious and slammed to the ground after the U.S. paratrooper collided with him at 65-100 feet above the ground, in front of numerous onlookers at the airport for the opening day of the Aeroclub Prealpi Venete glider club, the newspaper *Corriere Della Sera* reported.

It's unclear what caused the paratrooper's parachute to twist. The soldier was able to regain control but hit the ground hard, according to the report.

"They are two expert instructors," Giampi Michelusi, a Thiene city councillor told the newspaper. "It is truly a tragedy for the community and for this airport."

It's not clear what skydiving company oversaw the jump. Neither the airport nor Skydive Thiene, which operates at the airport, responded to phone calls or emails Monday.

It also wasn't clear whether the paratrooper was jumping for sport or in an official capacity.

The Italian Civil Aviation Authority will investigate the accident, the agency said in an email Monday.

US wants 17-year sentence for Russian spy

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

Federal prosecutors are seeking a 17-year prison sentence for a former Green Beret who pleaded guilty last year to providing classified information to Russian military intelligence for over a decade.

The recommendation was filed Friday in U.S. federal court in Virginia, following Peter Rafael Dzibinski Debbins' guilty plea last November to a charge of participating in an espionage conspiracy with Russian agents from December 1996 to January 2011.

"Debbins, who has family ties to Russia, committed the offense for primarily ideological reasons: he considered himself a 'loyal son' of Russia and believed that America needed to be 'cut down to size,'" the court

filing stated.

Debbins' lawyer asked the court for leniency in a separate filing, describing his client as a man with psychological pathologies who felt trapped by circumstances, including secret same-sex attraction that he feared the Russians might use against him to ruin his Army career during the era of "don't ask, don't tell."

The 46-year-old, whose mother was born in the Soviet Union, began his relationship with agents of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff, known as the GRU, while still an ROTC cadet at the University of Minnesota on an exchange program in Russia.

Two years earlier, he'd traveled to Russia for the first time and met his wife, whose father was a colonel in the Russian air

force. They married in late 1997, a few months after Debbins earned his reserve commission in the Army.

His spying spanned the length of his active-duty service, from 1998 to 2005, including two years he served as a captain with the Germany-based 10th Special Forces Group, prosecutors said. He didn't disclose his contacts with the GRU for nearly 25 years, until after he failed a polygraph as part of a security clearance reinvestigation two years ago.

He admitted to providing the Russians with information about units he served with in South Korea and Louisiana, as well as a deployment with Special Forces in the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Georgia, though in a letter to the judge, he said he mistakenly be-

lieved much of that information was already public.

He also provided information about six of his former team members and an intelligence official for Russian agents to use in deciding whether to try to recruit them, disclosures that jeopardized U.S. national security and the safety of service members, prosecutors said.

Debbins left the Army in 2005 after being removed from command and having his security clearance suspended for violating protocols while in Azerbaijan.

He worked as an intelligence contractor from 2011 to 2019, where he had access to highly classified material. He applied for several positions at the CIA, National Security Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency, prosecutors said.

Navy captain becomes Olympic torch bearer in Sasebo, Japan

By ERICA EARL
Stars and Stripes

The former commander of Sasebo Naval Base savored a rare opportunity Saturday as he helped run the Nagasaki prefecture leg of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay in Sasebo, Japan.

Capt. Brad Stallings, who now serves as the U.S. Naval Forces Japan chief of staff, was nominated to be a torch bearer by Sasebo City 1 1/2 years ago, base spokesman Aki Nichols told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday. The city wanted to recognize its relationship with the Navy.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Stallings said in an interview with Japanese broadcasting company NHK.

Stallings said he was devastated when he thought the event would be canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic and was extremely grateful he got the rare opportunity to bear an Olympic flame.

"I felt a lot of pride," he told NHK. "It was overwhelming and one of the most positive experiences I have ever had."

Stallings also joked that he was focused on not tripping with the lit torch in hand.

Stallings traveled from Yokosuka Naval

Base to participate in the event and carried the flame alongside 15 other city representatives.

"It was great to come back to Sasebo and see a lot of friendly faces," he said.

After three years, Stallings handed command of the naval base to Capt. David Adams in September. His final year in charge was marked by a mission to keep the base and the ships of the amphibious ready group there free of the coronavirus.

The theme for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay across Japan is "hope lights our way." Torchbearers are running the flame by famous landmarks and sites that are favorites of the local population, according to the official Tokyo 2020 website.

The flame will pass near Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni on May 13, Misawa Air Base on June 11, Yokosuka Naval Base and Naval Air Facility Atsugi on June 29, and Yokota Air Base on July 12. Its journey will end in Shinjuku, Tokyo, on July 23 for the start of the summer games.

Specific times for each location can be found on the Tokyo 2020 website.

Hamas fires rockets in Israel after clash

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Hamas militants fired a large barrage of rockets into Israel on Monday, including one that set off air raid sirens as far away as Jerusalem, after hundreds of Palestinians were hurt in clashes with Israeli police at a flashpoint religious site in the contested holy city.

The early evening attack drastically escalated what are already heightened tensions throughout the region following weeks of confrontations between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters in Jerusalem that have threatened to become a wider conflict.

Shortly after the sirens sounded, explosions could be heard in Jerusalem. One rocket fell on the western outskirts of the city, lightly damaging a home and causing a brushfire. The Israeli army said there was an initial burst of seven rockets, one was intercepted, and rocket fire was continuing in southern Israel.

Gaza health officials said nine people, including three children, were killed in an explosion in the northern Gaza Strip. The cause of the blast was not immediately known. Meanwhile, Hamas media reported that an Israeli drone strike killed a Palestinian, also in the northern Gaza Strip.

Operator: Pipeline hopefully back in days

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The operator of a major U.S. pipeline hit by a cyberattack said Monday it hopes to have service mostly restored by the end of the week.

Colonial Pipeline offered the update after revealing that it had halted operations because of a ransomware attack the FBI has linked to a criminal gang.

The ransomware attack on the pipeline, which the company says delivers roughly 45% of fuel consumed on the U.S. East Coast, raised concerns that supplies of gasoline, jet fuel and diesel could be disrupted in parts of the region if the disruption continues.

At the moment, though, officials said there is no fuel shortage.

The Colonial Pipeline transports gasoline and other fuel through 10 states between Texas and New Jersey, according to the company.

Colonial is in the process of restarting portions of its network. It said Sunday that its main pipeline remained offline, but that some smaller lines were operational. The

company has not said when it would completely restart the pipeline.

“The time of the outage is now approaching critical levels and if it continues to remain down we do expect an increase in East Coast gasoline and diesel prices,” said Debnil Chowdhury, IHS Markit executive director. The last time there was an outage of this magnitude was in 2016, he said, when gas prices rose 15 to 20 cents per gallon. But the Northeast had significantly more local refining capacity at that time, potentially intensifying any impact.

Meanwhile, the FBI on Monday said the ransomware attack had been carried out by a criminal gang known as DarkSide, which cultivates a Robin Hood image of stealing from corporations and giving a cut to charity.

In response to the attack, the Biden administration loosened regulations for the transport of petroleum products on highways as part of an “all-hands-on-deck” effort to avoid disruptions in the fuel supply.

If the pipeline outage persists, the industry may want to turn to barges to transport

fuel, but that could require a waiver of the Jones Act, a U.S. maritime law that requires products shipped between U.S. ports to be moved by American-flagged ships.

The pipeline utilizes both common and custom technology systems, which could complicate efforts to bring the entire network back online, according to analysts at Third Bridge.

Gasoline futures ticked higher Monday. Futures for crude and fuel, prices that traders pay for contracts for delivery at some point in the future, typically begin to rise each year as the driving season approaches. The price you pay at the gas pump tends to follow.

The average U.S. price of regular-grade gasoline has jumped 6 cents over the past two weeks, to \$3.02 per gallon, which is \$1.05 higher than it was a year ago. Those year-ago numbers are skewed somewhat because the nation was going into lockdown due to the pandemic.

The attack on the Colonial Pipeline could exacerbate the upward pressure on prices if it is unresolved for a period of time.

UK embracing eased lockdown

Associated Press

LONDON — In England, it’s going to be time to hug again.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to give the go-ahead for that much-misused human contact when he announces the next round of lockdown easing later Monday in the wake of a sharp fall in new coronavirus infections.

The U.K. is now recording around 2,000 new coronavirus cases a day, compared with a daily peak of nearly 70,000 in January. Daily deaths have also plummeted with only two recorded on Sunday.

The country’s alert level was also lowered to level three from four on Monday following a “consistent” fall in cases, hospital admissions and deaths. This means that transmission of the virus is no longer deemed to be high or rising exponentially, though still being in general circulation.

While hugs between households will be allowed again beginning May 17, Johnson is expected to stress that they should be done with care, given concerns about new virus variants that could bypass some of the immunity provided by Britain’s successful vaccination campaign.

Johnson is also expected to confirm that dif-

ferent households will be able to mix indoors in homes as well as in pubs and restaurants. However, the gatherings are to be capped at six people or two different households if that is higher. The limits on outdoor gatherings are expected to be raised to 30 people. Indoor entertainment activities such as cinemas, soft play areas, adult group sports, exercise classes and hotels are also expected to reopen.

Since the lockdown started to be eased in recent weeks as part of a plan the government insists is being driven by “data, not dates,” the mixing of households was only allowed outdoors, such as in a garden or restaurant patio, provided that social distancing was followed.

“I think it’s what most people have missed, that intimate contact with family and friends, and entertaining, having people in your own house, meeting outdoors,” Health Minister Nadine Dorries said.

The government has allowed some foreign travel to start on May 17 but only a handful of destinations are deemed safe enough to ditch the 10-day quarantine requirements upon return. Portugal and Iceland now have no quarantine requirements but other popular destinations such as France, Italy, Spain and Greece will still require quarantining and a series of coronavirus tests.

China set to draw ‘separation line’ on Mount Everest

Associated Press

BEIJING — China will draw a “separation line” atop Mount Everest to prevent the coronavirus from being spread by climbers ascending Nepal’s side of the mountain, Chinese state media reported Monday.

A team of Tibetan mountaineering guides will set up the separation line at the peak before climbers attempt to reach the summit from the Chinese side, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

It was not clear what the separation line would be made of. The climbers ascending the north side of the mountain from China will be prohibited from crossing the line or coming into contact with anyone or any objects on the south, or Nepalese, side, it said.

Both countries suspended the climbing season on the world’s highest mountain last year due to the pandemic. Nepal has issued permits allowing 408 foreigners to attempt climbs this year as it tries to boost tourism revenue.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police providing locks for Kia, Hyundai owners

WI MILWAUKEE — Milwaukee police are providing free steering wheel locks to residents who own some models of Kias and Hyundais.

Police said those vehicles have been increasingly targeted by thieves.

The Journal Sentinel reported that Milwaukee residents who can provide proof of ownership can contact any Milwaukee police district to receive a lock. The effort is made possible by a donation from the Milwaukee Police Foundation and O'Reilly Auto Parts.

The wheel locks are reserved for Kia models from 2011 or later and Hyundai models from 2015 or later.

Bus driver arrested after student riders find gun

MA NORFOLK — A school bus driver in Norfolk was arrested after students found a handgun that police said he had accidentally dropped.

David Tripp, 65, of Norfolk, faces charges including reckless endangerment of a child and carrying a firearm on a school campus.

Police said they received a call from a parent whose child saw the gun while getting on the bus at King Philip Middle School. An investigation found that the gun had been on a seat in the back of the bus as students were boarding. None of the students touched it, police said.

After hearing a commotion, the driver retrieved the gun and put it in his pocket, police said. There were about a dozen students on the bus at the time.

Police said the gun had fallen out of Tripp's pocket while he was cleaning the bus.

Shark museum to open at site of pirate museum

MA PROVINCETOWN — The Atlantic White Shark Conservancy plans to open a shark museum at a site on Cape Cod that is currently home to a pirate museum.

The conservancy announced that it had signed a lease to take over space now occupied by the Expedition Whydah Museum in Provincetown, The Cape Cod Times reported.

Barry Clifford, who discovered the pirate ship Whydah in 1984, has had the Provincetown museum for over 20 years. He opened a larger museum in Yarmouth in 2016.

The Provincetown space is double the size of the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy's Shark Center in Chatham, and Education Director Marianne Long said the organization is planning on opening a museum in the new space.

Law enforcement help capture loose zebra

TN COOKEVILLE — Law enforcement officials helped capture a loose zebra in middle Tennessee after it escaped from an exotic livestock auction.

According to news outlets, the Cookeville Police Department and Putnam County Sheriff's office helped Triple W employees capture the "agitated" zebra. Cookeville is about 80 miles east of Nashville.

The zebra ran onto Highway 111, but was not hurt due to the lack of traffic.

It took nearly three hours to corner and direct the zebra onto a transport trailer.

Oyster shells to form new 65-foot reef

SC MOUNT PLEASANT — Volunteers are helping to build a 65-foot oyster reef off the South Carolina coast in the Charleston area.

The effort involves members of the Department of Natural Resources' SCORE program, which does habitat restoration projects, WCIV-TV reported.

It's expected to take 350 bags of shells to construct the reef.

Benefits of oyster reefs include bolstering the shoreline and providing habitat for more than 100 species of aquatic life in South Carolina, the TV station reported.

College says that it broke jambalaya record

MS OCEAN SPRINGS — A Mississippi community college says it broke the Guinness World Record for the largest jambalaya.

WXXV25-TV reported that Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College worked to make the dish as part of a May 1 fundraiser in Ocean Springs for campus food pantries.

Event Coordinator Carin Platt told WXXV25 before the event that the college was planning to make around 3,700 pounds of jambalaya. That amount would be enough to beat the current record of 3,371 pounds set by the Jambalaya Festival Association in Gonzales, La., in 2009.

Platt said the college raised more than \$3,200 for food pantries in the process. Over 2,000 people in need were fed during

the event. Now all the school needs to do is file paperwork with Guinness World Records.

Pierogi Fest returning after 2020 cancellation

IN WHITING — A northwestern Indiana city is bringing back its annual Pierogi Fest, a year after the festival built around the popular Polish delicacy was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

This year's Pierogi Fest will take place from July 23-25 in Whiting where crowds will once again celebrate pierogis and consume the traditionally potato- and cheese-filled dumplings, The (Northwest Indiana) Times reported.

Pierogi Fest is one of the largest food festivals in Indiana and across the Midwest. The event in the city about 20 miles southeast of Chicago is filled with offbeat events like a Pierogi toss contest and a nun dunk tank.

Goats return to library to eat, create firebreak

CA SIMI VALLEY — More than 350 goats are using their mouths to help protect The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum from wildfire danger.

The herd returned to eat brush around the institution's campus in the Southern California community of Simi Valley.

The goats create a firebreak between the natural vegetation and the facility, library spokeswoman Melissa Giller told the Ventura County Star.

Goats were credited with helping keep the library safe from a wildfire in 2019.

— From wire reports

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Angels' Ohtani blossoming as two-way star

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The only weakness in Shohei Ohtani's incredible two-way game these days is his control, and it's bugging the Los Angeles Angels' star.

Although Ohtani is off to a superb start to a season with no analogue in the past baseball century, he has walked 19 batters in his four mound appearances.

Ohtani has fully emerged as one of the best hitters and also one of the most intriguing starting pitchers in baseball early in his fourth big league season. He's still a meticulous perfectionist with no real hobbies or interests outside of getting better — and video games, of course.

So while he piles up homers (a major league-leading 10, with his bat) and strikeouts (30, with his arm) even more quickly than Babe Ruth did when he first joined the Yankees as a two-way player 101 years ago, Ohtani is also searching for the reasons

behind his wayward control — particularly in the first inning, when he has issued eight of those walks.

"I think I'm just trying to rush everything and get out of the inning as quick as I can," Ohtani said earlier this week through his translator. "I need to slow down and not rush everything as much."

Not much happens quickly in baseball, and not just because of the languorous modern pace of play. Prospects become major league regulars — and regulars become legends — usually over the course of months and years, not days or weeks.

Nearly three years after the mound portion of his remarkable AL Rookie of the Year campaign ended with a torn elbow ligament requiring Tommy John surgery, Ohtani has slowly, deliberately built himself back into a unique force. The Angels knew it might take years to achieve Ohtani's dream to become the majors' most consistent two-way player in decades,

but the Japanese star has returned to that uncharted baseball territory this spring.

With a 2.41 ERA complemented by some of the majors' best power numbers at the plate, Ohtani has been the transcendent player in 2021 that he and the Angels patiently believed he would become. The next goals are consistency, longevity and health for a preternaturally talented athlete who has only been held back by injury.

"He's feeling so good, and doing so well," said Angels manager Joe Maddon, who encouraged Ohtani's move to play every day this season. "There's a lot of positive adrenaline rolling within him right now, so let's play that all the way out."

The ever-proliferating industry of obscure baseball statistics has a godsend in Ohtani, who is regularly accomplishing baroque feats that haven't been seen in the majors for decades — or ever.

Ohtani and Ruth are the only players in baseball history to

post seasons with 30 strikeouts and 10 homers — and both did it twice, roughly 100 years apart. And only Ohtani accomplished the feat in his team's first 30 games.

Last month, Ohtani also became the first major league homers leader to make a pitching start since Ruth did it on June 13, 1921.

At one point last month, Ohtani had both thrown the hardest pitch of the season and delivered the hit with the highest exit velocity of the season.

Ohtani is hitting so well and feeling so good that Maddon is encouraging him to hit on days when he pitches, which requires relinquishing the Angels' option of a designated hitter for the entire game.

The 26-year-old Ohtani even played an inning in left field late last month, taking a defensive position in a game for the first time since 2014 back in Japan. Maddon hasn't ruled out using Ohtani in the field in the future, saying he "can do anything."

Arenado, Wainwright lead Cardinals over Rockies

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Nolan Arenado homered against his former team, Adam Wainwright pitched three-hit ball into the ninth inning and the St. Louis Cardinals beat the Colorado Rockies 2-0 on Sunday.

Yadier Molina hit an RBI double and Ryan Helsley got Josh Fuentes to ground into a game-ending double play with the bases loaded for his second career save and first this season. St. Louis completed a three-game sweep and has won nine of 11 overall.

Colorado dropped to a major league-worst 2-14 on the road.

Wainwright (2-3) struck out five and walked three over 8½ innings, improving to 11-1 against the Rockies.

Arenado homered leading off the second against German Marquez (1-4), who allowed two runs — one earned — in six innings. The Cardinals improved to 14-4 since April 23, the best record in the majors during that span.

Yankees 3, Nationals 2: Giancarlo Stanton hit a game-ending single off Brad Hand

in the ninth inning, and host New York earned its second straight walk-off win over Washington.

Mets 4, Diamondbacks 2: Two-time Cy Young Award winner Jacob deGrom was pulled after five innings with right side tightness in his return from an injury to a similar area, and host New York won its fifth in row.

Angels 2, Dodgers 1: Jared Walsh hit a two-run double in the third inning and the host Angels held off the slumping Dodgers.

Red Sox 4, Orioles 3: Rafael Devers and Hunter Renfroe homered, Nick Pivetta won his third consecutive start and Boston improved to 6-0 at Camden Yards this season.

Rays 4, Athletics 3: Willy Adames hit a three-run homer in the fifth, Mike Brosseau added a tiebreaking drive the following inning and Tampa Bay won at Oakland to avoid a series sweep.

Brewers 6, Cubs 5: Tyler Anderson pitched eight solid innings and visiting Pittsburgh held on in the ninth to end Chicago's five-game winning streak.

Padres 11, Giants 1: Jake Cronenworth

hit a splash shot, Fernando Tatis Jr. also connected off Johnny Cueto and San Diego won at San Francisco.

Brewers 2, Marlins 1 (10): Tyrone Taylor hit a two-out, tiebreaking single in the 10th inning and seven Milwaukee pitchers combined on a six-hitter to win at Miami.

Astros 7, Blue Jays 4: Kyle Tucker hit a three-run homer and tied a career high with four RBIs as Houston built a big lead early to win against visiting Toronto.

Rangers 10, Mariners 2: Adolis García hit his team-leading ninth homer and drove in a career-high five runs, Dane Dunning (2-2) struck out 10 in five innings and host Texas beat Seattle.

White Sox 9, Royals 3: Yermin Mercedes and Jose Abreu each had three RBIs to help visiting Chicago finish a three-game sweep, handing Kansas City its eighth consecutive loss.

Braves 6, Phillies 1: Freddie Freeman and Dansby Swanson homered, Huascar Ynoa won his fourth straight start and host Atlanta beat Philadelphia.

Knicks beat Clippers, end Staples skid

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Derrick Rose scored 25 points off the bench, Reggie Bullock added 24 and the New York Knicks beat the Los Angeles Clippers 106-100 on Sunday to snap an eight-game losing streak at Staples Center.

Bullock made five three-pointers against his former team and RJ Barrett had four on his way to 18 points. The Clippers are the NBA's best three-point shooting squad, but they were just 12-for-35.

Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers with 29 points. Paul George added 18 and Nicolas Batum had 13 as the playoff-bound team's two-game winning streak ended in its home finale of the regular season.

The Knicks led by 10 early in the fourth, when they made three three-pointers, and the Clippers dissolved in miscues and misses.

Lakers 123, Suns 110: Anthony Davis had 42 points and 12 rebounds and host Los Angeles never trailed against Phoenix.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope and Alex Caruso each had 17

points and the short-handed Lakers won for just the third time in their past 11 games.

LeBron James missed his fourth straight game for Los Angeles because of a sprained right ankle, and Kyle Kuzma was held out because of tightness in his back.

Heat 130, Celtics 124: Jimmy Butler had 26 points and 11 assists to help Miami win at Boston as the teams fight for position in the tight Eastern Conference playoff race.

Duncan Robinson added 22 points and Bam Adebayo had 20 for the Heat, who increased their lead over the Celtics to two games for sixth place in the standings. Miami (37-31) has the same record as fifth-place Atlanta, but the Hawks own the head-to-head tiebreaker.

It is the first of two straight games between the Heat and Boston. They will meet for the final time during the regular season Tuesday night. Evan Fournier scored 30 points for the Celtics.

Mavericks 124, Cavaliers 97: Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 25 points and Josh Richardson had

20, allowing playoff-bound Dallas to overcome the ejection of Luka Doncic to win at Cleveland.

Doncic received a flagrant-two foul — an automatic ejection — early in the third quarter for hitting Collin Sexton with “an aggressive strike to the groin area,” according to lead official David Guthrie.

The Mavs extended their lead to a game over Portland in the battle for fifth place in the Western Conference. The Lakers entered the night two games behind Dallas in seventh, which would make them the top seed in the play-in tournament.

Pelicans 112, Hornets 110: Eric Bledsoe had 24 points and 11 assists, Jaxson Hayes added 18 points and short-handed New Orleans rallied to win at Charlotte to stay alive in the race for the play-in tournament.

James Johnson added 17 points and Willy Hernangomez had 16 rebounds for the Pelicans. They pulled within 1 ½ games of San Antonio for 10th place in the Western Conference.

Timberwolves 128, Magic

96: Karl-Anthony Towns and D'Angelo Russell each scored 27 points and Minnesota built a 30-point halftime lead, led by 43 in the third quarter and cruised to a win at Orlando.

Rookie guard Anthony Edwards added 16 points and 10 rebounds for his third double-double of the season to help the Timberwolves end a three-game losing streak. Ricky Rubio added 18 points.

Bulls 108, Pistons 94: Nikola Vucevic had 29 points and 16 rebounds and Chicago won at Detroit to keep its play-in chances alive.

Zach LaVine scored 30 points to help the Bulls move within 2 ½ games of Indiana for the last Eastern Conference play-in spot. Chicago had lost five of six.

Kings 126, Thunder 98: Maurice Harkless and Terence Davis each scored 18 points and host Sacramento beat Oklahoma City to move within 2 ½ games of San Antonio for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Delon Wright had 15 points, seven rebounds and five assists, and Richaun Holmes also had 15 points.

Truex dominates at Darlington for third win of year

Associated Press

DARLINGTON, S.C. — Martin Truex Jr. got nervous in a hurry near the end of his dominating drive at Darlington Raceway.

Barely pushed much of the race, the Joe Gibbs Racing driver suddenly saw Kyle Larson catching up in the closing laps.

Truex, though, called on his steady demeanor and track focus to pull away for his third NASCAR Cup Series victory this season.

Not that it was easy.

When Truex noticed Larson right behind him inside of 30 laps left, he thought, “Oh, man,

he's right behind me.

“Your heart rate goes up,” he continued, “Your anxiety goes up.”

Very quickly, Truex was back to his steady, powerhouse driving at the track “Too Tough To Tame.”

“Hopefully, we can keep this rolling,” Truex said.

Truex's owner, Joe Gibbs, told him after that Larson gave the three-time Super Bowl winning coach a scare. “Yeah, he scared me, too,” Truex told him.

The victory gave Truex some payback at Darlington from the last time here last September, when he led 196 laps, yet fin-

ished 22nd after tangling for the lead late with Chase Elliott.

This time, Truex made sure he had no issues by running out front — often holding a 10-second lead on the field — to win for the second time at the track.

Truex led 248 of the 293 laps for his 30th career victory in NASCAR's top series. He's the only driver with multiple wins over the year's first 12 races.

Who's hot

Kyle Busch followed up his first win of the season at Kansas last week with a solid third place at Darlington. It was Busch's sixth top 10 finish in his last seven races here. Busch's lone vic-

tory at Darlington came in 2008.

Who's Not

Kurt Busch seemed like he was headed for big things at Darlington when he gave the track one of its most iconic moments, finishing second here in 2003 to Ricky Craven in a side-by-side duel where he lost by 0.002 seconds. But Busch hasn't come that close to a Darlington victory in 22 races since. His latest start ended in flames after he hit the inside wall and the liquid his car spewed caught on fire. “It's been a rough year and this just adds to it,” said the Chip Ganassi Racing driver, who was unhurt in the incident.

McIlroy wins to end 18-month drought

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Rory McIlroy finally won when he least expected it, and it was as sweet as he could have imagined.

Only after he hung on for a one-shot victory in the Wells Fargo Championship, his first title in 18 months, did he reveal his neck locked up during his final practice session and if not for a late tee time Thursday, he would have had to withdraw.

And when he seized control Sunday afternoon with back-to-back birdies from the bunker down the stretch, he started to get ahead of himself thinking how cool it would be to see his wife and 8-month-old daughter waiting to celebrate with him on their first Mother's Day.

The finishing stretch at Quail Hollow snapped him back to reality. He hit a 7-iron safely over the water on the 17th, and caddie Harry Diamond wisely talked him into taking a penalty drop

from a dangerous lie in a hazard on the closing hole. He two-putted from 45 feet for bogey, a 3-under 68 and a one-shot victory.

The moment with Erica and little Poppy was what he imagined. So was that trophy.

"It's tough to get over the line, especially if you haven't done it in a while," McIlroy said, a winner at Quail Hollow for the third time. "It's such a funny week, knowing my game was pretty good and then having my neck lock up on the range and sitting here Sunday night with the trophy."

"Just glad I got through it."

Abraham Ancer finished runner-up for the fourth time in his career as he seeks his first title. Ancer wasn't part of the picture until he ran off three straight birdies late that briefly gave him a share of the lead, and nearly closed with a fourth birdie when his 35-foot putt on No. 18 grazed the lip. He shot 66.

But this was about McIlroy

and the second-longest winless drought of his career. Until this week, he had not played on the weekend in two months.

It was like he never was gone. McIlroy was bogey-free until the final hole, and even when he brought more pressure on himself with a poor tee shot, he delivered an 8-iron from just inside 200 yards to the fat of the green for his two-putt bogey to finish at 10-under 274.

His last victory was the HSBC Champions in Shanghai on Nov. 3, 2019. His next start is in two weeks at Kiawah Island for the PGA Championship, where he set the record in 2012 with an eight-shot victory.

How's that for timing?

"I'm excited going forward now," McIlroy said. His game is not perfect — he hit only three of 14 fairways in the final round — but he was quick to say a victory brought validation.

Locked in a tight race among Keith Mitchell, Gary Woodland

and then Ancer, McIlroy delivered the goods on the back nine. He holed a 10-foot par putt on the par-3 13th. He got up-and-down for birdie with splendid bunker shots on the reachable par-4 14th and the par-5 15th.

It was a tough finish for Mitchell, who started the final round with a two-shot lead and quickly stretched it to three shots with a 6-iron out of a fairway bunker into a stiffening breeze to 12 feet for birdie.

But his short game let him down all day, leading to bogeys on the fifth and sixth holes that cost him the lead, and on the 14th hole and 15th holes when he had to settle for pars after being in position for birdies.

Mitchell needed to finish alone in second to qualify for the PGA Championship through the money list. But he dropped a shot on the 17th and closed with a 72 to tie for third with Viktor Hovland, who had a 67.

Tortorella, Columbus part ways after 6 seasons

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — John Tortorella is out as coach of the Columbus Blue Jackets after six seasons.

General manager Jarmo Kekalainen said in a statement Sunday that parting ways with the winningest coach in franchise history was a mutual decision.

The 62-year-old Tortorella was in the last year of his contract, and the separation wasn't a surprise after a tumultuous season that saw the Blue Jackets plunge to last place in their division amid the coach's admitted failure to influence the team culture.

"Torts and I have had numerous conversations throughout the season, and we have agreed that the time is right for both he

and the club to go our separate ways," Kekalainen said a day after the Blue Jackets concluded the season with a 5-4 overtime win against Detroit. "He is a great coach and his accomplishments with our club over the past six seasons speak for themselves."

The Blue Jackets went 227-166-54 under Tortorella, including a franchise-best 50-24-8 finish in 2016-17. But the wheels fell off during a terrible 2020-21 season (18-26-12).

The late-starting 56-game season began with the refusal of Pierre-Luc Dubois, one of the team's brightest stars who often clashed with Tortorella, to sign a long-term contract. He was promptly traded to Winnipeg for forward Patrik Laine, who didn't perform to expectations.

Blackhawks finally get win in front of home fans

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Alex DeBrincat scored two more goals, Kevin Lankinen made 37 saves and the Chicago Blackhawks welcomed back fans to the United Center with a 4-2 victory over the Dallas Stars on Sunday night.

Chicago hosted a crowd of 3,820 for its first home game with fans in almost 14 months. The Blackhawks were the last U.S.-based NHL team to open their doors to the public during the pandemic.

Two of the biggest cheers of the night were for DeBrincat, who extended his goal-scoring streak to six. He scored on a power play in the first period and then helped close it out with his 31st of the season with 3:12 left.

Chicago had 10 rookies in the lineup for its penultimate game of the season, and it did enough to hold off Dallas in the Stars' first game since they were eliminated from playoff contention.

MacKenzie Entwistle became the ninth player to score his first career goal with the Blackhawks this year.

Dallas lost for the sixth time in seven games.

Flames 6, Senators 1: Johnny Gaudreau and Matthew Tkachuk each had a goal and two assists and host Calgary beat Ottawa to preserve its slim playoff hopes.

To make the postseason, the Flames need to win their remaining four games, and Montreal needs to lose its remaining two games against Edmonton in regulation.