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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Army falls short of recruiting goal

BY COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army fell short of its recruiting goal for 2018, missing its mark for the first time since 2005 as it looks to grow its force strength in the face of growing threats from competing world powers such as Russia and China.

The Army has launched a large-scale review of its recruiting practices, senior service officials said Friday. The service will pour millions of dollars into revamping recruiting facilities and bolstering its recruiting force after falling about 6,500 recruits short of its goal for fiscal year 2018, which will end Sept. 30. The Army had hoped to enlist 76,500 recruits in 2018, a goal that was lowered from 80,000 in April after more soldiers than expected elected to remain in the service.

Despite the shortfall, Maj. Gen. Joe Calloway, the Army's military personnel management director, said the 70,000 recruits who did enlist this year are the most the service has attracted since 2010. He said the Army chose to focus on taking in high-quality recruits instead of ensuring it met its goal with borderline applicants.

Missing the recruiting goal "is not devastating," Calloway said.

"It still has an impact, because that is 6,500 soldiers that are not filling a critical specialty or a foxhole somewhere."

He blamed the shortfall largely on a strengthening U.S. economy in which fewer potential recruits are looking for jobs. Nonetheless, the Air Force, the Marine Corps and the Navy all reached their recruiting goals for 2018, though they were less ambitious than the Army's.

Only about 30 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds can meet the mandatory requirements for consideration for military service — a combination of physical, mental and background attributes. Moreover, only about 13 percent of that population is interested in military service, according to the Pentagon.

The shortfall comes as the Army looks to increase its active force from about 476,000 soldiers to about 500,000 by 2024, a number Pentagon officials have said is necessary if a major war with a near-peer adversary were to break out.

The Army had aimed to increase its force strength to 483,500 by the beginning of October. It aims to build to 487,500 in 2019, Calloway said. The service has set a 73,000-recruit goal for next year.

In the meantime, Army Gen. Stephen Townsend, the chief of Training and Doctrine Command, has been leading a complete

review of how the service recruits potential soldiers, Calloway said. Townsend is slated to brief the Army Secretary Mark Esper on his findings next week, and the Army will look to implement changes quickly.

"The intent of that is to change our approach and methodology of what we're doing to recruit," Calloway said. "We've obviously got to change what we're doing to reach a pretty limited audience."

Calloway said some changes to recruiting efforts have already been implemented, including a new focus on reaching potential recruits through social media, interactive gaming, and in locations where recruiting typically has been weak, such as major metropolitan areas.

Last year, the Army added about 500 recruiters to its ranks and intends to add another 500, said Marshall Williams, the Army's principle deputy assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs.

The service also has poured more than \$50 million into upgrading its recruiting facilities and recruiters' internet service across the nation, recognizing that instead of reaching potential recruits or their parents by phone, they prefer to connect online, Calloway said.

Army finds fix for M4 firing glitch

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army has found a fix for a glitch in the M4 and M4A1 assault rifles that causes the weapons to fire unintentionally, officials said Friday.

"We know what the problem is and we know what the fix is," Tank-automotive and Armaments Command spokesman R. Slade Walters told Stars and Stripes. "The problem is fixed by modifying the selector to remove the tolerance issue and the fault."

"(TACOM) is working on an Army-wide directive to repair weapons with the issue that will be released when it is approved at the appropriate levels."

The misfire glitch was discovered in

March after a soldier firing on a range at Fort Knox got his rifle's fire-selector switch stuck between semi-automatic and fully automatic.

When the soldier pulled the trigger, the weapon failed to fire. The soldier then moved the selector switch and the weapon fired unintentionally, Walters said.

The Army issued a safety-of-use message earlier this year to all branches of the military, advising units to perform a function test on all variants of M16s and M4s.

About 50,000 service rifles were checked and the glitch was found in about 6 percent, or 3,000, of the firearms.

"After receiving a significant number of reports from the field and an average failure rate of about 6 percent of the weap-

ons inspected, we ended the inspections and have determined that the cause of the problem is a tolerance stack of the internal firing components," Walters said.

Most failures occurred in M4A1s that had been converted from M4s. Of the 23,000 M4A1s inspected, 2,070 failures, or 9 percent, displayed the defect.

By contrast, fewer than 1 percent of the M4s and M16s inspected were found to have the glitch.

The Marine Corps, which also uses M4s, said their weapons were functioning properly, in a statement in June.

All new M4A1s being issued by the Army are being checked for the selector glitch and are corrected as needed, Walters said.

Army adding firepower to 2 brigade combat teams

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army will convert two of its existing brigade combat teams to add firepower to the service as it prepares for potential fights with militaries of more advanced rivals, service officials announced Thursday.

The Army will convert a Stryker brigade based at Fort Bliss, Texas, to an armored brigade and convert an infantry brigade based at Fort Carson, Colo., into a Stryker brigade in the next two years, officials announced.

“Converting a brigade combat team from infantry to armor ensures the Army remains the world’s most lethal ground combat force, able to deploy, fight, and win against any adversary, anytime and anywhere,” Army Secretary Mark Esper said in a prepared statement.

The 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division

at Fort Bliss will begin trading its eight-wheeled, 18-ton Stryker armored combat vehicles for the firepower of heavier, tracked vehicles including 72-ton M1 Abrams tanks and 28-ton M2 Bradley fighting vehicles in the spring.

In the spring of 2020, Fort Carson’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division will transition from a light infantry brigade to a heavier Stryker brigade, adding some 500 soldiers in the process, according to the Army.

The two conversions follow the transformation at Fort Stewart, Ga., last year of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division from an infantry brigade to an armored brigade. They come as top Pentagon officials have warned the U.S. military must increase its combat firepower through added training and advanced technology to retain battlefield advantages over near-peer ri-

vals, namely Russia and China but also North Korea and Iran.

It also comes as the Army has asked its traditional combat brigades to focus primarily on preparing to fight more advanced adversaries after spending nearly two decades focused on counterterrorism operations in which heavy weapons such as tanks and self-propelled howitzers were less useful. The Army’s new brigades of advisers, known as Security Force Assistance Brigades, will continue to focus on training and advising partner forces for the counterterrorism fight, officials have said.

The conversion of the brigades and the additional firepower that they bring also are expected to serve as a deterrent to adversaries and to provide the service more options in a fight, said Maj. Gen. Brian J. Mennes, the service’s force management director.

Command to review inter-Korean agreement

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The U.S.-led United Nations Command will “thoroughly review” an inter-Korean military accord, an official said, after the two nations agreed to a series of sweeping measures aimed at easing tensions along the heavily fortified border that divides the peninsula.

The agreement — signed after South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held a three-day summit this week in Pyongyang — prompted concern that it could harm security as the two leaders move forward with efforts to forge peace despite slow progress in persuading Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons.

It also raised questions about how the measures could affect the 1953 armistice that ended three years of fighting after the warring parties, which included the U.S. and China, failed to reach a peace treaty.

The U.N. Command — which is led by Army Gen. Vincent Brooks, who also commands U.S. Forces Korea — oversees the South Korean side of the truce village of Panmunjom and is responsible for enforcing the armistice. The command planned to hold working-level meetings to examine each part of the agreement, a UNC official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

“UNC will thoroughly review the details of the comprehensive agreement to ensure compliance with the Armistice Agreement and its implementation under current circumstances considering the spirits of the Inter-Korean and Singapore Summits,” the official said in an email, referring also to the unprecedented meeting between Kim and President Donald Trump on June 12.

Navy to christen LCS USS Kansas City

Stars and Stripes

The wife of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command commander Adm. Philip Davidson will help christen the Navy’s newest littoral combat ship Saturday in Mobile, Ala.

Tracy Davidson will break a bottle of wine on the bow of the USS Kansas City during the ceremony, which is scheduled to start at 10 a.m. local time, a Navy statement said. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II, D-Mo., will serve as principal speaker.

Built by Austal USA, the Independence-class Kansas City is 418 feet long and capable of operating in excess of 40

knots, according to the Navy. It will have a core crew of 40 sailors and will carry a pair of MH-60R Seahawk helicopters and an MQ-8 Fire Scout drone.

The ship will stand as a symbol of the strong bond between the Navy and Marine Corps team and the people of Missouri, Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer said in the statement.

“The ship is a testament to our commitment to provide maritime dominance and power projection required by the nation, and to our partnership with industry to build the Navy the nation needs,” he said.

The modular, reconfigurable LCSs are built to provide joint forces the ability to access critical areas through “surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare and mine countermeasures missions in littoral regions,” the Navy statement said.

It’s the second ship to be named after Missouri’s largest city. The first USS Kansas City was a Wichita-class replenishment ship commissioned in 1970. Throughout its 24-year lifespan, it accrued numerous unit awards from service in Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm before being retired in 1994, the Navy said.

Ex-Trump lawyer Cohen boasts of aiding Mueller

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer says he is providing "critical information" as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election and possible coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign.

Michael Cohen, who pleaded guilty to campaign finance and other charges last month, said Thursday he is providing the information to prosecutors without a cooperation agreement.

Trump's longtime fixer-turned-foe could be a vital witness for prosecutors as they investigate whether Trump's campaign coordinated with Russians. For more than a decade, Cohen was Trump's personal lawyer, and he was a key power player in the Trump Organization and a fixture in Trump's political life.

Cohen pleaded guilty in August to eight federal charges and said Trump directed him to arrange payments before the 2016 election to buy the silence of porn actress Stormy Daniels and a former Playboy model, both of whom had alleged they had affairs with Trump. It was the first time any Trump associate implicated Trump himself in a crime, though whether — or when — a president can be prosecuted remains a matter of legal dispute.

On Thursday night, Cohen tweeted: "Good for @MichaelCohen212 for providing critical information to the #MuellerInvestigation without a cooperation agreement. No one should question his integrity, veracity or loyalty to his family and country over @POTUS @realDonaldTrump."

Trump abandons restraint, calls out Kavanaugh accuser

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Abandoning his previous restraint, President Donald Trump challenged the credibility of the woman accusing his Supreme Court nominee of sexual assault on Friday, declaring that if the alleged attack was so terrible she would have reported it to law enforcement.

Trump's change in tone — and apparent shift in tactics — came as Christine Blasey Ford's lawyers negotiated with the Senate Judiciary Committee on the terms for her possible testimony next week in a dramatic showdown over her accusation that threatens Judge Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation.

Trump tweeted: "I have no doubt that, if the attack on Dr. Ford was as bad as she says, charges would have been immediately filed with local Law Enforcement Authorities by either her or her loving parents. I ask that she bring those filings forward so that we can learn date, time, and place!"

The president previously had avoided naming Ford or plainly casting doubt on her account. Ford alleges that at a party when they were teenagers 30 years ago a drunken Kavanaugh held her down on a bed, tried to remove her clothing and clapped his hand over her mouth when she tried to scream before she managed to escape. Kavanaugh has denied all parts of the allegation.

Shortly after Trump's tweet, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., expressed his determination to get Kavanaugh confirmed. He told evangelical activists at the annual Values Voter conference the Senate will "plow right through."

The accusation has jarred the 53-year-old conservative jurist's prospects for winning confirmation, which until Ford's emergence last week had seemed all but certain. It has also bloomed into a broader clash over whether women alleging abuse are taken seriously and how both political parties address such claims with the advent of the #MeToo movement — a theme that could echo in this November's elections for control of Congress.

With his comment, Trump went against the advice of advisers who had counseled him to stay out of the fray. He has previously defended friends and other men against the claims of women.

Ford has said she didn't tell anyone at the time about the incident. According to the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, a majority of rapes and other sexual assaults are not reported to police.

Ford is willing to tell her story — but only if agreement can be reached on "terms that are fair and which ensure her safety," her lawyer said Thursday. She said Ford needs time to make sure her family is secure, prepare her testimony and travel to Washington.

Attorney Debra Katz said anew that Ford, 51, a psychology professor in California, has received death threats and for safety reasons has relocated her family.

Ford's preference is to testify to the Senate committee next Thursday, and she doesn't want Kavanaugh in the same room, her attorney told the panel's staff in a 30-minute call that also touched on security concerns and other issues, according to a Senate aide.

Early voting begins as midterm season enters final phase

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Much of the political world is consumed with a battle over a Supreme Court nominee, an expanding international trade war and President Donald Trump's social media posts. Yet here in Minnesota, the first votes of the 2018 midterm elections are being cast.

Voting machines are set up inside city buildings. A series of get-out-the-vote rallies is scheduled. And each party is spending millions of dollars to push its supporters to the polls.

While Election Day 2018 is technically Nov. 6, Minnesota law allows in-person voting to begin Friday — a full 46 days early — making it the first battleground state to begin casting actual votes in the broader fight for control of Congress.

Voters in every corner of the nation soon will follow.

South Dakota also opens early voting on Friday, and four more states follow in the next six days, including key states including New Jersey and Missouri. California, Montana and Arizona are among seven oth-

ers that allow early voting in the subsequent two weeks.

It may feel early, but make no mistake: The final phase of the 2018 midterm season has begun.

"It's like Election Day every day," said Jake Schneider, spokesman for Minnesota Republican Senate candidate Karin Housley. "It really changes the dynamic of an election. It really does. And it's exciting."

The commencement of voting in key states underscores the heightened significance of virtually every major development

— political or otherwise — on the state and national stage in the coming days. Economic indicators, the president's tweets, new revelations in the special counsel investigation and even the weather begin to matter much more as voters decide whether to go to the polls.

As is the case in many midterm battlegrounds, outside groups for several weeks have been dumping money into Minnesota, which features at least four competitive House elections, two U.S. Senate contests and a governor's race.

Florence evacuees return; flood risks remain

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, N.C. — The trillions of gallons of water dumped by Hurricane Florence continue to slowly meander their way to the sea, leaving billions of dollars of damage in their wake.

The crisis is slowly moving to South Carolina, where there was enough warning and certainty about where the water was going that hundreds of people loaded furniture from their homes into trucks and flatbeds to take to higher ground.

Officials downstream sounded dire alarms, pointing out the property destruction and environmental disasters left in Florence's wake.

"We're at the end of the line of all waters to come down," said Georgetown County Administrator Sel Hemingway, as he warned the area may see a flood like it has never seen before.

In North Carolina, a familiar story was unfolding as many places that flooded in

Hurricane Matthew in 2016 were again inundated.

Two years ago, flooding ruined the baseboards and carpet of the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant in Spring Lake. The congregation rebuilt. This year, water from the Little River broke the windows, leaving the pews a jumbled mess and soaked Bibles and hymn books on the floor.

"I'm so sad just thinking about all the work we put in. My gut is turning up," church member Dennis DeLong said. "We put a lot of heart and soul into putting it back up."

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster estimated damage from the flood in his state at \$1.2 billion in a letter that says the flooding will be the worst disaster in the state's modern history. McMaster asked Congressional leaders to hurry federal aid.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said he knows the damage in his state will add up to billions of dollars, but said with the ef-

fects on the storm ongoing, there was no way to make a more accurate estimate.

Florence is blamed for at least 42 deaths in the Carolinas and Virginia, including that of an 81-year-old man whose body was found in a submerged pickup truck in South Carolina. Well over half the dead were killed were in vehicles.

Potential environmental problems remained. Duke Energy issued a high-level emergency alert after floodwaters from the Cape Fear River overtopped an earthen dike and inundated a large lake at a closed power plant near Wilmington, N.C. The utility said it did not think any coal ash was at risk.

State-owned utility Santee Cooper in South Carolina is placing an inflatable dam around a coal ash pond near Conway, saying the extra 2.5 feet should be enough to keep floodwaters out. Officials warned human, hog and other animal waste were mixing in with floodwaters in the Carolinas.

Poland's president fights fallout over US visit

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's president is fighting back against criticism at home over a photo posted by Donald Trump that some say shows the Polish leader in a subservient role during a White House visit.

Trump tweeted photos of himself with President Andrzej Duda on Tuesday, including one of them signing a strategic cooperation agreement in which Trump is sitting at his desk and Duda is standing.

Both leaders look into the camera, Trump with a stern look and Duda grinning.

Critics of Duda, a conservative, have accused him of allowing himself and Poland to be dishonored, even humiliated. Some have reposted the photo with one of Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sitting together at a table as they signed a memorandum in June. The message: Even

a dictator gets better treatment than the president of Poland, one of Washington's most loyal allies.

Duda replied late Thursday with a photo of his own showing himself and Trump standing together with their signed agreement.

"The mockery and assault of the leftist media and some politicians and commentators of known views show the success of the Washington D.C. visit," Duda wrote in his caption.

Duda argued that if the trip hadn't been so successful, his critics would have said nothing, adding sarcastically: "Thank you for the words of appreciation!"

Duda is aligned with the ruling nationalist Law and Justice party, which has long vowed to restore a sense of national dignity to Poland after a long history of domination by foreign powers, and now what it consid-

ers excessive interference by the European Union. A key party slogan has been to get Poland "rising from its knees."

"This is the moment of signing an important declaration between the USA and Poland? This is rising from knees?" said political scientist Marcin Palade, arguing that Duda's closest staff should be fired over the photo.

The sense of Duda having been slighted was heightened by the fact that he had come to the U.S. to ask Washington to create a permanent American base in Poland, offering to name it Fort Trump and to provide more than \$2 billion toward that effort.

The fallout from the photo has included the firing of a reporter for a government-funded television broadcaster after he refused to delete the photo in question from his Facebook page.

3 newborns among 5 people stabbed at NYC day care

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Five people — including three newborn babies — were stabbed at an overnight day care center inside a New York City home early Friday, and a woman who had slashed her wrist and was found in the basement was taken into custody, police said. The victims were listed in critical

but stable condition.

The attack happened just before 4 a.m. in the Flushing section of Queens. A 3-day-old girl and a 1-month-old girl were stabbed in the abdomen, and a 20-day-old girl suffered cuts on her ear, chin and lip, authorities said. The father of a child at the center and a woman who worked there also

were stabbed, police said.

A 52-year-old woman who had cut herself was in custody at a hospital.

No immediate charges were filed, and police said the motive was under investigation.

A butcher knife and a meat cleaver were found at the scene.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Surgeon: Care good in removing healthy kidney

SD SIOUX FALLS — A South Dakota surgeon denies he breached the standard of care when he removed an Iowa woman's healthy kidney instead of her adrenal gland.

The Argus Leader reported that Dr. Scott Baker and The Surgical Institute of South Dakota responded to a lawsuit filed by Dena Knapp last month alleging professional negligence. The response acknowledges Baker removed Knapp's right kidney instead of an adrenal gland and an associated mass during her 2016 surgery.

Knapp said she wasn't told about the mix-up until after she was released from the hospital. She developed stage-three kidney disease after the surgery.

Baker and the Sioux Falls hospital deny breaching the standard of care by removing the kidney, failing to remove the adrenal gland and failing to admit the mistake. They also deny that Knapp suffered damages.

School selling chicken to save teacher position

NV HENDERSON — A Nevada elementary school is trying to save a teacher position through a unique fundraiser — selling chicken.

KVVU-TV reported parents at Lamping Elementary in Henderson, Nev., held a fundraiser Wednesday at a Chick-Fil-A in Las Vegas with the hopes of funding at least one teacher job. Some Clark County schools are facing serious challenges due to teacher shortages to budget cuts.

Lamping Elementary Principal Robert Solomon said the school had to cut three positions due to lack of enrollment or a decrease in enrollment.

Stranded in Europe, orchestra improvises

MA BOSTON — The world-renowned Boston Symphony Orchestra nearly missed the last stop on its European tour after getting stuck in Paris.

Orchestra brass had to scramble to get enough musicians to Amsterdam for the tour finale. Many wound up stranded in the French capital, forcing music director Andris Nelsons and others to redo the program hastily.

It happened Monday when the symphony's Luxair charter flight to the Netherlands had a mechanical problem and was canceled. Symphony president and CEO Mark Volpe said everyone adopted a "show must go on" mindset and picked new pieces that could be performed without the full orchestra. He said scores of players couldn't reach Amsterdam in time.

But Volpe said Tuesday it all ended on a high note with a thunderous standing ovation.

Union wants courthouse shut down due to bugs

RI PROVIDENCE—Union workers say a Rhode Island courthouse should be shut down over reports of bedbugs.

The Providence Journal reported that the union representing court clerks and deputy sheriffs is asking the state judiciary to close the Garrahy Judicial Complex in Providence and to relocate workers after bedbugs were found on the third and fifth floors. Union president J. Michael Downey said two workers refused to come in this week, and others said they want to walk off the job.

State Court Administrator J. Joseph Baxter said Friday that the fifth floor was treated for bedbugs and two public benches were removed. He said the

other floors were cleared for bedbugs and other insects.

School district fires bus driver who got lost

NJ MONTGOMERY — A New Jersey school district has fired a bus driver who got lost on the first day of school.

Montgomery schools Superintendent Nancy Gartenberg said the unidentified male driver was unfamiliar with the route and failed to go on a required practice run. The driver left Orchard Hill Elementary School with 37 students Sept. 6 and later became lost.

Jennifer Lafaman told the school board she got into her car to find her son, a kindergartener, when the bus didn't arrive. Lafaman said she found the bus "nowhere near the bus route" two hours after it was supposed to drop off her son.

School officials issued an apology and said drivers will be required to report to the transportation office next year to ensure they know their routes.

Police: Man threatens to shoot child over game

NY HUNTINGTON—Police say a Long Island man threatened to shoot an 11-year-old boy after losing to him in the video game "Fortnite."

Suffolk County Police Chief of Department Stuart Cameron said Michael Aliperti, 45, threatened to go to the boy's home and to harm him and also alluded to his school.

Newsday reported that Aliperti is suspected of threatening the child through text messages and online voice messages about 9 p.m. on Monday.

There was an increased police presence at R.J.O. Intermediate School in Kings Park.

Aliperti was arrested Tuesday on charges of aggravated

harassment and acting in a manner to injure a child.

Dogs rescued, fighting equipment seized

MS ABERDEEN — A Mississippi sheriff says 10 dogs discovered with dog fighting equipment have been rescued.

Sheriff Cecil Cantrell told news outlets that deputies received a call Wednesday about dogs tied up at the end of a field. The tip led them to find the nine pit bulls and a bait dog with no water and little food.

Cantrell said the equipment was seized — as were needles and horse medicine to inject the dogs with to build muscles. They also found scars on the dogs and bones of other dogs at the property. The animals will be taken to local shelters.

The sheriff says deputies have a person of interest they are looking for in the case.

Island estate sells for more than \$4M

ME FALMOUTH — An estate dating back to the Gilded Age of the U.S. built off the coast of Maine has been sold for over \$4 million.

Broker David Banks said the Clapboard Island estate features an 18-room mansion, five beaches, a helicopter landing pad, stone fireplaces, a guest house, a stone pier, barn, a children's playhouse and hiking trails. The Portland Press Herald reported it was sold when previous owners Al and Dawn Hoffman could no longer care for the 22-acre Falmouth property. Banks said the new owners have asked not to be identified for the time being.

The estate was built in 1898 by railroad tycoon Samuel F. Houston and his friend, architect Joseph M. Huston.

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Mayfield rallies Browns to win over Jets

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — At some point, Baker Mayfield was going to assume Cleveland's starting job and become the franchise quarterback, the future.

That moment arrived Thursday night. His days as a backup are over.

Throwing a 14-yard dart to complete his first pass, Mayfield replaced an injured Tyrod Taylor and rallied the Browns from a two-touchdown deficit for a 21-17 win over the New York Jets to end Cleveland's 19-game winless streak — the NFL's second-longest in 48 years.

Mayfield erased any doubts about why the Browns selected him with the No. 1 overall pick in this year's draft with a performance that included him catching a two-point conversion. The undersized and overlooked kid from Texas who walked on at two colleges, won a Heisman Trophy and became one of college football biggest stars, had some NFL debut.

"He's really special," Browns receiver Jarvis Landry said. "He took advantage of the moment and the opportunity. We always have seen him make these plays. As far back as when the Baker Mayfield story started, he has always made these types of plays. It is awesome to be a part of it."

Mayfield came in after Taylor sustained

a concussion late in the first half and led the Browns (1-1) on four scoring drives — the last a 15-play, 75-yarder capped by Carlos Hyde's 1-yard TD run — and Cleveland's defense intercepted two passes by Jets rookie quarterback Sam Darnold in the fourth quarter to seal the team's first win since Dec. 24, 2016.

Following the game, jubilant Browns fans walking down the ramps of FirstEnergy Stadium chanted "Ba-ker, May-field" at the top of their lungs.

Their new hero took it all in stride.

"I have just been waiting for my moment," said Mayfield, who completed 17 of 23 passes for 201 yards. "I have been patient. I have been in a good opportunity, put in a good situation with the guys around me — veteran QBs and great coaches that I can learn from. I was never whining or complaining about playing time. I just want the team to win, no matter what the cost is."

The Browns wanted to bring Mayfield along slowly by having him watch and learn behind Taylor.

That plan is about to be scrapped.

Although Cleveland coach Hue Jackson wouldn't commit to Mayfield as his starter going forward, the choice is obvious. Mayfield isn't your average rookie quarterback and it's clear he's as ready as he can pos-

sibly be.

"I am not surprised by any throws that this young man makes," Jackson said. "He does things in practice that I just go, 'Oh, my gosh.' Timing. Timing is everything. The right time. The right situation. You can't deny the talent. You can't deny what he is able to do. He showed that tonight."

Crude Crowell: Jets running back Isaiah Crowell scored two touchdowns, but his unsuitable celebration of the second one drew him a 15-yard penalty and the wrath of his coach.

Following his 2-yard TD run in the second quarter, Crowell squatted in the end zone and pretended to wipe his rear end with the ball before throwing it into the stands.

Crowell played four seasons with Cleveland and his gesture appeared to be directed at the Browns.

"Inexcusable," Jets coach Todd Bowles said. "We addressed it. It will never happen again."

Crowell said he got carried away.

"It was just passion and it wasn't a message toward anybody," he said. "You have to play the game with passion and that is the way I play. I did it so I have to accept whatever punishment comes with the celebration. I can't put my teammates in that position."

Russia's reinstatement by WADA draws harsh criticism

Associated Press

The World Anti-Doping Agency declared Russia's scandal-ridden drug-fighting operation back in business Thursday, a decision designed to bring a close to one of sports' most notorious doping scandals but one bitterly disputed by hundreds of athletes and described as "treachery" by the lawyer for the man who exposed the corruption.

On a 9-2 vote, the executive committee took the advice of the agency's compliance review panel and declared RUSADA as having satisfied conditions of reinstatement that were gradually softened over the summer.

In most tangible ways, the decision doesn't change much: RUSADA has been up and running for a while, bringing one of the world's largest testing programs back on line with

the help of officials from Britain and elsewhere. And Russia's Olympic committee was brought back into the fold after the Pyeongchang Olympics, where athletes who could prove they were clean were able to compete as "Olympic Athletes from Russia."

But RUSADA's reinstatement, after nearly a three-year suspension, now clears the country to again bid for major international events — although soccer's World Cup was held there this summer despite that restriction.

It also clears a major hurdle for Russia's track team to be declared compliant by that sport's international governing body (IAAF) — one of the few to take a strong, consistent stand against the doping — though IAAF released a statement saying there were other milestones still unmet and its next update

isn't due until December.

Perhaps most importantly, hundreds of athletes and dozens of world anti-doping leaders see it as a stinging rebuke to the ideal of fair play.

"WADA's decision to reinstate Russia represents the greatest treachery against clean athletes in Olympic history," said Jim Walden, the attorney for Grigory Rodchenkov, the former Moscow lab director who exposed much of the Russian scheme.

WADA had been telegraphing the move since Sept. 14, when it released the recommendation of its compliance review committee. Olympic champion Beckie Scott resigned from that committee afterward.

"I'm profoundly disappointed," Scott said to Canadian broadcaster CBC after the decision. "I feel this was an opportunity for WADA, and

they have dealt a devastating blow to clean sport. I'm quite dismayed."

U.S. Olympic Committee chairman Larry Probst said "suggesting that Russia has lived-up to its obligations is disingenuous, and today's decision to reinstate RUSADA flies in the face of WADA's responsibility to clean athletes everywhere."

Even in Russia, where the news was welcomed, it came with a sense that there's still work to be done.

"These questions will always follow us," said RUSADA CEO Yuri Ganus, whose appointment to the job was part of the housecleaning at the agency that WADA demanded. "These aren't the kind of skeletons which can lie unnoticed in the closet. These are the skeletons which will be banging on the closet door all the time."

OU learning how to handle Army offense

Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — It might be strange for longtime college football fans to imagine that Oklahoma's roster is almost completely unfamiliar with the triple-option offense.

In the eyes of many, Oklahoma perfected it. The Sooners ran it out of the wishbone formation to win national championships in 1974, 1975 and 1985 under coach Barry Switzer. There are three options per running play — the quarterback, a fullback and a pitch man. The quarterback often determines the ball carrier by reading what the defense does.

The system that dominated college football from the late 1960s into the 1990s is now rarely seen. That made Army's offense difficult to simulate in practice as the fifth-ranked Sooners prepared to host the Black Knights on Saturday.

"It's one of the toughest challenges," Oklahoma coach Lincoln Riley said. "You have to be creative with your roster.

That's something we've looked at well ahead of time, even as much as looking at the guys we're bringing in and what they played with in high school and guys that have any experience with it."

Oklahoma has spent extra time and effort planning how to deal with it. The Sooners worked on it one day during the spring and a few days during fall camp before their opener. The Sooners have had their scout team offense practice without a football so the defense can get used to playing specific assignments rather than just going after the ball. Adjusting to cut blocks — blocks in which the player targets a defender's legs — has been an emphasis.

"It's very unique, and it's difficult to transition into more patient react to blocks, try to keep people off of your legs," Oklahoma defensive coordinator Mike Stoops said. "There's a lot there. And their ability to execute so many different variables to the triple option is challenging in a lot of ways."

Oklahoma linebacker Kenneth Murray said it's all about discipline.

"They give you a bunch of different looks to run basically the same type of option," he said. "At the end of the day you've got to be honing on your keys. It's not a game where you can just forget this here and then go run to the ball."

Army has to deal with Oklahoma's improved defense, too. The Sooners were dominant in wins over Florida Atlantic and UCLA, and did enough in last Saturday's 37-27 win over Iowa State.

"Oklahoma is a great team," Army coach Jeff Monken said. "We just want to go down there and compete, hold the ball and put points on the board, be tough and physical and disciplined, show the country what Army football is about. That's the name of the game."

Here are some things to look for when the Sooners host the Black Knights:

Kelvin's time: Kelvin Hopkins Jr. was named Army's

starting quarterback after a three-way competition in pre-season camp. After a shaky start — Army lost two of five fumbles in its season-opening loss at Duke — Hopkins has been nearly flawless and has added a passing dimension that's been lacking. Army led the nation in rushing last year (362.2), but passed for only 361 yards to rank last. Hopkins has thrown for 420 yards already.

"I'm just doing whatever I can," Hopkins said. "Coach always talks about doing your one-eleventh. That's all I'm trying to do — do my part for this team to help us win, do the best job I can."

No turnovers, please: Monken preaches ball security incessantly, and he's been rewarded. In the last three years, the Black Knights have gone 9-0 when they didn't lose the football. Since Monken took over five years ago, they're 10-4 when they don't lose the ball. Last year's 10-win team lost only five fumbles in more than 800 plays.

Orgeron, LSU adjusting to new status as favorites

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — As much as LSU coach Ed Orgeron urges his players to "block out the noise," the reality is inescapable.

The Tigers have indeed used their underdog status as emotional fuel in a pair of upsets of top-10 teams in the first three weeks of the season. Now that they're ranked sixth in the Top 25, they'll have to get used to playing as favorites — this week against Louisiana Tech and perhaps until current No. 2 Georgia visits Death Valley on Oct. 13.

"All the negative stuff that was going on ... if it did affect us, it affected us in a positive way," Orgeron said Monday, referring to LSU barely being ranked in the Top 25 to start the season and listed as a pre-season underdog in a handful of

games on its schedule — including against then-No. 8 Miami in its season opener and then-No. 7 Auburn this past Saturday.

"We've been playing with a chip on our shoulder."

Several LSU players have acknowledged being motivated by college football analysts who almost unanimously predicted against them before their dramatic, 22-21 victory at Auburn on Saturday.

Going forward, Orgeron asserted, "We are going to stay humble. It's going to start with me. We are not going to mention rankings. We are not going to mention anything but focusing in on the task at hand."

Orgeron recalled that when he was an assistant to Pete Carroll on Southern California teams that contended for national titles, high rankings or anything else that promoted a sense of favored status were

"never mentioned."

As far as Orgeron is concerned, LSU players should look no further than their own experiences from this season for lessons about what it means to be highly ranked.

"We've played two top-10 teams so far. Being a top-10 team did not help them, so that's not going to win a football game for us," Orgeron asserted.

LSU entered the season confident in its defense, but unsure what to expect from an offense that would rely on a new quarterback, as well as largely unproven running backs and receivers. The suspension of starting offensive tackle Ed Ingram shortly before the season only cast further doubt on the unit's potential.

LSU's passing game has been by no means prolific, but quarterback Joe Burrow, a graduate transfer from Ohio State, has

avoided turnovers and come through with clutch completions, such as on his fourth-and-7 completion on Saturday's winning drive. Meanwhile, running back Nick Brossette has blossomed as a senior, averaging about 110 yards per game.

"It feels good. Credit to all the guys who just kind of trust the process," said senior tight end Foster Moreau, a member of the team's leadership council. "We understood what we were going to have to do and how we were going to have to beat teams that we weren't expected to beat. But then again, it's only three games in. We're undefeated so far, but we're far from perfect."

Burrow moved his right hand upward and across his body while predicting the direction of LSU's offense as the season progresses.

Red Sox top Yankees, wrap up AL East

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mookie Betts and the Boston Red Sox won their third consecutive AL East championship Thursday night, clinching on enemy turf with an 11-6 victory over the rival New York Yankees.

Betts homered, doubled twice and drove in five runs, finishing with four hits as the Red Sox overcame Giancarlo Stanton's go-ahead grand slam in the fourth inning. Jackie Bradley Jr. hit a tying home run in the seventh and Xander Bogaerts put Boston ahead with a sacrifice fly.

With the best record in baseball and a playoff berth already secured, Boston (104-49) closed out a once-tight division

race with nine games to spare. J.D. Martinez and the Red Sox, alone in first place since July 2, will open the postseason at home on Oct. 5 against an opponent to be determined.

Never before had Boston finished in first place three years in a row. The club needs one victory to match the franchise record held by the 1912 World Series champions.

It took three tries, but these Red Sox finally earned their chance to celebrate at Yankee Stadium under rookie manager Alex Cora.

Boston entered the three-game series needing a single victory to lock up its fourth AL East title in six years, but the Yankees put the party on hold for a few nights with two

straight wins.

Craig Kimbrel whiffed a slumping Stanton for the final out, and the Red Sox strolled out of the dugout to give each other hugs and high-fives in a muted celebration around the mound. They walked off the field and headed inside to cheers from Boston fans behind the third-base dugout.

Then, it was time to break out the bubbly in the Bronx.

Two years ago, in David Ortiz's final season, the Red Sox celebrated in the visitors' clubhouse at Yankee Stadium after wrapping up the division crown in New York. But that came in the wake of a loss — after Mark Teixeira's game-ending grand slam gave the Yankees a comeback win.

About 30 minutes earlier, the Red Sox had clinched when Toronto lost to Baltimore. So they went ahead and celebrated their season accomplishment with a booze-filled fiesta.

This time, they got to do it absolutely right.

After starter Eduardo Rodriguez walked a career-high seven in 3²/₃ innings, knuckleballer Steven Wright (3-1) worked three shutout innings for the win.

Brock Holt also homered for the Red Sox, and Martinez increased his major league-leading RBI total to 124 in a game that took 4 hours, 2 minutes.

Betts launched his 30th home run in the eighth, a three-run shot off All-Star closer Aroldis Chapman.

MLB roundup

Semien drives in five runs as Athletics wallop Angels

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — With a postseason berth within their sights, the Oakland Athletics are leaving nothing to chance.

Marcus Semien had three hits and a career-high five RBIs, Stephen Piscotty homered and drove in four runs and the Oakland Athletics hammered the Los Angeles Angels 21-3 on Thursday.

The Athletics reduced their magic number for clinching a playoff berth to five. Since June 15, Oakland is a major league-best 58-25.

Going into Thursday, Oakland trailed Houston by four games in the AL West, led Tampa Bay by 5½ games for the second wild-card spot, and was 2½ games behind the New York Yankees for the first wild card.

Catcher Francisco Arcia pitched the last two innings for the Angels, who were outscored 31-2 in the last two games of the series. He also homered in the ninth, becoming the first player in Major League history to

catch, pitch and hit a home run in the same game, according to the Angels.

"Honestly, when I saw the score up there on the board, it looked like a football score," Piscotty said. "It doesn't happen all that often, but it's a crazy game when you have position guys throwing."

The A's tied an Oakland record for runs scored first set on June 18, 2000, against Kansas City.

Blue Jays 9, Rays 8: Justin Smoak homered with two outs in the ninth inning to lift host Toronto, dealing a blow to Tampa Bay's wild-card playoff hopes.

Smoak hit his 25th homer of the season and third career walk-off blast. Sergio Romo (3-4) blew his eighth save in 30 opportunities. David Paulino (1-0) pitched an inning for the victory as Toronto won for the fourth time in its past five.

Braves 8, Phillies 3: Luca Duda's pinch-hit double drove in the go-ahead run in the seventh, and host Atlanta took an important step toward win-

ning the NL East by beating Philadelphia.

Atlanta leads the second-place Phillies by 6½ games following the opening game of the four-game series. The teams close the season with three games at Philadelphia, but the Phillies need to win at least three of four in Atlanta to retain hope of making the final series meaningful. The Braves have a magic number of four over Philadelphia to clinch their first division title since 2013.

White Sox 5, Indians 4 (11): Matt Davidson hit a run-scoring single with two out in the 11th inning to lift Chicago past Cleveland for its first victory at Progressive Field this season.

The White Sox were outscored 58-19 in dropping their first eight games in Cleveland, including a 4-1 loss Wednesday when Jason Kipnis hit a grand slam in the ninth.

Tigers 11, Royals 8: Christian Stewart hit his first two big league homers and drove in six runs, leading host Detroit past Kansas City.

Stewart, a September call-up playing in his 11th game, became the first Tigers rookie to drive in six runs in a game since Ryan Raburn had seven against the White Sox on July 25, 2007.

Mets 5, Nationals 4 (12): Jose Lobaton hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly against his former team in the 12th inning and visiting New York beat Washington.

Lobaton, who spent the previous four years in Washington before signing with the Mets in December, lofted a one-out fly ball off Jefry Rodriguez (3-3) with the bases loaded to score Amed Rosario.

Reds 4, Marlins 2: Cody Reed won for the first time as a starter in the majors, and Scooter Gennett homered and doubled to lead visiting Cincinnati past Miami.

Reed (1-2) allowed five hits and struck out six in six shutout innings. The left-hander joined the starting rotation Aug. 30 and has thrown 11 consecutive scoreless innings.