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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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SEAL team's leaders fired amid crackdown

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Navy's top SEAL on Friday fired SEAL Team 7's top three leaders from their duties as the service cracks down on a cultural and ethical crisis within the ranks of its elite commandos, according to Navy officials.

Rear Adm. Collin Green, the commander of Naval Special Warfare Command, dismissed Cmdr. Edward Mason, the team's commander, Lt. Cmdr. Luke Im, its executive officer, and Command Master Chief Hugh Spangler, the unit's senior enlisted leader, over problems with leadership in the team's ranks, according to a Navy statement. The move comes after at least one of the California-based SEAL Team 7 platoons was sent home early from Iraq in July amid

allegations of serious misconduct, including alcohol abuse downrange and accusations of a sexual assault occurring during an unofficial Independence Day celebration within the unit.

Green fired the SEAL leaders "due to a loss of confidence that resulted from leadership failures that caused a breakdown of good order and discipline within two subordinate units while deployed to combat zones," a Navy statement reads.

A Navy spokesperson declined to provide additional details about Green's decision but said the SEALs were not expected to face additional disciplinary action and would remain in the Navy. The spokesperson declined to say where the SEALs would be reassigned or to provide their service records.

The admiral's decision comes after he ordered major cultural changes for the Navy's special operations community late last month following a short probe into possible causes of misconduct among SEALs that have captured headlines in recent years.

In addition to the problems alleged within SEAL Team 7 in Iraq this year, SEALs from other units in recent years have faced a range of other troubling allegations, including committing war crimes such as killing unarmed, detained enemy fighters, murdering a Green Beret in Africa, and use of illegal narcotics.

In an attempt to rein in his force, Green ordered last month that the SEAL force return to standard Navy uniform and appearance standards, including undergoing regular inspections. SEALs have often

sported beards, longer hair and non-standard uniforms, especially during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Green also ordered the implementation of a program "to track and develop an individual's leadership and ethical development" through his or her career, the implementation of special warfare history and heritage into regular activities, and for the service provide all SEALs formal legal briefings.

Leadership failures throughout the SEAL organization were to blame for the ethical and cultural problems, Green wrote in a memorandum last month announcing his decisions.

"The root of our problem begins with members who fail to correct this behavior within their sphere of leadership and prioritize this misalignment over the loyalty to Navy and nation," Green wrote.

Soldier killed in Afghanistan was known as leader

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. soldier who died Thursday in Afghanistan from wounds in a bomb blast was a compassionate leader whose troops say he always encouraged people who are struggling to ask for help.

Now those soldiers are grappling with the loss of Sgt. 1st Class Elis A. Barreto Ortiz, 34, from Morovis, Puerto Rico, who left behind a wife, two sons and a daughter.

Barreto Ortiz, described as a "mainstay" in his unit by his leadership, died in a Taliban suicide bomb explosion Thursday and became the 16th U.S. combat fatality this year in Afghanistan as the Pentagon pre-

pares to draw down its forces there after nearly 18 years of war.

He was assigned to the 82nd Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, out of Fort Bragg, N.C., the Pentagon said in a statement Friday.

"This guy touched so many people's lives," recalled a soldier in his company, Sgt. Tylar Sieck, 24.

Barreto Ortiz taught soldiers it was OK to say when they needed help, Sieck said. On missions, Barreto Ortiz always would say he was there to help, even if people thought they didn't need it. Now, Sieck said, he wants to employ what Barreto Ortiz taught him about being honest about needing help.

"Everyone is trying to act like we're fine, because that's what we do as paratroopers, but at the end of the day, we know we're struggling," Sieck said. "We're hurting, I'm hurting."

Barreto Ortiz joined the Army in August 2010. Family friends said Barreto Ortiz followed in the footsteps of his father, who also served.

"He was a great person, honest, caring and full of hopes and dreams," said his recruiter, Julio Torres, who signed him up in 2010. "I do carry a burden for his death, but in this line of duty, there is a risk."

Barreto Ortiz was assigned to 82nd Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, in January 2018.

"With honor and courage, Sgt. 1st Class Barreto answered our nation's call to deploy and serve in Afghanistan," Col. Arthur Sellers, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, said in a statement.

Barreto Ortiz served as a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Sieck. He had a way of making people laugh, Sieck and others said. Friends and fellow soldiers recalled him as funny and intelligent. In photos, he often cracked a wide, cheesy smile.

Everyone would call him "Papi," Sieck said, a nod to Barreto Ortiz's roots in Puerto Rico.

"He was always happy, a tremendous friend; he never said no," said Miguel Otero, of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Iran now operating advanced centrifuges

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran on Saturday said it now uses arrays of advanced centrifuges prohibited by its 2015 nuclear deal and can enrich uranium “much more beyond” current levels to weapons-grade material, taking a third step away from the accord while warning Europe has little time to offer it new terms.

While insisting Iran doesn’t seek a nuclear weapon, the comments by Behrouz Kamalvandi of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran threatened pushing uranium enrichment far beyond levels ever reached in the country. Prior to the atomic deal, Iran only reached up to 20%, which itself still is only a short technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

The move threatened to push tensions between Iran and the U.S. even higher more than a year after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear deal and imposed sanctions now crushing Iran’s economy. Mysterious attacks on oil tankers

near the Strait of Hormuz, Iran shooting down a U.S. military surveillance drone and other incidents across the wider Middle East followed Trump’s decision.

“So far, Iran has showed patience before the U.S. pressures and Europeans’ indifference,” said Qassem Babaei, 33, an electrician in Tehran. “Now they should wait and see how Iran achieves its goals.”

Iran separately acknowledged Saturday it had seized another ship and detained 12 Filipino crewmembers, while satellite images suggested an Iranian oil tanker once held by Gibraltar was now off the coast of Syria despite Tehran promising its oil wouldn’t go there.

Speaking to journalists while flanked by advanced centrifuges, Kamalvandi said Iran has begun using an array of 20 IR-6 centrifuges and another 20 of IR-4 centrifuges. An IR-6 can produce enriched uranium 10 times as fast as an IR-1, Iranian officials say, while an IR-4 produces five times as fast.

The nuclear deal limited Iran

to using only 5,060 first-generation IR-1 centrifuges to enrich uranium by rapidly spinning uranium hexafluoride gas. By starting up these advanced centrifuges, Iran further cuts into the one year that experts estimate Tehran would need to have enough material for building a nuclear weapon if it chose to pursue one.

“Under current circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran is capable of increasing its enriched uranium stockpile as well as its enrichment levels and that is not just limited to 20%,” Kamalvandi said. “We are capable inside the country to increase the enrichment much more beyond that.”

Iran has already increased its enrichment up to 4.5%, above the 3.67% allowed under the deal, as well as gone beyond its 300-kilogram limit for low-enriched uranium.

While Kamalvandi stressed that “the Islamic Republic is not after the bomb,” he warned that Iran was running out of ways to stay in the accord.

“If Europeans want to make

any decision, they should do it soon,” he said. France had floated a proposed \$15 billion line of credit to allow Iran to sell its oil abroad despite U.S. sanctions.

Another trade mechanism proposed by Europe called INSTEX also has faced difficulty.

Kamalvandi also said Iran would allow U.N. inspectors to continue to monitor sites in the country. A top official from the U.N.’s International Atomic Energy Agency was expected to meet with Iranian officials in Tehran on Sunday.

The IAEA said Saturday it was aware of Iran’s announcement and “agency inspectors are on the ground in Iran and they will report any relevant activities to IAEA headquarters in Vienna.” It did not elaborate.

In Paris, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Iran’s announcement wasn’t a surprise.

“The Iranians are going to pursue what the Iranians have always intended to pursue,” Esper said at a news conference with his French counterpart, Florence Parly.

Typhoon slams S. Korea; Yongsan Garrison loses power

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Strong winds knocked out power on Yongsan Garrison on Saturday, forcing the Army post to lock down for the night as Typhoon Lingling tore through South Korea.

The powerful storm left heavy damage in its wake as it skirted the peninsula’s western coast with winds of more than 80 mph before making landfall in North Korea.

Yongsan, which sits in the heart of Seoul, already had urged people to stock up on essentials and to stay inside.

By Saturday afternoon, the garrison made that mandatory and closed all gates except for emergency traffic.

“Due to dangerous weather conditions, including fallen trees and blowing debris, all gates are closed and no walking outside is permitted until the all clear notice is given,” Yongsan said in an emergency

alert.

Toppled trees knocked out power lines, leaving the largest populated section of the garrison known as South Post without power.

The Brian D. Allgood Army Community Hospital and Dragon Hill Lodge were operating with emergency generators, officials said.

The garrison initially said crews were working to restore power but later said the outage would last all night and gates would remain closed in the meantime. “South Post will be out of power for approximately 24 hours,” according to an update issued Saturday evening. “The Shelter in Place is still in effect until the morning due to limited visibility and downed power lines.”

The situation will be reassessed at first light on Sunday, the garrison said. “Please exercise patience during this restoration timeframe. Typhoon Lingling has hit

Korea hard,” it said.

Yongsan has sharply reduced its population to just over 5,600 in recent months as it prepares to close after the U.S. military moved its main headquarters to the newly expanded Camp Humphreys, south of Seoul.

Humphreys and other bases also remained in Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness 1. Most nonessential services, including stores, taxis and buses, were unavailable.

Elsewhere in South Korea, the storm grounded planes, knocked out electricity to more than 57,000 homes and left at least three people dead, according to The Associated Press.

Traffic to Incheon International Airport also was disrupted due to the closure of its gateway bridge and a power failure on a commuter rail network, the news agency reported.

North Carolinians assess Dorian damage

ATLANTIC BEACH, N.C. — As the sky cleared and floodwaters receded Saturday, residents of North Carolina's Outer Banks began to assess the damage wrought by Hurricane Dorian.

Steve Harris has lived on Ocracoke Island for most of the last 19 years. He's ridden out eight hurricanes, but he said he'd never seen a storm bring such devastation to his community, which is accessible only by boat or air and is popular with tourists for its undeveloped beaches.

"We just thought it was gonna be a normal blow," Harris, a semi-retired contractor, said Friday. "But the damage is going to be severe this time. This is flooding of biblical proportions."

Gov. Roy Cooper said about 800 people had remained on the island to wait out Dorian. The storm made landfall Friday morning over the Outer Banks as a far weaker storm than the monster that devastated the Bahamas. Yet despite having been downgraded to a Category 1 storm, it still sent seawater surging over neighborhoods, flooding the first floors of many homes.

"There is significant concern about hundreds of people trapped on Ocracoke Island," Cooper said.

Death toll rises in Bahamas

Associated Press

ABACO, Bahamas — Search-and-rescue teams are still trying to reach some Bahamian communities isolated by floodwaters and debris after Hurricane Dorian, while the official death toll has risen to 43 and is likely to increase even more, top officials said.

Prime Minister Hubert Minnis said as of late Friday, 35 were known dead on Abaco Island and eight in Grand Bahama. "We acknowledge that there are many missing and that the number of deaths is expected to significantly increase," he said. "This is one of the stark realities we are facing

in this hour of darkness."

Security Minister Marvin Dames said authorities were striving to reach everyone, but the crews can't just bulldoze their way through fallen trees and other rubble because there might be bodies not yet recovered.

"We have been through this before, but not at this level of devastation," Dames said. "These are very serious times and very sensitive times."

He expressed understanding for the complaints of people who are calling for help after having their lives shattered by Dorian, but he urged patience for efforts by authorities to get in humanitarian aid.

By Friday evening, the governor said that officials were aware of no serious injuries on the Outer Banks from the storm. People in need of temporary housing were being taken to a shelter on the mainland, the governor said.

Connie Leinbach, who publishes the Ocracoke Observer newspaper, said sheriff's deputies and other rescue personnel performed at least two rescues from attics. She said the Coast Guard was also called in to help a man who was having problems with his oxygen.

"We've got a ton of water here. It's more than (Hurricane) Matthew," Leinbach said, comparing it to the damaging 2016 storm.

Dorian was expected to remain a hurricane as it went up the Eastern Seaboard through Saturday. While tropical-storm force winds buffeted southeastern Massachusetts, hurricane-force winds are unlikely to pose any threat to land in the U.S.

Canadian officials expected Dorian to remain a Category 1 hurricane when it makes landfall in Nova Scotia.

Canadian Hurricane Centre meteorologist Ian Hubbard said Saturday that the storm is expected to lose its title as a hurricane as it crosses the province.

Harris lost his car to the storm and his air conditioning is damaged, but he said he's blessed that his condominium is on the third floor and he is insured. Of the 11 units in his complex, seven had water in them, he said.

"It's just a strange picture," Harris said. "If you've been a regular guest down here for

years, you can't imagine what we saw."

The U.S. Coast Guard began landing local law enforcement officers on the island Friday via helicopter and airlifting out the sick, elderly and others in distress, Hyde County authorities said. National Guard helicopters also flew in supplies and a rescue team.

Smoke inhalation blamed for deaths in boat disaster

Associated Press

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — Dozens of people trapped on a scuba diving boat that caught fire off the Southern California coast appear to have died from smoke inhalation, not burns, authorities said Friday.

The 34 people who died were sleeping in a cramped bunkroom below the main deck of the Conception when the fire broke out before dawn Monday and quickly engulfed the boat.

Preliminary findings on the causes of death, announced by Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown, raise the possibil-

ity the victims inhaled highly toxic smoke and died in their sleep before being scorched by flames that burned their bodies beyond recognition.

"The indicators are from the preliminary examination of the bodies that the victims died prior to being burned," Brown said.

The revelation came as investigators searched for the cause of the deadly blaze and divers looked for the body of the one missing victim. The Coast Guard said safety concerns over the weather halted efforts to salvage the boat Friday.

Clergy and others offered

words of solace Friday evening in a vigil at a Santa Barbara park.

The dead were "our friends and our family members. Our common love for diving binds us together for eternity," dive instructor Don Barthelmess said.

Thirty-four scuba tanks were arranged in memory of those killed when the Conception caught fire Monday off Santa Cruz Island.

Mourners wept, embraced and placed white carnations in baskets. The flowers and a wreath will be placed at an existing waterside memorial to

those lost at sea.

While local, state and federal agencies try to solve the mystery of what doomed the dive boat, the investigation has not turned criminal, Brown said, though he said that was a possibility.

Under federal law known as the seaman's manslaughter statute, a captain or crew member can be charged with a crime if their negligence or misconduct results in death.

Laurie Levenson, a former federal prosecutor who is a professor at Loyola Law School, said it's too early to discuss charges.

Hong Kong mounts airport security blitz

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Hong Kong authorities mounted a security blitz at and near the airport on Saturday, averting a second straight weekend of disruptions by pro-democracy activists who have refused to yield even after gaining a concession from the government last week.

Police mounted road checks and inspected passengers on trains and buses heading to the airport to weed out protesters. An Associated Press journalist at an area near the airport witnessed at least two bus passengers being handcuffed and taken away after police found face masks in their bags.

The express train service to the airport was limited, running to and from downtown Hong Kong but skipping all stations in between. Only people with plane tickets were allowed to enter the terminals, and those milling around an adjoining bus ter-

minal were chased off.

Several hundred angry protesters, many in masks, converged at a subway station in the Tung Chung area adjacent to the airport. They chanted slogans and called police “murderers” amid widespread anger over alleged brutality against demonstrators during three months of protests in the city that have become increasingly violent.

Shops were shuttered and the station was shut down in the evening as the mood grew tense. Protesters spilled onto the street but left after riot police with batons confronted them.

Hong Kong’s airport, the world’s eighth busiest, has been a frequent target during a summer of protests sparked by an extradition bill that would have allowed criminal suspects to be sent to mainland China for trial. Many saw the bill as a glaring example of the Chinese territory’s eroding autonomy since the former British colony was returned to China in 1997.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announced Wednesday that her government would withdraw the bill, but that failed to appease protesters, who have expanded their goals to include other issues.

The airport rail link was suspended last weekend after protesters threw objects on the track, blocked roads near the airport and damaged a nearby subway station.

Last month, the airport was shut down for two days after protesters occupied the terminals, leading to violent clashes.

There were calls online for protesters to shed their trademark black shirts and forge boarding passes to gain access to airport terminals on Saturday.

Police warned using fake boarding passes to gain entry could land offenders up to 14 years in jail. They also said motorists who intentionally slow down to disrupt traffic could be charged with dangerous or reckless driving.

Russia, Ukraine exchange 35 prisoners each

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia and Ukraine on Saturday exchanged 35 prisoners each to the other country, a move that could be a significant step toward easing Russia-Ukraine relations and raise chances for resolving the conflict in Ukraine’s east.

At Kyiv Boryspil International Airport in the Ukrainian

capital, Kyiv, the prisoners were greeted by President Volodymyr Zelenskiy as they stepped down the stairway from an airplane that had brought them from Moscow. Relatives waiting on the tarmac surged forward to hug them.

Most of the prisoners appeared to be in good physical condition, although one struggled down the steps on crutch-

es and another was held by the arms as he slowly navigated the steps.

At Moscow’s Vnukovo International Airport, the released prisoners stayed aboard the plane for about 15 minutes for unexplained reasons, then disembarked with many toting baggage.

The released prisoners aboard the Russian plane in-

cluded Kirill Vyshinsky, head of the Russian state news agency RIA-Novosti’s Ukraine branch, who had been jailed since 2018 on treason charges.

The prisoners from the Russian side included 24 Ukrainian sailors who were seized by Russia in November, and filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, convicted of plotting terrorist acts.

India loses track of lunar lander during final approach

Associated Press

BANGALORE, India — India’s space agency said it lost touch with its Vikram lunar lander on Saturday as it made its final approach to the moon’s south pole to deploy a rover to search for signs of water.

The fate of the lander — whether it crashed or landed — wasn’t immediately known.

A successful landing would have made India just the fourth country to land a vessel on the lunar surface and only the third to operate a robotic rover there.

The space agency said the lander’s descent was normal until 1.2 miles from the lunar surface.

“Let us hope for the best,” said Indian

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was at mission control in the southern city of Bangalore.

The entire control center was jubilant during the first 10 minutes of the lander’s descent, with scientists breaking out in occasional cheers.

The mood suddenly turned somber and then dejected when the lander stopped sending data during its final minutes of descent.

“I can understand the sadness in your face,” Modi later told gathered scientists after being briefed by the space agency’s chairman. “I have lived the moment with you when communication with the spacecraft was lost.”

Dr. Kailasavadivoo Sivan, the agency

chairman, said the data was being analyzed to find out what happened.

The roughly \$140 million mission, known as Chandrayaan-2, was intended to study permanently shadowed moon craters that are thought to contain water deposits that were confirmed by the Chandrayaan-1 mission in 2008.

India’s achievements in space have been hailed by Modi as a symbol of the country’s rising ambition as a global power.

The space agency’s chairman had earlier called Chandrayaan-2 the “most complex mission ever” undertaken by the agency.

The mission lifted off on July 22 from the Satish Dhawan space center in Sriharikota, an island off the coast of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man charged with placing 'stink bomb'

MO CAPE GIRARDEAU — A Cape Girardeau man is charged with making a terrorist threat after he allegedly dropped a "stink bomb" at a cable service office.

The Southeast Missourian reported a court statement filed by police said Deandre Dunn, 35, was arrested after the incident at a Spectrum office in Cape Girardeau Tuesday.

An employee trying to help Dunn, who was upset with his service, said Dunn at one point ducked below the counter and then he left in a hurry.

The statement said after Dunn left, several employees reported feeling sick. Four employees and six customers who left the building were treated at the scene.

Police said liquid found inside a broken glass vial in the office contained no harmful chemicals.

Post office renamed for soldier killed

IL ALPHA — A western Illinois post office has been named in honor of a 26-year-old soldier who died while serving in Afghanistan.

The Alpha Post Office was formally renamed the Capt. Joshua E. Steele Post Office during a recent ceremony.

Steele was raised on his family farm in North Henderson. He graduated from the University of Missouri-Rolla in 2002 and was commissioned that year as a 2nd lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

He served in Iraq and the Republic of Georgia before he was killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan in 2007.

Woman hits another woman with bottle

CT HARTFORD — Authorities said a Connecticut woman is facing charges for allegedly smashing a glass bottle over another woman's face outside a restaurant.

Hartford police Lt. Paul Cicero said Avon resident Ronda Heard, 40, is accused of hitting a woman with a bottle and breaking it over her face after an argument on March 28 in Hartford.

Heard was arrested Saturday and faces first-degree assault and first-degree reckless endangerment charges.

The Hartford Courant reported the victim went to the police and showed them medical records that indicated she needed 45 stitches on her face.

Farm pays tribute to Gronk with corn maze

MA NORTHBOROUGH — A Massachusetts farm is paying tribute to recently retired New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski with a corn maze.

West End Creamery in Northbridge in a post on social media last weekend that included an aerial view of the maze announced that its Gronk maze opens later this month as part of the farm's annual fall festival.

The maze features a depiction of a football player wearing the No. 87 making Gronkowski's signature post-touchdown spike, along with the phrases "Thanks Gronk" and "Go Pats."

130-year-old painting restored and rehung

FL SARASOTA — After spending more than

half a century in storage, a massive oil painting will once again hang in the Ringling Museum of Art after undergoing major restoration made possible by a grant awarded to the museum.

"Emperor Justinian," created by Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant in 1886, is a towering 13.3-by-22-foot oil on canvas piece depicting the Byzantine Emperor atop his throne in the company of his consuls.

The painting was acquired by John Ringling from a private collector in 1929 and is considered one of the most important works by the French artist.

Injured dog survives 31 days in woods

WA VANCOUVER — Niko, a Vancouver family's dog, survived 31 days in the wilderness after getting hit by a car. Niko is 16-year-old Caden Alt's adventure partner.

On July 26, Niko went camping with Caden's father, David Alt, in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Later that night, Niko wandered over to the road and got hit by a car. David ran from the campsite just in time to see Niko sprint off into the woods.

For the next 31 days, he and Caden spent as much time as they could going back to look.

Then last weekend, they got a call from two men who had seen a post about Niko on Facebook and spotted him about 100 yards from where he disappeared.

Niko lost about 15 pounds but is otherwise doing well.

Bat appreciation day to be held at old prison

CT EAST GRANBY — The nation's oldest prison will be the backdrop for a day devoted to the im-

portance of conserving bats in Connecticut.

The underground tunnels at the former prison, Old New-Gate Prison & Copper Mine in East Granby, are the winter home of several state-endangered bat species.

On Saturday, the public can catch a glimpse of endangered bats in the "bat cave." Other family friendly activities are planned as well.

Attorney beats lawyer bloody with Lysol can

KY LOUISVILLE — A Kentucky attorney has pleaded guilty to fourth-degree assault in an attack on a fellow lawyer who was beaten bloody with a Lysol can.

The Courier Journal reported that Lindsey Scott entered the plea last week as part of a deal that includes a suspended 180-day jail sentence. James "J.R." Moore was attacked in the city's Hall of Justice in July. He has said he was eating when he suddenly felt "a thud" on his scalp. Scott's attorney, Shaun Wimberly Sr., said Moore bullied Scott.

Woman keeps corpse in her apartment

MI MONROE, MICH. — A southeastern Michigan woman who authorities said kept the corpse of her boyfriend, 61, in their apartment and used his credit card has been sentenced to six months in jail.

The Monroe News reported that Angela Shock, 50, received her punishment Thursday after earlier pleading guilty to concealing a death and illegal use of a financial transaction device.

From wire reports

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Prescott focused on winning, not a deal

Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas — Dak Prescott smiled without saying a word when a reporter wondered aloud why the star quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys didn't hold out for a new contract, a strategy that just led to a \$90 million extension for backfield mate Ezekiel Elliott.

The 2016 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year is going into the final season of his rookie deal — a year ahead of Elliott — while trailing only New England's Tom Brady in victories since entering the league and coming off his first playoff win.

Yet Prescott has never shown even a slight interest in staying away to try to get a contract that will be worth more than twice as much as Elliott's annually, assuming the two-time Pro Bowler and the Cowboys find that common ground.

As with Elliott, the deal figures to get done. In the meantime, Prescott wants to push the Cowboys past the divisional round of the playoffs before they reach the 25th anniversary of their previous trip to the NFC championship game and

beyond.

There's one year left for that breakthrough since Dallas won the last of a proud franchise's five Super Bowl titles during the 1995 season. Prescott's pursuit starts Sunday with the opener at home against the New York Giants.

"I mean, obviously I want to see it done," Prescott said of a contract that will be the richest in franchise history when it happens. "At this point, my focus is all on the Giants, the Giants defense, what this team needs to do to win the game and then next week we'll go to the next opponent.

"I don't want to blur my mind or distract myself any bit with thinking about those talks or thinking about what's going on when I've got enough on my plate to handle."

That doesn't mean the deal can't get done during the season. It just means Prescott probably won't be as involved in the talks as he was over the summer. The 26-year-old has left little doubt that he will be the face of the franchise, perhaps for another 10 years.

Prescott accomplished that

by showing his leadership skills even before 10-year starter Tony Romo was injured in a preseason game a few months after the Cowboys drafted Prescott in the fourth round, having failed in their pursuit of two other QBs earlier in the 2016 draft.

When Romo went down with another back injury at Seattle, Prescott came off the bench and converted a third-and-long with a completion on his first play. Jason Witten, who came out of retirement this year for what will be a club-record 16th season, still remembers that play.

"Amidst all the contract stuff, the guy comes to work ready," said Witten, who watched his best friend in Romo lose his job when Prescott led the Cowboys to a franchise-record 11 straight wins and the top seed in the NFC before a divisional loss to Green Bay in 2016.

"He's ready every single day. Ask any guy in the locker room, they'll run through a wall for him. It's been a true joy for me at this point in my career to have a young teammate come in at that position and to see

him take each step."

Prescott and Elliott formed a rare pair in leading an offense from the first snap of their first season together. They missed Witten last year, particularly inside the 20-yard line. Receiver Amari Cooper was a huge boost in a midseason trade.

Now the Cowboys have added one of Aaron Rodgers' favorite targets in Green Bay, Randall Cobb, as the slot receiver with Cole Beasley's departure to Buffalo in free agency. Michael Gallup, who was solid as a rookie, appears poised for a big improvement in his second year.

Center Travis Frederick returns after missing last season with a nerve disorder, re-solidifying an offensive line that has been among the best in the league but slipped last year. Prescott was sacked 56 times, second-most in the NFL.

Three years after starting against the Giants when many figured the Cowboys were on their way to another lost season without an injured Romo, Prescott is trying to meet lofty expectations instead of surpassing modest ones.

Raiders grant Brown's request to be released

Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — The Oakland Raiders released disgruntled star receiver Antonio Brown on Saturday before he ever played a game for the team.

The Raiders made the move just hours after Brown requested his release in the latest turn in a dramatic first summer with the team.

Brown was upset about his latest team fine over an outburst at practice at general manager Mike Mayock. That fine allowed the Raiders to void more than \$29 million in guarantees over the next two years in Brown's contract.

Oakland instead decided to cut ties entirely. The Raiders had been counting heavily

Brown after trading a third and fifth-round pick to Pittsburgh for the game's most prolific receiver in March. They also gave him a new three-year contract worth \$50.1 million that now is void following the release.

The final twist to this melodrama in Oakland comes a day after Brown returned to the team following a one-day banishment and apologized in a meeting and in a brief public statement. Coach Jon Gruden said the plan was for Brown to play in the opener Monday night against Denver, but that changed after Brown requested and was granted his release.

Brown posted on his Instagram account Saturday morning that he's not angry but wants the "freedom" to dis-

prove his skeptics.

"I have worked my whole life to prove that the system is blind to see talent like mines (sic)," he wrote. "Now that everyone sees it, they want me to conform to that same system that has failed me all those years. I'm not mad at anyone. I'm just asking for the freedom to prove them all wrong. Release me @ raiders. #NOMore"

A person familiar with the situation said Brown had been fined by the team Friday for the confrontation with Mayock in practice two days earlier. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the fine wasn't announced. That dustup came after Brown posted a letter Mayock had sent him detailing nearly \$54,000 in fines

for missing a practice and walkthrough.

ESPN reported the new fine was for \$215,073 for conduct detrimental to the team. That allows the Raiders to release Brown before the season opener without having to pay him more than \$29 million in guarantees over the next two years, although Brown could still contest that in a grievance.

Brown later sent an email to ESPN saying: "no way I play after they took that and made my contract week to week."

The Raiders acquired Brown after he wore out his welcome in Pittsburgh. Oakland gave up only a third- and fifth-round pick for the four-time All-Pro receiver and gave him a hefty raise.

Nadal, Medvedev to play in US Open final

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Rafael Nadal was down 4-0 in a first-set tiebreaker against a bigger, younger opponent finding ways to cause trouble in their U.S. Open semifinal.

So, a reporter wanted to know later, was Nadal already thinking ahead to how to come back in the next set?

“No,” Nadal responded quickly, shaking his head. “No. My goal was to win that point.”

He did, of course. And while he would soon twice stand a single point from ceding that set, Nadal never panicked, never allowed himself a let-down. He hung tough, waited for 24th-seeded Matteo Berrettini to wilt ever so slightly and then pounced.

Nadal moved closer to a fourth U.S. Open championship and 19th Grand Slam title

overall — one away from Roger Federer’s record for men — by pulling away for a 7-6 (6), 6-4, 6-1 victory over Berrettini on Friday night.

“I was a little bit lucky, no?” said Nadal, who will face No. 5 Daniil Medvedev of Russia in Sunday’s final. “I survived at that moment and ... after that, the match completely changed.”

Sure did. He took the last four points of the tiebreaker, then broke once in the second set and three times in the third, while never facing a single break point in the match.

“For a good part of the match, I felt up to the test,” said Berrettini, a 23-year-old from Rome. “I was ready.”

But Berrettini is still learning his way, while Nadal is, as the Italian’s coach, Vincenzo Santopadre, put it: “a champion with a capital ‘C,’ superhuman.”

This will be Nadal’s 27th major final, and Medvedev’s first. They’ve played each other once before, in the final of the Montreal Masters hard-court tournament in August, and Nadal won 6-3, 6-0.

“He’s one of the more solid players on tour,” Nadal said. “He is making steps forward every single week.”

Medvedev advanced earlier Friday by beating Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (5), 6-4, 6-3 for his tour-leading 50th win of the season.

The 23-year-old Russian first made a name for himself at the U.S. Open by earning the wrath of spectators. During his on-court interview Friday, Medvedev referenced his “tournament of controversies,” which included accumulating \$19,000 in fines and antagonizing booing fans last week, saying he knew it was “not going to

be easy with the public.”

Medvedev’s tennis was a bit scratchy Friday, and like Nadal, he barely avoided dropping the opening set. But he did just enough with his mostly defensive style to get past Dimitrov, who had eliminated Federer in a five-set quarterfinal.

“I do think he was better player in first set. I do think I was kind of lucky to win it,” Medvedev said. “Then the momentum changed completely. I think after, I was playing better than him.”

The 33-year-old Spaniard made it to the semifinals at every major this year. Nadal lost in the Australian Open final to Novak Djokovic in January, won a 12th French Open title in June, and lost to Federer in the final four at Wimbledon.

College football roundup

Boise State grinds out close victory over Marshall

Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — With a pair of true freshmen guiding Boise State’s sputtering offense, the Broncos leaned on their defense to deliver a win against Marshall.

The No. 24 Broncos held the Thundering Herd to zero yards of offense in the second half and got just enough offense to grind out a 14-7 victory Friday night.

It wasn’t flashy or dominant, perhaps something fans and analysts expected after Boise State won in Tallahassee last week against Florida State.

But Boise State coach Bryan Harsin didn’t care.

“Our defense played great, and our offense did just enough to take care of the football at the end of the game so we could run the clock out,” Harsin said. “It’s hard to be 1-0 every week. Like everybody, you like to dominate on all phases of the game, but it doesn’t always

work out like that. It’s nice to be able to learn with a win.”

Boise State (2-0) is learning that its freshman quarterback, Hank Bachmeier, is more than competent to continue the program’s burgeoning lineage of star quarterbacks.

Bachmeier, who threw for over 400 yards in the season opener, was 22-for-34 passing for 282 yards with a touchdown and an interception. He also scored on a 1-yard run just before the end of the first half, diving and extending the ball across the goal line as he absorbed a hit.

Wake Forest 41, Rice 21: Jamie Newman was 21-for-27 for 312 yards and three touchdowns, Scotty Washington had seven catches for 158 yards and two touchdowns and the visiting Demon Deacons beat the Owls.

Newman, who started 13-for-14, also rushed for 29 yards. Sage Surratt finished with

six catches for 45 yards and a score, and Kenneth Walker III had 125 yards on nine rushes, including a school-record 96-yard touchdown run with 13 minutes left in the fourth quarter, for the Demon Deacons (2-0). Wake outgained Rice, 513-321 yards.

Tom Stewart completed 19 of 30 passes for 185 yards and a touchdown after replacing starter Wiley Green, who was carted off the field with 4:44 left in the first quarter. Brad Rozner finished with 103 yards on six catches for Rice (0-2).

Arizona State 19, Sacramento State 7: Eno Benjamin caught a 72-yard touchdown pass in the fourth quarter, Cristian Zendejas kicked four field goals and the host Sun Devils labored to a 19-7 win over the Hornets.

Arizona State (2-0) had a few growing pains against Sacramento State (1-1) after winning 55-0 in the teams’ only other

meeting.

Arizona State’s offense sputtered, plagued by off-target passes, drops and an ineffective running game against a team ranked 115th in total defense last season — in the FCS.

Virginia 52, William & Mary 17: Bryce Perkins threw for two touchdowns and ran for a third and the host Cavaliers drubbed the Tribe.

Joe Reed caught a 40-yard touchdown pass and returned a kickoff 100 yards for Virginia (2-0), which spoiled the return of former coach Mike London, who now is coaching the Tribe. Virginia led 21-0 by the end of the first quarter and 35-3 at halftime.

William & Mary (1-1) got its only points against Virginia’s first team after recovering a muffed punt at the Cavaliers’ 13 yard-line in the second quarter. The Tribe began the fourth quarter trailing 45-10 and having gained just 75 yards.

Keuchel sharp as Braves top Nationals

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Dallas Keuchel struggled in his first two starts against Washington. He showed no signs of letting up this time.

“What a great team over there,” Keuchel said. “That’s really, really quality lineup. It’s probably my favorite to face, just because of how good they are. Some of their role players are just pros.”

Keuchel pitched six scoreless innings, Ozzie Albies and Josh Donaldson homered, and the streaking Atlanta Braves picked up another division win over the Washington Nationals with a 4-3 victory on Friday night.

The NL East-leading Braves have won eight in a row, 19 of 23 overall and 12 consecutive at home, dropping Washington nine games back.

It was Atlanta’s fourth straight victory and eighth in

11 tries over the Nationals.

Keuchel (7-5) allowed six hits and two walks and struck out three to win his fourth straight start. After posting a 6.10 ERA in his first two outings in the season series, the lefty protected a 2-0 lead in the sixth by striking out slugger Juan Soto with a runner on first, and getting Yan Gomes to ground out with runners on the corners.

“That’s what I’m predicated on,” said Keuchel, who is 4-0 with a 0.87 ERA over his last five starts. “I make the hitter guess and I’ve been guessing right for myself.”

Nationals starter Patrick Corbin (11-7) walked a career-high six, issuing three consecutive passes before striking out Dansby Swanson, his last batter, to end the fifth. Corbin gave up three hits and two runs — one earned — with nine strikeouts.

Washington, which began the

four-game series badly needing to make up ground in the division, has lost four of five for the first time since July 30-Aug. 4.

“We’re still a confident group here,” Corbin said. “We know how hot that they’ve been, and we’ll come back tomorrow and get over this one. We’re still in good position to do stuff.”

The Braves tacked on runs with Albies’ 20th homer in the third and Tyler Flowers’ sacrifice fly RBI in the fourth.

Donaldson, the self-proclaimed Bringer of Rain, broke out another umbrella celebration in the dugout after going deep for the 35th time, a two-run shot that made it 4-0 in the seventh.

Fans are joining in, too, as umbrellas are popping up around SunTrust Park during his at-bats.

“The fan base has been remarkable all year long, showing up and supporting it us,”

Donaldson said. “We’re winning a lot of games, so it’s fun to be a part of.”

Luke Jackson allowed Ryan Zimmerman’s fifth homer, a three-run shot that cut the lead to 4-3 in the eighth. Shane Greene earned his first save in three tries with Atlanta and 23rd overall after facing the minimum with two strikeouts in the ninth.

Dazzling: Swanson backhanded a grounder deep in the hole at short and jumped to throw out Trea Turner on a head-first slide at second and end the third. ... The Nationals were solid in the field in the sixth. CF Michael Taylor threw out Flowers at the plate, and RHP Tanner Rainey picked off pinch-runner Billy Hamilton at second. ... The home winning streak is Atlanta’s best since the 2000 team also won 12 in a row. ... The Braves improved to 40-21 against the NL East.

MLB roundup

Moreland hits 3-run homer as Red Sox down Yankees

Associated Press

BOSTON — Mitch Moreland hit a three-run homer and seven pitchers combined on a three-hitter to lead the Boston Red Sox to a 6-1 victory over the New York Yankees on Friday night.

Xander Bogaerts added a two-run double and Moreland two singles for the Red Sox, who won for the 13th time in 19 games. The defending World Series champions remained 6½ games out of the AL’s second wild-card spot with 21 games to play.

Brett Gardner homered for AL East-leading New York, which lost for just the third time in 11 games. The Yankees’ lead atop the East dropped to 8½ games over Tampa Bay, a 5-0 winner at home against Toronto.

Indians 6, Twins 2 (11): Roberto Perez hit a two-out RBI single against rookie Brusdar

Graterol to ignite a four-run 11th inning, as host Cleveland broke open a critical game against AL-Central leading Minnesota, trimming the division lead to 5½ games.

Athletics 7-4, Tigers 3-5 (11, second game): Chad Pinder homered, Mike Fiers earned the victory and host Oakland beat Detroit in a game that was suspended on May 19 because of the weather.

Brewers 7, Cubs 1: Christian Yelich hit his 44th homer and Zach Davies pitched five effective innings for his first win since July, helping Milwaukee beat visiting Chicago.

Giants 5, Dodgers 4: Mauricio Dubon went 3-for-4 and drove in three runs, Jeff Samardzija pitched six strong innings, and visiting San Francisco beat NL West-leading Los Angeles.

Mets 5, Phillies 4: Pete Alonso drew a bases-loaded

walk with two outs to cap a chaotic ninth inning and lift host New York over Philadelphia.

Rays 5, Blue Jays 0: Brendan McKay and four relievers combined on a two-hitter, Mike Zunino hit a two-run homer, and AL playoff-contending Tampa Bay beat visiting Toronto.

Rangers 7, Orioles 6: Willie Calhoun homered twice and drove in a career-high four runs, helping Texas beat host Baltimore.

Royals 3, Marlins 0: Jorge Lopez pitched six innings of four-hit ball and Hunter Dozier homered, leading visiting Kansas City over Miami.

Pirates 9, Cardinals 4: Adam Frazier capped a six-run seventh inning with a two-run triple, and host Pittsburgh beat St. Louis.

Angels 5, White Sox 4: Brian Goodwin’s two-run homer in the eighth inning tied the game, and Justin Upton

hit a solo shot in the ninth that proved to be the winner as Los Angeles rallied to beat host Chicago, snapping a four-game losing streak.

Diamondbacks 7, Reds 5: Ketel Marte hit a three-run homer, Josh Rojas singled home two more, and visiting Arizona beat Cincinnati.

The Diamondbacks have won 10 of 11 and 13 of 17, leaving them 2½ games behind the Cubs for the final NL wild card.

Astros 7, Mariners 4: Josh Reddick homered for the second straight game and Alex Bregman had two hits and stole home to help host Houston beat Seattle.

Rockies 3, Padres 2: Rookie Tim Melville struck out eight in 5⅔ innings and visiting Colorado beat San Diego to snap a season-long, nine-game losing streak.