

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Army set to hit lowered enlistment goal

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A year after failing to meet its enlistment goal for the first time in 13 years, the U.S. Army is now on track to meet a lower 2019 target after revamping its recruitment effort.

Army leaders told The Associated Press that they expect to sign up more than 68,000 active-duty soldiers for the fiscal year that ends Sept. 30 as the largest branch of the U.S. military increasingly turns to social media and other new online methods to find potential recruits.

Last year, the Army brought in about 70,000 new active-duty recruits, well below the 76,500 it needed amid low unemployment and tough competition from higher-paying civilian companies. Meeting the lower 2019 figure is considered a victory for a service that has struggled to compete for young people who are less familiar

with the military and that was criticized last year for using more bad-conduct waivers and other waivers to meet enlistment goals.

“We’re smoothing out the Army’s growth,” Gen. James McConville, chief of staff of the Army, said in an AP interview. “What we want to do is have modest growth over the next couple of years. And we’re trying to make sure that the end strength we have is high quality.”

Army leaders dispute the idea that they lowered the goal to help meet expectations. Instead, they said they plan to gradually grow the Army from 476,000 members last year to about 490,000 by 2024, seeking more high-quality recruits who will be less likely to fail or get injured in early training.

McConville and Army acting Secretary Ryan McCarthy said it took time to institute changes in the recruiting over

the past year but that the shifts have started to show promise. Already recruiters have an additional 13,000 recruits under contract to join the service in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, giving them a jump on next year’s totals.

They said the recruiting goal for next year will be between 68,000 and 69,000.

After a massive buildup to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army in recent years slashed more than 50,000 soldiers as those conflicts scaled back. Now, to meet military demands, the Army needs to grow again.

But in the effort to enlist more soldiers, Army leaders faced criticism, including from Congress, over the expanded use of waivers for recruits with previous marijuana use, bad conduct and health problems.

The use of waivers triggered worries that the service would repeat mistakes made during

the war buildup when recruiters brought in more youth with histories of misconduct, drugs and crime, which led to discipline and behavior problems in the units.

Now Army leaders say they have reduced waivers and improved the quality of recruits.

Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, head of Army Recruiting Command, said there were 3.4% fewer waivers this year and that includes the lowest percentage of conduct waivers in two decades. He said that about 12% of the recruits in 2019 needed a waiver to get in and less than 9% this year needed one.

To meet the recruiting goal while limiting waivers and raising standards, the Army increased the number of recruiters and targeted 22 cities that had historically been challenging areas. And, Muth said, “we have changed from the industrial age into the digital age in how we’re recruiting.”

Deadly attacks rock Afghan election rally, army base

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Separate attacks by suicide bombers — one targeting President Ashraf Ghani’s election rally and a second that ripped through the center of the Afghan capital — killed at least 48 people and wounded scores more Tuesday in the deadliest single day since a peace agreement with Taliban insurgents was declared dead.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for both blasts, saying an explosives-laden motorcycle targeted Ghani’s election rally being held on the outskirts of Charakar in northern Parwan province. Ghani was present but unhurt, his campaign

chief said. In that explosion, 26 people were killed, according to Nasrat Rahimi, spokesman for the Interior Ministry. Four among the dead were Afghan military personnel, he said. An additional 42 people were wounded.

In the second bombing, just hours later in the heart of Kabul, not far from the U.S. Embassy, the Taliban said they were targeting an Afghan army base. They killed 22 people, government officials said. Scores more were wounded.

The violence comes as Afghanistan faces presidential elections Sept. 28 — a vote the Taliban insurgents vehemently oppose. The group has

warned Afghans not to vote in the election and said their fighters would target election campaigns as well as polling stations.

The bomber who attacked Ghani’s rally detonated his explosives at the entrance to the rally, according to Hamed Aziz, a spokesman from Ghani’s campaign office. Aziz said the explosion occurred some distance from where Ghani was addressing a crowd of about 2,200.

Ghani condemned both attacks.

“By continuing their crimes, the Taliban have once again proven that they have no will and desire for peace and sta-

bility in Afghanistan and that all their movements are nothing but deceit,” Ghani was quoted as saying in a statement released by the presidential palace.

There were many women and children among the casualties in the bombing near Ghani’s rally, said Qasim Sangin, a local official.

Firdaus Faramarz, spokesman for the Kabul police chief, said the attack in the heart of the Afghan capital took place near Massood Square, a deeply congested intersection in the center of Kabul. NATO and U.S. compounds are located nearby, as are several Afghan government ministries.

Exec admits sharing Navy data with China

The Washington Post

A Canadian businessman and his company have pleaded guilty to charges related to the transfer to China of technical details about a U.S. Navy undersea submarine rescue vehicle in an effort to sell versions to the Chinese navy, U.S. court records show.

Glen Omer Viau, a Canadian citizen, pleaded guilty last week to a misdemeanor in federal court in Washington, admitting to transferring without authorization a thing of value to the United States. In a plea deal with U.S. prosecutors, Viau and the government valued the data as worth less than \$1,000.

Viau attorney Preston Burton and a

spokeswoman for the U.S. attorney's office declined to comment.

Viau's company, OceanWorks International of Vancouver, British Columbia, also pleaded guilty to a felony count of making false statements to U.S. authorities by omitting that the company worked on a proposal with its Chinese parent company to sell a version to China's navy, formally called the People's Liberation Army Navy. In a plea agreement, prosecutors agreed to recommend a fine of \$84,000 at sentencing.

U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly set sentencing in both cases for Dec. 2.

In plea papers, Viau acknowledged he and OceanWorks shared a technical draw-

ing with its Beijing Co. parent firm related to the U.S. Navy's Pressurized Rescue Module, a remotely operated rescue vehicle capable of docking with a sunken sub 2,000 feet underwater and carrying up to 18 people. OceanWorks held commercial rights to the data, which it developed for the Navy, but Viau knew the Navy also expected confidentiality for certain rights it had to some data, according to plea filings.

Beijing Co., based in China, purchased OceanWorks and its intellectual property for \$20 million in September 2016 and began trying to sell a version of its submarine rescue technology to the Chinese military, according to court filings.

Green Beret NCO killed in Afghanistan identified

BY PHILLIP WALTER
WELLMAN

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Pentagon identified the Green Beret killed in Afghanistan this week as Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy W. Griffin, who was on his fourth combat deployment.

Griffin, 40, of Greenbrier, Tenn., was killed Monday by small-arms fire while engaged in combat operations in central Wardak province, U.S. Army Special operations Command said in a statement.

The special forces communications sergeant was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Griffin was born in Panama in 1978 and enlisted in the Army in April 2004, when he was 25.

As a graduate of the 61-day Ranger School at Fort Benning, Ga., and the 64-week Korean language course at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif., he completed one of the military's most challenging physical courses and one of its most academically demanding schools.

His death is the first com-

bat fatality in Afghanistan since President Donald Trump ended nearly a year of peace negotiations with the Taliban this month.

Before his most recent tour in Afghanistan, Griffin deployed with the 82nd Airborne Division to Iraq in 2006 and Afghanistan in 2009. After completing the Special Forces Qualification Course in September 2014, he deployed to Afghanistan with 1st SFG (A) in 2016 and served on a rotation in Korea in 2018.

He had also served with 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) before attending training to become a Green Beret, USASOC spokesman Lt. Col. Loren Bymer said in a statement.

Griffin's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star medal, two awards of the Army Commendation medal, four awards of the Army Achievement medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Combat Action Badge, and Ranger and Army Special Forces Tabs. He was posthumously awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart, Bymer said.

Saudi oil attack is part of a dangerous new pattern

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The assault on the beating heart of Saudi Arabia's vast oil empire follows a new and dangerous pattern that's emerged across the Persian Gulf this summer of precise attacks that leave few obvious clues as to who launched them.

Beginning in May with the still-unclaimed explosions that damaged oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz, the region

ANALYSIS has seen its energy infrastructure repeatedly targeted. Those attacks culminated with Saturday's assault on the world's biggest oil processor in eastern Saudi Arabia, which halved the oil-rich kingdom's production and caused energy prices to spike.

Some strikes have been claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels, who have been battling a Saudi-led coalition in the Arab world's poorest country since 2015. Their rapidly increasing sophistication fuels suspicion among experts and analysts, however, that Iran may be orchestrating them — or perhaps even carrying them out itself, as the U.S. alleges in the case of Saturday's attack.

The attacks on the oil tankers

and the Houthi-claimed assaults on Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure would match up with previous incidents blamed on Tehran. Experts describe Iran as relying on so-called nonattributable attacks when blame is difficult to assign given the circumstances.

The reasons for this are several-fold. Since its 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has been unable to purchase sophisticated weapons from the West like its Gulf Arab neighbors. Its air force remains replete with prerevolution, American-made F-4s, F-5s and F-14s, as well Soviet fighter jets. The U.S. Navy sank half of Iran's operational fleet in a one-day naval battle in 1988 amid the so-called "Tanker War."

While it has built its own missile arsenal, experts say Iran's armed forces would suffer in a head-to-head military confrontation. Launching attacks that can't be easily linked back to Tehran limits the chance of direct retaliation.

Satellite images of the attacked Saudi sites released by the U.S. afterward show damage done largely in a northern direction at the sites. If any attack had come from Yemen, the southern sides of the structures would have been damaged, U.S. officials say.

Army virtual training ground nearly ready

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army is adding more cyber defense teams and intensifying the training required of its high-tech operators to better equip them to take on 21st-century adversaries, the head of U.S. Cyber Command said.

A new “persistent cyber training environment,” which will allow units to train virtually on the kinds of networks used by adversaries, will be set up within six to 12 months, CYBERCOM’s Gen. Paul M. Nakasone said Monday, as quoted in an Army statement.

The idea is that cyber warriors will face realistic attack

scenarios, much like combat brigades experience at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, Calif.

“It will make a huge difference in collective training for cyber teams and improve their readiness,” Nakasone said during an Association of the U.S. Army forum.

The National Guard and Army Reserve are also adding 21 cyber teams to the 20 active Army defensive cyber protective teams, Nakasone said.

The Army has been actively expanding its cyber and electronic warfare capabilities in recent years, expecting them to play a key role in how wars are fought in the not-too-dis-

tant future.

But there are questions about whether Army cyber and electronic warfare units are stretched thin and adding personnel faster than they can be properly trained.

In August, the Government Accountability Office warned that in the push to adapt to “great power competition” and threats posed by Russia and China, Army cyber units “are short of both people and equipment.”

The Army will step up the rate at which it trains cyber teams, Nakasone said.

Since 2015, more than 330 cyber officers have been trained at the Army’s cyber school

at Fort Gordon, Ga., but that number is expected to grow to about 200 officers per year, he said. On the enlisted side, about 250 soldiers have been trained as cyber operators, he said, a number also expected to grow significantly.

In addition, the Army is now able to deploy teams abroad to conduct cyber defensive operations. Last year, CYBERCOM had three teams deployed in Europe during the U.S. midterm elections to coordinate with partners to track attempts at meddling with the democratic process. “This was done exquisitely in the midterm elections,” Nakasone said.

House Dems hold first hearing in impeachment probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As they investigate President Donald Trump, Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee will hold their first official hearing in what they are calling an impeachment investigation.

Corey Lewandowski, Trump’s outspoken, loyal former campaign manager, was scheduled to appear Tuesday to discuss the report by former special counsel Robert Mueller.

But it was unlikely that Democrats would get much new information as they decide whether to draft articles

of impeachment against the president.

“Excited about the opportunity to remind the American people today there was no collusion no obstruction,” Lewandowski, who is considering a Senate run in New Hampshire, tweeted in the hours before the hearing. “There were lots of angry Democrats who tried to take down a duly elected President. Tune in. #Senate2020”

Lewandowski is echoing Trump’s characterization of the Mueller report, a characterization that isn’t fully accurate. Mueller found that there was not enough evidence to

establish a conspiracy between Trump’s campaign and Russia, and he also found that Trump could not be exonerated on obstruction of justice. Attorney General William Barr later made his own decision on obstruction, saying there was insufficient evidence.

A devoted friend and supporter of the Republican president, Lewandowski is likely to fiercely defend Trump — and he isn’t expected to elaborate much beyond what he told Mueller’s investigators last year. Mueller himself testified this summer, with no bombshells.

Two other witnesses who

were subpoenaed alongside Lewandowski — former White House aides Rick Dearborn and Rob Porter — won’t show up at all, on orders from the White House.

The hearing underscores what has been a central dilemma for House Democrats all year — they have promised to investigate Trump aggressively, and many of their base supporters want them to move quickly to try to remove him from office. But the White House has blocked their oversight requests at most every turn.

Source: NY subpoenaed president’s state, federal tax returns

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York City prosecutors have subpoenaed President Donald Trump’s tax returns, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Monday.

Manhattan District Attorney’s Cyrus Vance Jr.’s office recently sent a subpoena to Trump’s accounting firm seeking the last eight years of state

and federal tax returns for Trump and his company, the Trump Organization, the person said.

The person was not authorized to speak publicly about the matter and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Asked about the subpoena as he left the White House on Monday, Trump said, “I don’t know anything about it.” A lawyer for

the Trump Organization, Marc Mukasey, said he is “evaluating the situation and will respond as appropriate.”

Vance, a Democrat, subpoenaed the Trump Organization last month for records related to payments Trump’s former lawyer, Michael Cohen, helped arrange to a porn actress who claimed she had an affair with Trump.

Vance’s office declined to comment Monday on the tax returns subpoena, the news of which was first reported by The New York Times.

Trump, a Republican, is already fighting efforts by several Democratic-led congressional committees to obtain his tax returns and other records that could give them a window into his finances.

PR firms reject Hong Kong requests for help

Associated Press

HONG KONG — Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said Tuesday that international public relations firms have turned down the government's requests to help restore the city's reputation after months of pro-democracy protests.

The firms responded that "the time is not right" as the violence and unrest in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory have shown no sign of ending, Lam said at a news conference. She didn't give details on the firms or when they were approached.

The city's reputation has likely been tarnished not just by the protests but also by what many view as the government's slow response to the crisis.

Days after more than 1 million people took to the streets in early June, kicking off the

protests, Lam suspended an extradition bill that sparked the unrest but refused to formally withdraw it. She caved in this month after the demonstrations escalated, but the promise to ax the bill was deemed too little, too late as protesters widened their demands to include democratic reforms.

"It would perhaps be not the most cost-effective way to use government resources to launch any campaign to rebuild Hong Kong's reputation, but sooner or later, we will have to do it because I have every confidence in Hong Kong's fundamentals," Lam said Tuesday. "The time will come for us to launch a major campaign to restore some of the damage done to Hong Kong's reputation," she said.

Violence flared again over the weekend after an unap-

proved march downtown descended into familiar chaos. Hong Kong's economy, already reeling from the U.S.-China trade war, is facing its first recession in years, with tourist arrivals plunging and businesses being hit by the unrest.

The government took out a full-page advertisement in the Australian Financial Review earlier this month, two days after Lam's announcement that she was formally withdrawing the bill, vowing a peaceful resolution to the conflict amid concerns of possible military intervention by China. It's the only known overseas effort by the government to assuage international jitters.

Lam said the city's downgrade this week by credit ratings agency Moody's was "disappointing" but acknowledged that the continued instabil-

ity has tarnished international perception of Hong Kong's financial stability. Moody's was the second agency to make the move after Fitch Rating.

The world's largest brewer, AB InBev, which produces Budweiser and Corona, provided a boost to the city as it revived plans Tuesday to list its Asian business to raise up to \$4.8 billion in Hong Kong's biggest initial public offering this year.

It was, however, half the size of its original IPO, which was shelved two months ago and aimed to raise \$9.8 billion in what would have been the world's biggest IPO this year.

Jan Craps, CEO of the group's Asia-Pacific arm, said there was strong investor interest in the company's growth potential despite the challenging market conditions.

Cancer survivor swims English Channel 4 times

Associated Press

LONDON — An American cancer survivor has succeeded in her remarkable quest to swim across the English Channel four times in a row.

Sarah Thomas, 37, who is from Colora-

do, completed the feat Tuesday morning after more than 54 hours of swimming.

Thomas completed treatment for breast cancer last year.

She was cheered by a small crowd as she arrived in Dover.

She was given champagne and choco-

late to celebrate.

Thomas said she was "a little sick" after so much time in the water and thanked her husband and supporters for urging her to keep going.

She dedicated the swim to "all the survivors out there."

Taiwan loses Solomons, its biggest ally in the Pacific

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — Taiwan has lost its largest ally in the Pacific after the Solomon Islands confirmed Tuesday that it is switching diplomatic allegiance to China, and observers say other Pacific nations may soon follow.

The switch has geopolitical significance that will be felt as far away as Washington because the Solomon Islands are located directly between Australia and the U.S. and were the site of fierce battles during World War II.

Alex Akwai, a spokesman for Solomon Islands Prime

Minister Manasseh Sogavare, said the government's caucus took a poll on Monday, with 27 lawmakers voting in favor of switching allegiance to China and six abstaining. He said the Cabinet then voted unanimously in favor of the change.

Akwai said the Taiwanese Embassy in the capital, Honiara, had lowered its flag on Tuesday. Embassy staff declined to comment.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said it will close the embassy and recall all technical and medical staff stationed there.

"We sincerely regret and

strongly condemn their government's decision to establish diplomatic relations with China," Tsai said.

China, meanwhile, said it welcomed the Solomon Islands into its Pacific family.

"China highly commends the decision of the Solomon Islands' government to recognize the one-China principle and sever the so-called 'diplomatic ties' with the Taiwan authorities," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said in a statement.

China considers Taiwan to be part of its territory and wants to bring the island back into its

fold. Taiwan split from mainland China during a civil war in 1949 and set up a rival government to the victorious Communists in Beijing.

Most countries recognize Beijing today, and China has been ratcheting up diplomatic and economic pressure to woo the remaining ones since Tsai took office in 2016.

With a population of 660,000, the Solomon Islands were easily Taiwan's largest remaining ally in the Pacific. Its economy relies on agriculture, fishing and forestry, and the country has a wealth of undeveloped mineral resources.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bagger gets woman's purse back after theft

LA SHREVEPORT — A grocery store bagger in Louisiana has been hailed as a hero for stopping a man who tried to steal a woman's purse.

News outlets reported Juwone Scott, 26, was talking to a customer Thursday at Brookshire's Food & Pharmacy in Shreveport when a man snatched the woman's purse and ran. Scott said he chased down the culprit, who punched and kicked him in the face. Scott said he got the purse and returned it to the woman.

Scott has autism. His mother, Satara Scott, said he's a Special Olympics athlete and the skills he's learned as a weightlifter helped him confront the purse snatcher.

Paramedic accused of stealing morphine

GA CARNESVILLE — A Georgia paramedic is accused of stealing morphine, replacing it with another liquid and then reattaching the cap with super glue.

Prosecutors said Michael Shane Hambrick knew the vial he left behind would be intended for critically injured patients who are in need of the pain medication.

A newly filed indictment says Hambrick was a supervisory emergency medical technician/paramedic at Franklin County EMS when the crime occurred in September 2018.

Men face charges for walking on geyser

WY YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK — Two men face criminal charges for walking onto Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone National Park.

Kimberly Williams told KTMF-TV in Missoula, Mont., she saw the men leaning directly over the geyser to take photos Sept. 10. Going off boardwalks in Yellowstone's thermal areas is dangerous and illegal.

Park officials said the men have been summoned to appear in federal court.

Several people have been cited over the years for wandering onto Old Faithful.

Child's finger caught in seat belt buckle

CT DANBURY — Firefighters in Connecticut said they safely extracted a 5-year-old child's finger after it got stuck in a school bus seat belt buckle.

The News-Times reported that first responders from New Fairfield and Danbury used a high-speed diamond cutter to free the unnamed child from the buckle Friday evening at Danbury Hospital. Firefighters tried a number of different ways to free the finger, including using oil and ice, before turning to the cutter.

The procedure involved placing a safety guard over the child's finger and keeping a stream of water going over the tool and the belt to keep the metal from overheating. The child's hand wasn't injured.

Mansion from Gilded Age sells for only \$4M

ME BAR HARBOR — A mansion of the Gilded Age originally listed at \$15 million has sold for a fraction of its original asking price in Bar Harbor.

The Bangor Daily News reported the eight-bedroom East of Eden waterfront house sold for \$4.1 million. Its assessed value is \$5.1 million, and it remained on the market for two

years before its Sept. 7 scheduled auction.

The mansion was built in 1910 and dates to the glory days of Bar Harbor's Millionaire's Row.

Motorist injured in boulder collision

VA CHESTERFIELD — What a Virginia motorist thought was a large trash bag on the road as she traveled to work before dawn turned out to be a boulder the size of a picnic table.

Barbara Harris, of Amelia County, was seriously injured when her SUV collided with the rock early Friday. The Richmond Times Dispatch reported Harris fractured a vertebra and a wrist. She said Saturday she may need surgery if her pain doesn't subside.

Harris, 64, said she didn't have time to swerve before her vehicle flipped over and rolled.

Pigeon poops on lawmaker's head

IL CHICAGO — A pigeon apparently didn't think much of a lawmaker's ideas to address a messy situation at a Chicago Transit Authority stop known by some as "pigeon poop station."

WBBM-TV reported that one of the birds did its business on the head of Democratic state Rep. Jaime Andrade as he was discussing the problem with a reporter outside the Irving Park Blue Line station. During the interview, Andrade rubbed the top of his head and said, "I think they just got me." They did.

The sidewalks outside the station are covered in bird waste and feathers. One of Andrade's ideas is to ask the CTA to install a hose line for power washing when it constructs escalators at the stop.

Crowd divided over F-35s at local base

WI MADISON — The possibility of locating the military's newest fighter jets in Madison drew hundreds of people to a National Guard meeting.

The crowd at the Alliant Energy Center on Thursday night in Madison was divided on whether basing the supersonic jets at Truax Field would be a good idea. The base is one of five locations under consideration for two squadrons of F-35 jets.

An environmental impact study says noise from the jets could render more than 1,000 homes "incompatible for residential use."

The State Journal said opponents held "No F-35" signs and sang protest songs, while proponents wore blue stickers and baseball caps supporting the \$90 million jets.

State must pay for building of bikeway

RI PROVIDENCE — A judge has ruled that Rhode Island will have to compensate a construction company for building a public bikeway on private property.

The Providence Journal reported that general contractor H.V. Collins sued the state Department of Transportation in 2016 soon after the agency began building the Blackstone River Bikeway. The path's southernmost section begins in Providence's Fox Point neighborhood and passes behind the company's offices.

A Superior Court judge this month ordered the state to determine how much it owes H.V. Collins.

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Beckham leads Browns to rout of Jets

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Odell Beckham Jr. felt right at home again — in the end zone and on the highlight reels.

With an 89-yard touchdown catch and a spectacular one-handed grab in his return to MetLife Stadium, the Browns wide receiver helped lift Cleveland past the short-handed and banged-up New York Jets 23-3 on Monday night.

“We got the ball in (No.) 13’s hands,” Browns wide receiver Jarvis Landry said, “and let him go.”

Beckham, traded from the Giants in March, helped the Browns (1-1) bounce back from a 30-point loss to Tennessee in their opener to top the Jets (0-2) and give Freddie Kitchens his first victory as Cleveland’s coach.

It all came after Beckham called out Jets defensive coordinator Gregg Williams last

Thursday, saying the coach — then with the Browns — instructed players to hurt him in a preseason game in 2017. Williams denied Beckham’s accusations and jokingly asked reporters: “Odell who?”

Williams, who led the Browns to a 5-3 record as their interim coach last season, also chided reporters for giving Beckham attention and wouldn’t call him one of the NFL’s most dynamic players.

“Everything fuels me,” Beckham said. “Good comments, bad comments, I feel all of that. I just want to be the very best that I can and be the leader I am supposed to be.”

Williams clearly knows who Beckham is now. The coach was seen shouting angrily on the sideline after Beckham’s touchdown.

“Who?” Beckham said when asked about Williams’ comments. “No, everybody has the right to their own opinion. He’s

a phenomenal coach, he’s got a great defense, but I’m done talking about it, you know? We won, so I just tried to make plays to help the team.”

Beckham finished with six catches for 161 yards and the TD from Baker Mayfield.

The Jets couldn’t get anything going on offense, and the Browns blew open the game late in the third quarter.

Luke Falk led the Jets on their longest drive of night to that point — 60 yards — but Le’Veon Bell could only get 1 yard on a fourth-and-2 pass, turning the ball over on downs at the Browns 11.

On the next play, Mayfield hit Beckham with a slant pass, and the receiver outran the Jets’ defenders all the way to the end zone for the 89-yard TD that put Cleveland up 23-3 with 3:32 remaining in the third quarter.

“That did it and that was huge for us,” said running back Nick Chubb, who had a 19-yard

TD run. “We took all the momentum away from them with that long run. After that, it was our game to lose.”

Beckham helped the Browns take a 3-0 lead on their first possession on Austin Seibert’s 23-yard field goal — a drive highlighted by a spectacular 33-yard, one-handed grab that got Cleveland down to the Jets 4.

And, yes, Beckham was wearing his expensive watch — despite the NFL telling him last week not to.

Emotional return

Browns defensive end Chris Smith played after his girlfriend, Petara Cordero, was killed in a car accident last week. Cordero, 26, was killed after she exited Smith’s Lamborghini and was standing on the highway’s shoulder when she was hit by an oncoming car.

Sports briefs

NHL players opt to stay in CBA, avoiding labor strife

Associated Press

National Hockey League players announced Monday they will not opt out of the collective bargaining agreement, guaranteeing labor peace until at least 2022.

The NHL Players’ Association announced its decision just before the deadline to trigger its opt-out clause. Not terminating the CBA is a positive sign that negotiations are progressing toward an extension.

“While players have concerns with the current CBA, we agree with the league that working together to address those concerns is the preferred course of action instead of terminating the agreement following this season,” NHLPA executive director Don Fehr said. “We have been having discussions with the league about an extension of the CBA and expect that those talks will

continue.”

Meetings between owners and players have been going on since February and increased in frequency in recent weeks. The league also did not opt out of the CBA, with Commissioner Gary Bettman citing momentum and the importance of labor peace overriding any issues the owners might have.

Players made significant concessions in the last CBA, which was agreed to in 2013. Escrow payments, health care, Olympic participation and what qualifies as hockey-related revenue are things players have cited as some of their top concerns — many of which could be addressed in a potential extension.

Very little information has come out of the CBA talks either internally among players or with owners. Several players believe that signaled a more

united NHLPA and optimism that progress was being made.

“Every time you have any type of negotiation between two parties, those are the two parties that should be talking and it should not be through media or a third party because there’s a lot of things that get twisted and the more time the story gets told, something will change a little bit,” New York Rangers goaltender Henrik Lundqvist said recently. “If you can stick to just talking to the other side, I think it’s easier to get to the right answers and solutions.”

Bennett wants staff pay hike, not raise

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Virginia men’s basketball coach Tony Bennett has declined a pay raise offered by the school and instead asked

school officials for additional compensation for his staff and program improvement.

University officials said in a news release Monday that Bennett did sign a one-year contract extension, but instead of a pay hike for himself, the coach asked athletic director Carla Williams to focus on his staff and the program. The release also stated that Bennett and his wife also made a \$500,000 contribution toward a career-development program for current and former players.

Bennett earned nearly \$6 million last season and received a \$1 million retention bonus. The extension means Bennett is under contract with the school for the next seven years.

“I have more than enough,” Bennett said in the release, adding that the gift was his wife’s idea.

Giants bench Manning to start Jones

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Eli Manning's long and distinguished reign as the New York Giants' starting quarterback is seemingly over. Let the Daniel Jones era begin.

Coach Pat Shurmur announced Tuesday that the No. 6 overall pick in the NFL Draft is replacing two-time Super Bowl MVP as the Giants' quarterback, beginning Sunday at Tampa Bay.

The move comes less than 24 hours after Shurmur refused to say Manning would remain the starter following two straight losses, the sixth time in seven years New York has gotten off to a 0-2 start.

The 38-year-old Manning has been the Giants' starter since replacing Kurt Warner after nine games in the 2004 season.

Manning led the Giants to Super Bowl titles following the 2007 and '11 seasons, beating Tom Brady and the Patriots both times.

"Eli and I spoke this morn-

ing," Shurmur said. "I told him that we are making a change and going with Daniel as the starter. I also talked to Daniel. Eli was obviously disappointed, as you would expect, but he said he would be what he has always been, a good teammate, and continue to prepare to help this team win games. Daniel understands the challenge at hand, and he will be ready to play on Sunday."

In two games, Manning completed 56 of 89 passes for 556 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions for a passer rating of 78.7. But the Giants have scored only four touchdowns, despite averaging 420 yards.

"Ultimately, this is a move that I felt was best for this team at this time," said Shurmur, who is in his second season with the Giants. "I have said it since I got here, I am very fond of Eli. His work ethic, his preparation, his football intelligence. All those attributes are as good as I have ever seen in a player. And Eli worked as hard as you could ask of anybody to get ready for this season. This move is more

about Daniel moving forward than about Eli."

The question of when Jones would take over has been a constant topic since the Giants drafted him, and the issue gained momentum when the 22-year-old Duke product completed 29 of 34 passes for 416 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions in the preseason. His 137.2 quarterback rating was the best in the league.

The hint of an impending change surfaced Monday and a day later Shurmur benched the man who has been the face of the organization for the past 15-plus years.

Manning, who is playing in a team-record 16th season with the Giants, knew the change was a possibility.

"We're 0-2 and you are looking for answers," he said Monday. "I get it. We drafted a guy early and you are not winning games, these things are going to come up. I just have to keep working and do whatever my job is."

On Sunday, his job will be as Jones' backup.

Jones will be the third of the 11 quarterbacks selected in this year's draft to start a game. Kyler Murray, the first overall selection by Arizona, started the Cardinals' first two games. Gardner Minshew II, a sixth-round selection by Jacksonville out of Washington State, started Sunday in Houston for the injured Nick Foles.

Manning has started 232 of the Giants' last 233 regular-season games. The loss Sunday to the Bills dropped his record to .500 at 116-116.

Manning started 210 consecutive regular-season games from Nov. 21, 2004 to Nov. 23, 2017, the second-longest streak by a quarterback in NFL history behind Brett Favre (297). Manning did not play on Dec. 3, 2017, at Oakland when Ben McAdoo started Geno Smith instead.

McAdoo and general manager Jerry Reese were fired the next day and Manning returned to running the team, starting the last 22 games.

Brown's status in limbo again this week due to lawsuit

Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — New England Patriots receiver Antonio Brown's availability is again in limbo this week with the NFL preparing to meet with the former trainer that has filed a civil lawsuit accusing the star receiver of rape and sexual assault.

On Monday, the NFL declined to comment on the allegations against Brown or when it would speak with his accuser. But the league told the Patriots last week that it was opening an investigation into the matter.

Brown has denied the allegations made in the lawsuit. Darren Heitner, a lawyer representing Brown, told The Associated Press his client plans to countersue.

Sports Illustrated also published a story Monday after-

noon in which a second woman, an unnamed artist, alleged that Brown exposed himself to her while she was working on a mural for him at his Pittsburgh home in 2017.

In a statement issued Monday via Twitter, Heitner said Brown also denies the allegation made in the SI story.

"Antonio Brown has reviewed the sexual misconduct allegations made by an unnamed artist included in a recently published Sports Illustrated article and denies that he ever engaged in such activities," the statement said. "There will be no further comment at this time."

Brown has not spoken publicly since the lawsuit was filed and he did not address reporters leading up to the game against the Dolphins. He also

was not made available following the Miami game and was not present in the locker room during a player availability on Monday.

Asked during his Monday morning conference call if he expected to hear anything from the NFL about Brown's availability this week, Patriots coach Bill Belichick said, "I don't really know anything about that."

In the lawsuit filed by Brown's former trainer Britney Taylor last week in Florida, she alleges Brown sexually assaulted her on three occasions. According to the lawsuit, Taylor says she was sexually assaulted by Brown on separate training trips to Pittsburgh and Florida that same month in 2017. It also alleges he forcibly raped her in 2018. The suit includes what it

says are text messages from Brown bragging about the second assault.

The AP does not usually name the alleged victims of sex assaults, but Taylor was identified in the federal lawsuit and was quoted in a statement provided by her lawyer, David Haas.

Though the allegations made by Taylor against Brown made him subject to discipline under the NFL's personal conduct policy, he played and scored a touchdown on Sunday during the Patriots' 43-0 win at Miami. Two sources told The Associated Press that Brown was not placed on the commissioner's exempt list last week because no criminal charges had been filed against him and because the NFL hadn't fully developed its investigation.

Royals end A's 6-game winning streak

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — There was plenty of blame to go around after Oakland's stunning loss to Kansas City, one that prevented the Athletics from adding on to their lead in the AL wild-card race.

A costly error in the ninth inning by center fielder Ramon Laureano. Manager Bob Melvin's decision to lift hot-hitting first baseman Matt Olson for a pinch-runner an inning earlier.

Liam Hendriks pointed the finger at himself.

Brett Phillips hit a tying home run off Hendricks in the ninth, Adalberto Mondesi followed with an RBI double and the Royals beat Oakland 6-5 on Monday night to end the Athlet-

ics' six-game winning streak.

"It felt like I was making some pitches when I needed to but not enough," Hendriks said. "I fell behind a couple times and had to kind of groove them a fastball. At the end of the day I didn't get the job done and the team paid for it."

Oakland's lead over Tampa Bay for the top AL wild card was cut to one game. Cleveland is 1½ games behind the Rays.

Khris Davis' RBI single off Kevin McCarthy (4-2) gave Oakland a 5-4 lead in the eighth.

Phillips homered on a 2-0 fastball from Hendricks (4-3) with one out in the ninth, Hendriks' sixth blown save in 28 chances.

"Ball was down the middle to Phillips and Mondesi hit a pretty good pitch the other way for a double," Melvin said. "He's been absolutely fantastic for us. Every now and then you're going to blow a save."

Whit Merrifield reached when Laureano allowed his drive to pop out of the pocket of his glove at the front of the warning track for an error. Mondesi sliced an opposite-field double to left.

"Just looked like he turned around and once he turned back around he just picked it up a little late," Melvin said.

Marcus Semien singled leading off the bottom half for Oakland but Ian Kennedy retired his next three batters for his

30th save in 35 chances, giving the Royals' Ned Yost his 1,200th win in 16 seasons as a major league manager.

Kennedy struck out Chad Pinder to end it. Pinder had replaced Olson in the batting order.

At 56-95, the Royals are trying to avoid their second straight 100-loss season.

"That's a good team over there," Yost said. "It's hard to fall back four runs early because you know runs are going to be tough to come by."

Jorge Soler homered leading off the fourth, tying injured Los Angeles Angels star Mike Trout for the AL lead with his 45th home run.

MLB roundup

Cards top Nats, maintain 2-game lead in NL Central

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Marcell Ozuna drove in four runs and threw out a runner at home plate from left field, leading the St. Louis Cardinals over the Washington Nationals 4-2 on Monday night.

St. Louis retained its two-game lead over the second-place Chicago Cubs in the NL Central. Washington is one-half game ahead of the Cubs for the top NL wild card.

Nationals manager Dave Martinez missed the game following a heart procedure in Washington, and bench coach Chip Hale was in charge of the dugout.

Dexter Fowler walked against Sean Doolittle (6-5) with one out in the seventh, Hunter Strickland walked Paul Goldschmidt with two outs and Ozuna doubled just inside the left-field line, just the second hit in 11 at-bats for the Cardinals with runners in scoring position.

Rockies 9, Mets 4: Pitcher Antonio Senzatela hit a tying, two-run single that ended a year-long 0-for-44 slide at the

plate, Trevor Story followed three pitches later with a three-run homer of Steven Matz to cap a six-run fourth inning and host Colorado dropped New York five games back for the second NL wild card with 12 games to play.

Brandon Nimmo, batting leadoff for the first time since May 17, opened the game with a home run off Senzatela (10-10). Starting their last road trip of the regular season, the Mets built a 4-1 lead on Jeff McNeil's two-run homer in the third that stopped an 0-for-13 slump and Amed Rosario's RBI double in the fourth.

Diamondbacks 7, Marlins 5: Robbie Ray pitched 5²/₃ innings of no-hit ball, Jake Lamb hit a crucial three-run double and host Arizona rallied to beat Miami.

The Diamondbacks, clinging to slim postseason hopes, remained 5½ games back of the Chicago Cubs for the second NL wild card with 11 to play and also would have to leapfrog Milwaukee, Philadelphia and the New York Mets.

At 52-98, the NL-worst Marlins matched their loss total of last year and appear headed to their first 100-defeat season since 2013.

Cubs 8, Reds 2: Kyle Schwarber hit a three-run homer and made a diving catch in left field, helping host Chicago win its fifth straight.

Nicholas Castellanos added a two-run double in the eighth inning as the Cubs moved a season-high 14 games above .500. Chicago has outscored its opponents 59-18 during its win streak.

The Cubs (82-68) pulled within a half-game of Washington for the top spot in the wild-card standings and stayed two games back of NL Central-leading St. Louis, which held off the Nationals for a 4-2 win.

Twins 5, White Sox 3: Jose Berrios pitched into the eighth inning to win his second straight start, Mitch Garver hit a go-ahead double and host Minnesota increased its lead to five games in the AL Central.

Seeking their first division title since 2010, the Twins (92-

58) are assured of their best record since finishing 94-68 nine years ago.

Brewers 4, Padres 1: Corey Spangenberg drove in three runs, including a tiebreaking, two-run triple in the fourth inning, and host Milwaukee kept up a playoff push with its 10th win in 11 games.

The Brewers remained one game behind the Chicago Cubs for the NL's second wild card and three games back of St. Louis, the NL Central leader.

Tigers 5, Orioles 2: Jordy Mercer hit a two-run homer in the first inning, and host Detroit split a four-game series between the teams with the worst records in the major leagues.

After the first series in American League history between teams in 50 or more games under .500, Detroit (45-104) has a 3½-game "lead" over Baltimore (49-101) for the top pick in June's amateur draft, which goes to the club with the lowest winning percentage this season.