

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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DOD aims to reduce bias in promotions

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Top leaders for each of the Defense Department's military services are working to remove all personal identifying information from promotions packets, the top U.S. military officer said Thursday.

The top uniformed officers and the civilian secretaries of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force have agreed to remove not just official photographs but also other personal identifiers from promotions packets, such as name, gender and racial information, said Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The changes come as the Pentagon has faced criticism that its highest ranks lack diversity,

and the military works to promote inclusion.

"We are the world's biggest meritocracy. We take great pride in that," Milley said during a virtual town hall session at the Pentagon alongside Defense Secretary Mark Esper and the military's top enlisted service member, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramon Colon-Lopez. "Certainly, we have areas to improve in, but on balance, we recognize that knowledge, skills, attributes and the content of your character are what should advance you in the system, not any particular personal identity or characteristics."

Removing personal information from promotions boards should remove any biases members of those boards

might have, whether conscious or unconscious, Milley said.

The decisions are part of a wide-ranging look at diversity in the military, which Esper ordered in June as civil unrest against systemic racism and police brutality spread across the nation. The following month, the defense secretary ordered the military to take steps to remove photos from promotions processes, but some service members worried simply removing pictures would not go far enough.

Milley described the changes as a "sterilization" process, meant to ensure complete neutrality in deciding what troops advance in rank. It was one of several recommendations levied by a board of military officials examining racial and

other diversity issues in the services.

That panel, the Defense Board for Diversity and Inclusion led by Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett, has made at least 16 recommendations on changes that can be implemented quickly across the Defense Department, Esper said Thursday. He did not detail those recommendations.

"They are being fine-tuned and I'm confident that they are making good progress on that front," Esper said during the town hall. He added he is "frequently updated" on the panel's progress.

A second, outside panel of experts charged with finding long-term solutions to diversity issues in the military should begin meeting in December, Esper said.

Marines to study how it can train women in Calif.

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Marine Corps will send a group of female drill instructors to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in the winter to study how the service can train female recruits at the base for the first time, Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger said Thursday.

"We're going to run a couple trials this winter time actually moving drill instructors from South Carolina to San Diego, like [temporary duty travel, temporary additional duty] and train recruits on the West Coast to see how this is going to work. But there's no provisions on the West Coast, there have never been, for females," he said during a virtual event with DefenseOne, a news organization.

The Marine Corps has two locations for training new recruits: Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., and Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif. Female recruits train at Parris Island but not

at San Diego. The reason that the Marines have kept training for women at only one location is that, for years, the number of female recruits was low, Berger said.

The Marine Corps also remains the only service that does not fully integrate recruits in all levels of training. While Parris Island has recently begun integrating male and female recruits at the company level, it is only done when there are smaller numbers of female recruits during the slower training months.

The fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act has a section mandating the Marine Corps to end gender-segregated training at Parris Island within five years and integrate the training at San Diego within eight years.

"We're not set up on the West Coast at all, for zero females. So we could go all the way to Nirvana on the East Coast and still have half the Marine Corps training without any female recruits there. That's not Nirvana in any way, in anybody's construct," Berger said.

The two biggest challenges standing in the way of fully integrating Marine Corps boot camps are infrastructure and staffing, the commandant said.

Parris Island has limited barracks space for women, and San Diego has none, so even getting women and men to train on both coasts immediately cannot happen, Berger said.

"It's definitely not as simple as build a couple buildings, and we'll be there," he said about infrastructure concerns at boot camps.

"Even if we had the facilities in San Diego, for us to dedicate [to developing] the female leadership at San Diego ... we would be ripping them out of platoons, ripping them out of squadrons where they're at right now. We don't want to do that," he said.

Berger said they will need to work with Congress to find the best solution, but it would still take several years to get to that point.

N. Korea leader apologizes for man's death

BY KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has apologized for the killing of a South Korean official at sea earlier this week, calling the shooting death “unfortunate,” South Korea’s presidential office said Friday.

The rare apology was a major step toward defusing tensions a day after the South said that North Korean troops had fatally shot, then burned the body of a fisheries inspector who went

missing from a patrol boat Monday in the Yellow Sea off the peninsula’s western coast.

Earlier Friday, President Moon Jae-in vowed a firm response to threats against South Koreans’ safety, and the military vowed to tighten its defensive posture.

The United Front Department of North Korea’s ruling Workers’ Party, which handles inter-Korean ties, called the inspector’s death an “accident” in a message sent Friday, which was read in full by a senior presidential adviser.

Kim Jong Un “feels very sorry to have disappointed President Moon Jae-in and other South Korean compatriots because of an unexpected, unfortunate incident,” at a time when they already are suffering because of the coronavirus pandemic, it said.

According to the account, North Korean troops were called to the scene after a fishing boat reported an “illegal intruder” in the area. The troops demanded that the man identify himself but didn’t receive a satisfactory reply, so they fired

two blanks.

The man appeared to prepare to flee so the troops fired 10 live rounds from about 160 feet away, the message said.

North Korea expressed regret about the South Korean military’s fierce response to the shooting, which officials called a “brutal act.”

“Our leadership says such a thing shouldn’t have happened and has ordered troops to strengthen surveillance and other practices to prevent a recurrence of unfortunate incidents like these,” it added.

Three Camp Lejeune families sue housing firms

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Lakin Lewis said she kept her newborn baby’s bottles in sealed, plastic bags in her cabinets to keep roaches from crawling across them.

Lindsey Johnson said her family suffered continuous water leaks from the electrical system in their house. But instead of finding the cause, maintenance staff told her not

to let the children plug cords into the outlet.

The Burn family said pink and black mold grew and spread along a window frame in their daughter’s bedroom.

Those claims are part of a lawsuit filed Friday by the three Marine Corps families against the private companies that manage housing at Camp Lejeune, N.C. The military families claim Lendlease Group, an Australia-based multinational company, and

its partner, WinnCompanies, based in Boston, put profits before maintenance and the families’ homes were plagued with mold growth and water leaks, and maintenance crews were either unwilling or unqualified to repair the conditions.

The claims in the suit are similar to those made by other military families living at bases across the country who have filed lawsuits to combat poor housing conditions despite pledges from private

housing companies, the military and Congress that making base housing safe and habitable is a top priority. The extent of the poor quality of housing in the military first surfaced two years ago with a Reuters investigation. There are now at least eight ongoing lawsuits in courts across the country filed by residents of military family housing. Nine families at Fort Hood, Texas, also filed a lawsuit against Lendlease in June for similar problems.

Ginsburg 1st woman to lie in state in US Capitol

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is lying in state at the U.S. Capitol, the first woman in American history to do so, in commemoration of her extraordinary life.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said it is with “profound sorrow” that she welcomed the liberal icon and opened the private service.

Mourners gathered under coronavirus restrictions for the service for Ginsburg, who died last week at age 87, as her cas-

ket made the short procession from the court’s iconic steps where it had been on public view Friday to the East Front of the Capitol. A military honor guard carried it inside the Capitol’s stately Statuary Hall.

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, sat quietly with other elected officials, friends and family. His vice presidential running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, was also attending.

Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer welcomed Ginsburg’s casket with the Capitol in turmoil. Presi-

dent Donald is prepared to announce a conservative nominee to replace the justice on Saturday, weeks before the election.

Several members of Congress, including Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, both former presidential contenders, were among those attending. Members of the House and Senate who were not invited to the ceremony because of space limitations imposed by the coronavirus pandemic were able to pay their respects before a motorcade carrying Ginsburg’s casket departed the

Capitol early afternoon.

The honor of lying in state has been accorded fewer than three dozen times, mostly to presidents, vice presidents and members of Congress. Rep. John Lewis, the civil rights icon, was the most recent person to lie in state following his death in July. Henry Clay, the Kentucky lawmaker who served as Speaker of the House and also was a senator, was the first in 1852. Rosa Parks — a private citizen, not a government official — is the only woman who has lain in honor at the Capitol.

Taylor family, lawyers criticize prosecutor

Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Breonna Taylor's family and their lawyers sharply criticized Kentucky's attorney general for the failure to bring charges against police officers in her death, calling Friday for him to release the transcripts of the grand jury proceeding while vowing to continue protests until the officers are charged.

Tamika Palmer, Taylor's mother, said in a statement read by a relative to a gathering in Louisville that she did not expect justice from state Attorney General Daniel Cameron.

Ben Crump, a lawyer for the family, urged the prosecutor to make the transcripts public, so people can see if anyone was present at the grand jury proceedings to give a voice to Taylor. Gov. Andy Beshear, a Democrat, has also called for Cam-

eron to release what evidence he can.

Cameron's spokeswoman, Elizabeth Kuhn, said the prosecutor understood that Taylor's family "is in an incredible amount of pain and anguish" and that the grand jury decision was not the one they wanted. But, the statement added, "prosecutors and grand jury members are bound by the facts and by the law."

Taylor, a Black woman who was an emergency medical worker, was shot multiple times by white officers after Taylor's boyfriend fired at them, authorities said. He said he fired in self-defense, wounding one officer. Police were conducting a drug investigation and entered on a warrant connected to a suspect who did not live there, and no drugs were found inside.

Cameron has said the investigation showed officers acted in self-defense. The grand jury charged one officer, who has al-

ready been fired, with firing into a neighboring apartment.

At almost the same time that Taylor's family was decrying the handling of her case, a man accused of shooting at police during protests Wednesday was being arraigned. Two officers were wounded and expected to recover.

A not guilty plea was entered Friday for Larynzo D. Johnson, 26. Bond was set at \$1 million. Zac Meihaus, the attorney representing Johnson at the arraignment, said it is difficult to "pinpoint" if Johnson fired the shots in question. A prosecutor replied that a gun was recovered from Johnson, and there are video and witness accounts of the shootings.

The big question for Louisville, which has been torn apart by Taylor's death, and the larger issue of racism in America, was how to move forward.

Facebook shuts down networks in election scandal

The Washington Post

Facebook shut down two Russian disinformation networks operated by the nation's intelligence services and a third by people affiliated with a notorious troll farm that interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the company announced Thursday.

The networks focused their efforts in numerous nations in Europe and Asia, with relatively little reach among U.S. audiences, Facebook concluded. But the involvement of people and entities that previously had targeted American politics underscored the ongoing threat posed by Russia's disinformation machinery, which U.S. intelligence officials have said is also attempting to interfere in November's

presidential vote.

"Today's disclosures are further evidence that Russia continues aggressive interference operations and broader influence operations aimed at divisions within countries and among allies," said Graham Brookie, director of the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, which tracks disinformation and studied two of the three networks removed by Facebook.

Graphika, another outside research group that studied one of the Russian networks, said one of the campaigns aimed at Americans focused on courting Black voters and criticizing Democratic nominee Joe Biden — in efforts that included Facebook and other online services including Twitter, Medium, Tumblr and WordPress. One blog called "Black and intelligent"

was created by Russian operatives in 2018, and its supporting account on Twitter displayed an image and quote from the late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. The blog featured articles copied from numerous news sources, including The Washington Post, with a focus on racial issues.

"Black and intelligent" offered criticisms of Biden and promoted his onetime rival for the Democratic nomination, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. The overall reach of the effort was small, with followers in the hundreds, but the operatives used a feature on WordPress to collect 327 emails of those who viewed the blog, Graphika reported.

The three Russian networks involved nearly 350 accounts, pages and groups on Facebook and its photo-sharing subsidiary Instagram.

A look at the impact of coronavirus as deaths near 1M

Associated Press

As it marched from East to West this year, the coronavirus pandemic sank economies and transformed social interactions. It shut schools and businesses, stopped the sports and entertainment industries dead in their tracks, and even brought low the Olympic Games.

And it killed. Nearly 1 million deaths have been recorded worldwide to date, according to data tracked by Johns Hopkins University.

The effects were global — but also per-

sonal. The virus changed how people socialized and shopped, worked and dressed. It changed how they cared for their loved ones and how they mourned them.

It even changed the language they used. The word "hero" was employed with more frequency — and the definition expanded to include delivery and sanitation workers, cleaners and waiters. And, of course, health care workers, who in China and Italy, Iran and South Africa, the United States and Brazil toiled in hazmat suits for hours on end to treat the sick.

The virus changed how people interact-

ed and how they thought about interaction. People isolated to stay healthy — and then worried about what isolation was doing to their health.

Many people were unable to say goodbye to their loved ones because of restrictions at hospitals; others held them in their final moments, draped head-to-toe in protective gear. Funerals were also sterile affairs, if they happened at all.

And still the pandemic is far from over. The toll is climbing. By around 5,000 a day, a death every 17 seconds somewhere in the world.

Nev. virus rate rises after long decline

Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — Likely spurred by increased exposures to the coronavirus at social gatherings during the Labor Day weekend, Nevada's statewide daily positivity rate for COVID-19 is on an upward trend after a steady decline over the past month, health officials say.

A recent surge in Washoe County and smaller gains in new cases are being reported elsewhere in the tourism-dependent state with the highest unemployment rate in the nation at 13.2%.

"We are seeing the beginnings of some trends that could be tied to the Labor Day or to other public exposures that have occurred in the last two weeks right now," said Caleb Cage, Nevada's COVID-19 response director.

"I think you can see that in our numbers of new cases every day that've come up this week: It's small increases, but there have been noticeable increases to date," he said Wednesday.

Nevada's seven-day moving average for its daily positivity rate climbed to 8.6% on Wednesday.

The goal set by the World Health Organization is 5%.

The statewide rate had dipped to 6.6% on Sept. 9.

New Mexico

SANTA FE — Voters across New Mexico have submitted nearly 250,000 absentee ballot requests with especially strong demand among Democrats for alternatives to in-person voting amid the pandemic, according to statistics released Thursday by state voting regulators. In 2016, voters cast 8,000 absentee ballots.

Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver said the popularity of absentee voting may translate into a lengthier process for tallying ballots that could extend beyond Election Day on Nov. 3.

She said county clerks have been allotted more time to authenticate absentee ballots as they arrive ahead of Election

Day, but the counting process could potentially last for several days if voters wait until late in the cycle to mail or hand deliver ballots. Absentee ballots must be received by 7 p.m. on Nov. 3 to be counted.

Texas

HOUSTON — Results from a program that's testing Houston's wastewater to monitor the local spread of the coronavirus have shown that it could be a faster way of detecting outbreaks in the nation's fourth-largest city, officials said Thursday.

Since May, the city and scientists from Rice University and Baylor College of Medicine have tested wastewater from the city's 39 treatment plants. Studies indicate genetic material from the virus can be recovered from the stools of about half of patients with the COVID-19 virus. Wastewater analysis looks for that genetic material.

"The goal is to help develop an early warning system, allowing the health department to identify the city's COVID-19 hot spots sooner and put measures in place to slow the spread of this disease," said Mayor Sylvester Turner.

Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said Thursday he would seek a "bill of rights" for college students following crackdowns on parties and other social gatherings that some blame for a surge in COVID-19 cases on campuses around the country.

"I understand that universities are trying to do the right thing," DeSantis said during a news briefing at the Capitol, "but I personally think it's dramatically draconian that a student could get potentially expelled for going to a party. That's what college kids do."

The Republican governor also said he would move to block local governments from closing restaurants again, saying there's little evidence such

closures have slowed the spread of the coronavirus.

Georgia

FORSYTH — In-person classes have been called off for two weeks at a Georgia middle school after more than 90 students and staff were exposed to the coronavirus.

The Monroe County school system said Thursday in a news release that all students at Monroe County Middle School in Forsyth would shift to online instruction starting Monday. Learning will remain entirely online through Oct. 9, when the district starts its fall break. In-person classes would resume Oct. 19.

Cases statewide continue to fall, with the seven-day average of newly confirmed cases at their lowest point since late June, as well as the number of people hospitalized with the respiratory illness.

Iowa

An Iowa elementary school quarantined 130 elementary students after a staff member tested positive for coronavirus, while a high school switched to online classes after some students were absent as coronavirus cases surged Thursday by more than 1,300 across the state in the last 24 hours.

Officials at the Hartwick-Ladora-Victor Community School District quarantined 130 kindergarten through sixth grade students beginning Wednesday after a staff member tested positive for the virus a day earlier, Superintendent Brad Hohensee said.

The district has no mask requirement, though it has posted a notice on its website that it began requiring masks at indoor athletic events on Sept. 20. The district is based in Victor, nearly 76 miles east of Des Moines.

North Scott High School, which is quarantining more than 200 high school students due to positive tests, went to all online instruction last Friday, according to a Sept. 17 letter

the school sent to the Iowa Department of Education.

Connecticut

Capacity at Connecticut restaurants, hair salons, libraries, and certain outdoor and indoor event and performing arts venues will increase beginning Oct. 8, while bars and nightclubs will remain closed to prevent possible spread of the coronavirus, Gov. Ned Lamont announced Thursday.

Given Connecticut's low COVID-19 infection rate, which has hovered around 1% for weeks, the Democrat said he believes the state is also ready to increase the size of allowable indoor and outdoor gatherings, so long as people continue to be cautious and take steps such as wearing face masks, social distancing and washing their hands.

Under the plan, indoor capacity at restaurants will increase from 50% to 75%, with eateries required to keep diners 6 feet apart or partitioned by plexiglass or other material.

Ohio

COLUMBUS — People seeing images of a woman arrested at a middle school football game after refusing requests to put on a mask should not rush to judgment, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said Thursday as he called the incident "very unfortunate, very unpleasant."

A stun gun was used on the woman after she wouldn't leave the football stadium in Logan in southeastern Ohio on Wednesday, the Logan Police Department said in a news release. The woman, who told police she had asthma and wouldn't be wearing the mask, was arrested on a criminal trespassing charge and not for refusing to wear a mask, the agency said.

"Once she refused to leave the premises, she was advised she was under arrest for criminal trespassing, she resisted the arrest, which led to the use of force," the agency said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

'Man cave' found under Grand Central station

NY NEW YORK — Three railroad workers have been suspended for turning a storage room under New York's Grand Central Terminal into an unauthorized "man cave" with a television, a refrigerator, a microwave and a futon couch, officials said Thursday.

A Metropolitan Transportation Authority investigation found that managers at Metro-North Railroad were unaware of the hideaway beneath Track 114.

"Many a New Yorker has fantasized about kicking back with a cold beer in a prime piece of Manhattan real estate — especially one this close to good transportation," MTA Inspector General Carolyn Pokorny said in a news release. "But few would have the chutzpah to commandeer a secret room beneath Grand Central Terminal."

Prep golfer gets ace on first shot at first match

MI OTSEGO — First high school match, first shot — hole in one.

Stephanie Scott, a freshman at Otsego High School, aced hole No. 8 Monday at Lake Doster Golf Club.

Stephanie told MLive.com that she couldn't see what happened, but the reaction was swift.

"Her dad was standing by the green, and we had some other parents up there, and one of them hollered back, 'It went in the hole!'" coach Matt Rayman said.

Stephanie, who started golfing at age 7, said she had never had a birdie or even a par. She finished the nine-hole round at 53.

"I don't remember exactly

what I did, but I think I just stood there. ... It feels really awesome," she said of the hole-in-one.

Crash sends highway sign falling onto pickup

OH CLEVELAND — A dump truck struck the base of a sign on a Cleveland highway during the morning commute Thursday, causing the sign to fall on a passing pickup truck and killing one person in the pickup, authorities said.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol said the crash happened around 8:30 a.m. in the westbound lanes of Interstate 480 at the State Road exit.

The metal sign, which rises above three lanes of traffic, appeared to land on the hood of the pickup, which was traveling in a middle lane. It wasn't immediately known if the person killed in the pickup was the driver or a passenger, or if the dump truck driver was injured.

Man dies after trying to save daughter in surf

NC COROLLA — A man died after trying to save his daughter from what officials say was life-threatening surf on the North Carolina coast.

The Virginian-Pilot reported that the incident occurred Tuesday afternoon in Currituck County on the Outer Banks.

Currituck County spokesman Randall Edwards said the man was overcome by waves when he entered the water. Lifeguards from Corolla Beach Rescue responded within three minutes.

The man was pulled from the water in cardiac arrest. The man regained a pulse after emergency personnel per-

formed CPR. But he died at a hospital several hours later.

"This is a sad ending to what had been a great example of teamwork and skill," Edwards said.

The man's daughter was rescued by lifeguards and was not injured.

3 suspects sought after about 40 guns stolen

SD RAPID CITY — Authorities are searching for three suspects after about 40 guns were stolen early Wednesday morning from a Rapid City gun shop.

Officers responded about 3:30 a.m. to a report of an alarm and discovered that a glass door on the shop's main entrance had been shattered. Surveillance video shows two suspects inside the store, including one person with a baseball bat shattering various display cases, police said. A third suspect is seen outside.

Police are working with the business to determine the specific firearms taken during the burglary. The release does not name the gun shop.

"Any time you have a large-scale gun theft like this, it's highly concerning for local law enforcement," said Rapid City Police Capt. John Olson, commander of the department's Criminal Investigations Division. "We have around 40 guns that are now unaccounted for in the hands of our criminal element."

Most troopers in state to get body cameras

VT WATERBURY — Most Vermont State Police troopers are going to be getting body cameras by the end of the year.

Officials are still working on

the details of the policy for the cameras, including the public's access to view police videos.

Vermont State Police Capt. Garry Scott told WCAX-TV the cameras will be welcomed.

"It's about transparency and accountability," he said.

The inspection of state police body camera videos will be free after they have been redacted to protect privacy.

More than 200 troopers at barracks across the state will be outfitted with the body cameras, which have been delivered but are not yet in use. The cameras will turn on automatically when a trooper activates a cruiser's lights. The policy on when the cameras will be turned off is still being developed.

Brown bear breaks into zoo, kills popular alpaca

AK ANCHORAGE — A wild brown bear tunneled under perimeter fencing and killed a popular alpaca at the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage, officials said Wednesday. The bear was killed a day later by wildlife officials.

The bear had been hanging around the zoo, knocking over trash bins and breaking bear-proof latches, before it got under the fence early Sunday when the facility was closed to the public.

"It went through the zoo and killed our older male alpaca, Caesar," executive director Patrick Lampi said.

He said the 16-year-old alpaca had arrived at the zoo when he was a year old. Caesar's companion, a younger alpaca named Fuzzy Charlie, escaped and was found unharmed.

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Myers enjoying resurgence with Padres

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Wil Myers is back.

While Fernando Tatis Jr. and Manny Machado have grabbed most of the attention for the playoff-bound Padres, Myers' comeback performance also has been instrumental in returning San Diego to postseason play for the first time since 2006.

Myers' six-year sojourn with the Padres has been twisted and often dismal, at the plate and as a player on a team that lost with regularity. The longest-tenured Padres player, Myers has bounced back from his worst season and is putting up impressive numbers in the

pandemic-shortened season.

The outfielder is hitting .291 with 14 homers and 38 RBIs in 52 games.

Fittingly, Myers hit a big three-run home run in the Padres' playoff-clinching, 11-inning victory against the Seattle Mariners on Sunday.

"Throughout my entire career I've hit some home runs, but this one the other day was pretty big," he said. "To be able to have a hit that helped push us to get there was really cool."

In January 2015, Myers sat on a stage at Petco Park for an introductory news conference with Justin Upton, Derek Norris and Will Middlebrooks, part of general manager A.J. Preller's offseason shopping spree

that also included Matt Kemp and James Shields.

Myers came over from Tampa Bay in a three-team trade that also involved the Washington Nationals. He is the only player left from that group of high-priced veterans that failed to deliver Preller's win-now vision. However, the GM sent Shields to the Chicago White Sox for Tatis in a steal of a trade in July 2016 that highlighted San Diego's rebuild.

"In 2015 we had a good team here, a talented team with some names on it. At that time I didn't think it would be 2020 before I'd be talking about post-season," Myers said.

This is also the first season Myers has enjoyed the Padres

having a winning record.

"Although there's been a lot of downs, it's kind of cool to be a player that's kind of gone through the entire thing," said Myers, who marveled earlier this season about how good it felt that the Padres were buyers, not sellers, approaching the trade deadline. "You get to see an entire rebuild process, the good and the bad times to it. Obviously the bad times happen, but when you're in those it makes you appreciate this more. Certain years were tougher than others, but you sit back and you see the entire plan come together and I think that makes it a little more gratifying."

MLB roundup

Blue Jays clinch first postseason berth since 2016

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Hyun Jin Ryu (5-2) pitched seven shutout innings and the Toronto Blue Jays clinched their first postseason spot since 2016, beating the Yankees 4-1 Thursday night and further damaging New York's chances of hosting a first-round playoff series.

New York lost for the fourth time in five games and remained two games behind the slumping White Sox for the fourth seed. Chicago lost 5-4 at Cleveland, its fifth consecutive defeat.

Toronto secured at least an AL wild-card spot and ensured its eighth trip overall to the postseason.

Blue Jays players embraced on the diamond at their temporary home of Sahlen Field in Buffalo after Rafael Dolis struck out Aaron Hicks to end it.

The Blue Jays trail the Yankees by two games for second place in the AL East. Both teams have three games remaining. Toronto hosts Baltimore in Buffalo while the

Yankees host the Marlins.

Rockies 5, Giants 4: Raimel Tapia hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the 11th inning, and visiting Colorado rallied to keep San Francisco from gaining ground in the NL wild-card race.

The Giants (28-28), winners of three of their last five, dropped behind idle Cincinnati for the first NL wild card. The Reds (29-28) visit Minnesota over the final weekend as the playoff-bound Padres come to San Francisco

Indians 5, White Sox 4: Jose Ramirez delivered a go-ahead, two-run double in the seventh inning as host Cleveland beat Chicago for a four-game sweep in a matchup of playoff-bound teams.

The victory pulled the Indians within one game of Chicago for the fourth seed and home-field advantage in the first round of the postseason. Idle Minnesota leads the White Sox by one game in the AL Central with three to play.

Cardinals 4, Brewers 2: Yadier Molina singled twice to reach 2,000 career hits and host St. Louis began a five-game se-

ries between playoff contenders by beating Milwaukee.

Rookie Dylan Carlson homered, doubled and drove in three runs as the Cardinals (28-26) kept their slim lead over Cincinnati (29-28) for second place in the NL Central.

Marlins 4, Braves 2: Jon Berti had three hits, including a two-run double, Pablo Lopez (6-4) allowed only two hits in five scoreless innings and visiting Miami beat Atlanta to boost its playoff hopes.

Miami snapped a four-game losing streak. The Marlins (29-28) are competing for a wild-card spot as they try to reach the playoffs for the first time since winning the World Series in 2003.

Pirates 7, Cubs 0: Chad Kuhl pitched seven sharp innings and Colin Moran and Bryan Reynolds had home runs among their three hits each in host Pittsburgh's victory over slumping Chicago.

Mets 3, Nationals 2: Robinson Chirinos homered and drove in three runs, and New York beat host Washington to keep its flickering postseason

hopes alive.

The Mets (26-31) moved within 2½ games of Miami (28-28) for second place in the NL East and within 2½ games of San Francisco (28-28) for the NL's second wild card.

Astros 12, Rangers 4: Alex Bregman's three extra-base hits included one of his team's four home runs, and visiting Houston trimmed its magic number to one for clinching the American League's last playoff spot.

Orioles 13, Red Sox 1: Jose Iglesias, Pat Valaika and Austin Hays homered to lead visiting Baltimore past Boston in a struggle for last place in the AL East.

Royals 8, Tigers 7: Salvador Perez hit a three-run home run, Maikel Franco hit a go-ahead homer in the sixth inning and host Kansas City beat Detroit.

Dodgers 5, Athletics 1: Walker Buehler proved he and his fickle right index finger are playoff ready, Corey Seager homered and host Los Angeles beat Oakland to earn its major league-leading 40th victory of the shortened 60-game season.

Lakers one victory from ending series

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The Los Angeles Lakers are a victory away from returning to the NBA Finals — and only another comeback from 3-1 down by the Denver Nuggets can stop them.

Anthony Davis scored 34 points, LeBron James had 26 and the Lakers beat the Nuggets 114-108 on Thursday night in Game 4 of the Western Conference finals.

“We played great down the stretch, we played great overall,” Davis said. “Still some things that we can fix if we want to put this thing away.”

Davis got the Lakers off to a fast start with his scoring and James helped them finish it with his defense, forcing Jamal Murray into some late misses after the guard had kept the Nuggets in it with an array of high-difficulty baskets.

“I knew it was winning time and Jamal had it going,” James said.

James added nine rebounds

and eight assists, and the Lakers had 12 offensive rebounds for a whopping 25-6 advantage in second-chance points.

“This is the Western Conference finals, Game 4. If you can’t help us on the defensive end, maybe you shouldn’t be on the floor,” Denver coach Michael Malone said. “We have to be able to lock in, finish with a rebound. We had too many empty possessions tonight.”

Game 5 is Saturday night, when the Lakers can reach the NBA Finals for the first time in a decade. Davis said he expects to be fine for it after rolling his ankle in the fourth quarter.

The Nuggets will be facing elimination for the seventh time in the bubble. They were down 3-1 against Utah in the first round and climbed out of the same hole against the Los Angeles Clippers in the West semifinals.

They couldn’t come back in this game, getting within one point in the opening minute of the fourth quarter but con-

stantly turned back from there by a key stop or rebound by the Lakers.

“We just had so many breakdowns throughout the game,” Murray said. “We’ve just got to be better.”

The Lakers have 16 championships, one behind Boston for the most in history, but they haven’t played for one since winning their most recent title in 2010.

The Lakers started Dwight Howard at center and he had 12 points and 11 rebounds, helping put Nikola Jokic into foul trouble.

Murray had 32 points and eight assists, but Jokic finished with just 16 points and seven rebounds.

Davis scored 27 points in Game 3 but the 6-foot-10 forward acknowledged that his two-rebound performance was “unacceptable.” He came out much more aggressively Thursday after the Lakers played from behind much of the last game.

With an array of short jumpers, Davis made his first six shots before anyone else on the Lakers made a basket. Then Howard scored on consecutive follow shots before James followed with his first two field goals.

Murray kept the Lakers from getting too far away with a 7-for-8 start. He followed his acrobatic layup around James with 2½ minutes remaining in the half and two free throws that cut it to four, before the Lakers took a 60-55 edge to the locker room.

The Nuggets shot 59% in the first half but the Lakers had an 18-2 advantage in second-chance points.

The Lakers seemed to be taking control when Rajon Rondo and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope combined for a flurry that pushed the lead to 11 with under 4 minutes remaining in the third, but Michael Porter Jr. hit two three-pointers late in the period that cut it to 87-84 going to the fourth.

Dolphins’ Fitzpatrick continues dominance of Jags

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Ryan Fitzpatrick handles the Jacksonville Jaguars as well as anyone in the NFL.

It doesn’t matter which uniform the journeyman quarterback is wearing, either.

Fitzpatrick accounted for three touchdowns and led Miami to a 31-13 victory Thursday night, becoming the first NFL quarterback to notch six wins over the same opponent with six teams.

“Fitz is out of his mind,” tight end Mike Gesicki said. “He’s (37) and playing like he’s 23. You see the fun he has. After I scored, we came off the field chest bumping and screaming. It’s so much fun to play with him.”

The lopsided outcome also gave Miami (1-2) its first double-digit victory in 39 games, ending the longest drought in

the league. It was the first time the Dolphins have won a game by more than eight points since Dec. 3, 2017, a 35-9 victory over Denver.

Fitzpatrick completed his first 12 passes — a career high — as Miami scored touchdowns on its first three drives for the first time since 2011. He ended the night celebrating another victory over the Jaguars (1-2).

“It’s why I still play,” Fitzpatrick said. “I enjoy playing, especially when you’re having success. I feel like the luckiest guy in the world sometimes getting to go outside and play football with my friends.”

He improved to 6-2 as a starter against Jacksonville, his wins coming with Cincinnati (2008), Buffalo (2012), Tennessee (2013), Houston (2014), the New York Jets (2015) and now Miami.

Fitzpatrick also ran for 39

yards and a score, his 37-year-old legs looking as fresh as any in Miami’s backfield.

He completed 18 of 20 passes — the last one to himself — for 160 yards and two touchdowns in his latest successful outing against the Jags, who made countless mistakes while failing to consistently move the chains and get off the field on third down.

In short, they looked exactly like the team most outsiders expected them to be this season.

“As a group we just didn’t get it done,” said Jaguars quarterback Gardner Minshew, who completed 30 of 42 passes for 275 yards and two turnovers. “We had too many mistakes. That’s plain and simple.”

Jacksonville’s most egregious errors:

■ Chris Conley dropped two passes that would have been first downs and was flagged

for offensive pass interference in the third quarter. Minshew fumbled on the next play, leading to Miami’s fourth touchdown of the night.

“I let this offense down,” Conley said. “Rough night.”

■ Minshew audibled to a pitch to the short side of the field on a third-and-5 play. He was sacked on the next play, ending a shot at making the game close at halftime.

■ Left tackle Cam Robinson was disqualified for making contact with an official following Minshew’s fumble.

■ Rookie cornerback CJ Henderson was on the wrong end of one of four pass interference calls against Jacksonville. He also failed to touch receiver Jakeem Grant down after Grant made a diving catch. Grant jumped up and gained an extra 10 yards.

Pac-12, MWC decide to play football

Associated Press

The Pac-12 is set to kick off a seven-game football season Nov. 6 after it followed the Big Ten in overturning an August decision to punt on playing in the fall because of concerns about COVID-19.

With the conference having secured daily COVID-19 testing for its athletes and been given the green light from state and local health officials, the Pac-12 CEO Group voted unanimously Thursday to lift a Jan. 1 moratorium on athletic competition.

“The discussion among the presidents and chancellors was largely about the benefits as well as the cons of starting in the fall versus starting in January,” University of Oregon President Michael Schill said. “The consensus opinion was the benefits of starting in the fall were much greater than the benefits of starting in the ... winter.

“Things changed from the first time we addressed this issue.”

Three hours after the Pac-12 announced its return, the Mountain West did the same, using a tweet to say it is targeting an Oct. 24 start to an eight-game season.

The Pac-12’s men’s and women’s basketball seasons can start Nov. 25, in line with the NCAA’s recently announced opening date. The football championship game is set for Dec. 18, putting the conference in play for the College Football Playoff and a New Year’s Six Bowl selection — and the multimillion-dollar payouts that come with them.

The remaining FBS holdout is the first league to postpone. And that might not be for much longer. The Mid-American Conference university presidents were scheduled to meet Friday to reconsider fall football.

The Southeastern Conference begins play this weekend, joining the Big 12, Atlantic Coast Conference and three others that have been up and running since Labor Day weekend.

The season is ongoing but it has been anything but normal.

There have been 21 games postponed or canceled since Aug. 26 because of teams battling various levels of COVID-19-related issues.

This week, four games scheduled to be played Saturday have been called off, including Notre Dame at Wake Forest because of a virus outbreak among Fighting Irish players.

The turning point for the return of sports in the Pac-12 came Sept. 3 when it entered an agreement with diagnostic testing company Quidel that will give each school the capacity to conduct daily antigen tests on their athletes.

Still, it took three weeks for the conference to reverse course on fall football, leaving it starting later and scheduled to play fewer games than the other Power Five conferences.

“I don’t think we’re behind,” Schill said. “I think that we are acting deliberately. We are acting in the students’ best interest. We waited until we were able to if not ensure, protect their health and safety.”

Schill said state and local

restrictions in California and Oregon to stem the spread of the virus made it impossible for six Pac-12 teams in those states to practice football and slowed the conference’s return to play decision.

“Those barriers came down once the daily antigen test was available,” Schill said.

When the Pac-12 postponed Aug. 11, its medical advisers had recommended daily testing for athletes because of high rates of community spread of the virus in most of the counties where schools were located. Those rates have improved in most Pac-12 counties, but not all.

“If this is not sustainable, we will stop playing,” Schill.

Daily testing should also decrease the number of athletes who end up in quarantine after coming into what would be considered a high-risk contact with someone who has tested positive.

“Our goal is to not have a bunch of our student athletes get COVID,” said Dr. Doug Aukerman of Oregon State.

Champion Adesanya seeks redemption at UFC 253

Associated Press

After Israel Adesanya finally took up mixed martial arts full-time three years ago, he rocketed through the UFC ranks with a thrilling, athletic style of fighting. He even became an undisputed champion in just his 18th professional bout.

But a few days before the coronavirus pandemic upended the sporting world, Adesanya looked nothing like a superstar in his first title defense.

Six months after his desultory win over Yoel Romero in Las Vegas, Adesanya (19-0, 14 KOs) is on the other side of the globe to defend his middleweight belt against longtime antagonist Paulo Costa (13-0, 11 KOs) in the main event of UFC 253 on Fight Island in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

Adesanya couldn’t seize the

spotlight against Romero, but he vows to amaze the world against Costa, another muscle-bound opponent who seems a challenging target for Adesanya’s otherworldly striking ability.

“I feel like that was the valley of my story, and now it’s time to rise again,” Adesanya said. “This is my time, and this one is going to shoot me into the stratosphere.”

At UFC 248 in March, a patient, boring performance against a nearly inert Romero kept the Nigeria-born, New Zealand-based Adesanya from taking the quantum leap to international stardom that he and the UFC expected.

Instead, the voluble champion spent more time explaining why he hadn’t thrilled his fans — and sparring with Costa, who jumped at the chance to needle

Adesanya on social media.

Adesanya’s chance at redemption comes against another unbeaten contender whose rise in the UFC has been even quicker. The supremely powerful Costa needed only five UFC bouts to earn a title shot, although the Brazilian was nearly 26 when he joined the promotion.

Costa and Adesanya have sparred online, but been polite when they meet in person, according to both fighters — yet they go right back to trash-talking each other when they part.

“He’s insecure,” Adesanya said of Costa. “That’s why we’re fighting each other. We get to fight. Someone that you’ve been barking at behind the fence, when you see them, what do you do? ... I’ve just said I don’t like the guy, and I don’t like the way he looks. It’s never

personal, but the difference is I get to settle it this weekend.”

The main event is the most attractive fight by far on the card at UFC 253, the first of five consecutive UFC shows in its secure bubble in the Middle East.

Light heavyweight title challenger Dominick Reyes returns against Jan Blachowicz in the co-main event on a card also featuring crowd-pleasing flyweights Kai Kara-France and Brandon Royval, along with the 43rd professional fight of Diego Sanchez.

Adesanya excels at the verbal business of fight promotion along with his skills inside the cage, and he hasn’t backed down from Costa’s declarations that the champion is an overhyped, underskilled athletic freak who can’t handle truly physical 185-pound fighters.