

IT'S TIME TO TALK

RACE TOGETHER is an initiative from Starbucks and USA TODAY to stimulate discussion about racial inequality in America. **Special section inside**

► **Army investigates 'Racial Thursdays,' 1A**

NEWSLINE

IN NEWS

CDC on way to 'losing credibility'

Safety experts cite inadequate training, lack of commitment to safety.

Killer drones

U.S. campaign takes out over 500 terrorists. ► U.S. probes craft shot down in Syria.

IN MONEY

Delivery drones

FAA will let Amazon test Prime Air drops.

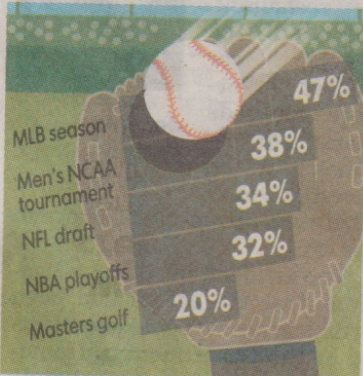


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USA SNAPSHOTS®

It's spring ... play ball!

Most anticipated "spring" sporting events:



Sources: Sharkey Institute for Seton Hall Sports Poll of 751 U.S. adults March 2-4

ANNE R. CAREY AND JANET LOHRKE, USA TODAY



Georgia State coach Ron Hunter was so excited after his son hit the game-winning shot that he fell off his stool.



Few would have picked 11th-seeded University of Alabama at Birmingham to beat No. 1 seed Iowa State.

It was one of those flat-out, wild-eyed days for NCAA fans. Fewer than 1% of brackets were left intact before Thursday night's games tipped off, the NCAA estimates. Yet that's the beauty of March Madness. ► **See Nancy Armour, 1C**



'Racial Thursdays' investigated

Army looks into complaints that slurs used to build morale

Michelle Tan
Army Times

The Army is investigating allegations by soldiers in an Alaska platoon that the unit leader encouraged soldiers to use racial slurs against each other every Thursday as a way to build morale and camaraderie.

Lt. Col. Alan Brown, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Alaska, confirmed that the Army has begun an inquiry into allegations into the practice, known as "Racial Thursdays."

Two soldiers in the platoon described the possible racial hazing to the *Army Times*. They asked that their names not be used to protect their privacy.

"The command is extremely sensitive to any allegations that involve equal opportunity or discrimination and will investigate

every allegation," Brown said. He would not provide more details.

One of the soldiers who filed a complaint is an African-American staff sergeant who said his platoon leader encouraged "Racial Thursdays."

The platoon is with the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team at Fort Wainwright in Alaska.

The soldier said he was told members of the unit could make racist slurs without consequences, although none was directed at him. He said he filed a complaint to stop the practice.

The second soldier told the *Army Times* that hurling racial slurs at members of the unit was not compulsory. He cited one case in which a Hispanic member of the platoon was called demeaning names based on his ethnicity for an entire day and nearly got into a fight over the slurs.

Brown said "it's important to emphasize that these allegations are just that ... and that's what the investigation has been assigned to find out, exactly what happened and if anything happened."

The platoon under investigation is part of a company involved in a controversy over ethnic hazing of a Chinese-American member who later committed suicide.

Pvt. Danny Chen committed suicide in 2011, while in Afghanistan. The Army ruled that Chen killed himself because he was hazed over his ancestry.

Investigators told his family he was called names while in training and hazed in Afghanistan.

On the day he died, Chen was forced to crawl about 100 yards across gravel carrying his equipment while fellow soldiers threw rocks at him, his family said.

At least eight soldiers were either court-martialed or administratively punished in the case.

Brown said there is "absolutely no connection" between the current investigation and the Chen case. "Treating all soldiers with dignity and respect is something this command takes extremely seriously, and when there are any indications that those values are not being followed, the command will ...take action as necessary."