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STARS AND STRIPES

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VIRUS OUTBREAK



MATT ROURKE / AP

Patti Burt poses for a portrait near a photo of her granddaughter, 9-year-old Ava Lerario, in Cherry Hill, N.J., on March 10. On May 26, Ava Lerario; her mother, Ashley Belson, and her father, Marc Lerario, were found fatally shot inside their home.

The hidden toll

Pandemic masks ongoing child abuse crisis as reports, investigations and interventions plummet

BY SALLY HO
AND CAMILLE FASSETT
Associated Press

LANSFORD, Pa. — Ava Lerario lived in a home marked by both love and chaos, even before the walls of the pandemic started closing in on her fractured family.

Sandwiched between two brothers, the 9-year-old was her father's princess, and she loved to snuggle up with her mom to read. She sometimes lugged her favorite stuffed animals all the way to the bus stop, where she never hesitated to share toys or books, or befriend a new or lonely kid.

But neighbors noticed she and



MATT SLOCUM / AP

Desks are arranged in a classroom at Panther Valley Elementary School on March 11 in Nesquehoning, Pa.

her brothers didn't play outside. Protective services visited their home at least twice, in 2019, over reports of potential abuse of Ava's younger brother. Her father, Marc Lerario, had an explosive temper. Her mother, Ashley Belson, struggled with drug addiction and considered leaving him.

She didn't dare take Ava. If she left with his favorite — the one who shared his strawberry blond hair and could calm him with a smile — Ashley feared he'd kill her.

In the end, Ashley wasn't the only one who died.

SEE TOLL ON PAGE 6

Special Ops diversity chief's posts investigated

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The new chief of diversity and inclusion for U.S. Special Operations Command is under investigation for controversial social media posts, including one that compared former President Donald Trump to Adolf Hitler, according to the Pentagon.

John Kirby, the chief Pentagon spokesman, said Monday that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has been notified by Gen. Richard Clarke, the SOCOM commander, of the investigation into the posts made by Richard Torres-Estrada.



Torres-Estrada

"[Austin] appreciated being kept apprised of that and that he supports the work that they're doing to look at this more deeply," Kirby said during a news briefing at the Pentagon.

The command announced Torres-Estrada as the new chief on Thursday in a tweet, writing that they looked forward to his "contribution in enhancing the capabilities and effectiveness of [Special Operations Forces] through diversity of talent, helping us recruit the best of the best."

Torres-Estrada's job involves being an advocate and senior adviser in diversity and inclusion for senior SOCOM leadership, Ken McGraw, a spokesman for Special Operations Command, wrote Monday in an email. The position also leads and directs all diversity

SEE POSTS ON PAGE 4

BUSINESS/WEATHER

VW weighs changing to 'Voltswagen' in US

Associated Press

DETROIT — Volkswagen is planning to change its brand name in the United States to "Voltswagen" as it shifts its production increasingly toward electric vehicles and tries to distance itself from an emissions cheating scandal.

A person briefed on the plan said a formal announcement is planned for Tuesday. The person didn't want to be identified because the plans had not been made public.

The company had briefly posted a press release on its website early Monday announcing the brand name change. The press release was noticed by a reporter from USA Today before it was removed. The release was dated April 29.

The premature release comes as VW is taking reservations for the new ID.4 small electric SUV in the U.S. It's the company's only new electric model sold in the U.S., though

there are plans for more, including a nostalgic reprise of the company's Microbus.

Even with the ID.4 fully on sale, only a small fraction of VWs on U.S. roads will bear the "Voltswagen" name. The vast majority of VW's vehicle sales in the U.S. will still be powered by gasoline for the foreseeable future and will continue to be labeled simply as "VW." The German automaker sold just under 326,000 VW-branded vehicles in the U.S. last year.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (March 31)	\$1.15
Dollar buys (March 31)	0.8303
British pound (March 31)	\$1.34
Japanese yen (March 31)	107.00
South Korean won (March 31)	1,105.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	.3767
Britain (Pound)	1.3719
Canada (Dollar)	1.2637
China (Yuan)	6.5732
Denmark (Krone)	6.3454
Egypt (Pound)	15.7207
Euro	.8534
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7750
Hungary (Forint)	310.17
Israel (Shekel)	3.3352
Japan (Yen)	110.37
Kuwait (Dinar)	.3024
Norway (Krone)	8.5663
Philippines (Peso)	48.53
Poland (Zloty)	3.97
Saudi Arab (Riyal)	3.7508
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3480

So. Korea (Won)	1,135.07
Switzerland (Franc)	.9430
Thailand (Baht)	31.31
Turkey (New Lira)	8.3182

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Interest Rates Discount rate	0.75
Federal funds market rate	0.09
3-month bill	0.03
30-year bond	2.24

WEATHER OUTLOOK

WEDNESDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



WEDNESDAY IN EUROPE



THURSDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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PCSing? STARS AND STRIPES RELOCATION GUIDE

Every Friday in the European and Pacific editions of Stars and Stripes AND online daily at www.stripes.com/relo

MILITARY

Trials begin in lawsuit over 3M's earplugs

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — A lawsuit involving more than 229,000 veterans with hearing problems that they claim are linked to faulty earplugs issued by the military begins its first trial Monday in a Florida federal courtroom.

The multidistrict litigation claims the companies that made the earplugs — 3M and its predecessor Aearo — knew from testing that the equipment it designed in coordination with the military did not fit properly into an ear canal and could loosen in a way that was imperceptible to the wearer. The suit also claims some of the testing results shown to the military before the purchase were done with a modification to the earplug that the military was not told was required to achieve optimal protection.

Jury selection begins Monday in Pensa-

cola, Fla., for the cases of three veterans who were selected as “bellwether” trials in the U.S. District Court Northern District of Florida under Judge M. Casey Rogers.

Bellwether trials can be used in multidistrict litigation to present a representative of the cases before a jury to gain useful information for potentially reaching a settlement for all cases. It can help both parties determine the costs of subsequent litigation.

Two of the veterans in the bellwether trials have hearing loss and tinnitus, according to court documents. The third veteran suffers hearing loss and conditions related to it.

Hearing loss and tinnitus, described as a ringing or buzzing in the ears, are the two most common conditions of veterans who are suing, and are also two of the most prevalent service-connected disabilities identified by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 2017, the VA compensated about 1.79 million veterans for tinnitus and about 1.16 million for hearing loss, according to the Hearing Health Foundation, a nonprofit funder of hearing research in America.

The lawsuit focuses on 3M's combat arms earplug, version 2. Work began on the product in the late 1990s, when the military tasked the St. Paul, Minn.-based company to design an earplug that could block loud gunfire while allowing the wearer to hear low-level sounds, such as speech. The resulting product, a dual-sided earplug, was sold to the military until 2015.

No recall was ever issued on the product and version 4 of the earplug remains in use by the military, according to 3M.

“We deny this product was defectively or negligently designed and caused injuries, and we will vigorously defend ourselves against such allegations,” the company said in a statement on its website.

In July 2018, the Justice Department announced 3M agreed to pay \$9.1 million to resolve allegations that it knowingly sold the earplugs to the military without disclosing defects that hampered effectiveness. That lawsuit was filed through the whistleblower provision of the False Claims Act, according to the Justice Department.

In settling the claim, 3M did not admit to wrongdoing, according to the company.

Following that decision, a series of lawsuits were filed by veterans who wore the earplugs and now suffer from hearing loss. Those claims were combined into the multi-district mass tort case now churning through the legal system. In a mass tort case, each plaintiff is treated as an individual instead of as a group, such as in a class action lawsuit.

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Kaiserslautern to open new elementary school

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The new Kaiserslautern Elementary School will welcome students to its bright, contemporary corridors starting Monday.

The \$51 million building on Ka-paun Air Station for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade is complete, except for the playground, which is still under construction.

First-day experiences may include eating lunch by a stage in a room that doubles as a performance hall; exercising on a spongy gym floor designed to reduce injuries; and learning about the pottery kiln in the art studio.

“We’ve been anticipating the move for well over a year and planning for it,” school principal David Groat said.

The school was supposed to open last fall, but modifications to the kitchen ventilation system to meet fire codes caused delays. The coronavirus pandemic further delayed work on the building.

Before spring break, students had the chance to say goodbye to the old school, Groat said. It’s slated

for demolition, along with the former Kaiserslautern middle and high schools, which date back to 1952. A new Kaiserslautern Middle School will be built on the Vogelweh campus.

The new, two-story school is designed for up to 690 pupils. Just over 400 children are expected to attend in-person classes; the remainder of the student body is enrolled in virtual learning due to the pandemic, school officials said.

It’s the latest Department of Defense Education Activity “21st century” school to open in Europe, part of an overhaul that began more than 10 years ago to replace or renovate aging military schools across the Continent.

“Really, the opportunities that are here in terms of the learning are much better,” Groat said.

Instead of sitting in a traditional classroom, students will be grouped according to grade level in color-coded common spaces, categorized by kid-friendly transportation symbols such as scooters and bicycle racers. Open classrooms with retractable, transparent walls allow teachers to collaborate with



JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

David Groat, principal of Kaiserslautern Elementary School in Germany, discusses the new facility.

each other and tailor instruction to classes of different sizes, Groat said.

The flexibility in seating and spacing allows kids to be more spread out, he said, which can help reduce potential coronavirus transmission. The building’s ventilation system monitors indoor carbon dioxide concentrations and adjusts

airflow accordingly, school officials said.

The school has ample light, from skylights and windows to sensors that turn on and off energy-efficient LED lights throughout the building, said Susan Brinson, DODEA facility engineer. A wind turbine and photovoltaic system also can be used as teaching tools, Brinson said.

The school also comes with new furniture. Only the students, staff and their curriculum materials have to move to the new building, Groat said.

“We’re very happy to be coming into a space like this,” he said.

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Veteran of guided-missile warships chosen to lead Navy Region Hawaii

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — A veteran of numerous stints aboard guided-missile warships has been chosen to lead Navy Region Hawaii, which oversees 23,000 acres of land and sea in and around Hawaii, the Pentagon said Monday in a news release.

Rear Adm. Timothy J. Kott will also assume command of Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific,

which is responsible for maintenance and training of all surface ships and their crews homeported at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

The Pentagon also announced that Rear Adm. Blake L. Converse, current commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet’s Submarine Force in Pearl Harbor, will become deputy commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Rear Adm. Jeffrey T. Jablon



Kott

will take command of the Submarine Force, the Pentagon said last month.

Kott is a 1990 graduate of the

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, N.Y. He holds master’s degrees in financial management from the Naval Postgraduate School and in national security strategy from the National War College.

Among his sea assignments were navigator aboard the USS Flatley, a guided-missile frigate; operations officer on the USS Hue City, a Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser; and exec-

utive officer on the USS Hopper, an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer.

His major command tour was aboard USS Mobile Bay, a Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser.

Kott is currently commander of Carrier Strike Group One, a position he has held since June.

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MILITARY



U.K. Ministry of Defense

A Russian Tu-95 Bear aircraft is escorted by a U.K. Royal Air Force Typhoon during an intercept in September 2014.

NATO fighters intercept 6 groups of Russian planes

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Allied fighter jets launched a flurry of intercepts Monday stretching from the Arctic to southern Europe as allies countered “an unusual peak” of flights by Russian warplanes, NATO said Tuesday.

Aircraft from seven nations conducted 10 intercepts as they shadowed Russian bombers and fighters over the North Atlantic, North Sea, Black Sea and Baltic Sea, NATO said in a statement.

The intercepts, which occurred in less than six hours, involved six different groups of Russian aircraft near allied airspace.

“Intercepting multiple groups of Russian aircraft demonstrates NATO forces’ readiness and capability to guard Allied skies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year,” Brig. Gen. Andrew Hansen, of NATO’s Allied Air Command at Ramstein Air Base, said in the statement.

Allied aircraft involved in those missions included warplanes from Norway, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Turkey, Italy, Romania and Bulgaria.

In the High North, Norwegian F-16s scrambled after radars detected two Tupolev Tu-95 Bear bombers, which continued to fly south over the North Sea, prompt-

ing the U.K. and Belgium to scramble their fighters, NATO said. Later in the day, the Norwegian F-16s intercepted two Tupolev Tu-160 Blackjack bombers over international waters.

Turkish, Romanian and Bulgarian fighter aircraft also tracked Russian aircraft over the Black Sea until they left the area, while Italian fighter aircraft intercepted a Russian Ilyushin Il-38 maritime patrol plane over the Black Sea near the Russian military exclave of Kaliningrad, the statement said.

While allies regularly intercept Russian military aircraft, NATO has complained that the Russians often do not fly with transponders, which make them invisible to civilian radars.

The Russian planes never entered alliance airspace, and NATO said all the intercepts were conducted in a “safe and routine manner.”

Some previous encounters between Russian and allied aircraft, however, have been deemed dangerous by U.S. military officials. In August, a U.S. B-52’s maneuvers over the Black Sea were restricted by two Russian fighter planes that flew within 100 feet of the long-range bomber.

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Polish general joins Army’s newly reestablished V Corps

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — A Polish general will serve as deputy commander of the U.S. Army’s recently reestablished V Corps headquarters, which oversees forces operating along NATO’s eastern flank, U.S. and Polish officials said.

Maj. Gen. Adam Joks was appointed as deputy commander of the Fort Knox, Ky.-based command, which has a forward headquarters in Poznan, Poland.

The U.S. Embassy in Poland said in a statement that the move marks the first time a Polish gener-



Joks

al has served in the U.S. military’s command structure in such a manner.

Joks will serve under U.S. Army Lt. Gen. John Kolasheski, who was in Warsaw on Monday for talks with Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Błaszczak when the decision was announced.

The establishment of V Corps’ forward element is “tangible proof of intensifying Polish-American relations and the fact that our strategic partnership is growing stronger,” Poland’s Defense Ministry said in a statement.

The Army officially reactivated V Corps in October in a push to add more command and control support for U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and help manage the movement of units rotating in and out of Europe.

About 200 of the Corps’ 635 soldiers will be on rotation in Poznan at any given time.

V Corps has a long history in Europe, dating to 1918 when it was established during World War I. It returned to Europe in World War II and carried out Army missions on the Continent throughout the Cold War. The unit was deactivated in 2013 as part of the Army’s long post-Cold War drawdown in Europe.

But after Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine in 2014, the Army mission on the Continent began to expand again, especially in places like Poland and the Baltics, where NATO allies are concerned about a more assertive Moscow.

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Posts: Diversity chief reassigned during investigation

FROM PAGE 1

and inclusion initiatives, policies and programs at the command, he said.

While Torres-Estrada waits for the results of the investigation, he has been assigned to other duties, McGraw said. The command also does not look into social media posts for hiring of civilians in these positions, he said.

On Friday, Fox News host Tucker Carlson pointed to Torres-Estrada’s Facebook posts and criticized his hiring to oversee the command’s new diversity and inclusion strategic plan released March 3.

In one post, a photo from June 2020 of Trump holding up a Bible in front of St. John’s Church in Washington, D.C., was shown side by side with Hitler, who also appears to be holding a book.

In addition to the Hitler post,

Carlson also showed a post from May 2020 that depicted police interviewing Goldilocks while also arresting the family of bears from the children’s story. The graphic says: “If you still don’t understand how racism works, remember SHE broke into THEIR house. #StopRacism.” Torres-Estrada’s comment with the post says: “It’s 2020 and yet...”

Kirby said Monday that the Defense Department takes seriously the need to promote diversity and inclusion.

“We certainly want that work to be transparent, to be credible, to be effective and, of course, professional. We want everybody to take those duties and those responsibilities seriously and professionally,” he said, adding he did not want to get ahead of the command investigation.

This is the latest criticism from

the Fox News commentator on the Pentagon and the direction of the military under President Joe Biden.

On March 11, Carlson said that Biden wants to make the military more feminine by allowing women to have more hairstyles as well as wear flight suits while pregnant.

The Air Force initiated changes under Trump to allow pregnant service members to fly nonfighter aircraft through their second trimester without a waiver.

The Pentagon and senior military leaders pushed back on Carlson’s comments, with Kirby saying Austin “shares the revulsion of so many others” to the Fox News host’s comments about women in the military.

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Aviano-based US soldier faces big fines after 2 DUI charges in same night

By KENT HARRIS
Stars and Stripes

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy — A U.S. soldier who was pulled over by Italian Carabinieri twice in the same night for suspected driving under the influence faces a potential fine of more than 8,000 euros, media reports said.

The 21-year-old unnamed soldier also may lose his driving privileges in Italy and have to pay additional penalties after being charged with DUI and cited for other infractions.

He was first pulled over in Aviano a little after 10 p.m. Friday, according to reports by Messaggero

Veneto and Il Gazzettino. He refused to take a test for alcohol and so his driver’s licenses were confiscated in line with Italian law. A 24-year-old passenger, also a soldier, then drove the vehicle away.

About three hours later, the Jeep Wrangler was again pulled over by Carabinieri in Polcenigo with the 21-year-old driver — now unlicensed — behind the wheel, according to the reports. He again refused to take a test for alcohol and the car was impounded.

Both soldiers are members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade assigned to Aviano, said Maj. Chris Bradley, a brigade spokesman. He

wouldn’t comment on the allegations in the reports due to ongoing investigations by U.S. and Italian authorities.

The events as portrayed “do not reflect our standards, and we will take appropriate action upon the completion of the investigation,” Bradley said. The two soldiers involved “are currently under the supervision of their unit leadership.”

Asked if the United States would seek jurisdiction under the Status of Forces Agreement, Bradley said: “We are cooperating fully with the Italian Carabinieri and will follow all established legal

procedures regarding custody of the case.”

Both soldiers were fined 400 euros for violating Italy’s 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew designed to combat the coronavirus pandemic, according to media reports. The only exceptions for travel during that period are for work or medical reasons. It was unclear if they were fined for each incident.

The driver also faces a fine ranging between 2,046 and 8,186 euros for driving without a license, an online report by Messaggero Veneto said. DUI penalties may also include substantial fines and jail time. And fees must generally be

paid for getting vehicles back from impound lots and towing services.

Also last week, Italian national wire service ANSA reported that police broke up a party in Sacile on Friday night involving multiple American service members, some of which were cited and fined by police for violating coronavirus protocols.

Six individuals who didn’t live at the residence were found after initially hiding, the report said, and several others were believed to have left before police arrived.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Biden, CDC director warn of virus rebound

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and a top health official warned that too many Americans are declaring virus victory too quickly, appealing for mask requirements and other restrictions to be maintained or restored to stave off a “fourth surge” of COVID-19. The head of the CDC said she had a feeling of “impending doom” if people keep easing off.

The double dose of warnings on Monday came even as Biden laid out hopeful new steps to expand coronavirus vaccinations, with all adults to become eligible over the next five weeks. Biden announced plans to expand the number of retail pharmacies that are administering vaccines, and investments to help Americans get to vaccination sites. But the optimism was tempered by stark warnings about the potential for another wave of cases.

“This is deadly serious,” Biden said, urging governors to reinstate mask mandates and other restrictions that some states have been easing.

Hours earlier, during a virtual White House health briefing, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, grew emotional as she reflected on her experience treat-



PATRICK SEMANSKY / AP

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, leads President Joe Biden into the room for a briefing at the headquarters for the CDC in Atlanta on March 19.

ing COVID-19 patients who are alone at the end of their lives.

“We have so much to look forward to, so much promise and potential of where we are and so much reason for hope,” she said. “But right now, I’m scared.”

“I’m going to lose the script, and I’m going to reflect on the recurring feeling I have of impending doom.”

Cases of the virus are up about 10% over the past week from the previous week, to about 60,000 cases per day, with both hospitali-

zations and deaths ticking up as well, Walensky said. She warned that without immediate action the U.S. could follow European countries into another spike in cases and suffer needless deaths.

“I have to share the truth, and I have to hope and trust you will listen,” she said.

Later Monday, Biden addressed the nation from the White House, declaring, “If we let our guard down now, we can see the virus getting worse, not better. People are

letting up on precautions, which is a very bad thing.”

Biden delivered a direct appeal to governors, state and local leaders to reinstate mask-wearing requirements if they have lifted them, and said he encouraged leaders to pause plans to further ease virus-related restrictions.

“Please, this is not politics, reinstate the mandate if you let it down,” he said.

Biden announced that by April 19 at least 90% of the adult U.S. population — and would have access to a vaccination site within 5 miles of home. Quick vaccination would still depend on supply.

Biden had previously directed that all states make all adults eligible for vaccination by May 1, but many have moved to lift eligibility requirements sooner in anticipation of supply increases.

Meanwhile, the White House is moving to double the number of pharmacies participating in the federal retail pharmacy program — it has emerged as among the most efficient avenues for administering vaccines — and increase the number of doses for them to deliver. Retail pharmacies are located relatively close to most Americans and have experience delivering

vaccines like flu shots.

Biden announced that the U.S. is expecting delivery of 33 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine this week — including 11 million of the single-dose Johnson & Johnson shot.

More than 1 in 5 adults and nearly 50% of senior Americans are fully vaccinated, according to data from the CDC. On Thursday, the U.S. set new single-day record for shots in arms: more than 3.2 million.

“Now is not the time to let down,” Biden said. “Now’s not the time to celebrate. It is time to do what we do best as a country: our duty, our jobs, take care of one another.”

“Fight to the finish,” he added. “Don’t let up now.”

Walensky and Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease expert, appealed to elected officials, community leaders and everyday Americans to maintain social distancing measures and mask wearing.

“We are doing things prematurely,” Fauci said, referring to moves to ease up on restrictions. Walensky appealed to Americans, “Just please hold on a little while longer.”

She added: “We are not powerless, we can change this trajectory of the pandemic.”

Restrictions tightened for military on Okinawa

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A cluster of new coronavirus cases the past week at bases on Okinawa prompted the U.S. military on Tuesday to lengthen a list of familiar pandemic restrictions reimposed a week ago.

U.S. bases in Japan reported 30 new coronavirus patients as of 6 p.m. Tuesday, all but one on Okinawa.

Okinawa prefecture, where most U.S. troops are based, and Tokyo are also reporting higher case numbers, although those numbers pale next to patient tallies in January.

Kadena Air Base cited 20 new cases from the past week, according to a base Facebook post Tuesday. The Marine Corps reported nine new coronavirus patients Tuesday: five at Camp Foster, two at Camp Kinser and one each at Camps Hansen and Courtney, according to a Facebook post by Marine Corps Installations Pacific.

Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo reported one individual tested positive while still in quarantine after recently arriving in Japan from the U.S., according to a base Facebook post.

Okinawa prefecture has seen a

spike in new case numbers starting with 30 on March 13 and climbing to 98 on Saturday, according to the prefecture’s COVID-19 website.

Tokyo reported 364 people newly infected with the coronavirus Tuesday, 27 more patients than March 23, according to public broadcaster NHK. For 11 days, new patient numbers in the city are higher than they were seven days earlier, according to metro government data.

The seven-day moving average in Tokyo has increased from 297 on March 18 to 357.7 on Monday, according to government data.

At Kadena, 13 individuals tested positive after becoming ill with symptoms of COVID-19, the coronavirus respiratory disease. The remaining seven were close contacts of a previously infected person, according to the 18th Wing.

One new patient is a Kadena Commissary employee who had no close contacts with service members, Defense Department civilian employees, contractors or family members, according to the wing. The base has reported 42 individuals with COVID-19 in March.

Kadena on Tuesday added outdoor, off-base dining to its week-



MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

Two visitors in masks stroll through American Village, a popular tourist spot on Okinawa, on March 30.

old prohibition on indoor dining, or even waiting inside a restaurant on a take-out order. The exception is waiting on takeout at malls or food courts.

The wing also added to the list gyms, fitness centers, CrossFit boxes and similar facilities; indoor tourist attractions like aquariums, museums and historical sites; and outdoor tourist attractions with large, densely packed crowds.

Indoor markets with multiple vendors such as flea markets and fish markets, and outdoor markets where social distancing and COVID-19 preventive measures are not possible or practiced, are also off-limits. Patronizing hair and nail salons, barbershops, tattoo parlors, massage parlors and similar services is also prohibited.

Riding mass transit, with some exceptions, and patronizing arcades and theaters off-base were

also put off-limits a week ago.

The Marine Corps also cited rising case numbers to impose similar restrictions March 22 and again Tuesday, according to a Facebook post by Marine Corps Installations Pacific. The Marines had 49 coronavirus patients at four Okinawa camps on Friday, according to U.S. Forces Japan.

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

Toll: Online learning took many kids out of the public eye

FROM PAGE 1

An Associated Press analysis of state data reveals that the coronavirus pandemic has ripped away several systemic safety nets for millions of Americans — many of them children like Ava. It found that child abuse reports, investigations, substantiated allegations and interventions have dropped at a staggering rate, increasing risks for the most vulnerable of families in the U.S.

In the AP's analysis, it found more than 400,000 fewer child welfare concerns reported during the pandemic and 200,000 fewer child abuse and neglect investigations and assessments compared with the same time period of 2019. That represents a national total decrease of 18% in both total reports and investigations.



Ava Lerario



Ashley Belson



Marc Lerario

The AP requested public records from all 50 state child welfare agencies and analyzed more than a dozen indicators in 36 states, though not every state supplied data for total reports or investigations. The analysis compared the first nine months of the pandemic — March to November 2020 — with the same time period from the two previous years.

A loss in reports means greater potential for harm because “there has not all of the sudden been a cure for child abuse and neglect,” said Amy Harfeld, an expert in child abuse deaths with the Children’s Advocacy Institute.

“Children who are experiencing abuse or neglect at home are only coming to the attention of CPS much further down the road than they normally would,” Harfeld said. “When families aren’t getting what they need, there are consequences for everyone.”

With many children out of the public eye, the U.S. system of relying on teachers, police and doctors to report potential abuse and neglect to Child Protective Services — known by various names across states — has been failing. During the pandemic, it became too late for many: the diabetic 15-year-old Wisconsin girl who died of medical complications despite 16 CPS reports in her lifetime, the 8-year-old Nevada boy who mistakenly drank a chemical substance stored in a soda bottle, the Phoenix teen beaten by his father with a bat.

School personnel are the top reporters of child abuse; they’re the most important eyes and ears for child welfare agencies across states. Teachers, administrators, counselors, coaches, nurses and other adults working in school settings are trained to identify warning signs and mandated by law to report any potential issues of child abuse or neglect.

The AP found that child abuse and neglect reports from school sources fell sharply during the pandemic as the U.S. pivoted to online learning — by 59%. For comparison, there was a 4% decline of reports nationally from nonschool reporter sources. In many states, school reports remained below pre-pandemic numbers even when in-person instruction resumed in some fashion.

“The pandemic and the resulting isolation



MATT SLOCUM/AP

After the death of former student Ava Lerario, 9, Panther Valley Elementary School principal Rob Palazzo says many in the school and community are grappling with the what-ifs: What if school had been open, and they had a chance to save Ava?

“Children who are experiencing abuse or neglect at home are only coming to the attention of CPS much further down the road than they normally would.”

Amy Harfeld

Children’s Advocacy Institute

reminds us that we cannot rely solely on a system that only responds after a child is hurt,” said Kurt Heisler, who oversaw the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System during the Obama administration. “What happens when we don’t have mandated reporters in front of children? It reminds us that we need another way to support and reach these families.”

The issue has affected other parts of the world, too, as Japan saw a record number of child abuse victims and the U.K. reported a significant increase in the number of maltreatment-suspected deaths and serious injuries.

Ava’s school, Panther Valley Elementary School in Nesquehoning, closed March 13. As the pandemic spread, few people understood the tumult inside the family’s home in the former coal mining town of Lansford.

The youngest brother, Marc Lerario Jr., has a severe form of autism, which made learning difficult even in the best of circumstances. Ashley, the breadwinner, lost her waitressing job as her restaurant shuttered amid coronavirus restrictions. The family applied for food stamps and relied on savings, said older brother Brian Belson, now 17.

Before the pandemic, Marc Lerario seemed to be turning a corner, despite his record of a dozen assault charges — including domestic violence incidents against Ashley. He quit smoking and drinking, worked out, and watched movies or played video games with the family, Belson said. But in April 2020, Marc’s grandmother died of COVID-19 at a nursing home outside Philadelphia. He was hours away and never got to say goodbye, and he spiraled into depression.

Ashley’s drug use escalated while Marc, unmedicated for bipolar disorder, slipped into extreme bouts of paranoia. School officials say it doesn’t appear Ava ever logged on for virtual school.

And on May 26, her body was found nestled in her fluffy bedding at home. Police say

her father put a bullet in her head while she slept. Officials say he also fatally shot Ashley, his partner of more than a decade, and then himself. Ashley was found with high levels of meth in her system on a blowup mattress in the living room that Marc set up to stand guard against the invisible monsters of his paranoia, authorities said.

Ava’s brothers were home that morning and found the bodies.

Despite Marc Lerario’s criminal record, the prior report on child welfare in the home, and the children’s absence from remote learning, no red flags were raised to law enforcement or other officials.

Principal Robert Palazzo knew that in a high-poverty area, nearly everyone would be affected by the pandemic. He worried for teachers, some of whom work second jobs, and students in the online-only model. Palazzo describes a survivalist mentality — teachers and others helped who they could first.

Nearly a quarter of families didn’t participate in virtual school, so it wasn’t unusual that even enthusiastic, high-achieving learners like Ava might never log in to the district’s platforms, he said. The usual truancy rules, in which the school must report to CPS any unexplained absence of more than six consecutive days, didn’t apply based on new state guidelines. Palazzo said the school called all 550 students at the start and made at least five attempts to reach Ava’s family about absences, via a letter, phone calls and email.

Months before the pandemic, the family was reported in two calls to CPS on the same October 2019 day. The reports involved injuries to the youngest child, Marc Jr. A social worker interviewed Junior at school with a teacher present, and abuse was denied in two home visits. It’s not clear whether the allegations were substantiated, but older brother Brian said his parents didn’t hurt Junior.

Pennsylvania’s Office of Children, Youth, and Families has acknowledged missteps by

authorities in Ava’s case. Social workers weren’t notified of Ava’s death, with officials learning instead from a Facebook post. The agency noted in a report that it didn’t know there were guns in the home or about any criminal history. Erin James, office spokeswoman, declined to answer specific questions about Ava’s case, citing privacy laws.

Palazzo said he and the rest of the school grapple with the what-ifs: If school had been open, would there have been a chance to save Ava? That motivated school officials to reopen the doors to students as soon as possible.

“We want all kids to have access to school, not only because of reading and math, but because of well-being, because of access to another positive adult in their life,” Palazzo said.

AP’s analysis suggests officials may be dealing with more severe cases of child abuse in several states, based on an assessment of priority response times, families that have previously been involved with CPS, and deaths and serious injuries.

For example, although Maryland investigated far fewer child abuse reports during the pandemic, the state saw about 1,500 more reports involving prior victims than in March through September the previous year. Nebraska, which also had significantly fewer child abuse and neglect reports during the pandemic, had dozens more investigations that required a 24-hour response — assigned to the most urgent priority cases — than in 2019.

Louisiana also acknowledged a decrease in reports and increase in severity, noting the state saw more domestic violence involving weapons, psychiatric issues with caregivers, and serious injuries.

Many states said the number of reports have recovered some, however slowly, over the past year, but that it is too soon to draw conclusions about the ongoing pandemic’s effects on child welfare. Colorado rejected the notion that fewer reports prove unreported abuse.

AP’s analysis showed that despite far fewer child abuse reports and school referrals, the percentage of reports accepted for further investigation and assessment largely remained steady during the pandemic. This suggests that while the work of social workers was consistent, there are likely untold cases of abuse going unreported, with at-risk children remaining invisible to the system without the attention of an in-person school environment, experts and some state officials said.

Much of a social worker’s typical caseload involves minor maltreatments that more often signal poverty and a lack of resources over nefarious parenting, making Child Protective Services crucial for support of vulnerable families. Within the system, state laws and processes vary widely, making child abuse trends notoriously difficult to track even in normal times. Experts aren’t sure how the loss in child abuse reports during the pandemic can or will be recovered.

Ava’s death was one of 105 child fatalities investigated for child abuse in Pennsylvania in 2020; that’s 11 more than in 2019. Other states that saw a significant increase in child deaths with suspected maltreatment include Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Texas, Maryland and Arizona, according to AP’s analysis. Pennsylvania also had 113 more near fatalities — a 67% increase in injuries so serious that they left the child hospitalized in serious or critical condition.

VIRUS OUTBREAK ROUNDUP

More states opening vaccines to all adults

Associated Press

More than a dozen states will open vaccine eligibility to all adults this week in a major expansion of COVID-19 shots for tens of millions of Americans amid a worrisome increase in virus cases and concerns about balancing supply and demand for the vaccines.

States that opened eligibility to anyone ages 16 and older on Monday included Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Ohio, North Dakota and Kansas.

The rapid expansion has fueled concerns that the number of eager vaccine seekers will far outstrip the available supply of shots, frustrating millions of newly eligible people who have waited since late last year for a chance to get an injection. Other officials have put their faith in a promised glut of vaccines and instead turned their attention to the next challenge: pressing as many people as possible to get the shots so the nation can achieve herd immunity at the earliest opportunity.

Some counties in Illinois are being allowed to expand eligibility to all this week if they find doses are going unused. But in Chicago, the vaccine will not be available to everyone until at least May 1 because the city does not have enough shots on hand.

On Tuesday, Minnesota opened eligibility, followed by Indiana and South Carolina on Wednesday, Connecticut and Montana on Thursday, and New Hampshire and Colorado on Friday. In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that residents over 30 would be eligible for vaccinations starting Tuesday, and everyone over 16 can sign up starting April 6.

Michigan

LANSING — Detroit on Monday immediately expanded COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to all residents 16 and older, a week earlier than planned, as Michigan continued to confront spiking infection rates that rank third-highest in the country.

Mayor Mike Duggan said the seven-day testing positivity rate in the state's largest city doubled in 10 days to 10.3%. Hospitalizations also doubled over that period but, unlike during the second wave of cases last fall, also involve younger people in their 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s.

A similar trend is occurring statewide, according to the Michigan Health & Hospital Association, which warned recently that confirmed adult coronavirus hospitalizations could top 2,500 this week — to about two-thirds of past peaks. As of Monday, they had tripled, to more than 2,100, in

4½ weeks.

“The younger people are getting infected. The younger people are being hospitalized. We have got to start to get them vaccinated,” Duggan said.

“I’m very concerned,” Dr. Jo-neigh Khaldun, the state’s chief medical executive, tweeted Sunday after working a shift in a Detroit emergency room the night before. She told people to wear masks, be tested, avoid indoor maskless venues and get vaccinated “ASAP.”

Detroit also said nonresidents who work in the city can get a shot. Vaccine eligibility will open to Michigan’s entire age 16-plus population April 5. About one-third have received a dose; 19% are fully vaccinated. The state wants to inoculate 70% of its population.

New Mexico

SANTA FE — The Indian Health Service announced Monday that it is shifting its vaccine distribution system to target individual hospitals and clinics with high demand for shots and taper supplies to hubs where most eligible patients have received doses.

The U.S. agency is part of a two-pronged national effort to immunize Indigenous communities that also relies on state health agencies. Native Americans have been disproportionately sickened and killed by the pandemic, and are also now at the forefront of federal efforts to deploy vaccine shots in the United States.

Dr. Matthew Clark, a safety and monitoring specialist with the agency’s vaccine task force, said that the new distribution model “is intended to improve efficiency by allowing locations with high demand and sufficient capacity to receive additional doses, and facilities where the majority of eligible individuals have already been vaccinated to receive only the doses they need.”

Additionally, most Indian Health Service facilities are beginning to offer vaccines to the general population after successfully immunizing vulnerable tribal members. It’s a push toward so-called herd immunity that still depends on development of a vaccine for children.

Older teenagers are already the focus of some vaccination efforts in scattered Native American communities.

Arizona

PHOENIX — The Republican-controlled Arizona Senate voted Monday to rescind its mandatory mask policy and the House speaker made the same move on his own authority.

The Senate vote on the rules designed to limit the spread of the



KATHY WILLENS/AP

A man enters a mobile vaccination van that was parked on a busy street in the Sunset Park neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y., on Monday. The New York City Test & Trace Corps on Monday added mobile vaccination to its community vaccine clinic program.

coronavirus got no support from minority Democrats. All 16 Republicans voted for the rule change. Face masks are now optional, and members continue to have the option of voting from their offices.

The move comes just days after Republican Gov. Doug Ducey blocked cities and counties from continuing to enforce mask requirements. He never issued a statewide mask order but amid a summer surge of virus cases allowed local governments to issue mandates. The mayors of Tucson and Flagstaff have refused to revoke their mask mandates, and they can still be enforced in government buildings and are required in schools.

Democrats pleaded with GOP members to vote against the rule change, with Sen. Lela Alston of Phoenix, a lung cancer survivor, asking them to do so for her and other at-risk members and staff.

“I am probably the most vulnerable member of this body — maybe not the only one, but one that could have really, really bad consequences if I were to get the virus,” Alston said. “I implore you to please, keep the masks on, keep us all safe. If I were to get this virus, it would probably be a death sentence.”

Alabama

MONTGOMERY — A spokeswoman for Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said Monday that the state’s mask mandate will end April 9 despite the president’s request for states to reinstate, or maintain, restrictions.

“As Governor Ivey has previously stated, Alabama’s mask mandate ends April 9. We have made progress, and we are moving toward personal responsibility and common sense, not endless government mandates,” Ivey spokeswoman Gina Maiola said in a

statement.

The governor’s spokeswoman issued the comment after the White House asked states to maintain restrictions. President Joe Biden and a top health official on Monday appealed for mask requirements and other restrictions to be maintained or restored to stave off a “fourth surge” of COVID-19.

Alabama has kept a mask mandate in place longer than surrounding states, but Ivey has made clear it will not be extended.

The governor has urged Alabamians to keep wearing them as a matter of personal responsibility.

“After April 9, masks will no longer be a mandate, but they remain one of the most successful tools we have to keep folks safe from COVID-19,” Ivey said last week. Her office released sign templates that businesses could use to request their patrons wear masks.

Massachusetts

BOSTON — Massachusetts’ pooled COVID-19 testing program for the state’s schools has tested nearly 159,000 people and found a positivity rate of lower than 1%, state officials said Monday.

Under the program, which started last month, teachers, staffers and students in groups of up to 10 are tested. The swabs are then placed in a single tube and shipped to a lab for testing. If the tube is tested and comes back negative, every person in that pool is presumed to be negative for COVID-19.

But because the average pool included seven people, individual prevalence among those tested is well below that number. State officials said it showed there is extremely little evidence of in-school transmission of COVID-19 in Massachusetts.

If the test for a tube comes back

positive, the people are tested individually and once positive individuals are identified, they must follow isolation guidelines, while their close contacts must quarantine.

“The science is clear that it is safe for kids to be in the classrooms, and this initiative has proved to serve as an invaluable tool for schools throughout the Commonwealth as they return to in-person learning,” Gov. Charlie Baker said in a statement.

The state also announced that it will cover the cost of pooled testing through the end of the school year.

Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas lawmakers on Monday rejected an effort to end the emergency declared because of the coronavirus pandemic, as Gov. Asa Hutchinson repeated his intent to drop the state’s mask mandate later this week.

The Arkansas Legislative Council’s vote effectively approves Hutchinson’s request to extend the emergency he declared because of the pandemic for another two months. The panel reviewed the request under a new law that expands the Legislature’s power to terminate an emergency and orders issued under it.

Hutchinson urged lawmakers to keep the emergency in place, saying it would ensure Arkansas continues receiving an additional \$23 million in food stamp benefits. He said it would also keep in place executive orders, such as liability protection for some businesses, that the Legislature is trying to write into law.

“To lift the emergency at this time would send the wrong message to the people of Arkansas that would not put our state in a good position,” Hutchinson told the panel before its vote.

NATION

US eyes additional UN action on N. Korea

By MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration said Monday it's looking at "additional actions" that the United Nations might take to respond to North Korea's recent missile tests.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield wasn't specific about what those actions might entail, but noted that the U.N. Security Council had met last week and renewed the mandate of experts who monitor sanctions against the North. The council was also expected to hold closed-door discussions on North Ko-

rea on Tuesday.

"We're looking at additional actions that we might take," Thomas-Greenfield said of the U.S. and other Security Council members.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan will be meeting in Washington soon with his counterparts from Japan and South Korea to discuss North Korea strategy as the administration finalizes a review of how to approach the country. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who recently returned from Tokyo and Seoul, said the three countries are united in dealing with the challenges

posed by Pyongyang.

"What we're seeing from Pyongyang in terms of these provocations does nothing to shake the resolve of our three countries along with allies and partners around the world to approach North Korea from a position of strength in order to diminish the threat that it poses to the region and beyond," Blinken said.

On Monday, North Korea accused the U.N. of a "double standard" over its reaction to the launches, which violate U.N. sanctions, warning of serious consequences.

Last week, North Korea fired two short-

range ballistic missiles into the sea in a defiance of U.N. resolutions that ban such launches by North Korea. Some experts say North Korea's missile launches, the first of their kind in a year, were aimed at applying pressure on the Biden administration.

Past short-range missile launches by North Korea have typically drawn U.N. Security Council condemnations, but not fresh sanctions. North Korea was slapped with toughened U.N. sanctions in 2016-17 following its provocative run of missile and nuclear tests aimed at acquiring the capability of launching nuclear strikes on the U.S. mainland.

Pence reemerges, lays groundwork for 2024 run

By JILL COLVIN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When former President Donald Trump was asked to list those he considers the future leaders of the Republican Party, he quickly rattled off names including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Sens. Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz. Conspicuously absent from the list: Mike Pence.

The former vice president is steadily reentering public life as he eyes a potential run for the White House in 2024. He's joining conservative organizations, writing op-eds, delivering speeches and launching an advocacy group that will focus on promoting the Trump administration's accomplishments.

But Trump's neglect in mentioning Pence during a podcast interview earlier this month signals the former vice president's unique challenge. For someone who built a reputation as one of Trump's most steadfast supporters, Pence is now viewed with suspicion among many Republicans for observing his constitutional duty in January to facilitate a peaceful transfer of power to the Biden administration, a decision that still has Trump fuming.

To prevail in a Republican presidential primary, Pence may have to reinforce his loyalty to Trump while defending his decisions during the final days of the administration when the president falsely alleged widespread voter fraud, contributing to a deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol. If anyone can achieve this awkward balance, some Republicans say, it's Pence.

"Anybody who can pull off an endorsement of Ted Cruz and become Donald Trump's vice presidential nominee should not be counted out," said Republican strategist Alice Stewart, who worked for Cruz's 2016 presidential campaign when Pence endorsed him. "He has a way of splitting hairs and threading the needle that has paid off in the past."

"Anybody who can pull off an endorsement of Ted Cruz and become Donald Trump's vice presidential nominee should not be counted out."

Alice Stewart
Republican strategist

Pence aides generally brush off talk of the next presidential election. They insist he is focused on his family and next year's mid-term elections, when Republicans are well positioned to regain at least one chamber of Congress. Allies argue that, over time, the anger will subside.

"I think 2024's a long time away and if Mike Pence runs for president he will appeal to the Republican base in a way that will make him a strong contender," said Republican Rep. Jim Banks, of Indiana, who chairs the conservative Republican Study Committee and has already endorsed a Pence 2024 run. "If and when Mike Pence steps back up to the plate, I think he will have strong appeal among Republicans nationwide."

Pence declined to comment for this story. For their part, Trump aides warn against reading too much into the omission during the podcast interview.

"That was not an exclusive list," said Trump adviser Jason Miller. Still, Trump continued to deride Pence in the interview, falsely claiming Pence had the authority to unilaterally overturn the results of the election, even though he did not.

Trump has not said whether he will seek the White House again in 2024. If he doesn't, other Republicans are making clear they won't cede the race to Pence. Former



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Former Vice President Mike Pence greets supporters Jan. 20 after arriving back in his hometown of Columbus, Ind. Pence is steadily re-entering public life as he eyes a potential run for the White House in 2024.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, for instance, is already visiting the critical primary states of Iowa and New Hampshire.

Since leaving office in January, Pence, who served as Indiana's governor and a member of Congress before being tapped as Trump's running mate, has kept a lower profile. He's pieced together a portfolio aimed at maintaining influence, paying the bills and laying the groundwork for an expected presidential run.

He's forged partnerships with the conservative Heritage Foundation and has even been discussed as a potential president of the organization, according to two people familiar with the discussions. He's joined the Young America's Foundation and a top speakers' bureau, penned an op-ed for the Daily Signal in which he perpetuated falsehoods about the 2020 election, and recently toured a Christian relief organization in North Carolina. He will make his first public speech since leaving office next month at the Palmetto Family Council's annual fundraiser in South Carolina, another crucial primary state.

"He's doing what he needs to be doing to lay the groundwork in the

event he wants to set up an exploratory committee," Stewart said. "You have to make money, lay the groundwork, gauge the support and then pull the trigger."

Pence's allies see him as the natural Trump heir, someone who can keep his base engaged while winning back suburban voters who left the party in droves during the Trump era.

"Obviously Mike Pence has a very different persona, a very different tone. That probably is an understatement," said former Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, a longtime friend who now leads the Young America's Foundation. "As long as he can still talk about the things that Trump voters care about, but do so in a way that's more reflective of kind of a Midwesterner, that I think ... would be attractive to those voters."

Skeptics, meanwhile, see another old, milquetoast white man saddled with Trump's baggage, but without his charisma. For these critics, Pence is a sycophant who debased himself for four years to avoid Trump's wrath — only to take the blame when Trump insisted, wrongly, that Pence could overturn 2020 election results.

The anger at Pence took a dan-

gerously personal turn Jan. 6 when rioters paraded through the Capitol chanting "Hang Mike Pence" as a mob outside set up a makeshift gallows. During Trump's impeachment trial for sparking the insurrection, video was presented showing Pence being rushed to safety, sheltering in an office with his family just 100 feet from the rioters.

Meanwhile, others, like Pompeo, are trying to claim the Trump mantle without as much baggage.

"In many ways I think his future's in Trump's hands," longtime Republican pollster Whit Ayres said of Pence. If Trump publicly praises Pence as a loyal lieutenant, Ayres said, he can see him being a viable candidate. But if Trump continues to publicly blame Pence for their loss in November, "he's toast," Ayres said.

In the meantime, Pence has tried to project the impression that he and the former president have mended fences, referencing their conversations at a meeting last month with members of the conservative Republican Study Committee. Pence and Trump have spoken multiple times since leaving office, according to aides for both men.

NATION

Teen who shot video: Floyd was 'begging for his life'

By STEVE KARNOWSKI
AND AMY FORLITI
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The teenager who shot the harrowing video of George Floyd under the knee of the Minneapolis police officer now charged in his death testified Tuesday that she began recording because "it wasn't right, he was suffering, he was in pain."

Darnella Frazier, 18, said she was walking to a convenience store with her younger cousin when she came upon the officers, and sent the girl into the store because she didn't want her to see "a man terrified, scared, begging for his life."

Frazier grew emotional at times, breathing heavily and crying as she viewed pictures of officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on Floyd last May.

Floyd's death and the video of Floyd pleading for his life and onlookers angrily yelling at Chauvin to get off him triggered sometimes-violent protests around the world and a reckoning over racism and police brutality in the U.S.

One of the bystanders, who identified herself as a Minneapolis firefighter, pleaded repeatedly with officers to check Floyd's pulse, but Chauvin continued to

kneel on Floyd's neck, and he and fellow officer Tou Thao wouldn't let onlookers get close, Frazier said.

"They definitely put their hands on the Mace and we all pulled back," she told the jury.

Frazier said of Chauvin: "He just stared at us, looked at us. He had like this cold look, heartless. He didn't care. It seemed as if he didn't care what we were saying."

Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson sought to show that Chauvin and his fellow officers found themselves in an increasingly tense and distracting situation, with the growing crowd of onlookers becoming agitated and menacing over Floyd's treatment.

But when Frazier was asked by a prosecutor whether she saw violence anywhere on the scene, she replied: "Yes, from the cops. From Chauvin, and from officer Thao."

When asked to identify the officer, Chauvin stood up in the courtroom and took off his mask, appearing somber as he looked down and away before putting his mask on.

Earlier Tuesday, a man who was among the onlookers shouting at Chauvin to get off Floyd testified that he called 911 after paramedics took Floyd away, "because

I believed I witnessed a murder."

Donald Williams, a former wrestler who said he was trained in mixed martial arts, including chokeholds, returned to the witness stand a day after describing seeing Floyd struggle for air and his eyes roll back into his head. He said he watched Floyd "slowly fade away ... like a fish in a bag."

On Tuesday, prosecutors played back Williams' 911 call, on which he is heard identifying Chauvin by his badge number and telling the dispatcher that Chauvin had been keeping his knee on Floyd's neck despite warnings that Floyd's life was in danger. She offers to switch him to a sergeant.

As he is being switched, Williams can be heard yelling at the officers, "Y'all is murderers, bro!"

During cross-examination, Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson pointed out that Williams seemed to grow increasingly angry at police on the scene, swearing at and taunting Chauvin with "tough guy," "bum" and other names, then calling Chauvin expletives, which the defense lawyer repeated in court.

Williams initially admitted he was getting angrier, but then backtracked and said he was controlled and professional and was



COURT TV/AP

Witness Donald Williams answers questions about what he saw as Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill presides Monday in the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, in the May 25, 2020, death of George Floyd.

pleading for Floyd's life but wasn't being heard.

Williams said he was stepping on and off the curb, and at one point, Thao, who was controlling the crowd, put his hand on Williams' chest. Williams admitted under questioning that he told Thao he would beat the officers if Thao touched him again.

Williams was among the first witnesses as Chauvin, 45, went on trial on charges of murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death.

Prosecutors led off their case by playing part of the bystander vid-

eo of Floyd's arrest. Chauvin and three other officers were fired soon after the footage became public.

Prosecutor Jerry Blackwell showed the jurors the video after telling them that the number to remember was 9 minutes, 29 seconds — the amount of time Chauvin had Floyd pinned to the pavement "until the very life was squeezed out of him."

Nelson countered by arguing: "Derek Chauvin did exactly what he had been trained to do over his 19-year career."

Court to hear bid for new defense of Ky. abortion law

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear an appeal from Kentucky's attorney general, who wants to be allowed to defend a restriction on abortion rights that lower courts had struck down.

The underlying issue in the case, to be heard in the fall, is a blocked Kentucky law that abortion rights supporters say would have effectively banned a standard abortion method in the second trimester of pregnancy.

But the issue before the court is whether Attorney General Daniel Cameron, a Republican, can intervene in the case, after rulings from a trial court and appellate panel, as well as Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's decision to drop the case.

The law was adopted in 2018, when Republican Matt Bevin was governor. Following a lawsuit by abortion providers, a trial court permanently blocked the law, finding it would have made it impossible to perform the abortion procedure known as dilation and extraction. A panel of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld

that ruling in June 2020.

Five days later, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 to strike down an unrelated Louisiana law regulating abortion clinics. But Cameron, who became attorney general in 2019, said the reasoning used by the high court called into question the ruling against the Kentucky law.

The appeals court, however, rejected his efforts to intervene, prompting his appeal to the Supreme Court.

"I promised Kentuckians that I would defend our laws all the way to the United States Supreme Court, and that's what we've done," Cameron said in a statement.

The American Civil Liberties Union, representing the abortion clinic that had sued over the law, had urged the court to stay out of the case.

In February, Kentucky's Republican-led legislature gave Cameron the power to seek civil and criminal penalties for any violation of Kentucky's abortion laws. Beshear had initially vetoed the measure.

Video shows Asian American woman assaulted on NYC street

Associated Press

NEW YORK — An Asian American woman was attacked in New York City by a man who repeatedly kicked her as two people nearby who appeared to be security guards did not intervene, according to surveillance footage released by police.

The 65-year-old woman was walking in midtown Manhattan a few blocks from Times Square on Monday afternoon when a man approached her and kicked her in the stomach, knocking her to the ground, police said. The man then stomped on the woman's face several times while shouting anti-Asian insults at her, police said. He later casually walked away, the footage shows.

The attack comes amid a national spike in anti-Asian hate crimes, and happened just weeks after a mass shooting in Atlanta that left eight people dead, six of them women of Asian descent. The NYPD says there have been 33 hate crimes with an Asian victim this year, news outlets reported.

Mayor Bill de Blasio called the video "absolutely disgusting and outrageous" and said it was "absolutely unacceptable" that witnesses did not intervene.

"I don't care who you are, I don't care what you do, you've got to help your fellow New Yorker," de Blasio said Tuesday at his daily news briefing.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo called the attack "horrifying and repugnant." He ordered the state police's Hate Crimes Task Force to offer its assistance to the NYPD. The NYPD's Hate Crime Task Force is investigating the attack and has asked anyone with information to contact the department. No arrests have been made.

The woman was hospitalized with serious injuries. She was in stable condition Tuesday, a hospital spokesperson said.

According to video footage of

the New York City assault, the two people who appeared to be security guards walked into the frame and one of them closed the building door as the woman was on the ground.

The property developer and manager of the building, Brodsky Organization, wrote on Instagram that it was aware of the assault and said staff members who witnessed it were suspended pending an investigation.

The head of the union representing building workers disputed allegations that the door staff failed to act. He said the union has information that they called for help immediately.

According to a report from Stop AAPI Hate, more than 3,795 incidents were reported to the organization from March 19, 2020, to Feb. 28. The organization, which tracks incidents of discrimination, hate and xenophobia against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S., said that number is "only a fraction of the number of hate incidents that actually occur."



Person of interest

NATION

Biden wants plan on infrastructure OK'd by summer

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is aiming for summer passage of an infrastructure plan that is expected to cost more than \$3 trillion, and the White House hopes to take a more deliberate and collaborative approach with the contentious Congress than it did on the COVID-19 rescue package, officials said.

The president will announce parts of his "Build Back Better" package Wednesday in Pittsburgh. Sweeping in scope, the ambitious plan aims to make generational investments in infrastructure, revive domestic manufacturing, combat climate change and keep the United States competitive with China, according to the officials. It could include \$3 trillion in tax increases.

The final price tag is in flux but was expected to be between \$3 trillion and \$4 trillion. One White House official said Monday night that it may end up being closer to \$3 trillion.

Though the White House is emphasizing the urgency, it also insists this will not be considered an emergency response like the \$1.9 trillion virus relief bill that Biden signed into law over Republican objections earlier this month. The administration wants to see progress on the new legislation by Memorial Day and have it passed over the summer, White House officials said.

"The president has a plan to fix our infrastructure and a plan to pay for it," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday. "But we certainly expect to have the discussion with members of Congress, as we move forward, about areas where they agree, where they disagree, where they would like to see greater emphasis or not."

The administration is setting the political pace and tone for this next big priority in Biden's agenda. The

COVID-19 bill, though broadly popular with voters of both parties, exposed the president to criticism for going it alone with only Democratic votes. White House officials believe this time there will be far more of an opportunity to win some GOP support and plan significant outreach on Capitol Hill.

As the committees in Congress begin to tackle individual provisions — including those on transportation, China and others — the White House will encourage those efforts. Then it will work through the tax increases separately, according to officials.

Infrastructure marks the unique opportunity for Biden to succeed on an issue where both his predecessors — Barack Obama and Donald Trump — made big promises that never came to fruition.

The multitrillion-dollar price tag means that any package will eventually need to be paired with tax hikes, drawing Republican opposition to any infrastructure plans that unwind Trump's 2017 corporate tax rate cuts. Biden has vowed not to raise taxes on households earning less than \$400,000 a year.

One key Republican, Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, of West Virginia, last week warned Democrats against a go-it-alone approach as happened on the virus aid plan.

"I'm very disappointed with what I'm reading, because I'm envisioning that the same thing is going to happen," Capito said.

As part of the group of Republicans who met with Biden only to have their virus aid proposal rebuffed, Capito is now wary as Democrats pile other domestic priorities onto the infrastructure package.

"I think we need to talk to the American people and say, 'Is this what you envision with infrastructure? Is this, are these job creators?'" she said.

Prosecutor: Woman in Slender Man stabbing still dangerous

Associated Press

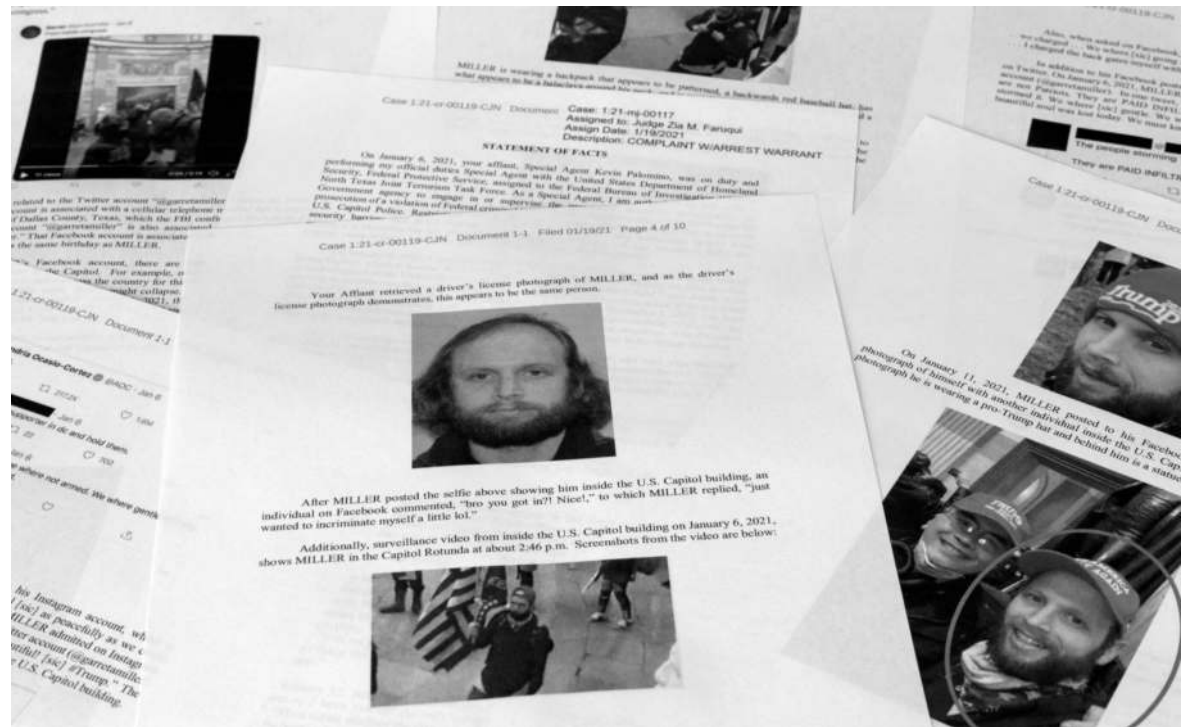
WAUKESHA, Wis. — A judge should deny a request to be released by a Wisconsin woman convicted of stabbing a classmate to please the internet horror character Slender Man because she remains a danger to others, a prosecutor argued in response to the petition for conditional release.

Earlier this month, Anissa Weier, 19, asked Waukesha County Circuit Judge Michael Bohren to

release her from the Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Oshkosh. Bohren sentenced her in December 2017 to 25 years in the institution after a jury found her not criminally responsible for her role in the stabbing.

Waukesha County Assistant District Attorney Kevin Osborne filed a response with the court Friday.

"Her mind is still immature, still forming, and still susceptible to dangerous influences. At this time,



Jon Elswick/AP

Garrett Miller appears on a document presented to the U.S. District Court on Monday. When Miller was arrested in Dallas in connection with the riot at the U.S. Capitol, he wore a T-shirt that had a photograph of former President Donald Trump and read "Take America Back" and "I Was There, Washington D.C., January 6, 2021," prosecutors noted in a filing Monday.

Capitol riot suspect wore 'I Was There' T-shirt when arrested

Associated Press

Garret Miller didn't speak to the law enforcement officers who arrested him on charges he stormed the U.S. Capitol in January, but the T-shirt he was wearing at his Dallas home that day sent a clear and possibly incriminating message.

Miller's shirt had a photograph of former President Donald Trump, and it said "Take America Back" and "I Was There, Washington D.C., January 6, 2021," federal prosecutors noted in a court filing Monday.

Prosecutors are urging a judge to keep Miller jailed while he awaits trial on charges stemming from the Jan. 6 riots in the nation's capital.

On a recorded call immediately after his arrest, Miller told his mother, "I don't feel that I've done anything wrong and now I'm being locked up," according to prosecutors.

Like many of the more than 300 people facing federal charges in connection with the siege, Miller

thoroughly documented and commented on his actions that day in a flurry of social media posts.

After Miller posted a selfie showing himself inside the Capitol building, another Facebook user wrote, "bro you got in?! Nice!" Miller replied, "just wanted to incriminate myself a little lol," prosecutors said.

Miller joined the mob that breached the Capitol building and later threatened to kill New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and a Capitol Police officer, authorities said. After the Democratic congresswoman tweeted the word "Impeach," Miller tweeted back to her, "Assassinate AOC," according to prosecutors.

In a Jan. 10 post on Instagram, Miller said the officer who shot and killed a woman in the crowd of rioters should get a televised execution, according to prosecutors.

"By bringing tactical gear, ropes, and potentially, by his own admission, a gun to the Capitol on January 6, 2021, Miller showed that he was not just caught up in

the frenzy of the crowd but instead came to D.C. with the intention of disrupting the democratic process of counting and certifying Electoral College votes," prosecutors wrote.

A federal magistrate judge in Texas ordered Miller detained after his Jan. 20 arrest. On Feb. 12, a grand jury in the District of Columbia indicted Miller on 12 counts, including civil disorder, obstruction of an official proceeding, and assaulting, resisting or impeding officers.

Miller's attorney is seeking his release from custody, saying he expressed regret for his actions.

"Nevertheless, he has no history of violence, and he did not engage in any acts of violence in connection with the charged offenses, unlike many others who have previously been released," defense attorney F. Clinton Broden wrote.

Miller remains jailed in Oklahoma City. His transport is on hold because he broke his collarbone while playing soccer in the recreation yard at a Dallas jail.

logical issues of their own," Osborne argued.

Bohren has scheduled a hearing on the matter June 11. If Bohren orders her release, Weier would be assigned state Department of Health Services case managers to track her progress until she's 37 years old, the length of her commitment.

Geysler is serving a maximum 40-year-old sentence at a mental health facility.

she simply cannot safely be released," Osborne wrote, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

Weier and her friend, Morgan Geysler, lured their classmate, Payton Leutner, into a Waukesha park in May 2014 following a sleepover. Geysler stabbed Leutner multiple times as Weier encouraged Geysler to inflict the injuries. All three girls were 12 years old at the time.

Leutner barely survived her wounds. Weier and Geysler told in-

vestigators that they stabbed her because they thought Slender Man was real and attacking Leutner would make them his servants and keep him from killing their families.

"What assurance do we have that she will not do this again, either for a thrill or to please a new friend and because of her situation real, appropriate, friends will be hard to come by. Instead she seems to attract people with myriad psycho-

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Sheriff seeks vandals who dug up grave from 1882

AL OPELIKA — An Alabama sheriff is on the hunt for vandals who dug up the grave of a man buried in 1882.

At Flint Hill Cemetery, somebody removed the hefty slab and dug a deep hole at the grave of early Lee County settler Samuel Jones, the Opelika-Auburn News reported.

Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones said he can't say for certain whether the culprits disturbed the settler's remains.

But Edna Ward of the Lee County Cemetery Preservation Commission said investigators found no casket or body.

Jones said whoever dug up the grave may have hoped to find valuables buried with the body, though he added it's unlikely anything valuable was in the grave.

Police officer shoots pit bull that ran toward her

FL TAMPA — A Florida police officer shot a 6-year-old pit bull that approached her as she and another officer investigated a case of suspicious activity at an apartment complex, authorities said.

Rachel Robledo called Tampa police to report seeing someone holding a gun on the balcony of a nearby apartment on St. Patrick's Day, news outlets reported.

Police officers who responded to the call couldn't locate the suspect, so they decided to speak to Robledo, officials said.

The bodycam footage taken from the officers shows the woman holding back a pit bull as they approached. But the dog, named Nala, ended up leaving Robledo's apartment and approaching the officers. One officer shot the dog two times, police said.

The dog is recovering, following surgery, news outlets reported.

6 arrested, 93 cited for trespassing onto trail

HI HONOLULU — The Honolulu Police Department has arrested six people and cited 93 over trespassing onto an illegal tourist attraction during a roughly 10-day period earlier this month.

The hikers were cited and arrested for sneaking into the Haiku Stairs trail, also known as the "Stairway to Heaven," Hawaii News Now reported.

The hiking trail has become popular online for its scenic views. The trail has been closed since 1987 due to safety concerns and maintenance issues.

Sausage festival crowded amid pandemic changes

AL ELBERTA — Crowds returned to a popular food festival on Alabama's Gulf Coast for a taste of sausage and a taste of normalcy a year after the



MATT ROURKE/AP

Spring has sprung

A pedestrian holding a face mask walks by daffodils blooming on a spring morning outside the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia, on Monday.

coronavirus pandemic forced changes to the event.

The tiny city of Elberta welcomed visitors back to the Elberta German Sausage Festival, WKRG-TV reported. Many people went without masks as they strolled between food tents and crafts vendors while cooking smoke and live music filled the air.

"Yes, people are tired of being cooped in and they just want a normal life," said visitor Cathy Mizell, of Satsuma.

The COVID-19 pandemic didn't completely shut down the festival a year ago, but forced it to adopt a drive-thru format.

Group wants answers on dead birds near lake

IN HAMMOND — The deaths of several geese, ducks and other birds around a lake in northwestern Indiana and northeastern Illinois have environmentalists and some area residents seeking answers from officials.

About 10 protesters held a demonstration near Wolf Lake, demanding transparency on how the birds died, the Post-Tribune reported.

"Those geese are big and if it's something naturally causing it, we're not pointing fingers," said Marisa Rowden, administrator for the environmental group Save Whiting and Neighbors. "We just want to be in the know."

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources said it received reports of the dead waterfowl and

THE CENSUS

\$1M The approximate amount at least 70 elderly people were defrauded out of by two Florida men and a Baltimore woman. Federal prosecutors in Maryland said the three defendants duped their victims into believing that a grandchild or other relative needed money for bail, legal fees or other expenses. Medard Ulysse, 37, of Miami; Eghosasere Avborayelgbinedion, 26, of Miramar, Fla.; and Amaya English, 21, of Baltimore; are charged with conspiracy to commit mail fraud.

dead fish dating back to mid-February. The cause of death is still under investigation.

Person in custody after accidents close interstate

CT HARTFORD — State police took one person into custody after two accidents closed Interstate 91 and caused lengthy delays.

The two crashes occurred on the highway's southbound side in the Hartford area. Three vehicles were involved in one of the crashes, and the second crash occurred two exits away around the same time.

Hartford fire personnel told WFSB-TV that a person involved in one of the crashes began behaving erratically and taking off their clothes at the scene of the accident. The person, who wasn't identified, was taken into custody by state police.

French bulldog puppy found safe after robbery

CA LOS ANGELES — A French bulldog puppy stolen at gunpoint in Los Angeles was found safe and returned to its

owners, authorities said.

Police said they are looking for two male suspects in the latest in a string of dog thefts in the Los Angeles area.

The 5-month-old puppy, named Seven, was found days after his family offered \$12,000 for his safe return.

The dog was nabbed outside a Target store in North Hollywood. The men followed the dog's owner from the store and into the parking lot where one of the men pulled out a gun. The suspects ran away with the puppy.

Retired USAF vet looks for unmarked vet graves

TN JOHNSON CITY — A retired Air Force veteran and historian with several East Tennessee veterans groups has made it his mission to find and document the unmarked and undermarked graves of local veterans, no matter how old.

Allen Jackson's most recent find was at the Oak Hill Cemetery, the Johnson City Press reported. James Watson was buried there in an unmarked plot alongside his family. His age at the time of his

death put him at the right age to have served during the Civil War.

"So I ran back the records and found him where he served as a Confederate with Company E of the 30th Battalion Virginia Infantry," Jackson said.

Watson is only the most recent veteran that Jackson has rediscovered. Overall, he has found 238 military veterans whose service was not noted on their headstones.

Bakery recovering after struck by car twice

NY CLIFTON PARK — Employees at a Schenectady-area bakery are on edge after their store was struck by a car last week, the second time that had happened in a little more than a month.

On Feb. 23, a car slammed into the Dolce & Biscotti Fine Italian Bakery in Clifton Park and went through its front window when an elderly woman at the wheel hit the gas instead of the brake.

The bakery had to close for three weeks, and reopened March 12. Last Thursday, a car veered into a support pole a few feet from where the first accident happened.

Owner and executive chef Mary Baldi-Fron said cars exit too fast off Route 9 into the bakery plaza and that there is no signage, street markings or speed bumps to slow people down. She said she's now wary of offering sidewalk seating.

SCIENCE

Two space fans get seats on billionaire's private SpaceX flight

BY MARCIA DUNN
Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — A billionaire's private SpaceX flight filled its two remaining seats Tuesday with a scientist-teacher and a data engineer whose college friend actually won a spot, but gave him the prize.

The new passengers: Sian Proctor, a community college educator in Tempe, Ariz., and Chris Sembroski, a former Air Force missileman from Everett, Wash. They will join flight sponsor Jared Isaacman and another passenger for three days in orbit this fall.

Isaacman also revealed some details about his Inspiration4 mission, as the four gathered Tuesday at NASA's Kennedy Space Center. He's head of Shift4 Payments, a credit card-processing company in Allentown, Pa., and is paying for what would be SpaceX's first private flight while raising money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn.

Their SpaceX Dragon capsule will launch no earlier than mid-September, aiming for an altitude

"Everything that I've done ... has brought me to this moment."

Sian Proctor
Passenger on SpaceX flight

of 335 miles. That's 75 miles higher than the International Space Station and on a level with the Hubble Space Telescope.

Isaacman, 38, a pilot who will serve as spacecraft commander, still won't say how much he's paying. He's donating \$100 million to St. Jude, while donors so far have contributed \$13 million, primarily through the lottery that offered a chance to fly in space.

Hayley Arceneaux, 29, was named to the crew a month ago. The St. Jude physician assistant was treated there as a child for bone cancer.

That left two capsule seats open. Proctor, 51, beat out 200



SPACEX/AP

From left to right, Jared Isaacman, Hayley Arceneaux, Sian Proctor and Chris Sembroski pose from the SpaceX launch tower at NASA's Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral, Fla., on Monday.

businesses and nabbed the seat reserved for a customer of Isaacman's company. An independent panel of judges chose her space art website dubbed Space2inspire.

"It was like when Harry Potter found out he was a wizard, a little bit of shock and awe," Proctor told The Associated Press last week. "It's like, 'I'm the winner?'"

Sembroski, 41, donated and entered the lottery but wasn't picked in the random drawing earlier this month — his friend was. His friend declined to fly for personal reasons and offered the spot to Sembroski, who worked as a Space Camp counselor in college and volunteered for space advoca-

cy groups.

"Just finding out that I'm going to space was an incredible, strange, surreal event," he said.

Proctor, who studied geology, applied three times to NASA's astronaut corps, coming close in 2009, and took part in simulated Mars missions in Hawaii. She was born on Guam, where her late father — a "Hidden Figure" in her mind — worked at NASA's tracking station for the Apollo moonshots, including Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's.

She plans to teach from space and create art up there, too.

"To me, everything that I've done ... has brought me to this moment."

Virgin Galactic rolls out latest generation of its spaceship

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Virgin Galactic rolled out its newest spaceship Tuesday as the company looks to resume test flights in the coming months at its headquarters in the New Mexico desert.

Company officials said it will likely be summer before the ship — designed and manufactured in California — undergoes glide flight testing at Spaceport America in southern New Mexico. That will coincide with the final round of testing for the current generation of spacecraft, which will be the one that takes British billionaire and Virgin Galactic founder Sir Richard Branson to the fringes of space later this year.

CEO Michael Colglazier said the new addition marks the start of Virgin Galactic having a fleet that will one day be capable of ferrying paying customers and scientific payloads from spaceports around the globe. The company is still aiming for commercial operations to begin next year following testing and a few months of downtime for maintenance and other upgrades.

Virgin Galactic has reached space twice before — the first time from California in December 2018. The company had its second flight over Spaceport America in June.

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WORLD

China greatly reduces elected seats in Hong Kong legislative body

Associated Press

HONG KONG — China has sharply reduced the number of directly elected seats in Hong Kong's legislature in a setback for the territory's already beleaguered democracy movement.

The changes were announced Tuesday after a two-day meeting of China's top legislature.

The legislature will be expanded to 90 seats, and only 20 will be elected by the public. Currently, half of the 70-seat legislature — 35 seats — is directly elected.

The move is part of a two-phase effort to rein in political protest and opposition in Hong Kong, which is part of China but has had a more liberal political system as a former British colony. China imposed a national security law on Hong Kong last year and is following up this year with a revamp of

the electoral process.

The crackdown comes in the wake of months of pro-democracy protests in 2019 that brought hundreds of thousands to the streets and turned violent as the government resisted the movement's demands.

"It's a very sad day for Hong Kong. The election system is completely dismantled," said former lawmaker and Democratic Party member Emily Lau.

"They are going to get rid of opposition voices because under this new system, which is so oppressive and restrictive, I don't think any self-respecting individual will want to take part," Lau said.

China's top legislature, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, amended Hong Kong's constitution to pave the way for the changes. The



VINCENT YU/AP

A TV screen broadcasts Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam during a news conference in Hong Kong on Tuesday.

Hong Kong government is now tasked with revising its electoral laws and holding an election.

In the current 70-member legislature, voters elect half the members and the other half are chosen by constituencies representing various professions and interest groups. Many of the constituencies lean pro-Beijing, ensuring that wing a majority in the legislature.

The new body will have 20 elected members, 30 chosen by the constituencies and 40 by an Election Committee that also chooses

the city's leader.

The committee, which will be expanded from 1,200 to 1,500 members, is dominated by supporters of the central government in Beijing.

Election hopefuls will undergo vetting by the national security police and a committee that oversees national security in the city.

A new separate body will also be established to review the qualifications of candidates for office in Hong Kong to ensure the city is governed by "patriots," in the language of the central government.

Airstrikes hit ethnic group in Myanmar

Associated Press

MAE SAM LAEP, Thailand — Violence in eastern Myanmar, including air raids that drove thousands of members of the Karen ethnic minority to seek shelter across the border in Thailand, deepened Tuesday with new air attacks by the military that seized power from an elected government last month.

Thailand's prime minister denied that his country's security forces had forced villagers back to Myanmar who had fled from military airstrikes over the weekend, saying they returned home on their own accord.

But the situation in eastern Myanmar appeared to be getting more, not less, dangerous.

Saw Taw Nee, head of the foreign affairs department of the Karen National Union, the main political body representing the Karen minority there, confirmed that new raids Tuesday left six civilians dead and 11 wounded.

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NETFLIX

Idris Elba and Caleb McLaughlin star as father and son in the film “Concrete Cowboy,” streaming Friday on Netflix.

New this week: Movie monsters, ‘Concrete Cowboy’ and pooches

Associated Press

Here’s a collection curated by The Associated Press’ entertainment journalists of what’s arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

Movies

■ Two of cinema’s most famous giants are headed for an old-fashioned big-budget clash in “Godzilla vs. Kong,” available on HBO Max for 31 days starting Friday. The sequel to “Godzilla: King of the Monsters” and “Kong: Skull Island” brings back Kyle Chandler and Millie Bobby Brown, and adds a host of new characters played by Rebecca Hall, Brian Tyree Henry, Alexander Skarsgard and Demian Bichir. There’s also a bunch of April additions to HBO Max including “Boogie Nights,” “The Bodyguard,” “Goodfellas” and “Bringing Up Baby.”

■ On Netflix, Idris Elba leads the cast of “Concrete Cowboy,” out Friday, about a teen who goes to live with his estranged father in Philadelphia and learns about the urban horseback riding world. It’s based on the novel “Ghetto Cowboy.”

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

Television

■ “Expedition Deep Ocean” follows adventurer Victor Vescovo and a team of scientists in a bid to descend to the bottom of the world’s oceans. Vescovo takes the helm of what’s described as a “purpose-built” submarine to reach the lowest depths of the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Arctic and Southern oceans. The risks include seismic fault zones, icebergs and tropical storms, with the chance to chart new realms among the rewards. The mission unfolds over five hours debuting Thursday on the Discovery+ streaming service.

■ Rebel Wilson hosts ABC’s “Pooch Perfect,” a competition series in which dog



ABC

“Pooch Perfect,” hosted by Rebel Wilson, right, features fanciful — and at times outrageous — dog-grooming competitions. The show airs stateside on ABC.

groomers display their skills for a shot at a \$100,000 prize. Lisa Vanderpump, groomer Jorge Bendersky and veterinarian Callie Harris judge the eight-episode contest, airing Tuesdays, based on a show in Wilson’s native Australia. The actor boasts credentials for the job: She comes from a long line of handlers and groomers — her mom judges dog shows internationally — and as a child traveled to shows with her family.

■ Legendary gospel singer Mahalia Jackson gets overdue biopic attention in a Lifetime film debuting Saturday. “Robin Roberts Presents: Mahalia,” produced by the “Good Morning America” anchor, stars Danielle Brooks (“Orange Is the New Black”) as the recording artist who gained international acclaim. Also an ardent supporter of the 20th-century U.S. civil rights movement, Jackson shared her voice at rally after rally, including the 1963 March on Washington. The movie’s cast includes Joaquina Kalukango, Jason Dirden, Olivia Washington and Rob Demery.

— AP Television Writer Lynn Elber

Music

Demi Lovato is getting candid about her near-fatal overdose in 2018. Lovato sings about the moment she “almost made it to heaven” on her new album. “Dancing with the Devil ... The Art of Starting Over,” which will be released Friday, features 19 songs and three bonus tracks. Ariana Grande, Noah Cyrus, Saweetie and Sam Fisher collaborate. The album is a companion to her YouTube Originals docuseries, “Demi Lovato: Dancing with the Devil.”



Lovato

■ New York City rapper Lil Tjay’s second album is out Friday, “Destined 2 Win.” It includes the tunes “Headshot” with Polo G and Fivio Foreign, and “Calling My Phone,” featuring 6lack, which peaked at No. 3 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

BTS condemns racism, says band members have faced it

From wire reports

K-pop superstar group BTS has condemned racism against Asians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in a statement, adding that they’ve experienced it themselves.

“We stand against racial discrimination,” BTS tweeted Tuesday in English and Korean. The band said their own painful encounters with racism included “expletives” and being “mocked for the way” they look.

BTS issued their statement after recent attacks against people with Asian heritage in the United States, which have risen during the coronavirus pandemic.

“We cannot put into words the pain of becoming the subject of hatred and violence,” the band said in the statement, adding that their experiences made them feel powerless and chipped away at their self-esteem.

The band said that although the discrimination they endured is “inconsequential” compared to “events that have occurred over the past few weeks,” they felt the need to speak out. “What’s happening right now cannot be disassociated from our identity as Asians,” the band said.

BTS is one of the first South Korean bands to openly condemn anti-Asian racism. K-pop bands are known to be careful about maintaining personas created by their labels, which often muzzle stars on touchy subjects like race and mental health.

Beyoncé sets record with latest NAACP Image Awards wins

Weeks after making Grammy history with a record 28 wins, singer Beyoncé took home four NAACP Image Awards over the weekend in the music category.

With 22 trophies, Beyoncé is the overall most awarded winner in the history of the NAACP Image Awards.

With her latest music release, the iconic superstar was awarded outstanding female artist for single “Black Parade,” outstanding music video for “Brown Skin Girl,” outstanding hip hop/rap song for “Savage Remix” with Megan Thee Stallion, and outstanding duo, group or collaboration (contemporary), also shared with Megan Thee Stallion for “Savage Remix.”

Other winners from the March 27 ceremony included late “Black Panther” star Chadwick Boseman for outstanding actor, Viola Davis for outstanding actress, D-Nice for Entertainer of the Year and “Bad Boys for Life” for outstanding motion picture.

Other news

■ Whoopi Goldberg, Andra Day and Zendaya will be among the honorees at this year’s **Essence Black Women in Hollywood** event, which will be livestreamed April 22 during Oscars week for the first time this year.

■ The **Tribeca Film Festival** said Monday that it plans to hold its 20th edition in-person this June with outdoor screenings spread throughout New York’s five boroughs. The springtime festival — canceled last year due to the pandemic — will instead turn to the summer for its next edition, spanning 12 days beginning June 9.

STARS AND STRIPES

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Ernie Gates

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Use TSP model to help private sector workers save

By **TERESA GHILARDUCCI**
AND **KEVIN HASSETT**
Special to The Washington Post

The Federal Reserve reports that Americans in the bottom 25% of the national wealth distribution have a median net worth of only \$310. Many of them owe more in debt than they have in savings, leading to the fact that the median retirement savings for working-age Americans is close to \$0. In 2016, only 41% of Black families and 35% of Hispanic families had any retirement savings at all. Meanwhile, as stock prices reach historic highs, most people — and certainly most lower-income workers — are not invested in the markets and get no benefit.

In a paper published March 25 by the Economic Innovation Group, we describe how government policy unwittingly contributes the wealth gap — and how the Biden administration and Congress can help shrink it.

Current retirement savings policy is actually exacerbating inequalities. Workers can shelter income if they save it for retirement in an IRA or 401(k) account — which is terrific if you are well-off and have a high marginal tax rate, but of almost no value if you are a low earner with a low tax rate.

We have an alternative based on what we, as economists, consider one of the best-designed savings programs in U.S. history. That is the Thrift Savings Plan available to federal employees and members of the military. The government should offer such a program to all disadvantaged workers.

TSP's design draws from important findings in behavioral economics to help workers create retirement wealth. Most federal employees are eligible to participate and are automatically enrolled in TSP. Tax-deferred contributions are withheld from their paycheck and the government match-

es that contribution up to 5% of their annual salary. By default, those contributions go into a very low-expense mutual fund appropriate for the age of the employee.

Employees can change their investments or contribution rates, or opt out completely. But by far, most choose to participate in the plan and contribute the default amount. Evidence suggests the high level of TSP participation is thanks to the simplicity of enrollment and the government match.

As the federal match has increased since 1987, TSP participation increased as well — notably in historically marginalized groups of workers. A recent Congressional Budget Office report found that after government matching was introduced, participation rates jumped by at least 20 percentage points for eligible Black workers, those with at most a high school education and those in the bottom one-third of the earnings distribution. Automatic enrollment, implemented in 2010, pushed participation rates even higher, reaching 94% for Black federal employees and 95% for those in the bottom one-third of earnings. By contrast, while 67% of private industry workers have access to employer-provided retirement plans, only 51% participate.

Bottom line: Workers at all income levels find space in their budgets to save when the right incentives are in place.

Government should make the proven TSP model available to a wide range of working Americans, especially those below a certain income level. Private-sector employers would have to handle only the paperwork, similar to what they do for income tax and Social Security purposes. The government would provide a savings match and would keep politics out of investment decisions by hiring private investment managers to create a sensible, low-cost

portfolio, just as the TSP does.

Our plan builds on past proposals from lawmakers from both parties to provide access to retirement plans to disadvantaged workers. Our calculations show that people in the bottom income quartile, contributing 5% of their wages with 5% matched, could accumulate median wealth of more than \$43,000 within 10 years. A bottom-quartile 25-year-old could accumulate more than \$600,000 by retirement.

This federally funded plan would have a smaller deficit impact than you might think. Most beneficiaries pay little tax today, so the cost in foregone taxes is small. And the tax is deferred, not eliminated: When that hypothetical 25-year-old retires and starts to take money out of their \$600,000 TSP account, they will pay income tax on withdrawals. As for the government match, it would cost taxpayers, but the government currently borrows at close to a zero percent interest rate. If it does that, and gives the money to workers to invest in higher returning private capital, it will surely be a net gain for society.

Imagine how much healthier and more secure our future might look if wealth disparities were diminished and more Americans had a direct stake in the success of our free-market system. In our view, there is no policy better suited to address the challenges we face today than to give low-income Americans access to the same expertly designed savings and investment plan enjoyed by every member of Congress and the broader federal workforce.

Teresa Ghilarducci is a professor of economics at the New School for Social Research and director of the Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis. Kevin Hassett is a vice president of the Lindsey Group and a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution; he served as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers from 2017 to 2019.

Biden says he's a 'respector of fate.' We all should be.

By **MARY SCHMICH**
Chicago Tribune

What will you be doing in 2024? If you think you know for sure, you're either clairvoyant or deluded.

I've been thinking about this question since President Joe Biden's recent news conference in which he was asked whether he plans to run again in 2024. This was the same news conference in which not a single reporter asked about the pandemic or the economy.

The 2024 question deserved all the eye rolls it got — c'mon, man, the guy's been president for two months. Yet Biden's answer — yes — was treated as big news because in the game of politics the future always matters more than the present.

But forget Biden's presidential plans. Let's talk about the most noteworthy part of his answer, a remark that went largely unremarked.

"I'm a great respector of fate," he said. "I've never been able to plan four and a half, three and a half years ahead for certain."

Wise words. We all should all be great respecters of fate. Fate can be defined in various ways. In a broad way, it means the things that happen to us unavoidably, through forces beyond our control.

Biden's life is a spectacular example of how potent fate can be. He had just been elected to the U.S. Senate when his first wife and infant daughter were killed in a car crash. He was

poised to run for president in 2016 but changed his mind after his son Beau died of cancer. When he announced he would run in 2020, it seemed unlikely that this old white guy, as he was often called, could get elected.

Then he did. And he brings to the job the perspective of someone who knows that after you hope and plan and dream, fate may snatch your plans, crumple them into a ball, toss them in the toilet and cap it off with a cruel chuckle.

Over and over, in the big realms and in our personal lives, the force we call fate outwits predictions and expectations. Consider politics. How many people believed in 2005 that Barack Obama, a Black newly elected senator with an unusual name and no national reputation, would be elected president in 2008? And until it happened, how many of us failed to believe Donald Trump would be president?

In fact, most of the presidents in my lifetime have seemed surprising until they became inevitable. A Georgia peanut farmer? An Arkansas governor? No way. Until fate said, "Way."

Fate tricks us in ways beyond the political, too. Pandemic, anyone? Some savvy epidemiologists weren't entirely surprised, but the rest of us never saw it coming. Sometimes what we call fate wouldn't be outside our control if only we saw more clearly.

Think about your own life three and a half years ago. On some level, it may seem not so

long ago, time that passed as quickly as the click of a computer key. But try to remember about how you envisioned what you'd be doing in 2021. It wasn't this, was it?

All of us can look back on our lives and see the moments when fate yanked our plans away. The sudden death of someone we love. The loss of a job. The end of a relationship. A disease, our own or someone else's. The longer you live, the more you know how quickly life can change.

And the longer you live, the murkier the time ahead may seem, even though it seems to come faster. A friend talks about his feelings when he gets a new driver's license or credit card and notices the distant expiration date.

"Hmm," he thinks, "four years from now, will I even be alive? Will I have the same job? What will my kids be doing?"

I feel that way every time I fill in an online form for my new credit card and type in the expiration date of 1/26. What? 2026? Whatever I imagine it will be, it will probably be something else.

Planning and hoping are built into our brains. That's part of what makes us human. We envision the future, and by envisioning it we help to build the life we want. But even as we look ahead, a week, a year, a decade, it helps to remember that fate is bound to take us somewhere we did not imagine.

Mary Schmich is a columnist for the Chicago Tribune and winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for commentary.

Frazz



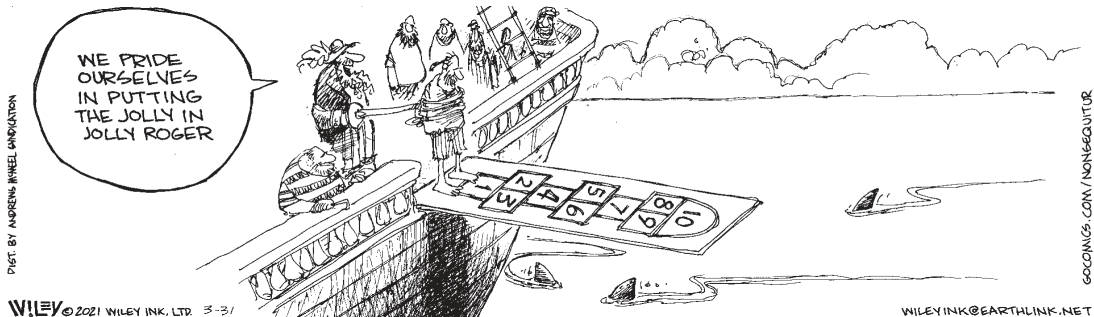
Dilbert



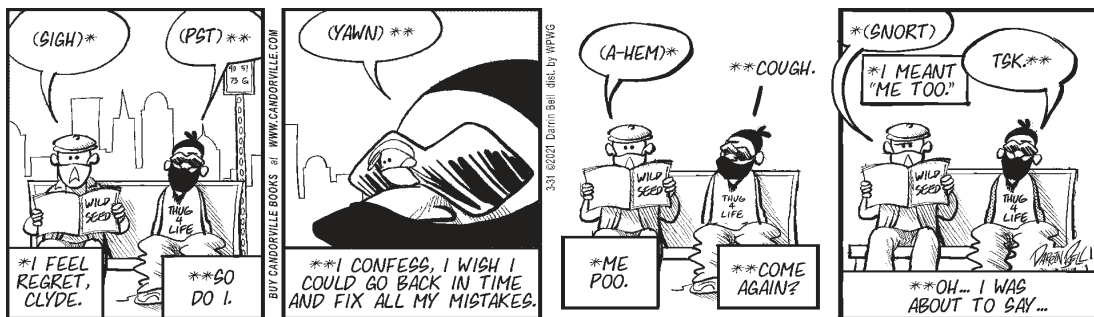
Pearls Before Swine



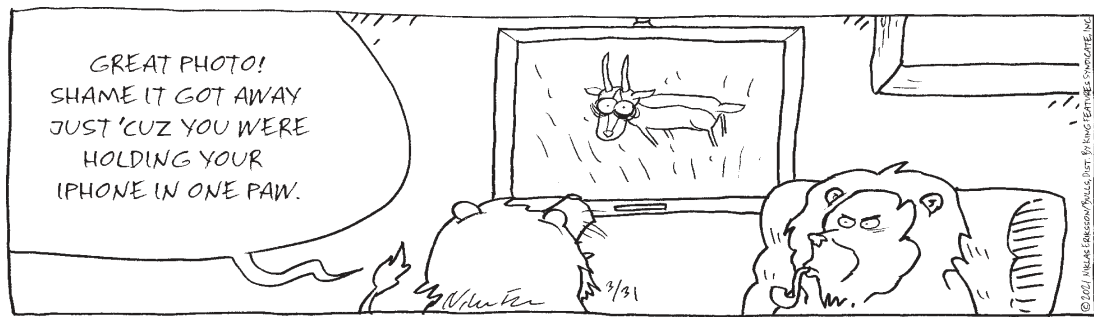
Non Sequitur



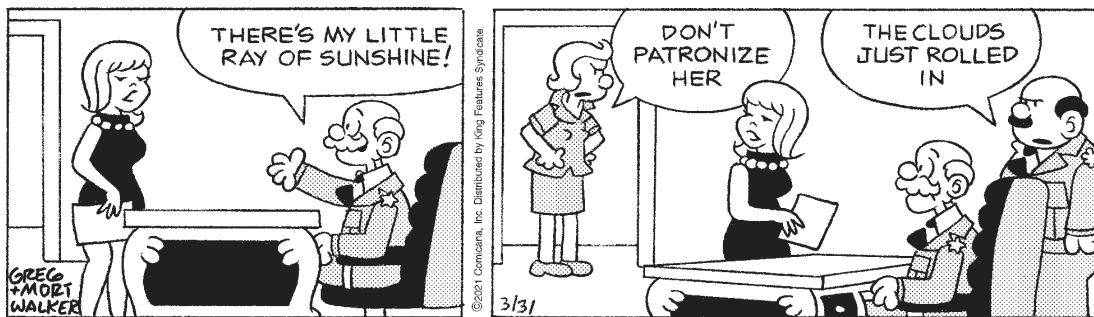
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16					17			
18			19				20					
			21		22	23		24		25	26	27
28	29	30					31		32			
33				34				35		36		
37			38		39				40			
41				42		43						
			44		45			46		47	48	49
50	51	52				53	54			55		
56					57					58		
59					60					61		

ACROSS

- 1 Wager
- 4 Goals
- 8 Panorama
- 12 Egg (Pref.)
- 13 March Madness gp.
- 14 Old U.S. gas brand
- 15 Carnival city
- 16 Comedian who starred in and directed "Top Five"
- 18 God, in Islam
- 20 German article
- 21 Sweet wine
- 24 Fragrant wood
- 28 3, to 27
- 32 Without help
- 33 Candle count
- 34 Lieu
- 36 Weir
- 37 Bridge coup
- 39 Driver's news source
- 41 Try to swat
- 43 Low digits
- 44 Wee dollop
- 46 Curly-tailed dog
- 50 Lipstick shade
- 55 Existed
- 56 Bigfoot's cousin
- 57 Green land
- 58 Online chats, briefly

- 59 Monopoly card
- 60 Large amount
- 61 Badminton barrier

- 25 Former Connecticut senator
- 26 Jai —
- 27 QB Tony
- 28 Moolah
- 29 Wrinkled fruit
- 30 Exhausted
- 31 Poi base
- 35 Greatly feared
- 38 Capital of Spain
- 40 Request
- 42 Sailor
- 45 Tournament passes
- 47 Victor's cry
- 48 Docile
- 49 Admin. aide
- 50 Dancer Charisse
- 51 Haw preceder
- 52 Tours season
- 53 Rock's Ocasek
- 54 Mound stat

DOWN

- 1 Tora —, Afghanistan
- 2 Satan's forte
- 3 Implement
- 4 News show VIPs
- 5 German pronoun
- 6 Blemish
- 7 Uttered
- 8 Poem parts
- 9 Equi-
- 10 Computer key
- 11 Stir-fry pan
- 17 Pouch
- 19 Mimic
- 22 Campus mil. group
- 23 Have a bite —

Answer to Previous Puzzle

E	A	S	Y	M	A	I	M	G	A	R		
A	N	K	A	E	L	L	A	A	W	E		
R	A	I	N	M	A	K	E	R	Y	O	M	
				K	O	N	A	R	A	L	L	Y
A	T	S	E	A	H	Y	D	E				
L	I	T	E	I	C	E	M	A	K	E	R	
A	K	A	S	N	O	R	E	I	S	O		
W	I	G	M	A	K	E	R	G	N	A	T	
				E	D	G	Y	A	R	G	U	E
M	E	S	S	I	S	A	T	E				
O	W	E	N	E	W	S	M	A	K	E	R	
M	E	T	A	S	A	P	S	I	L	O		
S	S	W	I	N	S	E	P	I	C			

3-31

CRYPTOQUIP

QYBQ HZG HUBMUG NBTDJ
 NVQBQVDJ SVT TDJCMDWQJ
 VS YCJ ECQG. YD'J B NDDUDT
 VS QYD EVKKZWCQG.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN YOUR POOCHES ARE OVERHEATING, WHAT IS THE MOST HELPFUL FOOD TO GIVE THEM? CHILLY DOGS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals Y

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SCOREBOARD/SOCCER

COLLEGE HOCKEY

NCAA Division I Tournament
BRIDGEPORT REGIONAL
 At Bridgeport, Conn.
First Round
Friday, March 26
 Bemidji St. 6, Wisconsin 3
 UMass 5, Lake Superior St. 1
Championship
Saturday, March 27
 UMass, 4 Bemidji St. 0
FARGO REGIONAL
 At Fargo, N.D.
First Round
Friday, March 26
 Minn. Duluth vs. Michigan, no contest
 North Dakota 5, American International 1
Championship
Saturday, March 27
 Minn. Duluth 3, North Dakota 2, 5OT
ALBANY REGIONAL
 At Albany, N.Y.
First Round
Saturday, March 27
 Boston College vs. Notre Dame, no contest
 St. Cloud St. 6, vs. Boston U. 2
Championship
Sunday, March 28
 St. Cloud St. 4, Boston College 1
LOVELAND REGIONAL
 At Loveland, Colo.
First Round
Saturday, March 27
 Minnesota St. 4, Quinnipiac 3, OT
 Minnesota 7, Omaha 2
Championship
Sunday, March 28
 Minnesota St. 4, Minnesota 0
FROZEN FOUR
 At Pittsburgh
National Semifinals
Thursday, April 8
 Minn. Duluth vs. UMass
 St. Cloud St. vs. Minnesota St.
National Championship
Saturday, April 10
 Semifinal winners

TENNIS

Miami Open
Monday
 At Tennis Center at Crandon Park
Miami
Purse: \$3,343,785
Surface: Hardcourt outdoor
Men's Singles
Round of 32
 Marin Cilic, Croatia, def. Lorenzo Musetti, Italy, 6-3, 6-4.
 Milos Raonic (12), Canada, def. Ugo Humbert (20), France, 6-4, 7-5.
 Andrey Rublev (4), Russia, def. Marton Fucsovics (29), Hungary, 6-2, 6-1.
 Hubert Hurkacz (26), Poland, def. Denis Shapovalov (6), Canada, 6-3, 7-6 (6).
 Diego Schwartzman (5), Argentina, def. Adrian Panatta (25), France, 6-1, 6-4.
 Sebastian Korda, United States, def. Aslan Karatsev (17), Russia, 6-3, 6-0.
 Lorenzo Sonego (24), Italy, def. Daniel Elahi Galan, Colombia, 7-6 (6), 6-3.
 Stefanos Tsitsipas (2), Greece, def. Kei Nishikori (28), Japan, 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.
Women's Singles
Round of 16
 Ashleigh Barty (1), Australia, def. Victoria Azarenka (14), Belarus, 6-1, 1-6, 6-2.
 Elina Svitolina (5), Ukraine, def. Petra Kvitova (9), Czech Republic, 2-6, 7-5, 7-5.
 Aryna Sabalenka (7), Belarus, def. Marketa Vondrousova (19), Czech Republic, 6-1, 6-2.
 Naomi Osaka (2), Japan, def. Elise Mertens (16), Belgium, 6-3, 6-3.
 Anastasija Sevastova, Latvia, def. Ana Konjuh, Croatia, 6-1, 7-5.
 Maria Sakkari (23), Greece, def. Jessica Pegula (29), United States, 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (6).
 Sara Sorribes Tormo, Spain, def. Ons Jabeur (27), Tunisia, 6-4, 0-6, 6-1.
 Bianca Andreescu (8), Canada, def. Garbine Muguruza (12), Spain, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.
Men's Doubles
Round of 16
 Rajeef Ram, United States, and Joe Salisbury (7), Britain, def. Santiago Gonzalez, Mexico, and Marcelo Demoliner, Brazil, 4-6, 6-4, 10-2.
 Nikola Mektic and Mate Pavic (2), Croatia, def. John Isner and Taylor Fritz, United States, 6-4, 6-4.
 Horia Tecau, Romania, and Marcelo Arevalo-Gonzalez, El Salvador, def. Robert Farah and Juan Sebastian Cabal (1), Colombia, 7-6 (7), 7-6 (4).
Women's Doubles
Round of 16
 Caroline Garcia, France, and Nadia Podoroska, Argentina, def. Timea Babos, Hungary, and Veronika Kudermetova (4), Russia, 6-1, 7-5.
 Gabriela Dabrowski, Canada, and Giuliana Olmos, Mexico, def. Storm Sanders, Australia, and Anna-Lena Friedsam, Germany, 6-2, 6-4.
 Hayley Carter, United States, and Luisa Stefani (8), Brazil, def. Zhaoxuan Yang, China, and Ekaterina Alexandrova, Russia, 6-0, 6-3.

AP SPORTLIGHT

March 31
1909 — Baseball's National Commission rules that players who jump contracts will be suspended for five years. Players joining outlaw organizations will be suspended for three years as punishment for going outside organized baseball.
1923 — The Ottawa Senators of the NHL complete a two-game sweep of the WCHL's Edmonton Eskimos with a 1-0 victory to win the Stanley Cup for the third

DEALS

Monday's transactions
BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Agreed to terms with LHP Tony Watson and RHP Steve Cishek on one-year contracts.
MINNESOTA TWINS — Optioned OF Brent Rooker to alternate training site. Reassigned LHP Brandon Waddell and RHP Derek Law to minor league camp. Placed RHP Edwar Colina on IR.
NEW YORK YANKEES — Agreed to terms with C Robinson Chirinos and INF Derek Dietrich on minor league contracts. Released RHP Jhoulys Chacin from minor league contract.
TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Released LHP Francisco Liriano from minor league contract.
National League
CINCINNATI REDS — Selected the contract of RHP Cam Bedrosian and OF Tyler Naquin from Louisville. Placed RHP Brandon Bailey on IR.
PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Optioned RHP Geoff Hartlieb to Indianapolis (Triple-A Midwest). Reassigned OF Brian Goodwin, INF/OF Wilmer Difo and RHP Steven Wright.
WASHINGTON NATIONALS — Reassigned INF Jake Noll, RHPs Dakota Bacus and Chase De Jong and LHP Chasen Shreve to alternate training site.
BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
SAN ANTONIO SPURS — Signed C Gorgui Dieng.
FOOTBALL
National Football League
ARIZONA CARDINALS — Agreed to terms with S Shawn Williams and S Chris Banjo to one-year contracts.
ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed OL Josh Andrews.
CINCINNATI BENGALS — Signed S Ricardo Allen to a one-year contract. Re-signed LB Jordan Evans.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Re-signed CB Brian Allen.
HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed WR Chris Conley and LB Jordan Jenkins. Re-signed LS Jon Weeks.
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Signed T Julien Davenport. Re-signed C Joey Hunt.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Agreed to terms with CB Mackensie Alexander and S Xavier Woods, pending passing the physical exam.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS — Signed DE Tanoah Kpassagnon.
NEW YORK GIANTS — Signed DT Danny Shelton.
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Re-signed WR Greg Ward to exclusive rights tender for 2021 season.
PITTSBURGH STEELERS — Re-signed P Jordan Berry to a one-year contract. Signed OL Rashaad Coward.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Signed LB Nathan Gerry to a one-year contract. Signed WR Mohamed Sanu to a contract.
HOCKEY
National Hockey League
CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS — Designated Ds Wyatt Kalynuk, Lucas Carlsson and Ian Mitchell and RWs Reese Johnson and Mackenzie Entwistle for assignment to taxi squad. Reassigned D Alec Regula, LW Brandon Pirri and C Mikael Hakkarainen to minor league Rockford (AHL).
COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS — Designated RW Ryan MacInnis and G Cameron Johnson for assignment to taxi squad. Waived D Scott Harrington.
DALLAS STARS — Designated LW Tanner Kero and RW Nick Caamano for assignment to taxi squad.
DETROIT RED WINGS — Reassigned LW Mathias Brome and D Dennis Cholowski to Grand Rapids (AHL). Reassigned LW Giovanni Smith to taxi squad.
NASHVILLE PREDATORS — Designated RW Mathieu Olivier and G Kasimir Kaskisuo for assignment to taxi squad.
NEW YORK RANGERS — Agreed to terms with D Hunter Skinner on a three-year entry-level contract.
OTTAWA SENATORS — Waived D Arten Anisimov. Designated C Clark Bishop for assignment to taxi squad.
SOCCER
Major League Soccer
COLORADO RAPIDS — Loaned G Abraham Rodriguez, Ds Sebastian Anderson and Michael Edwards, M Philip Mayaka and F Matt Hundley to Colorado Springs (AHL).
ORLANDO CITY SC — Signed D Kyle Smith to a two-year contract with a club option in 2023.
National Women's Soccer League
WASHINGTON SPIRIT — Named Paul Crichton goalkeeper coach.
COLLEGE
PERU STATE — Named Ian Holleran women's head basketball coach.
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE — Named Alicia Longworth and Brady Hart senior associate athletic directors.
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY — Named Matt Figger men's basketball head coach.

time in four years. Harry "Punch" Broadbent scores the goal.
1973 — The Philadelphia Flyers tie an NHL record for most goals in one period, scoring eight goals in the second period of a 10-2 win over the New York Islanders.
1973 — Ken Norton scores a stunning upset by winning a 12-round split decision over Muhammad Ali to win the NABF heavyweight title. Norton, a 5-1 underdog, breaks Ali's jaw in the first round.

AUTO RACING

Food City Dirt Race
NASCAR Cup Series
Monday
 At Bristol Motor Speedway
Bristol, Tenn.
Lap length: 0.53 miles
(Start position in parentheses)
 1. (10) Joey Logano, Ford, 253 laps, 55 points.
 2. (13) Ricky Stenhouse Jr, Chevrolet, 253, 42.
 3. (2) Denny Hamlin, Toyota, 253, 50.
 4. (18) Daniel Suarez, Chevrolet, 253, 49.
 5. (14) Ryan Newman, Ford, 253, 41.
 6. (8) William Byron, Chevrolet, 253, 40.
 7. (27) Tyler Reddick, Chevrolet, 253, 32.
 8. (3) Ryan Blaney, Ford, 253, 35.
 9. (24) Erik Jones, Chevrolet, 253, 31.
 10. (26) Chase Elliott, Chevrolet, 253, 28.
 11. (20) Brad Keselowski, Ford, 253, 26.
 12. (16) Michael McDowell, Ford, 253, 25.
 13. (12) Matt DiBenedetto, Ford, 253, 24.
 14. (11) Chris Buescher, Ford, 253, 24.
 15. (6) Kevin Harvick, Ford, 253, 22.
 16. (28) Kurt Busch, Chevrolet, 253, 21.
 17. (4) Kyle Busch, Toyota, 253, 20.
 18. (22) Ryan Preece, Chevrolet, 253, 19.
 19. (5) Martin Truex Jr, Toyota, 253, 35.
 20. (25) Chase Briscoe, Ford, 252, 17.
 21. (9) Austin Dillon, Chevrolet, 252, 16.
 22. (7) Alex Bowman, Chevrolet, 252, 15.
 23. (32) Stewart Friesen, Chevrolet, 252, 0.
 24. (21) Cole Custer, Ford, 252, 13.
 25. (33) Quin Houff, Chevrolet, 252, 12.
 26. (39) Ty Dillon, Toyota, 252, 0.
 27. (19) Bubba Wallace, Toyota, 251, 18.
 28. (34) JJ Yeley, Chevrolet, 249, 0.
 29. (1) Kyle Larson, Chevrolet, 248, 8.
 30. (37) Josh Billicki, Ford, 247, 7.
 31. (38) Mike Marlar, Ford, accident, 244, 6.
 32. (31) Cody Ware, Chevrolet, 242, 0.
 33. (36) Chris Windom, Chevrolet, engine, 62, 4.
 34. (15) Christopher Bell, Toyota, accident, 54, 3.
 35. (17) Ross Chastain, Chevrolet, accident, 52, 2.
 36. (23) Aric Almirola, Ford, accident, 39, 1.
 37. (35) Shane Golobic, Ford, accident, 39, 1.
 38. (30) Corey Lajoie, Chevrolet, accident, 39, 1.
 39. (29) Anthony Alfredo, Ford, accident, 39, 1.

Race Statistics
Average Speed of Race Winner: 65.792 mph.
Time of Race: 2 hours, 43 minutes, 53 seconds.
Margin of Victory: 0.554 seconds.
Caution Flags: 10 for 39 laps.
Lead Changes: 5 among 6 drivers.
Lap Leaders: K.Larson 0; D.Hamlin 1; Ky-Busch 2-8; M.Truex 9-134; D.Suarez 135-192; J.Logano 193-253
Leaders Summary (Driver, Times Led, Laps Led): M.Truex, 1 time for 126 laps; J.Logano, 1 time for 61 laps; D.Suarez, 1 time for 58 laps; Ky.Busch, 1 time for 7 laps; D.Hamlin, 1 time for 1 lap; K.Larson, 1 time for 0 laps.
Wins: J.Logano, 1; M.Truex, 1; K.Larson, 1; W.Byron, 1; R.Blaney, 1; C.Bell, 1; M.McDowell, 1.
Top 16 in Points: 1. D.Hamlin, 327; 2. J.Logano, 269; 3. M.Truex, 247; 4. K.Larson, 242; 5. B.Keselowski, 232; 6. W.Byron, 228; 7. R.Blaney, 226; 8. K.Harvick, 225; 9. C.Elliott, 211; 10. C.Bell, 186; 11. A.Dillon, 186; 12. M.McDowell, 183; 13. Ky.Busch, 183; 14. R.Stenhouse, 180; 15. Ku.Busch, 173; 16. A.Bowman, 172.

PRO BASEBALL

Spring training
Sunday's games
 Pittsburgh 2, Baltimore 1
 Boston 8, Minnesota 3
 Tampa Bay 16, Atlanta 5
 Philadelphia 6, N.Y. Yankees 2
 Washington 11, St. Louis 3
 Miami 10, N.Y. Mets 2
 Detroit 4, Toronto 4
 Texas 12, Chicago Cubs 8
 Milwaukee 7, Cincinnati 1
 San Diego 3, Cleveland 3
 Oakland 9, San Francisco 3
 Chicago White Sox 7, Arizona 4
 Kansas City 6, Colorado 3
 L.A. Angels 6, L.A. Dodgers 5
Monday's games
 N.Y. Mets 3, St. Louis 3
 Houston 2, Washington 2
 Tampa Bay 8, Baltimore 3
 Detroit 5, N.Y. Yankees 2
 Minnesota 5, Pittsburgh 3
 Toronto 13, Philadelphia 7
 Boston 4, Atlanta 0
 Kansas City 5, Cleveland 4
 Chicago Cubs 7, Arizona 4
 Seattle 5, Cincinnati 5
 San Francisco 7, Oakland 2
 Colorado 10, San Diego 2
 Kansas City at Northwest Arkansas, ccd.
 Milwaukee 4, Texas 0
 L.A. Dodgers 10, L.A. Angels 2
Tuesday's games
 Pittsburgh vs. Minnesota at Fort Myers, Fla.
 Tampa Bay vs. Detroit at Lakeland, Fla.
 Atlanta vs. Boston at Fort Myers, Fla.
 Milwaukee vs. Texas at Arlington, TX
 Chicago White Sox vs. Colorado at Scottsdale, Ariz.
 Cleveland vs. Arizona at Phoenix
 L.A. Angels vs. L.A. Dodgers at Los Angeles, CA
Wednesday's games
 No games scheduled



FERNANDO LLANO / AP

Honduras' Cristopher Melendez, left, comforts the United States' Sebastian Soto at the end of their CONCACAF Men's Olympic qualifying semifinal Sunday in Guadalajara, Mexico. Honduras won 2-1, preventing the United States from qualifying for the Olympics.

Olympic failures show dysfunction

US Soccer, MLS aren't on the same page

By RONALD BLUM
 Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Catch-22 for U.S. men's soccer in the Olympics is this: The better a player gets, the less likely he is to play.

Compounding the difficulty is a structural issue, according to American under-24 coach Jason Kreis: Major League Soccer does not adhere to the international calendar of a season that runs from August to May, leaving most of his players trying to regain fitness while facing opponents in midseason form.

The Americans failed to qualify for their third straight Olympics when they lost 2-1 to Honduras on Sunday. For the second time in three Olympic cycles, a goalkeeping blunder helped sink the U.S. when David Ochoa gifted the second goal, similar to goalkeeper Sean Johnson fumbling a shot against El Salvador that cost the Americans a trip to the 2012 London Games.

In addition, the U.S. streak of seven World Cup appearances ended in 2018.

Former American defender Alexi Lalas, now a commentator for Fox, and ex-goalkeeper Tim Howard, now an NBC broadcaster, say the onus is on the U.S. Soccer Federation and MLS to get better players from teams.

Lalás maintains the burden to improve the Olympic effort lies with Kreis, senior national team coach Gregg Berhalter and U.S. men's national team general manager Brian McBride. FIFA regulations say clubs don't have to release players for Olympic qualifying or the Olympics. European clubs regularly deny their players, and Major League Soccer's Atlanta team

blocked Kreis from using defenders George Bello and Miles Robinson, and forward Brooks Lennon.

"Some clubs are going to decide they don't want to release players. There's nothing you can do about that if that's the ultimate decision," Lalas said. "But you better leave every stone unturned in trying to convince them and call in every favor and be part of that negotiation in order to do that. And then when it comes to the Major League Soccer teams that decided not to release players, I think that in and of itself is inexcusable and it's ridiculous and it's a joke given the cooperation and the partnership and the historic connection that the United States Soccer Federation and MLS has."

While the U.S. started 11 MLS players against Honduras, age-eligible Christian Pulisic, Gio Reyna, Josh Sargent, Sergiño Dest, Antonee Robinson and Yunus Musah were with the senior national team in Belfast for a 2-1 friendly win over Northern Ireland.

FIFA restricts Olympic qualifying to players 23 and under. Qualifying was postponed by a year because of the pandemic, and FIFA kept Jan. 1, 1997, as the earliest birth date for those competing.

Five of the 20 players on the qualifying roster last year were not made available by their clubs this year: Reggie Cannon, Chris Gostner, Mark McKenzie, Erik Palmer-Brown and Brenden Aaronson.

None of Honduras' players on the roster for last week's national team exhibition against Greece were Olympic-age eligible.

Kreis cited rust: MLS teams don't open the pandemic-delayed season until April 16. None of Sunday's starters for Mexico on Sunday were from MLS.

NHL/SPORTS BRIEFS

NHL scoreboard

East Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	34	23	7	4	50	119	99
N.Y. Islanders	36	22	10	4	48	106	84
Pittsburgh	36	23	11	2	48	117	94
Boston	31	17	9	5	39	83	73
Philadelphia	34	17	13	4	38	106	123
N.Y. Rangers	34	15	15	4	34	107	92
New Jersey	33	13	16	4	30	79	101
Buffalo	34	6	23	5	17	71	122

Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	34	24	8	2	50	123	82
Carolina	33	23	7	3	49	112	84
Florida	35	22	9	4	48	115	98
Nashville	36	18	17	1	37	92	107
Chicago	36	16	15	5	37	104	114
Columbus	36	13	15	8	34	91	117
Dallas	32	11	12	9	31	89	88
Detroit	36	12	20	4	28	79	115

West Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	33	24	8	1	49	108	75
Colorado	34	22	8	4	48	118	77
Minnesota	33	21	10	2	44	97	82
St. Louis	35	16	13	6	38	100	113
Arizona	35	16	14	5	37	92	103
Los Angeles	33	13	14	6	32	92	94
San Jose	34	14	16	4	32	95	118
Anaheim	37	11	20	6	28	83	123

North Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Toronto	35	22	10	3	47	116	91
Winnipeg	36	22	12	2	46	119	99
Edmonton	36	22	13	1	45	122	103
Montreal	31	14	8	9	37	100	87
Calgary	37	16	18	3	35	96	112
Vancouver	37	16	18	3	35	100	120
Ottawa	36	12	20	4	28	94	135



ADRIAN KRAUS / AP

Philadelphia Flyers right wing Jakub Voracek, facing right, congratulates defenseman Ivan Provorov (9) on his winning goal in overtime against the Buffalo Sabres on Monday in Buffalo.

NHL ROUNDUP

Flyers rally for OT win, hand Sabres 18th straight defeat

Associated Press
 BUFFALO, N.Y. — Ivan Provorov scored 42 seconds into overtime, and the Philadelphia Flyers overcame a three-goal deficit to pull out a 4-3 win and hand the Buffalo Sabres their 18th consecutive loss Monday night.

The Flyers scored three times in the third period to overcome a 3-0 deficit, with Sean Couturier forcing overtime by tipping in Provorov's point shot with 1:29 left, and Philadelphia's net empty for an extra attacker.

Kevin Hayes started the Flyers' comeback by scoring 1:50 into the third, when his shot deflected in off Rasmus Dahlin's stick. Claude Giroux scored 10 minutes later, by converting Couturier's no-look pass in front of the net.

"I think when you're down a few goals, obviously you rely on your offensive guys to make a difference and get you back in the game," Couturier said. "We found a way to do that tonight. But like I said, we can't put ourselves in those situations too often and expect to win many games."

Henri Jokiharju, Cody Eakin and Brandon Montour scored to put the Sabres up 3-0 through two periods. Buffalo fell to 0-15-3 to match the NHL's 14th-worst skid and longest since the Pittsburgh Penguins went 0-17-1 during the 2003-04 season.

The Sabres haven't won since a 4-1 victory at New Jersey on Feb. 23.

They also extended their home losing skid to 0-9-2, the second

longest in team history, and one short of the record set during during the 1990-91 season, when Buffalo went 0-6-1 with five ties.

Penguins 2, Islanders 1: Casey DeSmith made 19 saves after starter Tristan Jarry's mysterious exit and host Pittsburgh held on to beat New York for the sixth time in eight meetings this season.

Jarry left after the first period and DeSmith filled in by holding the Islanders at bay as the Penguins pulled even with New York for second place in the East Division.

Matt Martin scored his seventh of the season for the Islanders and Semyon Varlamov made 20 saves.

Oilers 3, Maple Leafs 2 (OT): Darnell Nurse scored 17 seconds into overtime and Edmonton won at Toronto.

After Oilers goalie Mike Smith stopped Auston Matthews on a 2-on-1 break right off the faceoff of the extra period, Edmonton broke the other way, with Connor McDavid passing to Nurse for his 12th goal of the season, and second in two games.

Josh Archibald and Kyle Turris scored in regulation for the Oilers, while Smith stopped 29 shots.

Sharks 4, Wild 3 (SO): Erik Karlsson scored twice in regulation and then added the deciding goal in the eighth round of the shootout to lead host San Jose.

Karlsson capped a stellar night by ending a streak of nine combined misses by both teams when he beat Cam Talbot with a slap

shot.

Karlsson had his first two-goal game in the regular season in more than three years and Radim Simek also scored as the Sharks rebounded from back-to-back losses in Arizona.

Avalanche 5, Ducks 2: Philipp Grubauer got his 100th career win with a 13-save night to lead host Colorado past Anaheim.

Grubauer has 57 wins since joining the Avalanche before the 2018-19 season and notched his 21st this season.

Gabriel Landeskog and Tyson Jost scored in the second period to help Colorado extend its points streak to 11 games (9-0-2). Mikko Rantanen, J.T. Compher and Valeri Nichushkin also scored, Cale Makar had three assists and Nathan MacKinnon added two.

Golden Knights 4, Kings 1: Tomas Nosek scored in the second period and host Vegas beat Los Angeles.

Alec Martinez, Reilly Smith and Nicolas Hague also scored for the Golden Knights, who have won 14 of 18 and improved to 14-2-1 at home. Jonathan Marchessault had two assists. Robin Lehner stopped 24 shots.

Jets 5, Flames 1: Mark Scheifele had two goals and an assist to lead Winnipeg to a win at Calgary.

Nate Thompson, Andrew Copp and Pierre-Luc Dubois also scored for the Jets. Nikolaj Ehlers had three assists and Kyle Connor added two. Connor Hellebuyck made 29 saves for the win.

BRIEFS

USOPC will allow protests during national anthem

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee will not sanction athletes for raising their fists or kneeling during the national anthem at Olympic trials, previewing a contentious policy it expects to stick to when athletes head to Tokyo this summer.

The USOPC released a nine-page document Tuesday to offer guidance about the sort of "racial and social demonstrations" that will and won't be allowed by the hundreds who will compete in coming months for spots on the U.S. team.

In other Olympic news:
 ■ World champion sprinter Salwa Eid Naser will have a two-day appeal hearing next month that could lead to a ban from the Tokyo Olympics for breaking anti-doping rules.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport said Tuesday it will hear the case involving the 400-meter runner over two days on April 22-23.

Denver basketball hires Stanford assistant

The University of Denver has hired Jeff Wulbrun as its men's basketball coach. It will be Wulbrun's first head coaching job in the college ranks.

In other college basketball news:

■ Fordham hired longtime Villanova assistant Kyle Neptune on Tuesday to take over a men's basketball program that has had only two winning seasons since joining the Atlantic 10 Conference in 1995.

The 36-year-old Neptune has been an assistant at Villanova under Jay Wright for the last eight seasons.

■ Memphis has hired Katrina Merriweather as the new women's basketball coach after she led Wright State to that program's first NCAA Tournament win.

■ Missy Traversi was hired as the women's basketball coach at Army on Monday, joining the academy after five years of coaching Adelphi on Long Island.

Bills rename stadium after health insurer

The Buffalo Bills' home has a new name: Highmark Stadium.

The newly rebranded health insurer, Highmark BlueCross, BlueShield of Western New York, has purchased the naming rights for what was simply known as Bills Stadium last season.

Panthers defenseman Ekblad out for season

Florida defenseman Aaron Ekblad had surgery to "repair a leg fracture on Monday and is likely done for the season. The Panthers said that Ekblad will need 12 weeks to recover.

NBA

Three-lined win: Clippers rout Bucks

LA hits 19 three-pointers in defeat of Milwaukee for 6th straight victory

By BETH HARRIS
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Marcus Morris scored 25 points and three other starters had at least 20 points, helping the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Milwaukee Bucks 129-105 on Monday night for their sixth straight victory.

Kawhi Leonard added 23 points and nine rebounds, Luke Kennard had a season-high 21 points and Reggie Jackson added 20 points.

The Clippers made 19 three-pointers, one off their season high. They hit eight in the fourth, when they stretched a 13-point lead to 24 points. Kennard, starting in place of injured Paul George, made four threes in a row while the Bucks managed just two points during a stretch midway through the quarter. Kennard finished with five threes, tying his season high, and Jackson had four.

Los Angeles owned a 25-6 edge in second-chance points and out-rebounded Milwaukee, 46-32.

“They shot it at a really high clip. Just didn’t think we guarded



MARK J. TERRILL / AP

Los Angeles Clippers guard Reggie Jackson, right, shoots as Milwaukee Bucks guard Donte DiVincenzo defends. Jackson had 20 points in his team’s 129-105 win Monday in Los Angeles.

very well, particularly late. Just too much penetration,” Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. “They did a good job of getting inside of us. They were creating a lot of good looks. We got to be better defensively.”

George was a late scratch because of right foot soreness.

“Everything we’ve been working on and frustrated by earlier in the season, you can see it coming together,” Clippers coach Tyronn Lue said. “We have a defensive

mindset every single night.”

Giannis Antetokounmpo led Milwaukee with 32 points, making 10 of 12 free throws, and Jrue Holiday added 24 points in the opener of a six-game trip, their longest of the second half.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	32	14	.696	—
Brooklyn	32	15	.681	½
New York	24	23	.511	8½
Boston	23	24	.489	9½
Toronto	18	29	.383	14½

Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Charlotte	23	22	.511	—
Atlanta	23	23	.500	½
Miami	23	24	.489	1
Washington	17	28	.378	6
Orlando	15	31	.326	8½

Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	29	17	.630	—
Indiana	21	24	.467	7½
Chicago	19	26	.422	9½
Cleveland	17	30	.362	12½
Detroit	13	33	.283	16

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Dallas	24	21	.533	—
San Antonio	23	21	.523	½
Memphis	22	22	.500	1½
New Orleans	21	25	.457	3½
Houston	13	33	.283	11½

Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Utah	35	11	.761	—
Denver	28	18	.609	7
Portland	28	18	.609	7
Oklahoma City	19	27	.413	16
Minnesota	11	36	.234	24½

Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Phoenix	31	14	.689	—
L.A. Clippers	32	16	.667	½
L.A. Lakers	30	17	.638	2
Golden State	23	24	.489	9
Sacramento	22	25	.468	10

Monday’s games

Washington 132, Indiana 124
Brooklyn 112, Minnesota 107
Miami 98, New York 88
New Orleans 115, Boston 109
Dallas 127, Oklahoma City 106
Memphis 120, Houston 110
Detroit 118, Toronto 104
Sacramento 132, San Antonio 115
Utah 114, Cleveland 75
L.A. Clippers 129, Milwaukee 105
Golden State 116, Chicago 102

Tuesday’s games

Charlotte at Washington
Philadelphia at Denver
Atlanta at Phoenix
Orlando at L.A. Clippers

Wednesday’s games

Miami at Indiana
Portland at Detroit
Dallas at Boston
Houston at Brooklyn
New York at Minnesota
Toronto at Oklahoma City
Utah at Memphis
Sacramento at San Antonio
Chicago at Phoenix
Milwaukee at L.A. Lakers

Thursday’s games

Philadelphia at Cleveland
Washington at Detroit
Charlotte at Brooklyn
Golden State at Miami
Orlando at New Orleans
Atlanta at San Antonio
Denver at L.A. Clippers

Leaders

Through Tuesday

Scoring					
	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Beal, WAS	41	449	296	1284	31.3
Lillard, POR	44	404	319	1310	29.8
Curry, GS	40	386	202	1162	29.1

Rebounds

G OFF DEF TOT AVG					
Capela, ATL	40	197	367	564	14.1
Gobert, UTA	46	159	456	615	13.4
Valanciunas, MEM	39	156	333	489	12.5

Assists

	G	AST	AVG
Harden, BKN	40	448	11.2
Westbrook, WAS	38	400	10.5

ROUNDUP

Harden’s triple leads Nets past Wolves

Associated Press

NEW YORK — James Harden had 38 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds, tying the Nets’ single-season record with his 12th triple-double in just 32 games, and Brooklyn held off the Minnesota Timberwolves 112-107 on Monday night.

“He’s our leader and he’s meant a lot to us. Another triple-double and you can’t take it for granted, but you tend to, a little bit, because he’s able to pull these out of a hat almost every night,” Nets coach Steve Nash said.

Kyrie Irving added 27 points in his return after missing the three-game road trip last week for family reasons.

Hall of Famer Jason Kidd had 12 triple-doubles for the Nets in both the 2006-07 and 2007-08 seasons.

Brooklyn won for the 18th time in 21 games.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 31 points and 12 rebounds for Minnesota. Rookie Anthony Edwards had 23 points and 10 boards,

Wizards 132, Pacers 124: Russell Westbrook had 35 points, a season-high 21 assists and 14 rebounds for his NBA-leading 16th triple-double, helping Washington past visiting Indiana.

Westbrook also claimed the franchise career triple-double record in just his 38th game with the Wizards, this one coming while teammate and NBA leading scorer Bradley Beal sat out with a bruised hip. Darrell Walker had 15 triple-doubles in 283 games for Washington between 1987-1991.

Jazz 114, Cavaliers 75: Donovan Mitchell scored 19 points and Rudy Gobert added 18



FRANK FRANKLIN II / AP

The Brooklyn Nets’ James Harden, right, protects the ball from the Minnesota Timberwolves’ Karl-Anthony Towns. Harden had 38 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds.

points and 17 rebounds to power host Utah to its sixth straight win.

Mike Conley contributed 18 points for the Jazz, who have won 20 straight at home after dropping their first two home games of the season.

Heat 98, Knicks 88: Jimmy Butler scored 27 points and Miami snapped a six-game losing streak with a win at New York.

Bam Adebayo scored 20 points, Duncan Robinson added 20, and Tyler Herro finished

AUTO RACING/MLB



PHOTOS BY WADE PAYNE / AP

Joey Logano leads Denny Hamlin through Turn 4 during Monday's NASCAR Cup Series race in Bristol, Tenn. Logano won the series' first race at a dirt track in 50 years.

Paydirt: Logano takes the checkered flag in a haze

Bristol has 1st NASCAR Cup race on dirt in 50 years

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Somewhere under the thick red haze floating over Bristol Motor Speedway, Joey Logano took the checkered flag for NASCAR's first Cup Series race at a dirt track in 50 years.

He couldn't see much — visibility was next to nothing during this Monday dust storm — but Logano clung to the familiar bottom lane around the bullring to collect the checkered flag on this NASCAR experiment.

Logano got a jump on Denny Hamlin on the overtime restart to earn his third career victory at Bristol. But this was not the Bristol of old, the track had been covered with 2,300 truckloads of red Tennessee clay so that NASCAR could add a dirt track to the Cup schedule for the first time since 1970.

"How about Bristol on dirt, guys! This is incredible," Logano said to the crowd, a reduced capacity sellout of about 30,000 fans.

"There's nothing like winning at Bristol, but putting it on dirt and being the first to do it is very special."

Logano became the seventh race winner through seven races this season and gave Team Penske back-to-back victories. Ryan Blaney won in a Penske Ford last week.

The Logano victory closed a weekend of uncertainty and even some hysteria as NASCAR

launched this drive through the dirt. It was broadcast partner Fox who wanted a dirt race on the Cup schedule and Speedway Motorsports, seeking some new energy at its beloved Bristol bullring, said it would take the race.

So NASCAR awarded the experiment to Bristol, bypassing dozens of quality established dirt tracks across the country. The snub extended to Tony Stewart, who had successfully hosted seven Truck Series races at his Eldora Speedway dirt track in Ohio but said was never considered for a Cup race.

Marcus Smith, the CEO of Speedway Motorsports, insisted concrete Bristol was up to the challenge and he told The Associated Press he'd spent nearly \$2 million to make the dirt dream a reality.

Smith was pleased with the buzz generated by the event, even as NASCAR huddled for solutions to extreme dust, poor tire durability and shifting weather conditions that made the buildup a muddy mess. When race day finally arrived, torrential overnight rains had flooded the Bristol grounds and NASCAR had to postpone Sunday's show by a day.

Through all the consternation, Smith remained optimistic and headed to the track Monday morning convinced this dirt project was a success. The final product was a doubleheader — Martin Truex Jr.



Logano celebrates after his win, only his fourth race driven on a dirt track.

won his first Truck Series race in 15 years to open the day — and then Logano closed the Cup race with the overtime victory.

Everyone seemed happy, and before the race was even over, the track announced over the public address system that Bristol would run on dirt again next season.

"It's only my fourth dirt race ever, so I had a lot of fun trying to figure it out," Logano said. "I was having a blast racing, trying to find the right lanes, moving around."

Ricky Stenhouse Jr., a veteran dirt racer, was second for his highest finish of the season. Hamlin, who had last raced on dirt in go-karts when he was 8, finished third.

MLB to relax protocol when 85% on field have been vaccinated

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Card games, car pools and eating at restaurants may be back in the major leagues later this season. Trips to church and sponsor events may return, too.

Mask use would be dropped from dugouts and bullpens, and electronic tracing devices would be eliminated when 85% of major league players and primary field staff are vaccinated against the coronavirus. Communal clubhouse video would return before and after games. Pool tables would be restored, along with team saunas.

A three-page memorandum from Major League Baseball and the players' association sent to players and staff on Monday and obtained by The Associated Press also stated "all players and staff are strongly encouraged to receive one of the approved COVID-19 vaccines when eligible."

"For purposes of this memo, individuals are considered 'fully vaccinated' two weeks after receiving their second dose of a two-dose vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) or two weeks after their first dose of a single dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson)," the memo stated.

Not many players have been vaccinated, according to MLB, but it expects the pace to increase after teams return to their home cities from spring training. Opening day is Thursday.

The St. Louis Cardinals and Houston Astros said Monday their players will be offered vaccines before openers and the San Francisco Giants said some of their players already had received vaccination shots.

MLB's Tier 1 restrictions in place since last summer cover players, managers, coaches, bull-

pen catchers, team physicians, athletic trainers, physical therapists, and strength and conditioning coaches.

While clubhouse video rules would loosen before and after games, in-game use will remain covered by rules restricting in-game use to MLB-issued iPads with catcher's signals blocked, regulations put in place in response to the Houston Astros sign-stealing scandal.

Once the 85% threshold is reached, fully vaccinated players and staff would be able to eat and drink on flights. They would be able to gather in indoor spaces such as hotels without masks or social distancing as long as nonvaccinated people aren't present, and they would be able to carpool or use Uber or Lyft. The relaxation would not apply to gatherings in group facilities at ballparks, such as clubhouses.

Fully vaccinated people who have close contact with someone with COVID-19 would not have to quarantine unless they exhibit symptoms.

Vaccinated players and staff would have the option to reduce PCR saliva testing to twice weekly, similar to Tier 2 staff, such as front office and clubhouse employees, owners and groundkeepers.

Family members who are fully vaccinated and children who are not vaccinated would be able to stay with players and staff in hotel rooms during road trips, though MLB and the union cautioned that the Centers for Disease Control advised not to use commercial travel and to stay home unless necessary. Families also would be able to sit anywhere in ballparks and not be restricted to pods, subject to local laws and policies.



JOSE F. MORENO / AP

A statue of Harry Kalas wears a face mask during a tour on the COVID-19 protocols and safety guidelines that fans should be aware of when they return to games at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia.

NCAA TOURNAMENT

Magical moment makes Sampson reflect

Houston coach remembers first coach who hired him: Heathcote

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Kelvin Sampson savored Monday night's magical moment.

After Houston beat Oregon State to reach the Final Four, the coach and his wife, Karen, walked over and waved to Cougars fans. Then he celebrated his second Final Four trip by hugging his son and assistant coach, Kellen. His daughter, Lauren, is the team's director of external affairs.

Finally, he took a few moments to reflect on the man who would have enjoyed the game even more than him or Oregon State coach Wayne Tinkle — the late national-championship winning coach Jud Heathcote of Michigan State.

"My two kids were born in Montana. I coached in Montana, and Wayne was a great player at the University of Montana," Sampson said after his 1,000th career game as a head coach. "When I talked to Wayne before the game, I said, 'You know who would love to watch this game tonight was Jud Heathcote.' Jud gave me my start at Michigan State, and Wayne and I are both part of Jud's coaching tree, so I was thinking about Jud tonight."

Heathcote hired the then-22-year-old Sampson as a graduate assistant at Michigan State in the late 1970s. Later, he helped Samp-

son get jobs at Montana Tech and the Washington State job, which led Sampson to Oklahoma — where he made his first and only other Final Four appearance in 2002.

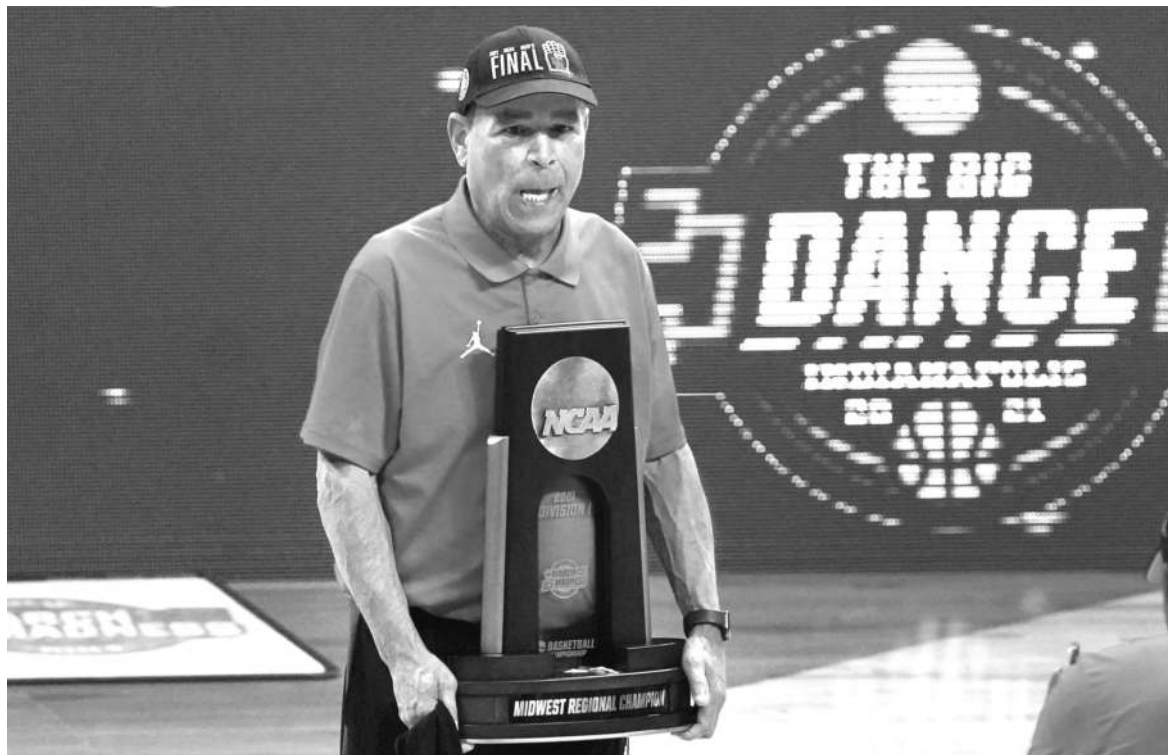
Sampson fell short of the national championship that year and when it looked like he might make it back in 2008 with Indiana, was forced out before the end of the season because of NCAA violations. Now, 13 years later and a short stroll from the governing body that nearly ended his career, Sampson made it back with some of the same lessons he learned from Heathcote all those years ago.

"Jud was unique, he was a hard worker, he came from humble beginnings," Sampson said, noting that Heathcote's top student, Magic Johnson, texted him Monday. "His greatest strength was his ability to get the most out of people. But the guy that influenced me the most that I would give the most credit to was my father, John W. Sampson. I wish he and my mother were here tonight to see this."

Staying loose

Coach Mark Few, freshman star Jalen Suggs and top-seeded Gonzaga are chasing history in Indianapolis.

The Zags need three more wins to win their first national cham-



DARRON CUMMINGS / AP

Houston head coach Kelvin Sampson holds the trophy after winning the Midwest Regional with Monday's 67-61 victory over Oregon State in Indianapolis. It's Sampson's second trip to the Final Four.

pionship and become the first undefeated men's champion in 45 years.

Conventional wisdom might suggest the pressure should be increasing as the finish line draws nearer. Not a chance with this team.

"There's a looseness about them because you've got Drew Timme on your team, for one, and Joel Ayayi has just an infectious enthusiasm about him," Few said.

"Heck, Jalen's 19 years old. This is his first time through. He doesn't know any different. So he's having a great time."

La La land

Through their long history as crosstown foes, there's one place USC and UCLA have never met: the NCAA Tournament.

It could happen next weekend, though it would take two upsets. First, the Trojans would have to

knock off unbeaten Gonzaga. Then, if the 11th-seeded Bruins beat No. 1 seed Michigan in the East Region championship game, the crosstown rivals would finally meet in the NCAA tourney.

While UCLA has a record 11 championship banners, it hasn't played in the Final Four since 2008. USC has never made it and this is the first time the two Los Angeles schools have ever made the Elite Eight in the same season.

Scoreboard

East Regional

At Indianapolis
Regional Semifinals
Sunday, March 28

Michigan 76, Florida St. 58

UCLA 88, Alabama 78, OT

Regional Championship

Tuesday, March 30

Michigan vs. UCLA

South Regional

At Indianapolis
Regional Semifinals
Saturday, March 27

Baylor 62, Villanova 51

Arkansas 72, Oral Roberts 70

Regional Championship

Monday, March 29

Baylor 81, Arkansas 72

Midwest Regional

At Indianapolis
Regional Semifinals
Saturday, March 27

Oregon St. 65, Loyola Chicago 58

Houston 62, Syracuse 46

Regional Championship

Monday, March 29

Houston 67, Oregon St. 61

West Regional

At Indianapolis
Regional Semifinals
Sunday, March 28

Gonzaga 83, Creighton 65

Southern Cal 82, Oregon 68

Regional Championship

Tuesday, March 30

Gonzaga vs. Southern Cal

Final Four

At Indianapolis
National Semifinals
Saturday, April 3

Baylor vs. Houston

Michigan-UCLA winner vs. Gonzaga-

Southern Cal winner

National Championship

Monday, April 5

Semifinal winners

Tickets: 'We got good looks and the guys made them'

FROM PAGE 24

that's what great teams do. They get on top and then figure out how to stay there.

In this case, guard Davion Mitchell's speedy runs through the Arkansas defense opened up space at the perimeter, which teammate MaCio Teague took full advantage of to nail consecutive three-pointers and put the game out of reach.

"It just showed how focused and ready to play we were," said Baylor coach Scott Drew, who took over a scandal-plagued program in 2003 and brought the Bears to the cusp of a Final Four twice before. "We got good looks and the guys made them."

Not bad timing, either, with overall top seed Gonzaga and the final No. 1, Michigan, expected to validate their championship credentials against No. 6 USC and No. 11 UCLA, respectively, when the Elite Eight round wrapped up Tuesday.

Houston's win over Oregon State was a different story. Like Baylor, the Cougars came flying out of the gate, rolling to a 34-17



MICHAEL CONROY / AP

Baylor head coach Scott Drew holds up the net after his team's 81-72 victory over Arkansas on Monday in Indianapolis.

lead at intermission. Then they went cold, shooting a miserable 29% in the second half as the Beavers, improbably, looked set to become the lowest-seeded team to make a Final Four.

But then Houston's Quentin Grimes punctured that balloon

with a three-pointer with 3:21 left to break a 55-all tie, Oregon State couldn't buy a basket, and the Cougars made enough free throws the rest of the way for a shaky win.

"It was right there within our grasp with the effort we showed in the second half," Beavers coach

Wayne Tinkle said. "Really proud of this group. We got every single ounce out of them."

Gonzaga's Bulldogs, on the other hand, have yet to be pushed anywhere near their limits. They've won won 33 straight dating to the 2019-20 season. They're 29-0 this time around and the last 26 have all been by double-digits. They've got NBA Draft lottery talent, a deep bench and like Michigan, and now Baylor, they've proven capable of responding every time push comes to shove.

Thus far, the Zags have done it mostly on offense.

But what all those high-scoring wins obscure is how good they can defend when they need to. They've held opponents below their scoring average in 20 games, including the past six and might be getting even better. Their win against Creighton was the seventh time Gonzaga held an opponent to at least 10 points worse than their average.

"This is not a one-trick pony," cautioned Bluejays coach Greg McDermott. "These guys can play on both ends of the floor."

NCAA WOMEN'S TOURNAMENT



ERIC GAY / AP

UConn guard Paige Bueckers, center, drives to the basket between Baylor defenders Queen Egbo, left, and DiJonai Carrington during the Huskies' 69-67 regional championship win Monday in San Antonio.

UConn tops Baylor, reaches its 13th straight Final Four

Bueckers scores 28 points as Huskies barely hold off Bears, 69-67

By DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — It took a great game from phenomenal freshman Paige Bueckers and a last-second stop with a disputed nonfoul call to keep UConn's run of Final Four appearances going.

Bueckers scored 28 points and the top-seeded Huskies used a huge run spanning the final two quarters to beat No. 2 Baylor 69-67 on Monday night and reach a 13th consecutive Final Four in the women's NCAA Tournament.

"Each year that we do it, I still can't believe it," said UConn coach Geno Auriemma, who was showered by his team with confetti after the game.

The Huskies have made the national semifinals every season since 2008 and have won six titles during that span. They will face Arizona on Friday night. The Wildcats are playing in their first Final Four after beating Indiana.

Bueckers was 6 years old when UConn started its run of appearances in the national semifinals.

"To be part of that history is wild," Bueckers said. "It's why I came here. ... Saw that as a young kid, wanted to be a part of that. It's surreal."

The Huskies (28-1) trailed 55-45 late in the third quarter before scoring 19 consecutive points, including 10 by Bueckers, who became the third first-year player to make first-team All-America.

"Paige got that look in her eye, started getting some buckets. And

Scoreboard

Alamo Region At San Antonio Regional Championship Tuesday, March 30 Stanford vs. Louisville	Hemisfair Region Regional Championship Tuesday, March 30 South Carolina vs. Texas	River Walk Region At San Antonio Regional Championship Monday, March 29 UConn 69, Baylor 67	Mercado Region At San Antonio Regional Championship Monday, March 29 Arizona 66, Indiana 53
Final Four At San Antonio National Semifinals Friday, April 2 UConn vs. Arizona Stanford-Louisville winner vs. South Carolina-Texas winner	National Championship Sunday, April 4 Semifinal winners		

when Paige is scoring, the rest of the team really gains a lot of confidence," Auriemma said. "Our defense got just really good at the end, and we got some great stops."

The Bears (28-3) wouldn't go away as Bueckers went cold in the final minutes. Trailing 64-55, NaLyssa Smith, an All-American herself, ended Baylor's drought with 6:47 left and sparked a 12-4 burst that got the Bears within one after DiJonai Carrington converted two free throws with 19.3 seconds left.

After a timeout, Baylor fouled Christyn Williams, who missed

both free throws to give Baylor one last chance. Carrington, who finished with 22 points, drove the lane to the left and missed a contested jumper from the baseline where a foul could have been called, but wasn't.

"I personally don't see it as a controversial call. I've seen the replay, and one girl fouled me in my face and one girl fouled me in my arm," Carrington said. "So, at that point you can't do anything else. We drew up a play, (Smith) got fouled posting up and I got fouled driving. Nothing we could really do about that situation in particular. But, you know, turn the page."

LeBron James even tweeted that a foul should have been called. Bears coach Kim Mulkey agreed.

"I've got still shots and video from two angles. One kid hits her in the face and one kid hits her on the elbow," Mulkey said.

Williams corralled the rebound and was fouled with 0.8 seconds left. She hit one of the free throws before Bueckers stole the inbounds pass at the buzzer.

No team has played UConn tougher over the last decade than Baylor, with each team winning four of the matchups. The Lady Bears (28-3) had won the previous two, including a 74-58 win at Connecticut in January of 2020.

They were supposed to meet this past January, but Mulkey came down with COVID-19 around Christmas and the game was canceled.

McDonald powers Arizona past Indiana and into Final Four

By JIM VERTUNO
Associated Press

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SAN ANTONIO — Arizona asks Aari McDonald to do just about everything for the Wildcats. And just about every game, she delivers all she's got.

McDonald scored 33 points in a dizzying display of razzle-dazzle shot making and gutsy leadership in crunch time, carrying the No. 3 seed Wildcats to a 66-53 win over No. 4 seed Indiana on Monday night, sending Arizona to its first Final Four in women's NCAA Tournament history.

"Just being a little player, I always play with a chip on my shoulder," said McDonald, who stands just 5-foot-6 but used her small frame to slip under and around defenders or shake them off the dribble.

"A lot of people say I'm too small. I'll never do this, I'll never do that. That drives me," she said.

The Pac-12 player of the year controlled just about every Wildcats possession, hitting the Hoosiers with slashing drives, timely rebounds and even a banked-in three-pointer.

She briefly left the game with a twisted left ankle late in the fourth quarter, but had it taped up and limped back on the court to score six more points. Her three-point play with 34 seconds left put the exclamation point on the victory.

Arizona (20-5) advanced to Friday's national semifinal against top-seeded UConn, which reached its 13th straight Final Four when it beat No. 2 seed Baylor earlier Monday.

Wildcats coach Adia Barnes, who led Arizona to the Sweet 16 as a point guard in 1998, is now the sixth coach to lead her alma mater to the women's Final Four.

Barnes has said she took a risk when she returned to coach her alma mater five years ago, when it was one of the worst programs in the Pac-12. Then McDonald transferred from Washington and the

Points by Arizona 5-6 senior guard Aari McDonald, a season high, in her team's 66-53 defeat of Indiana on Monday. She also had 11 rebounds and four assists.

SOURCE: Associated Press

two have been not-so-quietly building the program in the desert ever since.

"Aari, I asked her to do everything. She has done everything the whole time she's been here," Barnes. "And I'm proud of all of these young women around her. They fight and they play for her, and it's just amazing."

McDonald topped 30 points for the second straight tournament game. She scored 31 against Texas A&M two days earlier. Against the Hoosiers, she was 12-for-20 shooting and made 5 of 6 three-pointers.

"I always want to be better than I was the day before," McDonald said.

History was going to be made whichever team won Monday night. Indiana advanced past the Sweet 16 for the first time but its methodical, grinding game simply ran into a player it couldn't match for 40 minutes.

After pulling back from an eight-point deficit in the third behind a workhorse night from Mackenzie Holmes in the post, the Hoosiers had tied it 48-48. But a scoring drought of more than three minutes kept them from making a charge in a game Indiana led only one minute of the second quarter.

Holmes scored 20 and grabbed eight rebounds to lead the Hoosiers (21-6), and they tried to use her presence in the post to control the game until the late scoring problems.

"I feel like we got some good looks, we couldn't put an exclamation point on some of them," Indiana coach Teri Moren said.



ERIC GAY / AP

Arizona guard Aari McDonald drives to the basket past Indiana forward Mackenzie Holmes. McDonald scored 33 points in the Wildcats' 66-53 win Monday in the Elite Eight.

SPORTS



Down to the wire

Bueckers, UConn edge Baylor, earn berth in Final Four » Page 23

NCAA TOURNAMENT



DARRON CUMMINGS / AP

Baylor players celebrate Monday's 81-72 victory over Arkansas in the regional finals of the NCAA Tournament in Indianapolis. It's Baylor's first trip to the Final Four since 1950.



MICHAEL CONROY / AP

Houston players celebrate after beating Oregon State 67-61 on Monday in the Midwest Regional final to earn a berth in the Final Four.

Baylor, Houston get first two tickets to Final Four

By JIM LITKE
Associated Press

Another contender emerged from the mist at the NCAA Tournament — nothing dramatic, mind you, like in the movies, because we already knew No. 1 seed Baylor was very good.

But so was third-seeded Arkansas. Yet the Bears ran the Razorbacks into the ground early and then again when it got close, posting a comfortable 81-72 win that demonstrated they're much, much better than good and in the mood for bigger game. They won't have to wait long.

Baylor faces No. 2 Houston, which nearly blew a 17-point lead before shaking off 11th-seeded Oregon State 67-61, come Saturday for a spot in the national championship game. Cougars fans have until then to revel

in the memories of Houston's great "Phi Slamma Jamma" tournament teams of the early 80s, but they could be in for a rude awakening.

Because this is how Arkansas coach Eric Musselman began his postgame news conference: "Just want to give Baylor a ton of credit. I thought that they played phenomenal tonight, especially offensively."

The Bears are fast, tenacious, long-armed and when everything is clicking, brutally efficient, too. Just nine minutes in, they built an 18-point cushion, playing harassing defense and shooting 68% without turning the ball over once. By half, that was trimmed to 46-38. The Razorbacks got within four around the 6-minute mark, then got counter-punched with an 8-1 run because

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Logano wins NASCAR's dirt track race » Auto racing, Page 21

