WASHINGTON — The U.S. unemployment rate fell unexpectedly in May to 13.3% — still on par with what the nation witnessed during the Great Depression — as states loosened their coronavirus lockdowns and businesses began recouping workers.

The government said Friday that the economy added 2.5 million jobs last month, driving unemployment down from 14.7% in April.

The May job gain, which confounded economists’ expectations of another round of severe losses, suggests that thousands of stores, restaurants, gyms and other companies reopened and rehired more quickly than many analysts had forecast.

Still, it raises a key question for businesses and unemployed workers: How fast will the rebound proceed? For hiring to continue at a solid pace, businesses will probably need to see signs that consumers are starting to resume their pre-outbreak habits of shopping and dining out.

SEE UNEMPLOYMENT ON PAGE 8

BY CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

A man walks by a career center in Lawrence, Mass., on Friday. The U.S. unemployment rate, although lower, is still elevated with what the nation witnessed during the Great Depression.
More J.C. Penney stores to close

The Dallas Morning News

J.C. Penney asked the U.S. Bankruptcy Court on Thursday to allow it to reject 18% of its store leases in 38 states. Most of those locations are in malls, and Penney said it expects more closings during the bankruptcy reorganization.

Penney filed for bankruptcy reorganization in May after the coronavirus pandemic temporarily closed all its stores, putting its turnaround efforts in jeopardy. A judge approved J.C. Penney’s $900 million financing package Thursday to fund its reorganization. Retail bankruptcies can deteriorate quickly as Penney’s lenders have power to convert the filing into a liquidation.

“When closing stores is always an extremely difficult decision, our store optimization strategy is vital to ensuring we emerge from both Chapter 11 and the COVID-19 pandemic as a stronger retailer with greater financial flexibility to allow us to continue serving our loyal customers for decades to come,” said Jill Soltau, chief executive officer of Penney.

Soltau will be convincing lenders to allow the company to reorganize and come out of bankruptcy still operating as a department store retailer, but with fewer stores and less debt.

EXCHANGE RATES

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INTEREST RATES

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

**ROSE GUDEX/U.S. Air Force**

**WAR ON TERRORISM**

**PAGE 3**

Staff Sgt. Johnathan Randall, Special Operations Surgical Team member assigned to the 720th Operational Support Squadron, smiles during a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., on May 20, where he received the Bronze Star Medal for his actions while deployed in 2019.

**Airman awarded Bronze Star for caring for over 600 in Syria**

**By Chad Garland**

Stars and Stripes

A special operations airman has been awarded a Bronze Star for his work on a battlefield surgical team during the fight against the Islamic State, as the terrorists lost the last of their territory.

Over the course of a six-month deployment in early 2019, Staff Sgt. Johnathan Randall provided surgical care for 644 combat casualties, assisted in 16 damage control surgeries, 46 resuscitations and 70 advanced procedures “at the most forward point of combat operations,” the military said this week.

One moment that stood out was during a counterattack in an undisclosed location, where he and his special operations surgical team stabilized and evacuated 31 injured and kidney casualties at a forward staging point, while under constant threat of small arms and mortar fire.

Randall was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service to the U.S. military.

They performed surgeries in buildings and vehicles on the battlefield, the award citation said. Randall and the other team members, who couldn’t attend the ceremony due to coronavirus prevention measures, did “amazing work” in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, said Lt. Col. James Webb, Special Operations Surgical Team director of operations.

“Damage control resuscitation and surgery in the forward zone was challenging even in the most ideal situations, but to perform at such a high level in the most extreme environments, hours forward of the closest hospitals, is a testament to the mental and physical fortitude of him and his team,” Webb said in the statement.

Randall, who joined the Air Force in 2012 and quickly made joining a special operations surgical team his goal, said it was “surreal” to be so effective as part of a small team of six people.

“It’s the dream job,” he said.

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**US conducts 1st Taliban strikes since cease-fire**

**By Phillip Walter Wellman**

Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. conducted two airstrikes against the Taliban in Afghanistan this week as the insurgent group targeted Afghan forces, a U.S. military spokesman said Friday.

The airstrikes were the first by the U.S. against the Taliban since the start of the Eid cease-fire at the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in late May. U.S. Forces—Afghanistan spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett said Friday.

A strike in western Farah province Thursday targeted 15 Taliban fighters “executing an assault” on an Afghan checkpoint, Leggett said. The other strike in southern Kandahar province Friday afternoon also targeted insurgents attacking a checkpoint, he said.

Leggett said the strikes did not violate a peace deal signed between the U.S. and the Taliban in February.

“Taliban didn’t immediately comment on the latest strikes but in April accused the U.S. of violating the Feb. 29 deal by conducting ‘brutal drone attacks and other bombings’ against illegitimate targets,” he said.

The strikes are an indication that the peace process is faltering.

On March 28, Afghanistan’s Tolo News reported Thursday that the Taliban had conducted an average of 30 attacks per day since the cease-fire ended May 27.

While the text of the deal doesn’t explicitly prohibit Taliban attacks against Afghan forces, Leggett said last month that the Taliban made a verbal agreement to reduce violence by 80%, which was not kept.

In late February, both sides observed a seven-day peace in “reduction in violence,” but within a week of the peace deal being inked, the U.S. reported strikes on Taliban forces attacking Afghan checkpoints.

Meanwhile, an initial drawdown from roughly 13,000 to 8,600 U.S. troops called for in the deal has proceeded and is scheduled to be completed by early next month.

Under the deal’s terms, the insurgents were to begin talks with the Kabul government in March, a condition for the total withdrawal of U.S. and other foreign forces. But those talks have been stymied by disagreements over a prisoner swap, rising violence and political infighting in Kabul.

While the Taliban have largely held off on attacking foreign troops since February, restraint has yet to be seen with the insurgents targetting Afghan forces in the country, saying the data could hurt the peace process.

The little strike information released since comes from rare official tweets like Leggett’s on Friday, which went on to repeat the U.S.’s commitment to the agreement: “We’re making sure: All sides must reduce violence to allow the peace process to take hold.”

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**ISIS claims responsibility for attack at Kabul mosque**

**Associated Press**

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Islamic State claimed responsibility Thursday for a bomb attack inside a mosque in the Afghan capital Kabul that killed two people, including the prayer leader, and wounded eight others.

In a statement on an ISIS-affiliated website, the group said Tuesday’s attack in Kabul targeted a prayer leader who was described as “an apostate and evil propagating loyalty to the apostate Afghan government.”

Prayer leader Ayaz Niazi was buried Thursday at the same mosque where the attack took place. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and several other officials paid tribute.

ISIS attacks have increased, possibly in Kabul, meeting Afghan media, civilians and minority Shiites.

On Sunday the group claimed responsibility for a roadside bombing against a bus belonging to a local TV station in Kabul.
Blue Angels receive modified Super Hornets

BY JAMES BOLINGER  
Stars and Stripes

The world’s largest aircraft maker, reeling from evaporating demand for its planes during the coronavirus pandemic, nonetheless scored a morale-boosting lift this week.

Boeing delivered the first of a planned fleet of 11 modified F/A-18E Super Hornets to the Navy’s Blue Angels demonstration team on Wednesday, according to the company.

The aircraft will undergo flight testing and evaluation at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland, according to a press release on the company’s website. “The Super Hornet is an iconic representation of excellence in naval aviation,” said Pat Walsh, a retired Admiral and the vice president of U.S. Navy & Marine Corps services for Boeing, according to the release. Walsh flew with the Blue Angels from 1985 to 1987 as the left wingman and slot pilot.

The Blue Angels now fly the F/A-18 Hornet. The Super Hornet that the team is moving to has major modifications, including an oil tank for the smoke-generation system, fuel systems that enable the aircraft to fly inverted for extended periods of time, civilian-compatible navigation equipment, cameras and adjustments for the aircraft’s center of gravity.

Boeing plans to deliver the remaining Super Hornets this year. The Super Hornet can fly at speeds up to Mach 1.6 (about 1,200 mph at sea level) and weighs 16 tons empty, each of its twin engines generates 17,000 pounds of thrust, according to a Boeing fact sheet. During their performance the Blue Angels fly at speeds ranging from 120 mph to 700 mph (just below Mach 1).

The first F/A-18 Super Hornet for the Navy’s Blue Angels demonstration team was delivered for testing and evaluation, June 3.

Sen. Tom Cotton raises profile with defense of show of force

Taciturn as he strides through Capitol hallways, former defense secretary Robert Gates, long acknowledged reporters’ questions, Cotton is known for tough stances and frankness. Cotton’s office declined to make him available for this article. But a person close to him, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Gates would consider serving in the Cabinet for a second Trump term if he were to seek it, in November, and running for president himself in 2024.

An Army combat veteran and Harvard Law School graduate, Cotton’s ambition is no surprise in Washington or Arkansas. Notice has been taken of his unusually high profile for a first-term senator and his frequent appearances on the network of choice for Trump and his followers.

“Everything he’s doing looks like what a very ambitious, too, who wants to run for president at the next available time does,” said GOP consultant Liz Mair, who says she’s “not a fan.” Cotton was on Fox again Thursday, saying the outrage about his call for police reforms is “what oceans of tears” will do to protesters “exposes the hypocrisy of all these woke progressives” who can’t tolerate opinions they don’t like.

And with some protests over police killings of black men veering into violence in New York and elsewhere, Cotton reprised his role as one of Trump’s chief defenders in Congress.

He disputed Defense Secretary Mark Esper’s comment that this week’s turbulence didn’t create an urgent need to use troops in cities, saying that was Trump’s call. And to former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis’ stunning assertion that Trump was dividing the country and violating the Constitution, Cotton said, “He’s wrong on this one.”

None of that went well over with Democrats.

“I’m appalled that anyone, let alone a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, would advocate for the use of military force to silence dissent,” said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., a fellow member of that panel.

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump’s inability to unify the nation at a time of grave unrest is testing his uneasy alliance with mainstream Republicans, some emboldened by Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma and others, such as Rep. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, who say they’re prepared to draft what could be a sweeping package of police reform measures, including a ban on choke holds. Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, has endorsed such a ban.

“We have a moral moment in our country,” Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., the chairwoman of the House’s Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Subcommittee, said on a conference call Wednesday.

The political stakes of any police reform efforts are high, amplified in an election year by the pandemic. President Donald Trump’s “law and order” stance, including his threats to call in the U.S. military to clamp down on protesters.

The House is expected to vote on police reform legislation this week. With Democrats in the majority, the bills will almost certainly pass the House. But with President Trump’s “law and order” stance, it remains unclear if the Senate will pass anything.

Senior Democratic Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said he won’t force a vote on the police reforms. Senate Republicans have not endorsed any particular legislation.

On Thursday, Senate Demo- cratic Leader Chuck Schumer said his side was prepared to draft police reform legislation, including a ban on choke holds. Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, has endorsed such a ban.

“Words of kindness and grace are essential to America, but so are laws and order,” he said.

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Reflection: Rallies, demands for justice continue across US

FROM FRONT PAGE

criminal charges against the police officers involved in Floyd’s arrest; a more conciliatory approach by police who have marched with them or taken a knee to recognize their message; and the realization that the deluge of rage after Floyd’s death is not sustainable.

As the protests have taken root over the past week, they have become communities unto themselves.

In New York, where residents have been stuck at home for nearly three months because of the coronavirus pandemic, residents who can’t go to a restaurant are happy to be able to go a protest. People bring their dogs and share snacks and water bottles. They have been heartened by police who have joined them.

“It's great to be alive, it's history right now,” said protester Kenyata Taylor.

In Atlanta, protesters Nate Saint carried a sign that encouraged people to vote. He attributed the reduction in violence in part to the police.

“Cops are recognizing that the more passive they become, the more receptive, the more they listen, the less the protesters are going to react,” he said.

A group of protesters stood near a line of police and National Guard troops. Some cursed officers. Others were seen talking to the officers. It was a different scene from last Friday when the city experienced widespread vandalism and looting following a peaceful demonstration.

Protester Hilliard Jones, 24, sat on a barricade downtown Atlanta near police. He's been attending the protests for nearly a week. The violence early on reflected centuries of injustice against blacks, he said.

“If you've been oppressed like we have for so long, eventually it's going to explode,” Jones said.

There were still skirmishes in the Bronx and elsewhere. In Buffalo, a police commissioner suspended two officers after video from WBFO showed a man being struck repeatedly on the ground by police as they were enforcing a curfew Thursday night. The man appeared to hit his head on the pavement and blood leaked out as officers walked past. The man was hospitalized.

But in Texas, protesters cheered as Fort Worth officers joined the front of a march. Police in Austin also walked with dozens of members of the University of Texas football team as they made their way from campus to the state Capitol to honor Floyd’s memory. Once there, the group and police officers took a knee for nine minutes.

“This protest won't just stop here,” junior safety Caden Sterns said. “To the white community ... if you want change like you say you do, you must change. What I mean is, you must realize, and the oppressor must realize, you are oppressing.”

Wednesday marked the first peaceful night of protests in Seattle since demonstrations began there last week. The mayor and police chief were hoping for more peace after meeting with community members.

“For those peacefully demonstrating tonight, please know you can continue to demonstrate. We want you to continue making your voice heard,” Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan said on Twitter. The calm in Seattle followed a weekend of chaos that saw police vehicles burned and stores looted, and officers on Monday and Tuesday nights used pepper spray, tear gas, flash bangs and rubber bullets to disperse crowds.

"Demonstrators protest Thursday near the White House in Washington over the death of George Floyd, a black man who was in police custody in Minneapolis."

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Ex-cop charged in Floyd's death served 8 years in Army Reserve

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Derek Chauvin, the fired police officer charged in a Minneapolis man’s death that sparked protests around the world, spent eight years as a military policeman in the Army Reserve, according to his official service record.

The 44-year-old was charged Wednesday with second-degree murder, along with previously filed charges of third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in the May 25 death of George Floyd, according to a release from Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison.

The incident in which Chauvin and three other police officers detained Floyd has sparked protests in many U.S. cities. Floyd, 46, died after Chauvin pressed his knee into Floyd’s neck for nearly nine minutes while he was handcuffed and laying on the pavement.

Chauvin enlisted in the Army Reserve in February 1996 and left in February 2004, about three months after he joined the Minneapolis Police Department, according to the state attorney and a redacted copy of his police personnel file. He attained the rank of specialist in February 1998 and left the service at the same rank.

On his police application to become a community service officer in 2001, Chauvin said he spent seven months at a training center formerly known as the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany, and 14 months serving with the 759th Military Police Battalion at former Army base Fort McClellan, Ala.

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars And Stripes

A 31-year-old Army veteran carrying an assault rifle and dressed in military fatigues was arrested in Los Angeles early Tuesday morning after a member of the National Guard pointed him out to police in the area, according to the city’s police department.

Gregory Wong, who was arrested on a felony charge of transportation of an assault weapon, drew the attention of troops when he arrived downtown at about 1:30 a.m. in a civilian sedan dressed in clothing similar to the National Guard’s uniform and carrying an assault rifle and a pistol, according to a news release from the Los Angeles Police Department.

About 2,500 California National Guard members were serving within Los Angeles on Tuesday to prevent looting and vandalism that has occurred during protests that began last week after the death of George Floyd on May 25, according to the service.

On Tuesday, a National Guard member notified police officers that they’d seen “an unknown individual dressed in military fatigues.”

Wong, who is from Gardena, a city about 15 miles south of Los Angeles, told police that he was going downtown to provide security for a friend’s establishment, according to city police.

However, California law states assault weapons must be transported only between specific locations and unloaded and stored in a locked container during transport, according to the state attorney general’s website.

“While investigating the incident, authorities found a firearm and ammunition that matched the description of the reported weapon,” according to the release.

The complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Las Vegas alleged that three Nevada men with ties to a loose movement of right-wing extremists advocating the overthrow of the U.S. government have been arrested on terrorism-related charges in what authorities say was a conspiracy to spark violence during recent protests in Las Vegas.

Federal prosecutors say the three white men with U.S. military experience are accused of conspiring to carry out a plan that began in April in conjunction with protests to reopen businesses closed because of the coronavirus.

More recently, they sought to capitalize on protests over the death of George Floyd, a black man who died in Minneapolis after a white officer pressed his knee into his neck for several minutes even after he stopped moving and pleading for air, prosecutors said.

The three men were arrested Saturday in downtown Las Vegas after filling gas cans at a parking lot and making Molotov cocktails in glass bottles, according to a copy of the criminal complaint obtained by The Associated Press.

Life is hard and all Americans expect to succeed but we must create opportunities for success for all, regardless of their religion or their sexual preference,” he said. “I am sure that today this is not enough,” he said.

“We will hear many words about improving policing, on maintaining law and order, about being more empathetic to our fellow citizens’ views as we have before. And I am not naive enough to think that these words will change something that is deeply rooted in our culture which started the day the first African slave was brought to what we know as America.”

Neller cajoled the nation’s political and cultural leaders to continue speaking out for justice and fairness.

“At the same time work to address the conditions of any group in the country who is disadvantaged by any reason,” he said. “You cannot make everyone in the Country succeed but we must create opportunities for success for those not conditions for fairness. Life is hard and all Americans expect to work hard … but don’t make it harder than it is.”
On anniversary, few to mourn the D-Day dead in Normandy

By Ray Casert
Associated Press

COLLEVILLE-SUR-MER, France — At least the dead will always be there. All too many have been, for 76 years since that fateful June 6 on France’s Normandy beaches, when allied troops in 1944 turned the course of World War II and went on to defeat fascism in Europe in one of the most remarkable feats in military history.

Forgotten they will never be. Revered, yes. But Saturday’s anniversary will be one of the loneliest remembrances ever, as the coronavirus pandemic is keeping almost everyone away — from government leaders to frail veterans who might not get another chance for a final farewell to their unlucky comrades.

Rain and wind are also forecast, after weeks of warm, sunny weather.

“The sadness is almost too much, because there is no one,” said local guide Adeline James. “Plus you have their stories. The history is sad and it’s even more overwhelming now between the weather, the virus situation and, again.”

The locals in this northwestern part of France have come out year after year to show their gratitude for the soldiers from the United States, Britain, Canada and other countries who liberated them from Adolf Hitler’s Nazi forces.

Despite the lack of international crowds, David Pottier still went out to raise American flags in the Calvados village of Mosles, population 356, which was liberated by allied troops the day after the landing on five Normandy beachheads.

“In a forlorn scene, a gardener tended to the parched grass around the small monument for the war dead, while Pottier, the local mayor, was getting the French tricolor to flutter next to the Stars and Stripes.

“We have to recognize that they came to die in a foreign land,” Pottier said. “We miss the GIs,” he said of the U.S. soldiers.

The pandemic has wreaked havoc across the world, infecting 6.6 million people, killing over 391,000 and devastating economies.

It poses a particular threat to the elderly — like the surviving D-Day veterans who are in their late nineties or older.

It has also affected the younger generations who turn out every year to mark the occasion. Most have been barred from traveling to the windswept coasts of Normandy.

Some 160,000 soldiers made the perilous crossing from England that day in atrocious conditions, storming dunes which they knew were heavily defended by German troops determined to hold their positions.

Somehow, they succeeded. Yet they left a trail of thousands of casualties who have been mourned for generations since.

Last year stood out, with U.S. President Donald Trump joining his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron at the American cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer, on a bluff overlooking Omaha Beach. A smattering of veterans were honored with the highest accolades.

All across the beaches of Normandy tens of thousands came from across the globe to pay their respects to the dead and laud the surviving soldiers.

The acrid smell of wartime-era jeep exhaust fumes and the rumble of old tanks filled the air as parades of vintage vehicles went from village to village. The tiny roads between the dunes, hedges and apple orchards were clogged for hours, if not days.

Heading into the D-Day remembrance weekend this year, only the salty brine coming off the ocean on Omaha Beach hits the nostrils, the shrieks of seagulls pierce the ears and a sense of desolation hangs across the region’s country roads.

“Last year this place was full with jeeps, trucks, people dressed up as soldiers,” said Eric Angely, who sat on a seawall, dressed in a World War II uniform after taking his restored U.S. Army jeep out for a ride.

“This year, there is nothing. It’s just me now, my dog and my jeep,” the local Frenchman said.

Three quarters of a century and a dune on Omaha Beach with men in WWII period uniforms after a Native American ceremony at his memorial in Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, Normandy, France, on Friday.

World War II D-Day veteran and Penobscot Eder from Maine, Charles Norman Shay, left, walks in the dunes overlooking Omaha Beach with men in WWII period uniforms after a Native American ceremony at his memorial in Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, Normandy, France, on Friday.

Unemployment: Some businesses in hard-hit industries report signs of progress

FROM FRONT PAGE

Other evidence has also shown that the job-market meltdown triggered by the coronavirus has bottomed out. The number of people applying for unemployment benefits has declined for nine consecutive weeks. And the total number of Americans receiving such aid has essentially leveled off.

The overall job cuts have widened economic disparities: While the unemployment rate for white Americans was 12.4% in May, it was 17.6% for Hispanics and 16.8% for African Americans.

Even with the surprising gain in May, it could take months for all those who lost work in April and March to find jobs. Some economists forecast the rate could remain in double-digits through the November elections and into next year.

For weeks, economists had warned that unemployment in May could hit 20% or more.

The street protests over George Floyd’s killing that led to vandalism and lootings in dozens of cities did not affect Friday’s figures, which were compiled in the middle of May. However, business closings related to the unrest could show up in the June report.

A few businesses are reporting signs of progress even in hard-hit industries. American Airlines, for example, said this week that it will fly 55% of its U.S. routes in July, up from just 20% in May.

The Cheesecake Factory said one-quarter of its nearly 300 restaurants have reopened, though with limited capacity. Sales are at nearly 75% of the levels reached a year ago, the company said.

Erica Greshen, a labor economist at Cornell University and a former commissioner of the Labor Department’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, said hiring could ramp up relatively quickly in the coming months and reduce unemployment to low double-digits by year’s end.

“Then my inclination is that it will be a long, slow slog,” she said.

Until most Americans are confident they can shop, travel, eat out and fully return to their other spending habits without fear of contracting the virus, the economy is likely to remain sluggish.

Gwyneth Duesbery, 22, returned this week to her job as a restaurant hostess in Grand Rapids, Mich., as Bowdie’s Chop House prepares to reopen with tables 6 feet apart and seating capacity reduced to about one-quarter.

“I am concerned that it will expose me to potential diseases, and expose others, no matter the precautions that we take,” she said. “It’s kind of uncharted waters.”
AUSTIN, Texas — Reported coronavirus infections and hospitalizations continued to surge Thursday in Texas as Gov. Greg Abbott continues his phased reopening of the state’s economic activity.

The Department of State Health Services said 1,649 more cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus, were reported to the state Thursday. That brought the total number of reported cases to a total of 67,000.

The state reported 1,796 COVID-19 hospitalizations Thursday, a one-day increase of 309 and the third-highest Texas total of the outbreak. The 33 new COVID-19 deaths reported Thursday brought the state’s total to 1,340.

The actual number of positive cases is believed be three times higher because of testing shortages and because some people with the disease don’t show symptoms.

North Carolina

RALEIGH — Gyms and fitness centers would get relief from North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper's COVID-19 executive order that keeps them closed in a bill approved unanimously on Thursday by the House committee.

The measure, which would allow the gyms and health clubs to reopen indoors at 50% capacity, is another effort by lawmakers to overturn Cooper’s restrictions that have kept certain types of businesses shuttered during the pandemic. Social distancing for those working out on equipment and for classes, as well as extensive cleaning, also would be mandated under the legislation.

"We can take appropriate steps and still be safe in local areas and be responsible," Sen. Jim Perry, a Lenoir County Republican, said during the committee meeting.

Last week, the General Assembly approved legislation that would allow bars to reopen, although they would only operate outdoors. Cooper criticized the measure and has until this week to sign it or veto it. If he doesn’t sign it, it will become law. Cooper didn’t say late Thursday how he’d act on the bill, which would also expand outdoor seating temporarily for restaurants. But the governor said he had concerns about both measures because they would erode the ability to quickly adjust commerce limits should coronavirus cases surge unexpectedly.

A telephonic hearing is scheduled Tuesday on its new request for a temporary injunction suspending the cap after the U.S. Court denied its bid last week for an emergency order striking it down as unconstitutional.

Church leaders say the hard cap violates their religious freedom, treating them differently than many Nevada businesses allowed to operate at 50% of capacity if they practice strict social distancing.

Meanwhile, the local sheriff said in a court motion this week he won’t use his deputies to actively enforce social distancing at churches in his county east of Reno.

Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — The coronavirus has infected another 537 people and killed another 75 in Pennsylvania, the state Health Department said Thursday, even as the case of new cases and the percentage of those testing positive continues to decline.

The agency said it has now confirmed nearly 74,000 cases and a total of 5,817 deaths because of the virus in Pennsylvania in the last three months.

On Friday, Gov. Tom Wolf’s administration is expected to lift more restrictions, as it previously announced it would.

Nearly 6 million people in Philadelphia and seven other counties in hard-hit southeastern Pennsylvania are scheduled Friday to become the last in the state to shed the tightest restrictions under Wolf’s stoplight-colored three-phase reopening plan. That includes the stay-at-home order that is part of the so-called “red” phase.

Tennessee

NASHVILLE — Tennessee voters are stepping up their defense of Gov. Steve Sisolak’s 30-person cap on religious gatherings in a legal battle with leaders of a rural church who say it violates their constitutional right to exercise their beliefs.

Attorney General Aaron Ford is urging a federal judge in Reno, Nevada, to reopen the case and allow state health officials to set limits on gatherings in the state.

Judge William Young in Reno, Nevada, in 2017, granted a preliminary injunction preventing Nevada from enforcing a ban on large gatherings until the case is decided.

On Friday, the state court of appeal in Reno will hear arguments in the case.

The new procedures include quarantining new prisoners and transfers for 14 days, the Wisconsin State Journal reported Thursday. The department resumed accepting new prisoners and transfers on Monday, after a moratorium that Gov. Tony Evers issued on March 23 expired. Visits from friends and family remain suspended.

The department is also about a third of the way through its plan that started in May to test all 21,800 adult inmates. So far, 259 inmates have tested positive and 43 have recovered. Most of those who tested positive, 225, were at the Waupun Correctional Institution.

“I think that Waupun Correctional has done everything in their power to try to prevent it, but just like in the community, there are times in which there might be a spike,” said Malda Fessaha, administrator for the Division of Adult Institutions.
State-backed hackers target campaigns

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thurs-
day directing agencies to look for ways to speed up building of highways and other major projects by scaling back environ-
mental reviews, said in the executive order that the economic lockdown and ac-
misions on a near-weekly basis during his fourth year in office. Thursday’s order will mark his 29th of the year as he uses the pandemic to justify efforts to do away with government regulations that are designed to protect the environment and public health but are viewed by critics as costly and unecessary.

The president has consistently portrayed the permitting process as hindering infra-
structure projects in the U.S. He issued an executive order in August 2017 that was designed to speed infrastruc-
ture projects.

But a report prepared for the Treasury Department in 2016 looked at 40 major proposed transportation and water proj-
ects whose completion had slowed or was in jeopardy and found that “a lack of funds is by far the most common challenge to completing these projects.”

Meanwhile, finding the additional dollars to fund new roads and bridges has proved elusive as lawmakers and the president fail to agree on the extremely difficult choices that are necessary to raise more money for transportation projects without adding to the already soaring national debt.

In anticipation of Trump’s executive order, natural resources advocacy groups said the proposed transportation and water projects that his administration has approved are the “most common challenge to completing these projects.”

“Amercians are crying out for leadership to confront racial violence and stop the spread of disinformation,” said the Natural Resources Defense Council. "It is by far the most common challenge to completing these projects."
Patrons under plastic

As virus restrictions are relaxed, restaurant owners are seeking to welcome back safe, in-person dining

BY THOMAS ADAMSON
Associated Press

Dining at a table where each person is enclosed by a clear plastic shield might look and sound futuristic, but it could be one way for some restaurants to reopen. It also might help in the event that your companion orders escargots, heavy on the garlic. The prototype plastic shields are known as the “Plex’eat,” and they resemble big clear lampshades suspended from the ceiling. They are being showcased temporarily at H.A.N.D., a Parisian restaurant seeking a way to reopen its dining room as coronavirus restrictions are relaxed.

As restaurateurs around the world seek to resume in-person dining amid the pandemic, they want to fill the space with fun things,” said owner Patrikas Ribas.

Vilnius Mayor Remigijus Simasius called the initiative a “perfect match of communal spirit and creativity working side by side.”

In Hofheim, Germany, the Beef’n Beer is using large teddy bears seated at some tables to keep diners properly spaced apart. They also ensure a cozy, less-sterile atmosphere.

At Amsterdam’s Mediamatic restaurant, the owners have erected small glass houses that surround each table, served by waiters in protective shields.

While many restaurants offered takeout and delivery during the health crisis to keep generating at least some income, such practices are less common as coronavirus restrictions are relaxed.

Being French, there’s a version for more intimate dining, of course: a dome that cocoons its occupants in romantic isolation from the rest of the room. Among other revamped restaurants across Europe:

At El Salamanca, a Barcelona beachfront restaurant, menus are gone and customers use their smart phones to scan a QR code to consult what is on offer.

Greek restaurants are using salt and pepper sachets inside of shakes, and menus are either thrown away after each meal or are laminated and wiped down regularly. Some tavernas have staff in matching face masks.

In the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, a restaurant on the banks of the Volga and Oka rivers has set up 20 plastic huts for couples. It is awaiting approval from authorities to open if it meets safety standards.

Italian restaurants are using contact tracing. Diners are supposed to reserve tables ahead of time and owners are keeping their contact information: If someone subsequently reports testing positive, the restaurant can quickly identify and contact those who ate there at the same time.

A man and a woman demonstrate dining under a plastic shield at a restaurant in Paris on May 27. As restaurants in food-loving France prepare to reopen, some are investing in lampshade-like plastic shields to protect diners from the virus. The strange-looking contraptions are among experiments restaurants are trying around the world as they try to lure back clientele while keeping them virus-free.

TRIBALCAT CAMUS/AP
Learning from a video game?

Players flock to download Minecraft’s Education Edition, offered for free since March

BY TODD MARTENS
Los Angeles Times

With schools closed and many a parent thrust into the difficult role of managing a job, a household and a child’s education, there’s one unexpected bit of positive news to emerge from the coronavirus outbreak: Video games are good for your brain. Well, some games, at least.

Minecraft, the Microsoft-owned game known for its user-driven content, creative use of blocks and monsters that come out at night, has been at the forefront of mainstream games that utilize educational content. The studio’s Minecraft: Education Edition has for the past few years played host to virtual curricula that have allowed students to visit and learn about global monuments, sharpen math skills, understand coding or take puzzle-filled explorations to places as varied as the human body or a NASA-approved jaunt into the International Space Station.

Much of this content, which was at first fueled by educators in the Minecraft community before Microsoft brought it in-house in 2015, had previously been available only to schools and teachers and worked in tandem with Microsoft educational accounts. In March, however, Microsoft made an assortment of Minecraft’s popular educational tools available for free, with easier access for all players via the Minecraft Marketplace.

And players have flocked to it. Microsoft reports that there have been more than 50 million downloads globally of educational content since it was made available for free March 24. It’s further evidence that virtual worlds are not just places to play or escape, but vessels to learning, connecting or even taking part in digital events. Last month, for instance, Minecraft was home to a mock commencement ceremony for UC Berkeley, which featured remarks from Chancellor Carol T. Christ alongside musical performances. It was one of many Minecraft graduation ceremonies happening around the globe.

The UC Berkeley event, said Helen Chiang, the studio head at Minecraft developer Mojang Studios, happened organically. When viewed alongside more commercially-minded endeavors, such as rapper Travis Scott unleashing a single in Fortnite via an interactive experience that attracted more than 27 million participants, this pandemic moment is arguably accelerating an entertainment and cultural landscape in which persistent and evolving virtual worlds don’t just live alongside content crafted by traditional media gatekeepers but become equally as vital.

How it all evolves is something of an unknown, as evidenced by the fact that Minecraft’s own educational suite was birthed via the game-playing community rather than with the company behind it.

“The example right now of universities and college campuses,” says Chiang, discussing Minecraft graduations at schools around the globe, “it actually would have been really difficult for us to re-create all these colleges. The fact that we have a tool that passionate Berkeley students can go build their campus, and passionate MIT students can build their campus, that’s where the magic happens. It is not that we do all of these things.”

While no one knows yet how the gaming audience will shift when the world begins to emerge from the grips of COVID-19, it’s become clear that interactive entertainment is uniquely positioned for this moment. Almost daily we discover inventive tactics that users are wielding—not just via Minecraft or Fortnite but also Animal Crossing, Nintendo’s friendly, task-filled game that has become a coronavirus-era phenomenon.

Minecraft, which is turning 11 and is considered by many to be the top-selling game of all time, has now sold more than 200 million copies, says Chiang, and boasts 126 million active monthly players. In April alone, the game saw a 25% increase in new users over the previous month. People are also playing together—Minecraft’s multiplayer sessions surged 40% in April.

While Minecraft’s popularity has never been in doubt, as Mojang Studios gets deeper into the game’s second decade, the company has been looking to expand the Minecraft brand. Mojang recently released the augmented-reality mobile game Minecraft Earth and on May 26 issued the hack-and-slash game Minecraft Dungeons across multiple platforms. For high-end PC users, the studio is also tinkering with graphical enhancements for Minecraft.

But the studio is also having to adjust to a work-from-home lifestyle. While complications related to the current health crisis caused a brief delay in the release of Minecraft Dungeons, Chiang notes that there are lessons to be learned from the remote-work environment that can translate to the office.

For instance, Chiang says, while office life may provide many efficiencies for large companies, remote work has also allowed for some democratization. Online tools can provide participatory options for those who may not feel comfortable raising their hand in a meeting room.

“One of the things I love seeing is how much more inclusive a lot of the conversations can be. I think when you’re in the office and you try to fit into a conference room there are different configurations of teams that come in for the conversation,” Chiang says. “But one of our big teams did a planning exercise where they took the entire team virtually off site to plan for the next year. That’s something that would have actually been pretty difficult to do in person because it’s hard to hear 100 different voices when you’re in the room together. But then doing that planning exercise together online in a remote situation was actually more productive. You can hear more voices in that situation.”

Looking ahead, Minecraft has pledged to keep its educational assets free and available to non-educators at least through June 30. Chiang also sees the company continuing to experiment with bringing Minecraft to players outside of the core game, as witnessed by Minecraft Earth and Minecraft Dungeons.

“That is definitely something we’re very deliberate and focused on,” Chiang says. “Our players have been telling us for years that they want more versions of Minecraft. The most popular question is, ‘Where is Minecraft 2? There really isn’t a Minecraft 2, but options like Minecraft Earth and Minecraft Dungeons are ways we can continue to build out the Minecraft franchise.’

Minecraft, which offers several variations on the game including its Education Edition, has been at the forefront of mainstream games that utilize educational content.

DREAMSTIME/TNS
Igniting interest in role-playing games

The 3D remake of Trials of Mana helps novices get acquainted with the basics of RPG gameplay

BY GENE PARK
The Washington Post

Role-playing games can be intimidating. They involve all this math, stats and different mechanics to memorize and track. Enemies might explode into a treasure trove of new items with benefits harder to read than your insurance policy.

Meanwhile, every new town in Trials of Mana offers you exactly one new weapon. No need for spreadsheets on the “loot grind” and decoding cryptic algorithms. Just get the one sword, which you know is stronger because it has bigger numbers than your last sword.

The brilliance of Trials of Mana is how it distills several core gameplay features to their truest sense. The “loot grind” to gain more equipment really comes down to comparing smaller and bigger numbers. Sometimes towns really don’t function as much else besides places to stock up on things and maybe get some loose context for the world. Sometimes, a simple classic like Trials of Mana is all you really need.

This game is mythical. It’s the direct sequel to the Super Nintendo classic Secret of Mana, a name whispered with just a little less reverence than for Chrono Trigger or Final Fantasy VI. Known as Seiken Densetsu 3, it was only ever released in Japan in 1995, at the tail end of the Super Nintendo console’s life. Despite this lack of attention, Japanese gamers and intrepid importers praised the game as a celebration of all things that were great about the 16-bit era of role-playing games. The game attained near-mythical status for collectors and retro gamers, becoming a 16-bit milestone.

Last year, Seiken Densetsu 3 was finally released in the West as Trials of Mana under the Collections of Mana. And now, in 2020, there is a full-bore 3D remake of that same game for the PlayStation 4, PC and Nintendo Switch.

Trials of Mana is perfect for two types of players. First, there are folks like me who grew up with the 16-bit classics, and who would like a chance to dive back into that charming world of simple and immediate rewards. But then, it’s also a great primer for anyone who’s been intimidated by role-playing games, or even more action-heavy games like the Devil May Cry series.

Yes, this is a 2020 remake, but don’t expect anything as luxurious or literally game-changing like the Final Fantasy VII Remake. This Japanese role-playing remake is far more faithful, at least in spirit, to its classic roots. Super Nintendo role-playing stories were often mere outlines of grand epics, and Trials of Mana makes little to no effort to update its dialogue and writing.

What’s different, then, is how it implements modern action role-playing design concepts into an old but classic formula. The combat is now fully 3D and moves in real time like an action game. There’s one button for basic attacks, another for slower attacks that hit harder, a jump button and a dodge button. Big enemy attacks will be telegraphed by red flashing lights on the floor, which is the player’s signal to move. Massive multiplayer online RPGs have used this system for years, and it’s a neat visual trick to implement in real-time combat.

It’s almost impossible to get lost in this game. There are no side quests to distract you, and every quest is a simple matter of getting from Point A to B, another example of this game’s ability to distill gameplay concepts to their core.

All of this is introduced pretty slowly, but certainly not more slowly than some of the tutorials in today’s most complicated games. And the game is easy, even on its “hard” difficulty. Players who want high-octane engagement need not apply, but what if these new to the genre suddenly get bored halfway through the game?

Well good news, it just means you’re probably primed for something more complex and challenging! Did you think the dungeons were too straightforward? Maybe it’s time you finally checked out one of the 17 phenomenal The Legend of Zelda games. Mana offers similar gameplay, movement and combat (complete with a lock-on targeting system for enemies). But the Zelda dungeons also have puzzles to solve and enemies to beat that require a bit more thought than a simple button press.

Maybe you liked the combat and wish it was more exciting? You’ve got an entire genre of character action games to explore, from the five Devil May Cry games that created and innovated the genre, to 2018’s award-winning God of War for the PlayStation 4.

If you enjoyed the character customization and “loot grind,” you’re probably ready for Diablo 3, another simple action role-playing adventure. Its “loot grind” is infinitely more complicated, but Trials teaches you basic concepts like “strength” and “magic strength,” more than enough information to tackle anything Diablo throws at you.

That’s not to say Trials of Mana offers little. On a “normal” difficulty, it offers at least 20 hours of gameplay, including a new chapter. And like the original game, it offers you six heroes to choose from, all with their own stories, abilities to learn and weapons to gain. You can take up to three of the characters through the whole game. And each character comes with at least six different classes, only widening the combat possibilities. The game’s combat is basically a simple Streets of Rage brawler with RPG mechanics, but the combat and class variety spices things up considerably. New Game Plus, meanwhile, allows players to run through the story again with different lead characters if you want) with all your items and stats intact.

The graphics are pretty but rely mostly on the strength of their colorful character designs. Good art direction goes a long way to hide any technical issues, and Square Enix’s designers were on fire during the ‘90s. Some characters look a bit outdated (notably the huge busts on the warrior princesses), and one character’s voice acting is irredeemably terrible in English.

But Trials of Mana was never meant to wow anyone with fireworks. It’s a simple, updated remake of a legendary game. Time has humbled its legacy, as developers and studios iterated the formula of the 16-bit adventure. Modern classics like The Witcher 3 and Skyrim have done wonders to build believable characters, settings and compelling contexts for adventure.

Trials of Mana reminds us of why we fell in love with these games in the first place. The rules are simple; the rewards are immediate and obvious. There’s no better formula for escapist fantasy.

Platforms: PC, Switch, PS4
Online: trialsofmana.square-enix-games.com

Trials of Mana offers six heroes to choose from, all with their own stories, abilities to learn and weapons to gain.
Be kind to yourself

First, don’t beat yourself up or attempt to power through if your drive is low right now.

“Give yourself time to get through almost what I call the grieving moment,” Magness says. He says it’s important to allow yourself to “wallow” or do “whatever you need to do.”

Harrison agrees. She says if you can’t muster the energy to work out for a day or even a week, “Give yourself some grace.”

But that doesn’t mean throwing in the towel indefinitely.

“At some point, you have to set some sort of expectation or set some sort of bar,” Magness says. “And that bar can be really low.” As a distance runner, he was running six to seven days a week with a focus on becoming “super fit for my next race” before the pandemic. Now, he’s focusing on staying healthy, healthy and sufficiently fit to compete again when the opportunity arises. These days, he gives himself permission to walk instead of run.

Magness says staying home has been especially challenging for his clients with young children. Instead of struggling to squeeze in challenging workouts, they’re going for walks with their kids “and maybe doing a few random exercises” —which he says is absolutely fine.

Harrison says that “the most important thing is continuing to move,” even if it’s only a 20-minute walk.

Set new goals

With our lives upended, many of our pre-coronavirus fitness goals no longer make sense. If that’s your situation, select a new goal that accounts for your circumstances and priorities. The more meaningful your target, Magness says, the more committed you’ll be to it, so choose wisely.

Right now, he’s encouraging his athletes to focus on outcomes that are unrelated to performance. Before the coronavirus, his workouts served to prepare him for racing, now the goal is time to himself and a welcome escape from Zoom calls.

“It provides this nice little anchor to the day,” he says.

Emmerman advises asking yourself what you can do to make yourself feel better as you select fitness goals right now. If, for example, you struggle with back pain, your goal could be to experience no more than two days per week of pain greater than three out of 10 on the pain scale.

Achieving the goal might mean completing three 30-minute mat Pilates sessions per week with a YouTube instructor or engaging in yoga or a stretching routine for 15 minutes per day, if those activities tend to be helpful.

Stay accountable

Once you select a goal, being accountable, even if only to yourself, can help you achieve it. Harrison suggests keeping a simple chart on your phone or your fridge where you can check a box for every day you work out.

Friends and family members can also help you stay on track. If you live in a part of the country where it’s allowed, Harrison suggests getting some fresh air with a friend.

“Put a mask on and go for a walk with your best friend and laugh for 30 minutes,” she says.

You could also compete against or collaborate with others, whether it’s on Zoom, or in person with roommates or family. For example, you and your workout buddies could challenge one another to increase your maximum pushup repetitions by a certain percentage each week or compete to see who can do more on any given day.

Harrison says even if your workout buddy slack off, the temptation to test yourself can still be motivating, she says.

Since the coronavirus took hold, Harrison has been offering free group challenges each month that are open to anyone; the goal is to accrue as many points as possible. May’s participants earned points for doing 15 minutes of yoga, completing a bike or run workout without music, or completing 15 minutes of dryland swim drills, to name a few.

Look forward

If you’re feeling too tired to exercise, Emmerman suggests focusing not on how low you feel now but on how energized you’ll be when you’re done, or how you might feel if you skip it.

“A body at rest wants to stay at rest, and a body in movement wants to stay moving,” she says. Changing clothes and starting can be the biggest hurdles.

The promise of a post-workout treat can also entice you to face up to your tennis shoes, Emmerman says. A reward might be a dessert or a meal you’ve been looking forward to or anything else you enjoy, such as a show, a hot bath or a scented candle.

Finally, it’s important to stay optimistic, Harrison says. Believing the future will be better as you select fitness goals right now. If, for example, you struggle with back pain, your goal could be to experience no more than two days per week of pain greater than three out of 10 on the pain scale.

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Finally, it’s important to stay optimistic, Harrison says. Believing the future will bring races, events and workouts among friends is vital.

“Hope is not a plan, and hope is not a strategy,” she says, “but it sure as heck is a motivating factor for people.”

### Willpower to Work Out

Fitness gurus offer tips for finding the motivation to exercise during the pandemic
A ny misconduct attached to ABC’s “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” was of the garden-variety business type. During the quiz show’s initial 1999-2002 run, the network milked the unexpected hit with nightly airings until its ratings crashed.

Then there was the lawsuit over the show’s profits that yielded a $269 million verdict, plus interest, against ABC’s parent company, Disney. British TV, which originated the series, easily topped those corporate offensives. In 2001, a husband and wife were accused of cheating their way to the top million-pound prize — allegedly coughing up a "nasty cough" central to the story. When “Quiz” aired last month on U.K. network ITV, the home of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire,” it drew big ratings along with enthusiastic reviews. The project teamed Graham, at age 37, already a Tony Award nominee for “Ink,” with veteran director Stephen Frears, a two-time Oscar nominee (“The Queen,” “The Grifters”).

Macfadyen, star of “Succession” and 2005’s “Pride & Prejudice,” and Clifford, who played Phoebe Waller-Bridge’s sibling in “Fleabag,” portray the Ingrams, with Sheen (“Masters of Sex”) as the quiz show’s longtime host, Chris Tarrant.

Clifford said she dismissed everything she had heard and read about the couple after she received the script. “You don’t have to dig very deep into this story to realize there has been an injustice of sorts,” she said, “whether or not you think they’re guilty, but certainly in terms of fair treatment as human beings by the media and by the public and even the way they were treated in the courtroom, which I think is appalling.”

Graham approached the couple’s portrayal with “care and grace” and examines events in a balanced way, one that “raises more questions than it gives us answers,” she said. “I think that’s exciting.”

Macfadyen said portraying the Ingrams and their relationship became more important than whether they scanned the show, although he and Clifford did go back and forth on the issue. “As to his guilt or innocence, ‘I don’t know,’” the actor said of the British Ingram. “I really don’t know; is the honest answer.”

Macfadyen, 37, portrays the British army major and his wife, who became more important than anything else. He borrows a line from the Britain saga doesn’t cast a pandemic-era shadow. Like many in the U.K. and beyond, he was aware of the legal and tabloid ordeals of Charles Ingram, who was a major in the British army, and his wife, who were convicted in both forums. More than a decade later, Graham’s interest was reignited by a book that argued for the pair’s innocence. (In April, an attorney for the Ingrams said they intend to appeal their conviction.)

The resulting play and TV drama take a nuanced, if not necessarily exculpatory, view of events. Graham recalls watching “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” as a teenager and being “transfixed by what, in retrospect, seems like a relatively simple concept of questions and answers.”

He borrows a line from the series to explain why his nation might have embraced pub quizzes and trivia nights more quickly than others: “They combine the two great British loves, drinking and being right.” Then came the unlikely TV plot twist, with a “relatively ordinary couple trying to achieve this extraordinary thing of stealing a million pounds like you would from a bank vault,” Graham said. “But it was a game show, live, in front of cameras and microphones and studio lights and an audience.”

Viewers share his fascination. “I don’t have to dig very deep into this story to realize there has been an injustice of sorts,” she said, “whether or not you think they’re guilty, but certainly in terms of fair treatment as human beings by the media and by the public and even the way they were treated in the courtroom, which I think is appalling.”

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By Lynn Elber
Associated Press

The headline-making chapter of the garden-variety business type. During the quiz show’s initial 1999-2002 run, the network milked the unexpected hit with nightly airings until its ratings crashed.

Then there was the lawsuit over the show’s profits that yielded a $269 million verdict, plus interest, against ABC’s parent company, Disney. British TV, which originated the series, easily topped those corporate offensives. In 2001, a husband and wife were accused of cheating their way to the top million-pound prize — allegedly coughing up a “nasty cough” central to the story. When “Quiz” aired last month on U.K. network ITV, the home of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire,” it drew big ratings along with enthusiastic reviews. The project teamed Graham, at age 37, already a Tony Award nominee for “Ink,” with veteran director Stephen Frears, a two-time Oscar nominee (“The Queen,” “The Grifters”).

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The headline-making chapter was of the garden-variety business type. During the quiz show’s initial 1999-2002 run, the network milked the unexpected hit with nightly airings until its ratings crashed.

Then there was the lawsuit over the show’s profits that yielded a $269 million verdict, plus interest, against ABC’s parent company, Disney. British TV, which originated the series, easily topped those corporate offensives. In 2001, a husband and wife were accused of cheating their way to the top million-pound prize — allegedly coughing up a “nasty cough” central to the story. When “Quiz” aired last month on U.K. network ITV, the home of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire,” it drew big ratings along with enthusiastic reviews. The project teamed Graham, at age 37, already a Tony Award nominee for “Ink,” with veteran director Stephen Frears, a two-time Oscar nominee (“The Queen,” “The Grifters”).

Macfadyen, star of “Succession” and 2005’s “Pride & Prejudice,” and Clifford, who played Phoebe Waller-Bridge’s sibling in “Fleabag,” portray the Ingrams, with Sheen (“Masters of Sex”) as the quiz show’s longtime host, Chris Tarrant.

Clifford said she dismissed everything she had heard and read about the couple after she received the script. “You don’t have to dig very deep into this story to realize there has been an injustice of sorts,” she said, “whether or not you think they’re guilty, but certainly in terms of fair treatment as human beings by the media and by the public and even the way they were treated in the courtroom, which I think is appalling.”

Graham approached the couple’s portrayal with “care and grace” and examines events in a balanced way, one that “raises more questions than it gives us answers,” she said. “I think that’s exciting.”

Macfadyen said portraying the Ingrams and their relationship became more important than whether they scanned the show, although he and Clifford did go back and forth on the issue. “As to his guilt or innocence, ‘I don’t know,’” the actor said of the British Ingram. “I really don’t know; is the honest answer.”
Official: Man arrested after nude foot chase

**MS**

Bay St. Louis — A man who allegedly stripped naked as he ran from deputies in Mississippi has been arrested on drug charges.

Hancock County Sheriff’s deputies saw Ryan Millet arguing with a woman, Misty Quiroz, at a gas station in Bay St. Louis on Wednesday and approached the couple. Chief Deputy Jeremy Skinner told The Sun Herald. The deputies started searching their car after Quiroz allegedly admitted to having marijuana in the vehicle.

Skinner said that’s when Millet, who appeared to be under the influence of drugs, ran away and started taking off his clothes.

Deputies chased him down and later used a stun gun to arrest him and bring him back to the gas station, with his clothes in hand, Skinner said.

“He was actually caught naked, so that’s how he gets escorted back,” he added.

2 dogs die in car; owner was in dog training class

**MO**

High Ridge — Two dogs died in a hot car at a dog training center near St. Louis as their owner attended a lecture on how to become a paid dog trainer, the center’s owner said.

Tom Rose of the Tom Rose School told The St. Louis Post-Dispatch that the deaths were the result of “a terrible accident.”

The owner left her car running, with the air-conditioner on high, while she was inside for the approximate 90-minute lecture on Wednesday, a day when the high temperature topped 90 degrees.

Rose said the car quit running without the owner knowing it. By the time she got outside the dog — a Labrador retriever and a German shepherd — were dead.

Rose said the car may have run out of gas.

Sheriff admits using racial slur on recording

**TN**

Ripley — A Tennessee sheriff admitted that he used a racial slur on a recording that prompted a peaceful protest and calls for his resignation.

Lauderdale County Sheriff Steve Sanders confirmed that it was his voice on the recent recording and he plans an apology to the community of about 25,000 people.

“I’m going to apologize Friday to all the citizens in the county, because they’re good people,” Sanders told WREG-TV on Wednesday. “I got a lot of black friends, I got a lot of enemies, as any sheriff would, but I apologize to all of them.”

Man accused of stealing 34 guns from pawn shop

**MO**

St. Louis — A 19-year-old man is facing federal charges accusing him of stealing nearly three dozen semi-automatic weapons from a St. Louis County pawn shop.

The U.S. Attorney’s office in St. Louis on Wednesday announced a federal complaint accusing Devante Coffie of Valley Park of stealing 32 handguns and two long guns at the Southside Pawn Shop in Affton on May 31.

The complaint said Coffie and another person broke in through a second-story window after climbing onto the roof of a parked minivan. Once inside, they allegedly fired guns into glass enclosures to get access to the weapons.

The U.S. Attorney’s office said Coffie suffered a cut on the broken window class. Investigators monitored social media and found that Coffie was trying to sell the stolen guns, authorities said, and one video showed bandages on his hands.

Police: Pregnant woman tried to run car off road

**NM**

Hobbs — A pregnant New Mexico woman is facing charges after police say she tried knocking a car off the road while two children sat in her backseat.

The Hobbs News-Sun reports Shantiece Langley was arrested and charged with abuse of a child and criminal damage to property.

According to police, Langley, 31, was involved in a car crash in Hobbs stemming from a domestic dispute.

A driver picked up a friend and was being followed by Langley, who tried to run them off the road, police said. Langley drove next to the vehicle and rammed into it twice before braking, according to police.

Police: Armed woman threatens neighbors

**WA**

Mountlake Terrace — Police in Washington state arrested a woman on suspicion of pointing a gun at her neighbors in what authorities classified as a hate crime.

Mountlake Terrace police arrested the woman for investigation of a hate crime and second-degree assault, The Daily Herald reported.

Police said she appeared to be having mental health issues. The 67-year-old suspect is white and the neighbors are black and Muslim.

The woman, who was not immediately identified, is accused of pointing a pistol at a 34-year-old mother and her two daughters, both under 15, records said.

Police said the woman told the family to go back to their native country because they don’t belong in the U.S.

Wildlife agency officials say gray wolf in state

**UT**

Salt Lake City — Utah has set up traps for a rare gray wolf that wildlife officials believe killed a calf in Rich County.

A trapper with the state first believed the predator was a coyote but determined it was gray wolf earlier this week after analyzing scat, tracks and other evidence, The Salt Lake Tribune reported.

The species has only been seen in Utah a handful of times since it was extirpated from the state in the 1920s.

No prison time for ex-sheriff in theft case

**ND**

Bismarck — A former sheriff won’t spend any time behind bars after reaching a plea agreement with prosecutors on accusations he stole more than $750,000 from the state government.

Johnny Zip Lawson, 43, the former Wells County sheriff, was ordered to pay full restitution during sentencing in federal court earlier this week.

Minot Daily News reports he could have been sent to prison for 10 years and fined $250,000. Lawson was ordered to serve three years of supervised release.

Lawson and his wife, Christine Diana Lawson, were indicted for “converting for their use $751,000 in overpayments” made from North Dakota’s Department of Human Services.

She was given the same sentence earlier.

Police: Man faked wife’s disappearance

**WV**

Grandview — A woman and her husband faked her disappearance by pretending she plummeted from an overlook as part of a scheme to keep her out of having to go to prison, authorities said.

Julie Wheeler and Rodney Wheeler were arrested on multiple charges including conspiracy and giving false information to West Virginia State Police.

State police said Julie Wheeler was reported missing Sunday by her husband and 17-year-old son. The family claimed Julie Wheeler had fallen from the main overlook at the New River Gorge National River, National Park Service Ranger Leah Perkowski-Sisk said.

Authorities searched for Julie Wheeler for days but found her Tuesday “alive and well” hiding in a closet in her home.

*From wire reports*
T hirty-one years ago Thursday, the Chinese government massacred thousands of democracy protesters in Beijing, but the international community moved on in relative silence. Beijing’s current regime is killing the freedom of 8 million people in Hong Kong. The survivors of the Tiananmen Square massacre are warning the world not to repeat the mistakes it made in 1989.

On June 4, 1989, Chinese troops imported from former Soviet Union soldiers patrolled the streets as demonstrators petitioning for reforms, as the world watched in horror. The following night, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger phoned the Hong Kong leader Sir Alan Donald to send a secret cable back to London estimating 10,000 innocent civilians had been killed and detailing gross atrocities, including crowds of people run over by tanks and their “remains incinerated and then hosed down drains.” Similar scenes played out in cities across China.

International condemnation was swift, sanctions were imposed, and the Chinese leadership was on the defensive. But while President George H.W. Bush publicly condemned the massacre, privately he quietly and quickly resumed his diplomatic efforts to warm Beijing, signaling to Chinese leaders that their brutal crackdown would have little long-term cost.

Economic engagement quickly resumed, most sanctions were soon lifted and China’s economy surged for the next three decades. But the political reforms Washington policymakers had hoped for never materialized. After Xi Jinping formally took power in 2013, the Chinese Communist Party’s brutality and repression only accelerated.

That’s a very big lesson the American government should learn from 1989,” said Wang Dan, a former student leader who survived the Tiananmen Square massacre. “We hoped China would change. Unfortunately, we helped China become the second-largest economy in the world, but their political system didn’t change.”

Wang was part of a group of Chinese dissidents who met with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo this week. He told Pompeo that the United States and the international community must do more to help people in mainland China have free access to information—and do more to punish Chinese leaders for their assault on freedom in Hong Kong.

Last week, China’s rubber-stamp legislature approved a sweeping new national security law for Hong Kong, after which Pompeo announced, “Hong Kong is no longer autonomous as a special administrative region on the ground.” President Donald Trump gave a speech promising to roll back the economic engagement policy he inherited, saying Beijing’s moves have “already hurt us” and will “continue to do business in China.”

The Bush administration could be forgiven for thinking China’s leaders were moving toward opening and reform in 1989. In 2020, nobody can make that argument. The CCP has abused its access to the international economy for economic aggrandizement while fighting a protracted war against democracy on its own territory. It has engaged in a brutal crackdown from above.

China’s internal repression has blossomed into wholesale ethnic cleansing of Uighurs and other Muslim minorities, severe repression of millions of Tibetans and the snuffing out of any space for political dissent.

“The world faces a significant challenge. Unfortunately, we helped China become the second-largest economy in the world, but their political system didn’t change,” said Henry Li, a former student leader who faced down Chinese troops in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and lived to tell the tale. “Right now, finally, the world is waking up.”

It would be easy to say that the current political and social upheaval in the United States means we shouldn’tstand up against China’s crackdown on human rights and freedom in Hong Kong. It’s a feature of China’s public diplomacy and propaganda these days to try to make us believe that U.S.-China relations are not as tense as they actually are.

But that would be to ignore the fact that the United States and the international community must do more to help people in mainland China have free access to information. If we don’t stand up against China and act in line with our values, China will throw away the good China it could have become.

Prominent politicians fueled the divisions. Donald Trump, the title of his statement: “In Union There Is Strength.”

The power of Mattis’ text lies in linking the American people, not a party or a faction or an idea, to that enterprise. When the president tries to do business in China, the unity. If the military is deployed too readily, we will see “a conflict—a false conflict—between the military and the community.” That is dangerous; it is what we see in authoritarian societies.

 Mattis views a conflict between the military and the American society, concocted out of a series of protests over racial injustice, as distinctly threatening to national unity. There is a reason that, by tradition, the military is nonpartisan. Whether generals or captains or privates, soldiers protect the American people, not a party or a politician.

 Mattis refers explicitly to the Constitution. But Madison himself was deeply concerned about the potential weakness of “parchment barriers,” used to protect “against the encroaching spirit of power.” In 1788, Madison asked: “Is there no vigilance, no internal police, no system of rewards and punishments?”

The very project of self-government depends on a shared understanding that, in Madison’s words, “the only safer way to engage in a common enterprise and that national leaders are committed, above everything else (including their own self-interest), to our collective well-being. When the president does not share that commitment, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks — no form of government can render us safe. The early draft suggests that the Constitution is created by the states; it sees “We the People” as citizens of their states, first and foremost. The final text emphasizes national citizenship. And rather than acting directly from “We the People” to the act of establishing the Constitution, it declares the purposes of that act — and gives pride of place to the formation of “a more perfect Union.”

That project was designed to overcome disparate allegiances, interests and ideologies, producing “factions,” which James Madison regarded as an omnipresent threat. More specifically, the institution of slavery was a moral as well as practical threat to the existence of that more perfect union — and of course its legacy is at the heart of some of our divisions today.

The power of Mattis’ text lies in linking the claim that claim with the broader idea of national unity. If the military is deployed too readily, we will see “a conflict—a false conflict—between the military and the community.” That is dangerous; it is what we see in authoritarian societies.

 Mattis is aiming to get us out of it. Who will join him?


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NEW YORK — Patrick Mahomes, Saquon Barkley and Michael Thomas are among more than a dozen NFL stars who united to send a passionate video message to the league about racial inequality.

The 70-second video was released on social media platforms Thursday night and includes Odell Beckham Jr., Deshaun Watson, Ezekiel Elliott, Jamal Adams, Stephon Gilmore and DeAndre Hopkins, among others.

Thomas, the New Orleans Saints wide receiver, prompted the Saints’ star quarterback to issue a public apology during the national anthem. And Brees now realizes he’d fallen out of touch.

When Brees expressed his position on the anthem three years ago, he was one of many voices in the NFL consortium to kneel during national anthems. But when he repeated it Wednesday, he learned in humming fashion how times have changed.

The intensity and frequency of protests stemming from Floyd’s killing over the last two weeks has given rise to widespread anxiety among large segments of the U.S. population regarding the safety of police brutality and racial injustice as matters of greater urgency.

I recognize that I should do less talking and more listening,” Brees wrote in the apology posted on social media. “When the black community is talking about their pain, we all need to listen.”

Charles Reid/P Published: June 6

Players send video message

The seven athletes are from three sports, and all were asymptomatic. They learned the results Wednesday night.

Dumbadze said contact tracing has begun, and anyone who has been exposed to any of the seven athletes will be required to quarantine for 14 days.

“This is a day that we knew would come, but not at A-State, but for colleges and universities across America,” Dumbadze said.

Oklahoma State and Marshall football players have each had three athletes test positive. Mississippi also has had an athlete and staff member test positive. A student worker in the Iowa State athletic department also has COVID-19.

Alabama also reportedly had multiple positive tests.

At least five Crimson Tide football players have tested positive for the coronavirus, according to 247Sports, which cited multiple unnamed sources.

Players returned to Tuscaloosa this week and are set to start voluntary workouts on Monday. On other college football news:

■ Oregon State has dismissed four football players after each had three athletes test positive. The players then name several of the black men and women who have recently been killed, including Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmad Arbery and Eric Garner.

“I AM George Floyd,” Hopkins said.

Adam’s follows with: “I AM Breonna Taylor.”

The video closes with the players insisting they “will not be silenced.” They also demand the NFL state that it condemns “racial inequality and the systemic oppression of black people.”

We, the National Football League, admit wrong in silencing our players from peacefully protesting. “We, the National Football League, believe black lives matter.”

Briefs

Brees apologizes for comments

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Briefs

Brees apologizes for comments
Baseball players hold line on pay

By Ronald Blum
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Baseball players reaffirmed their stance for full prorated pay, leaving a huge gap with teams that could scuttle plans to start the coronavirus-delayed season around the Fourth of July and may leave owners focusing on a schedule as short as 50 games.

More than 100 players, including the union’s executive board, held a two-hour digital meeting with officials of the Major League Baseball Players Association on Thursday, a day after the union’s offer was rejected by Major League Baseball.

“Earlier this week, Major League Baseball communicated its intention to schedule a dramatically shortened season unless players negotiate salary concessions,” union head Tony Clark said in a statement. “The concessions being sought are in addition to billions in player salary reductions that have already been agreed upon. This threat came in response to a union proposal aimed at charting a path forward.”

“Rather than engage, the league replied it will shorten the season unless players agree to further salary reductions,” Clark added.

Players originally were set to earn about $4 billion in 2020 salaries, exclusive of guaranteed money such as signing bonuses, termination pay and option buyouts. The union’s plan would cut that to around $2.8 billion and management to approximately $1.2 billion plus a $200 million bonus pool if the postseason is completed.

MLB last week proposed an 82-game season with an additional sliding scale of pay cuts that would leave a player at the $563,500 minimum with 47% of his original salary and top stars Mike Trout and Gerrit Cole at his original salary and top stars $563,500 minimum with 47% of that would leave a player at the national sliding scale of pay cuts 82-game season with an additional sliding scale of pay cuts that would leave a player at the prorated salaries they agreed to on March 26. That would leave each player with about 70% of his original pay.

MLB rejected that Wednesday, when Deputy Commissioner Dan Halem wrote in a letter to union chief negotiator Bruce Meyer informing him “we do not believe that a reasonable solution could be reached — it seems unlikely that a collective bargaining agreement could be reached.”

“Nonetheless, the commissioner is committed to playing baseball in 2020,” Halem said in the letter, which was obtained by The Associated Press. “He has started discussions with ownership about staging a shorter season without fans.”

Management officials have said they are considering a slate for an 82-game season with no pay cuts beyond the prorated salaries they agreed to on March 26. That would leave each player with about 70% of his original pay.

Players countered Sunday with a letter to the commissioner, saying in part: “This threatens to scuttle the hope that a new season can come in response to a union proposal aimed at charting a path forward.”

“This whole year is going to be tough on players, from the uncertainty of when we can return to the field and what we can expect to do there to how we will handle the coronavirus pandemic,” Clark said in a statement. “The league’s demand for additional concessions is resoundingly rejected.”

Baseball’s March 26 deal allows games if there are no government restrictions on playing in front of fans and no relevant travel limitations. The sides agreed to “discuss in good faith” the economic feasibility of playing in empty ballparks, which appears to be the likely option.

MLB says that without fans it would average a loss of $640,000 for each additional game played. The union disputes the teams’ financial figures.

Ready to race
IndyCar finally set to start season

By Jenna Fryer
Associated Press

T he stars of IndyCar were in Florida preparing to start their season when the coronavirus pandemic slammed the brakes on those plans 48 hours before the green flag.

Almost three months later, the series is finally set to go racing. The 2020 season will open Saturday night at Texas Motor Speedway in NBC’s first primetime IndyCar race. The series follows NASCAR, which heads into this weekend having already completed nine events. Both have had to draw up safety plans. Both are racing without fans for now.

IndyCar teams based in Indianapolis will head to the airport before sunrise Saturday to begin health screenings required to board chartered flights scheduled to leave for Texas before 6 a.m. Everyone will be screened again before they enter the track and face masks will be required.

Drivers and teams outside of Indy arrived Friday and were also subjected to the same screenings. Team rosters are limited to 20 competitors and the garages will be divided — Chevrolet teams in one, Honda teams in the other.

It will be radically different from the last time everyone was together in March in St. Petersburg, Fla., soaking up the sun and enjoying the party atmosphere of the traditional season opener. An already lengthy offseason has now been stretched to more than eight months and the first event at Texas’ high-speed oval will also give drivers their first test of a new windshield designed to protect the cockpit.

“I think everybody is nervous. If you’re not nervous, I’d be concerned about the head that you have on your shoulders,” said Graham Rahal. “You’re going to probably one of the most intense tracks of the year and you’re going there without testing, you’re going there without much practice, you’re going there without knowing what these tires may bring for us this weekend. You’re going there without knowing what exactly the aeroscreen is going to do to us on a track like this.”

Unlike NASCAR, which has scrapped practice and qualifying for its rescheduled events, IndyCar will do both at Texas in the afternoon before the race.

“Texas is a very difficult racetrack to race in general, whether you’ve been there 20 years or first time. It’s a daunting track to get right,” Newgarden said. “From the rookie side, it’s going to be extremely difficult. This whole year is going to be tough on rookies with limited track time. I think Texas will be one of the toughest places to go to right out of the gates.”

Will Power lowers into his car as he prepares to drive in IndyCar Series testing in Austin, Texas.

The rebranded Arrow McLaren SP team will debut with rookie Oliver Askew, last year’s Indy Lights champion, and Pato O’Ward, who has returned to IndyCar after a brief stint last year racing in Europe. Alex Palou will debut for Dale Coyne Racing, which in the offseason fired Sebastien Bourdais and promoted Santino Ferrucci into its lead seat. Rinus VeeKay is the third rookie making his debut, alongside oval veteran Ed Carpenter, owner of Ed Carpenter Racing.

The last six winners at Texas are in the field dating to Ed Carpenter’s victory in 2014 through two-time IndyCar champion Josef Newgarden’s trip to victory lane last year.

Newgarden isn’t sure veterans will have any sort of edge considering drivers have largely been side-lined since the Sept. 22 finale. Texas has never before opened an IndyCar season and instead is held well into the season and after the Indianapolis 500.

“Texas is a very difficult racetrack to race in general, whether you’ve been there 20 years or first time. It’s a daunting track to get right,” Newgarden said. “From the rookie side, it’s going to be extremely difficult. This whole year is going to be tough on rookies with limited track time. I think Texas will be one of the toughest places to go to right out of the gates.”

New Zealand’s Scott Dixon drives into turn one during testing of the new windscreen at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in October. The 2020 IndyCar season will open Saturday night in Texas.
**Commentary**

**With NASCAR back, are fans far behind?**

**By Jenna Fryer**
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — There is finally a break in this weird, new world of NASCAR after nine races over 16 days in three different states.

Brad Keselowski lacked a pair of wins, new favorite son Chase Elliott lost three races (but won one), and Kyle Busch ticked off his haters simply by being himself.

Some rain interruptions aside, the racing has been good. The series is starting to find a rhythm and the story lines are strong. Even seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson has come close to winning his first race in more than three years.

But all is not entirely well. A sport that prides itself on the access to its drivers is racing at empty tracks, most evident Sunday at cavernous Bristol Motor Speedway. The Tennessee building known as “The Last Great Colosseum” can hold about 140,000 fans and once boasted a 55-race sellout streak spanning 28 years.

It was jarringly empty on a spectacular day for racing Sunday. When Elliott and Joey Logano tangled on the track with just over a lap remaining — and when Logano gave Elliott a long stare on pit road — it was eerily silent.

In the old days, before the pandemic, the crowd would have been hysterical. In the new normal, the two drivers put on their mandatory face masks and had a peaceful discussion in front of dreary, gray grandstands.

“It’s kind of like, well, I guess we’ll go home,” runner-up Clint Bowyer said of the anticlimactic post-race dramatics. “I’m ready to have fans back. I think it’s time.”

Local tracks around the country have allowed spectators for at least the last two weekends. NASCAR, when it announced its second stretch of races through June 21 in Alabama, said the events would be without fans.

The pressure will grow to get fans back in the stands, particularly as more and more local tracks open the gates with their governors’ OK. If fans can attend South Alabama Speedway in Ozark, why can’t they go to the big show at Talladega Superspeedway in three weeks?

NASCAR has touted a health plan it was confident could get the teams back to the track and so far it has worked. No driver has failed the temperature checks required to enter the facilities so far. But it has been barely two weeks since Darlington Raceway hosted the first race back, so it’s far too early to know if the plan is perfect.

Masks are still required and teams have been good sports about following the rules. But it’s also hard to get back in the groove and the days are long and the masks are going to become a nuisance. Social distancing is for the most part followed, but awareness is fading and teams were in clusters along pit road waiting for the Bristol race to start.

NASCAR already made a huge decision to get back to business after postponing eight Cup Series races following a 10-week shutdown for the coronavirus pandemic.

His return has been a roller-coaster ride that saw him drive off with just one victory, a Thursday night race at Charlotte Motor Speedway last week, to break up the string of close calls.

“There’s a handful of drivers and teams who we know have a shot to win every single week,” Elliott said Tuesday in a Zoom call with reporters. “And there’s no reason why we can’t be among that group. That’s our goal and I think if you’re in that position enough, it’ll go your way plenty and you’ll get your fair share.”

Elliott’s Hendrick Motorsports team expects to be in contention every race and believes that shouldn’t change Sunday at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

He was pushing for the lead at Darlington Raceway when Kyle Busch wrecked him. He was about to win the Coca-Cola 600 until a caution with two laps remaining jumbled the finish. Elliott pitted from the lead, took four tires and couldn’t get back to the front in the two-lap overtime sprint. He did win a $100,000 beauty by beating Kyle Busch in a Truck Series race at Charlotte and followed it with a win in the Cup race.

The near-misses haven’t shaken the confidence for Elliott or crew chief Alan Gustafson.

“I think you have to be a little bit hard-headed to do this job, and you have to find a way to improve, and just you have to kind of shake it off,” Gustafson said after Elliott won at Charlotte. “Professional sports are super fickle, and one day you’re good and one day you’re terrible, and you just get used to that.”

Elliott took the momentum from his Charlotte win to Bristol Motor Speedway on Sunday and was again in contention for a victory. But he and Joey Logano tangled on the track with just over a lap remaining that caused both to crash. Logano gave Elliott a long stare on pit road that lacked some of the drama with no fans on scene to react.

“I talked to Joey after the race face-to-face like it should be,” Elliott said.

Regardless of the missed opportunities or bad breaks, he’s in contention in the Cup Series standings with the top-five finishes through nine races. Elliott is keeping that fast start in perspective, but still feels like he can contend for a series championship.

“This is a 38-race season, and we have to keep that up to really be a contender,” he said. “I think we can do it, but until you go out there and achieve that it really doesn’t matter.”

It’s been anything but a normal season so far amid the pandemic. Races have been held without fans and with condensed one-day schedules. Elliott likes the new itinerary, saying “over time we’ve overcomplicated weekend schedules and practiced entirely too much.”

“I know a lot of that’s money driven, and I get it,” he said. “As our popularity grew over a period of time, tracks and things tried to get all they could get. I understand that, but I think a lot of us... we’ve got to get back to our roots.”

He’s not alone in that sentiment. Brad Keselowski, winner of two of the races Elliott lost, said this schedule cuts costs and benefits the more experienced drivers.

Added Logano: “We are race car drivers, not practice car drivers.”

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** Chase Elliott celebrates after winning the NASCAR Cup Series race on May 28 in Concord, N.C.**

**Elliott challenging to win nearly every race**

**By John Zenor**
Associated Press

CHASE ELLIOTT has been tantalizingly close to winning NASCAR races so many times it’s hard for him not to be disappointed.

Sure, Elliott understands he can’t win them all, but he has flirted with victory in four of the five Cup races since NASCAR resumed competition May 17 following a 10-week shutdown for the coronavirus pandemic.

His return has been a roller-coaster ride that saw him drive off with just one victory, a Thursday night race at Charlotte Motor Speedway last week, to break up the string of close calls.

“There’s a handful of drivers and teams who we know have a shot to win every single week,” Elliott said Tuesday in a Zoom call with reporters. “And there’s no reason why we can’t be among that group. That’s our goal and I think if you’re in that position enough, it’ll go your way plenty and you’ll get your fair share.”

Elliott’s Hendrick Motorsports team expects to be in contention every race and believes that shouldn’t change Sunday at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

He was pushing for the lead at Darlington Raceway when Kyle Busch wrecked him. He was about to win the Coca-Cola 600 until a caution with two laps remaining jumbled the finish. Elliott pitted from the lead, took four tires and couldn’t get back to the front in the two-lap overtime sprint. He did win a $100,000 beauty by beating Kyle Busch in a Truck Series race at Charlotte and followed it with a win in the Cup race.

The near-misses haven’t shaken the confidence for Elliott or crew chief Alan Gustafson.

“I think you have to be a little bit hard-headed to do this job, and you have to find a way to improve, and just you have to kind of shake it off,” Gustafson said after Elliott won at Charlotte. “Professional sports are super fickle, and one day you’re good and one day you’re terrible, and you just get used to that.”

Elliott took the momentum from his Charlotte win to Bristol Motor Speedway on Sunday and was again in contention for a victory. But he and Joey Logano tangled on the track with just over a lap remaining that caused both to crash. Logano gave Elliott a long stare on pit road that lacked some of the drama with no fans on scene to react.

“I talked to Joey after the race face-to-face like it should be,” Elliott said.

Regardless of the missed opportunities or bad breaks, he’s in contention in the Cup Series standings with the top-five finishes through nine races. Elliott is keeping that fast start in perspective, but still feels like he can contend for a series championship.

“This is a 38-race season, and we have to keep that up to really be a contender,” he said. “I think we can do it, but until you go out there and achieve that it really doesn’t matter.”

It’s been anything but a normal season so far amid the pandemic. Races have been held without fans and with condensed one-day schedules. Elliott likes the new itinerary, saying “over time we’ve overcomplicated weekend schedules and practiced entirely too much.”

“I know a lot of that’s money driven, and I get it,” he said. “As our popularity grew over a period of time, tracks and things tried to get all they could get. I understand that, but I think a lot of us... we’ve got to get back to our roots.”

He’s not alone in that sentiment. Brad Keselowski, winner of two of the races Elliott lost, said this schedule cuts costs and benefits the more experienced drivers.

Added Logano: “We are race car drivers, not practice car drivers.”

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**NASCAR Cup points leaders**

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Action: League finalizing specifics of what testing plan at Disney will entail

FROM BACK PAGE

medical experts.

The eight-game slate — it’s unclear if they would be classified as regular-season games — will help determine playoff seeding. From there, the league could have a play-in tournament for the final spot in the Eastern Conference and Western Conference postseason fields.

“While there is still work to be done, we applaud all the effort and collaboration that has gone into finding a safe, competitive format,” Orlando Magic CEO Alex Martins said. “It has always been our feeling that sports have the ability to bring people together and we look forward to restarting the NBA season while using that platform to drive meaningful social impact at this period of time.”

There are numerous other details to continue working through, including finalizing specifics of what the testing plan at Disney will entail and calculating the financial ramifications of playing fewer games.

Another person, also speaking to AP on condition of anonymity because the details of the ongoing talks have not been publicly released, said the NBPA and the NBA are working on “lengthy” medical protocols that will be shared with teams once those discussions are completed, which will be long before they arrive at Disney, the person said.

“The NBA is taking all the appropriate measures, and working tirelessly to provide a safe environment for our team and staff,” the Dallas Mavericks said in a statement.

The 22 Disney-bound clubs would play somewhere between 71 and 75 games before the playoffs begin, down from the customary 82-game slate. The teams who didn’t qualify for the restart would play somewhere between four and six games.

Roughly 15% of what would have been the full NBA regular season won’t be played, which means players will be around $600 million in salary. How that process will work is among the issues the league and union are still working to solve.

NBA/NHL

NHL clears way for players to return to practice rinks

Penguins report first positive test, ninth total for league

The NHL cleared the way Thursday for players to return to the practice rink next week and firmly up its playoff format even as a ninth player tested positive for the coronavirus.

After finalizing the details of its 24-team plan, the league said teams could reopen facilities in a matter of days to take part in limited, voluntary workouts beginning Monday. The NHL and NHL Players’ Association must still iron out health and safety protocols before moving ahead with training camps and games.

Players can skate in groups of up to six at a time under “phase 2,” which includes specific instructions on testing, mask-wearing and temperature checks. It’s another step closer to the ice as the league said every player-off series will be a best-of-seven format after the initial qualifying round and teams will be reseeded throughout.

That announcement came at nearly the same time the Pittsburgh Penguins revealed one of their players had tested positive. The team said the player is not in Pittsburgh, isolated after experiencing symptoms, and has recovered from COVID-19.

The nine players who have tested positive, five from the Ottawa Senators, three from the Colorado Avalanche and one from Pittsburgh. The league is expected to tell players daily if games resume. The NHL is still assessing health and safety protocols for what would be 24 teams playing in two hub cities.

“We still have a lot of things to figure out, namely the safety of the players,” Winnipeg Jets captain Blake Wheeler said earlier this week. “We’ve got to make sure that our safety is at the top of that list.”

The top four teams in the Eastern and Western Conferences will play separate round-robin tournaments to determine seeding. Re-seeding each round puts more value on the seeding tournaments between Boston, Tampa Bay, Washington and Philadelphia in the East, and St. Louis, Colorado, Vegas and Dallas in the West.

“The games are going to be competitive,” Capitals general manager Brian MacLellan said.

The remaining 16 teams will play best-of-five series to set the final 16.

Trenton captain John Tavares, a member of the NHL/NLHA Return to Play committee, said he preferred the traditional seven-game series once the playoffs were down to the more traditional 16 teams. A majority of players agreed.

“Everybody is used to a best-of-seven,” Pittsburgh player representative Kris Letang said. “You know how it’s structured. You know how it feels if you lose the first two or you win the first two. You kind of know all the scenarios that can go through a best-of-seven.”

The team logo is seen in the center of the Pittsburgh Penguins locker room at their practice facility in Cranberry Township, Pa. The NHL said Thursday that teams could reopen facilities and players could take part in limited, voluntary workouts beginning Monday. That announcement came at nearly the same time the Penguins revealed one of their players, had tested positive for the coronavirus. The team said the player is not in Pittsburgh, isolated after experiencing symptoms, and has recovered.

By Stephen Whyno

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference

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"STARS AND STRIPES"
Plan of action

Owners approve 22-team format for restarting season in Orlando

By Tim Reynolds
Associated Press

The NBA took a major step toward getting back on the court Thursday, with the league’s Board of Governors approving a 22-team format for restarting the league season next month at the Disney campus near Orlando, Fla.

The vote was 29-1, with Portland casting the dissenting vote, said a person with knowledge of the situation. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the league did not publicly release voting details. The National Basketball Players Association has scheduled a meeting for Friday to vote on the plan.

Teams would arrive at Disney around July 7 and play an eight-game slate of games starting July 31 at the ESPN Wide World Of Sports complex. All teams will stay, practice and play at Disney and the NBA Finals — which would have started Thursday if not for the coronavirus pandemic that caused the NBA to suspend its season on March 11 — will likely stretch into October.

“The Board’s approval of the restart format is a necessary step toward resuming the NBA season,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. “While the COVID-19 pandemic presents formidable challenges, we are hopeful of finishing the season in a safe and responsible manner based on strict protocols now being finalized with public health officials and

SEE ACTION ON PAGE 23

The NBA cleared a major hurdle in getting back to playing games on Thursday when the league’s Board of Governors approved a 22-team restart plan. The NBPA and the NBA are reportedly still working on “lengthy” medical protocols.

Photo Illustration by Sean Venables/Stars and Stripes