

US will resume J&J COVID vaccinations

Associated Press

U.S. health officials lifted an 11-day pause on COVID-19 vaccinations using Johnson & Johnson's single-dose shot on Friday, after scientific advisers decided its benefits outweigh a rare risk of blood clot.

The government uncovered 15 vaccine recipients who developed a highly unusual kind of blood clot out of nearly 8 million people given the J&J shot. All were women, most under age 50. Three died, and seven remain hospitalized.

But ultimately, federal health officials decided that J&J's one-and-done vaccine is critical to fight the pandemic — and that the small clot risk could be handled with warnings to help younger women decide if they should use that shot or an alternative.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the J&J vaccine has important advantages for some people who were anxiously awaiting its return. And the Food and Drug Administration updated online vaccine information leaflets for would-be recipients and health workers, so that shots could resume as early as Saturday.

"This is not a decision the agencies reached lightly," FDA Acting Commissioner Janet Woodcock told reporters late Friday.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky added that the pause should increase confidence in vaccine safety, showing "that we are taking every one of those needles in a haystack that we find seriously."

The U.S. decision — similar to how European regulators are rolling out J&J's shot — comes after advisers to the CDC debated in a daylong meeting just how serious the risk really is. Panelists voted 10-4 to resume vaccinations without outright age restrictions, but made clear that the shots must come with clear warnings about the clots.

"I think we have a responsibility to be certain that they know this," said Dr. Sarah Long of Drexel University College of Medicine, who voted against the proposal because she felt it did not go far enough in warning younger women.

The committee members all agreed the J&J vaccine "should be put back into circulation," panel chairman Dr. Jose Romero, Arkansas' health secretary, said in an interview after the

vote. "The difference was how you convey the risk ... It does not absolve us from making sure that people who receive this vaccine, if they are in the risk group, that we inform them of that."

European regulators earlier this week made a similar decision, deciding the clot risk was small enough to allow the rollout of J&J's shot. But how Americans ultimately handle J&J's vaccine will influence other countries that don't have as much access to other vaccination options.

Dr. Paul Stoffels, J&J's chief scientific officer, pledged that the company would work with U.S. and global authorities "to ensure this very rare event can be identified early and treated effectively."

At issue is a weird kind of blood clot that forms in unusual places, such as veins that drain blood from the brain, and in patients with abnormally low levels of the platelets that form clots. Symptoms of the unusual clots, dubbed "thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome," include severe headaches a week or two after the J&J vaccination — not right away — as well as abdominal pain and nausea.

CIA chief made an unannounced trip to Afghanistan

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — CIA Director William Burns made a recent unannounced visit to Kabul, a senior politician and a well-placed public figure told The Associated Press, as concerns mount about Afghanistan's capability to fight terrorism once the U.S. has withdrawn its remaining troops by summer.

Separately, a senior former Afghan security official deeply familiar with the country's counterterrorism program said two of six units trained and run by the CIA to track militants have already been transferred to Afghan control.

The three men spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss sensitive security issues with the media.

In Washington, the CIA declined to comment when asked about the director's schedule and the agency's role in Afghanistan.

In deciding this month on an unconditional troop pullout by Sept. 11, President Joe Biden

had argued that a key objective of the U.S. invasion — to prevent terror attacks on the U.S. from Afghan soil — has been met. The pullout deadline marks the 20th anniversary of the al-Qaida terror attacks on the U.S., which triggered the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.

However, senior U.S. officials have cautioned that the withdrawal poses risks.

Burns recently told the U.S. Congress that neither al-Qaida nor Islamic State extremists have the ability to stage attacks against the U.S. Still, "when the time comes for the U.S. military to withdraw, the U.S. government's ability to collect and act on threats will diminish, that's simply a fact," he said.

Burns quietly visited Kabul last weekend, the politician and the public figure said. They would not say whom Burns met with, but said some of the discussions addressed Afghanistan's preparedness after the U.S. pullout. Burns also reassured Afghan officials that the U.S. would continue to be engaged in counterterrorism efforts.

Yet concerns are mounting that Afghanistan's security forces won't be able to halt a march by Taliban insurgents on government-held territory or battle terrorist groups without the help of U.S. and NATO soldiers. Already, the Taliban control or hold sway over half the country.

The former security official said he believes terrorism-fighting capabilities will be significantly reduced once the roughly 2,500 to 3,500 U.S. troops and 7,000 allied NATO soldiers leave.

The official said the CIA had been training and running Afghan special forces known as Counter Terrorism Pursuit Teams, or CTPT. The teams are located in the provinces of Kunar, Paktia, Kandahar, Kabul, Khost and Nangarhar. He said the plan is to gradually hand them over to the Afghan intelligence service, known as the National Directorate of Security. So far, the Kunar and Paktia units have been transferred to Afghan control, he said.

All-female recruit platoon makes history

The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO — The first woman in Marine Corps history to attend boot camp in San Diego faced one final challenge in their training: the daunting final hill of the feared “Reaper” hike.

At the crack of dawn Thursday, 53 recruits in the all-woman Platoon 3241 made their charge and completed the grueling 54-hour Crucible exercise at Camp Pendleton, earning the title of “Marine.”

Thursday’s event was years in the making as the Marines work to fully integrate recruit training,

something the other military branches did decades ago.

Until now, the Marine Corps only trained women at its East Coast boot camp at Parris Island, S.C.. Male recruits were divided between east and west, depending on which side of the Mississippi River they lived. Those female companies were largely segregated from their male counterparts but in recent years the Corps began integrating some companies in South Carolina.

In 2019, Congress ordered the Marines to fully integrate wom-

en into both its boot camps — Parris Island by 2025 and San Diego by 2028.

Boot camp in San Diego is different than the one on the East Coast. Training in San Diego is split between the Marine Corps Recruit Depot and Camp Pendleton. And, while both East and West Coast boot camps are considered the most arduous in the U.S. military, the humid swamps of South Carolina lack the steep terrain that recruits find at Camp Pendleton.

Six platoons — one female, five male — began training Feb. 9.

Fifty-three of the 59 women who began training with Platoon 3241 finished the Crucible — an attrition rate comparable to that of the men, said Capt. Martin Harris, a recruit depot spokesman.

The Reaper hike is notoriously difficult. Recruits carry rifles and packs full of gear weighing up to 70 pounds up and down a meandering ridge for up to 10 miles, unsure of which hill will be the last. They begin shortly after 3 a.m.

The women’s platoon was the first in the company to summit the final hill of the hike.

Film about heroism of 2 Marines now online

BY CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

A short film about two Marines’ final acts of heroism to stop a truck bomb suicide attack in Iraq became free to view last week on the 13th anniversary of the incident, for which the two men earned Navy Cross medals.

“The 11th Order,” directed by Marine veteran Joshua DeFour, recreates the events of April 22, 2008, at an outpost in Ramadi where Cpl. Jonathan Yale and Lance Cpl. Jordan Haerter stood their ground to halt an oil truck laden with 2,000 pounds of explosives barreling toward the gates of a compound housing 50 fellow Marines and 100 Iraqi police.

DeFour, who co-wrote, directed and produced the 2019 short for his thesis at the University of Texas film school in Austin, has been touring the film festival circuit with it, garnering awards at a couple. But he felt it wasn’t reaching enough viewers, so he made it

public Thursday on Facebook and YouTube.

“We promised the families that we would get their story to a bigger audience,” DeFour said in a phone interview from Iowa, where he was attending the Julien Dubuque Film Festival.

The film, which has been accepted into the Marine Corps Museum archives, was a semifinalist in the 2019 Student Academy Awards and produced with help from the service. It gained backing from the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation and other donors, including executive producer and Marine veteran Michael Goyette.

Haerter and Yale’s story had garnered widespread attention after a November 2010 Marine Corps ball, where then-Gen. John Kelly recounted their final six seconds to a packed house just four days after his own son was killed in Afghanistan. Kelly was commander of U.S. and Iraqi forces in the country at the time of the 2008 incident.

Indonesian navy declares missing submarine sank

Associated Press

BANYUWANGI, Indonesia — Indonesia’s navy on Saturday said items were found from a missing submarine, indicating the vessel with 53 crew members had sunk and cracked open, and that there was no hope of finding survivors.

Military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said the presence of an oil slick as well as the discovery of debris near the location of KRI Nanggala 402’s last dive on Wednesday off the island of Bali were clear proof the vessel had sunk. Indonesia earlier considered the vessel to be only missing.

Navy Chief Yudo Margono told a press conference in Bali, “If it’s an explosion, it will be in pieces. The cracks happened gradually in some parts when it went down from 300 meters to 400 meters to 500 meters ... If there was an explosion, it would be heard by the sonar.”

The navy previously said it believes the submarine sank to a depth of 2,000-2,300 feet, much deeper than its collapse depth of

655 feet, at which point water pressure would be greater than the hull could withstand.

The cause of the disappearance was still uncertain. The navy had previously said an electrical failure could have left the submarine unable to execute emergency procedures to resurface.

Margono said that in the past two days, searchers found parts of a torpedo straightener, a grease bottle believed to be used to oil the periscope, debris from prayer rugs and a broken piece from a coolant pipe that was refitted on the submarine in South Korea in 2012.

“With the authentic evidence we found believed to be from the submarine, we have now moved from the ‘sub miss’ phase to ‘sub sunk,’” Margono said at the press conference, in which the found items were displayed.

Margono said no bodies have been found so far. Officials previously said the submarine’s oxygen supply would have run out early Saturday.

Biden: Armenian atrocities were genocide

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden has formally recognized that the systematic killings and deportations of hundreds of thousands of Armenians by Ottoman Empire forces in the early 20th century were “genocide” — using a term for the atrocities that his White House predecessors have avoided for decades over concerns of alienating Turkey.

With the acknowledgment, Biden followed through on a campaign promise he made a year ago Saturday — the annual commemoration of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day — to recognize that the events of 1915 to 1923 were a deliberate effort to wipe out Armenians.

Biden used a presidential proclamation to make the pronouncement. While previous presidents have offered somber reflections of the dark moment in history via remembrance day proclamations, they

have studiously avoided using the term genocide out of concern that it would complicate relations with Turkey — a NATO ally and important power in the Middle East.

But Biden campaigned on a promise to make human rights a central guidepost of his foreign policy. He argued when making the campaign pledge last year that failing to call the atrocities against the Armenian people a genocide would pave the way for future mass atrocities. An estimated 2 million Armenians were deported and 1.5 million were killed in the events known as Metz Yeghern.

During a telephone call Friday, Biden informed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of his plan to issue the statement, said a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to publicly discuss the private conversation and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The U.S. and Turkish governments, in separate statements following Biden and Erdogan’s call, made no mention of the American plan to recognize the Armenian genocide. But the White House said Biden told Erdogan he wants to improve the two countries’ relationship and find “effective management of disagreements.” The two also agreed to hold a bilateral meeting at the NATO summit in Brussels in June.

In Armenia on Saturday, people streamed to the hilltop complex in Yerevan, the capital, that memorializes the victims. Many laid flowers around the eternal flame, creating a wall of blooms seven feet high.

Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Avet Adonts, speaking at the memorial before Biden issued his proclamation, said a U.S. president using the term genocide would “serve as an example for the rest of the civilized world.”

Mental health crisis teams set to replace cops in certain situations

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When police respond to a person gripped by a mental health or drug crisis, the encounter can have tragic results. Now a government insurance program will help communities set up an alternative: mobile teams with mental health practitioners trained in de-escalating such potentially volatile situations.

The effort to reinvent policing after the death of George Floyd in police custody is getting an assist through Medicaid, the federal-state health insurance program for low-income people and the largest payer for mental health treatment. President Joe Biden’s recent coronavirus relief bill calls for an estimated \$1 billion over 10 years for states that set up mobile crisis teams.

Many 911 calls are due to a person experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis. Sometimes, like with Daniel Prude in Rochester, N.Y., the consequences are shocking. The 41-year-old Black man died after police placed a spit hood over his head and held him to the pavement for about two minutes on a cold night in 2020 until he stopped breathing. He had run naked from his brother’s house after being released from a hospital following a mental health arrest. A grand jury voted down charges against the officers.

Dispatching teams of paramedics and behavioral health practitioners would take mental health crisis calls out of the hands of uniformed and armed officers, whose mere arrival may ratchet up tensions. In Eugene, Ore., such a strategy has been in place more than 30 years, with solid backing from police.

The concept “fits nicely with what we are trying to do around police reform,” Eugene Police Chief Chris Skinner said.

Eugene is a medium-size city about 100 miles south of Portland, known for its educational institutions. The program there is called Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets, or CAHOOTS, and is run by the White Bird Clinic. CAHOOTS is part of the local 911 emergency response system but operates independently of the police, although there’s coordination. Crisis teams are not sent on calls involving violent situations.

“We don’t look like law enforcement,” White Bird veteran Tim Black said. “We drive a big white cargo van. Our responders wear a T-shirt or a hoodie with a logo. We don’t have handcuffs or pepper spray, and the way we start to interact sends a message that we are not the police and this is going to be a far safer and voluntary interaction.”

7 NC deputies on leave after Black man fatally shot

Associated Press

ELIZABETH CITY, N.C. — Seven North Carolina deputies have been placed on leave in the aftermath of a Black man being shot and killed by members of their department serving drug-related search and arrest warrants, authorities said Friday.

The disclosure comes as calls increase for the release of deputy body camera footage amid signs, including emergency scanner traffic, that Andrew Brown Jr. was shot in the back and killed as he was trying to drive away.

Pasquotank County Sheriff’s Office Maj. Aaron Wallio confirmed the number of deputies on leave due to the shooting in an email Friday. Sheriff Tommy Wooten II has previously said that multiple deputies fired shots and were placed on leave after Brown was killed Wednesday morning.

Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper joined calls for the swift release of the body camera footage, saying that initial reports of what happened “are tragic and extremely concerning.”

Wooten has said deputies from his department including a tactical team were attempting to serve drug-related search and arrest warrants when Brown was shot, but offered few other details.

Space station sees biggest crowd in years

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The International Space Station's population swelled to 11 on Saturday with the jubilant arrival of SpaceX's third crew capsule in less than a year.

It's the biggest crowd up there in more than a decade.

All of the astronauts — representing the U.S., Russia, Japan and France — managed to squeeze into camera view for a congratulatory call from the leaders of their space agencies.

"In this tough situation around the world, I believe you have brought courage and hope for all of us," Japanese Space Agency President Hiroshi Yamakawa said from his country's flight control center, referring to the global pandemic.

A recycled SpaceX capsule carrying four astronauts arrived at the space station a day after launching from NASA's Kennedy

Space Center. The Dragon capsule docked autonomously with the orbiting outpost more than 260 miles above the Indian Ocean. The hatches swung open a couple hours later, uniting all 11 space travelers.

"Man, it is awesome to see the 11 of you on station," said NASA's acting administrator, Steve Jurczyk. He noted that this will be the norm, now that SpaceX is regularly flying crews.

The newcomers will spend six months at the space station. They'll replace four astronauts who will return to Earth in their own Dragon capsule Wednesday to end a half-year mission. NASA deliberately planned for a brief overlap so the outgoing SpaceX crew could show the new arrivals around.

Although this was SpaceX's third crew flight for NASA, it was the first to use a vehicle that's flown before, an essential part of Musk's push to the moon and Mars. The Dragon capsule was used for SpaceX's

first crew launch last May, while the Falcon rocket soaring Friday hoisted crew two in November.

It was the first time two SpaceX crew Dragons were parked there at the same time — practically side by side.

NASA astronauts Shane Kimbrough and Megan McArthur — the commander and pilot of the returning Dragon — monitored their capsule's flat screen computers during the morning rendezvous. They could have taken control if necessary, but the autonomous system did its job, much like a self-driving car.

Also checking into the space station: France's Thomas Pesquet and Japan's Akihiko Hoshide. Both have lived there before, as has Kimbrough. But it was the first station visit for McArthur. She flew up in the same seat and the same capsule — named Endeavour — as her husband, Bob Behnken, did on SpaceX's debut crew mission.

LGBT activists not excited by Jenner's campaign for governor

Associated Press

Though Caitlyn Jenner is one of the most famous transgender people in America, the announcement of her candidacy for California governor was greeted hostilely by one of the state's largest LGBTQ-rights groups and by many trans activists around the country.

"Make no mistake: we can't wait to elect a #trans governor of California," tweeted the group, Equality California. "But @Caitlyn_Jenner spent years telling the #LGBTQ+ community to trust Donald Trump. We saw how that turned out. Now she wants us to trust her? Hard pass."

Jenner — the former Olympic gold medalist and reality TV personality — is a Republican and supported Trump in 2016. She later criticized his administration for some discriminatory actions against transgender peo-

ple, but has failed to convince many trans-rights advocates that she is a major asset to their cause.

"Caitlyn Jenner is a deeply unqualified hack who doesn't care about anyone but herself," tweeted trans activist Charlotte Clymer. "Her views are terrible. She is a horrible candidate."

David Badash, editor of an LGBTQ-oriented news and opinion site called The New Civil Rights Movement, noted that Jenner's campaign website outlined no policy positions and offered two options to those visiting the site: "Shop" and "Donate."

Badash questioned why Jenner would run as a Republican at a time when GOP legislators in more than 20 states have been pushing bills aimed at curtailing transgender youths' ability to play school sports and receive gender-affirming medical care.

Ala. governor signs ban on transgender athletes

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Republican Gov. Kay Ivey on Friday signed legislation restricting transgender students from participating in K-12 sports, making Alabama the latest conservative state to ban transgender girls from playing on female sports teams.

Ivey's office announced in an email that she had signed the bill that says a public K-12 school "may never allow a biological male to participate on a female team." Asked if the governor had a comment on the decision, spokeswoman Gina Maiola said she could confirm the governor signed the bill but did not elaborate.

Supporters of the bill, HB 391, say transgender girls are born bigger and faster and have an unfair advantage in competition. Opponents argue the bills are rooted in discrimination and fear, and violate the federal law barring sex discrimination in

education.

"HB 391 is nothing more than a politically motivated bill designed to discriminate against an already vulnerable population. By signing this legislation, Gov. Ivey is forcefully excluding transgender children. Let's be clear here: transgender children are children. They deserve the same opportunity to learn valuable skills of teamwork, sportsmanship, and healthy competition with their peers," Human Rights Campaign President Alphonso David said in a statement.

The Alabama House voted 74-19 for the bill sponsored by Republican Rep. Scott Stadhagen of Hartselle. The Alabama Senate voted 25-5 for the legislation.

During Senate debate on the bill last week, Republican Sen. Garlan Gudger of Cullman said the bill is needed to protect the integrity of female athletic programs.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teacher asks kids to be in wedding in viral video

KS WICHITA — Students squealed with delight when their newly engaged Kansas teacher asked them to be in her wedding in a TikTok video that has more than 10 million views.

The Wichita Eagle reported that Alexandra Stamps popped the question to her class of fifth-graders at McLean Science and Technology Magnet Elementary School in Wichita as Kina Grannis' cover of the Elvis Presley ballad "Can't Help Falling in Love" played in the background.

Her fiance, Mason McDowell, also is inviting his class of 18 third-graders to be part of their bridal party during their July wedding.

Police shoot man carrying military-style rifle

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — Police in Colorado Springs shot a man accused of accosting a customer at a gas station while armed with a military-style rifle.

The Gazette reported police had been following the man after they spotted a license plate that was believed to have been stolen.

The suspect led officers on a chase to a business area, got out of his vehicle with an AR-15 rifle and walked to a nearby gas station, where he approached a customer at a pump.

Police say the suspect, whose name has not been released, ignored commands to drop the rifle and was initially shot with a stun gun before an officer opened fire and wounded him.

Lt. Jim Sokolik, a spokesman for the police department, says the stun gun was ineffective.

Archaeologists find home of abolitionist's father

MD ANNAPOLIS — Archaeologists in Maryland say they believe they have found the homesite of famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman's father.

The homesite of Ben Ross was found on property acquired last year by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an addition to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, officials said.

An archaeology team led by the State Highway Administration conducted research that led to the find.

Tubman was born Araminta Ross in March 1822 on the Thompson Farm near Cambridge on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Kayaker wants to be 2nd to paddle solo to Hawaii

HI HONOLULU — A man is trying to become the second person to kayak alone from California to Hawaii.

Cyril Derreumaux, 44, will attempt to become the first person since 1987 to pull off the feat, Hawaii News Now reported.

Derreumaux is hoping to complete the roughly 2,400-mile journey in 70 days.

Derreumaux in 2016 was a member of a four-person team that rowed across the Pacific and set a Guinness World Record.

He will start the journey May 30 from San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.

Girl dies of CO poisoning while cleaning hog plant

IA ALGONA — A teenage girl who died after helping to clean a hog confinement building in Kossuth County was overcome by carbon monoxide poisoning, authorities said.

Victoria Marie Parra-Lerdo, 17, was found unconscious in the building in rural Swea City. She was taken to the Kossuth Regional Health Center in Algona, where she was pronounced dead, the Kossuth County Sheriff's office said.

A power washer was being operated in the building's hallway near where Parra-Lerdo was working, and inadequate ventilation caused her to be overcome by the fumes, authorities said.

Gender reveal explosion rocks several towns

NH KINGSTON — One New Hampshire family's gender reveal party was such a blast that it rattled towns, set off reports of an earthquake, and could be heard from across the state line, police said.

Police in Kingston, a town not far from the Massachusetts border, received reports of a loud explosion.

They responded to Torromeo quarry where they found people who acknowledged holding a gender reveal party with explosives.

Nearby residents said the blast rocked their homes. Some reported property damage, NBC 10 Boston reported.

Police said an investigation is

ongoing and they will make a determination on charges.

Officials warn parents after rabid bat bites child

PA PITCAIRN — A rabid bat bit one child, and health officials urged the parents of three other children who might have handled the bat to seek medical attention for them.

The animal was captured in Pitcairn, about 15 miles east of Pittsburgh, and a resident brought it to the Allegheny County Health Department for testing. The bat tested positive for rabies, according to county health officials.

At least one child was bitten by the bat, and was taken to a hospital for treatment. The Health Department said its investigation revealed that several children might have passed the bat around, or been bitten by it.

Rehabilitated sea turtle released for Earth Day

FL MARATHON — Staff from the Florida Keys-based Turtle Hospital released a rehabilitated loggerhead sea turtle back to the ocean to mark Earth Day.

Nicknamed "Sparb," the 125-pound sub-adult sea turtle was rescued in late January after being discovered floating offshore, unable to dive, with severe wounds and a missing front right flipper.

Among Sparb's rescuers was a Keys resident who wished to honor her late husband, who had that nickname and lost his right leg.

— From The Associated Press



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Andretti building name as an owner

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Alexander Rossi didn't sugar-coat his 2020 season, which was a terrible year at Andretti Autosport. Just one win, never in the championship mix, a driver fired with three races remaining and, worst of all, the team was a non-factor at the Indianapolis 500.

"I just think we sucked globally," Rossi said.

The man running the massive operation is Michael Andretti and he gives Rossi's assessment some validity. But he also believes Andretti Autosport has emerged with at least two legitimate title contenders among four entries Sunday at St. Petersburg. He's down two cars from this time a year ago.

"We're here. We made it out of 2020. We're not going to be out of business," Andretti said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But we're working to make sure we can keep our heads above water and stay competitive. I don't want to have to cut my budget. If I have to cut my budget, our cars are going to go slower and

nobody wants that."

Andretti is 58 and has been out of cars full-time since he was 39. He could have kept driving, and physically felt he probably had five more years in him. But he was over it. He had moved on to the next chapter.

There can only be one Mario Andretti, right? At some point you just are Michael Andretti and his career is much different from that of his famous father.

Andretti is running 15 cars across seven different series, from IndyCar to the fully-electric UK-based Formula E and Extreme E Series.

Andretti Autosport will have six cars in the Indianapolis 500, a race Michael Andretti has won five times as a team owner. Rossi and Colton Herta, who had the team's only win last season, could both be considered to be among the title contenders.

IndyCar is where Andretti Autosport gets most of its attention but Andretti isn't afraid to look beyond his backyard. Andretti Autosport races in

Australia and Mexico, and he wants to start an IMSA sports car program for son Marco, who in January said his heart isn't in IndyCar anymore and he only wants to run the Indy 500.

Mario Andretti told AP his son is interested in entering Formula One in some form and Michael Andretti last month announced the formation of a Special Purpose Acquisition Company. The SPAC anticipates being listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "WNNR" and said in a statement it aims to raise \$250 million.

Racing is all Michael Andretti knows and although it doesn't pay the bills — among the Andretti Group "family properties" is a petroleum consortium of gas stations, car washes and convenience stores up and down the West Coast — "you need a reason in your life to get up, right?"

Andretti needs to show this year that his IndyCar program is better because Rossi, the 2016 Indy 500 winner, is tired of not winning the champion-

ship. Andretti needs him.

Herta, who turned 21 last month, has always been part of the organization. His father, Bryan, was an Andretti driver, part team owner and Marco Andretti's race strategist.

Ryan Hunter-Reay is on the hot seat, as always, it seems. The 2012 champion, the last driver not from Ganassi or Penske to win the title, turns 41 this year and young talent is coming into IndyCar. Andretti loves the 2014 Indy 500 winner, but said the driver knows he's got to produce this year.

A sixth driver, probably Stefan Wilson, will be added to the Indy 500 lineup alongside full-time driver James Hinchcliffe and Marco Andretti, who will make his season debut next month in that race. Andretti Autosport was struggling last year to sell sponsorship for the third generation racer and Marco told his dad he wanted to do other things.

"As soon as he told me, it was like all the pressure was gone," Michael Andretti said. "He's just happy. That's good for him."

Burton, 20, preps for NASCAR Cup debut at Talladega

Associated Press

TALLADEGA, Ala. — Jeff Burton the former NASCAR driver sees some benefits to his son making his Cup Series debut at Talladega Superspeedway.

Jeff Burton the father is more anxious about it.

"As mom and dad, it's going to be a little nerve-racking," Jeff Burton said. "Obviously, Talladega is a nerve-racking place."

Harrison Burton, all of 20 years old, will make his debut on NASCAR's top circuit Sunday, barreling onto a track that can prove harrowing even for the most veteran drivers. It's not always easy on the parents, either, even one who won 21 Cup races,

though none of the victories came on the 2.66-mile oval known for its wrecks.

The elder Burton, now a commentator for NBC Sports, said he even got nervous walking in on Harrison's film session from old Talladega races. Harrison, the reigning NASCAR Xfinity Series rookie of the year, will drive the No. 96 Toyota for Gaunt Brothers Racing this weekend.

He is set to become the first driver born in the 21st century to run a Cup Series race. This will be his eighth stock car start on a superspeedway and fourth at Talladega. He was 23rd in 'Dega last October, his best finish at the massive track.

Burton said he definitely doesn't feel comfortable about Talladega racing, but feels "comfort with the discomfort." He is familiar with the track and the intensity of stock car racing's top drivers from growing up in a racing family.

"Those Cup guys are aggressive, man," Harrison said. "Those guys are all about wrecks every lap. And being prepared for that and understanding that there's going to be discomfort and trying to find a way to handle that adversity is something I'm excited about."

"It would probably be a little bit more simple to go to a short track and just kind of run where

you're going to run and do all that," he said. "But gosh, it's a crazy opportunity. I'm excited for it."

Harrison Burton is scheduled to start 39th on Sunday, a day after making start No. 50 in the Xfinity Series. Starting in the back of the pack and taking some time to get acclimated to the car isn't such a bad position for a youngster, especially with the absence of practice time these days.

"It's a race track where he really doesn't have to just take off and have all the pressure of staying on the lead lap and all those kind of things," Jeff Burton said. "He can kind of work up to understanding the car."

Kaprizov, Wild stay hot with victory over Kings

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Minnesota Wild rookie Kirill Kaprizov showed how good he could be on opening night against the Los Angeles Kings and hasn't slowed down.

Three months later, with the Kings battling to keep their playoff hopes alive, the electric Russian forward still got the best of them.

Kaprizov had two goals and the Wild beat the Kings 4-2 Friday night for their sixth straight win.

"I know I'm biased, but he's putting together a Calder season," Wild forward Nick Bonino said. "I think he's got the most goals and points, and he's obviously a threat every time he's on the ice. His goals are pretty amazing. That first goal, pretty fun to watch."

Joel Eriksson Ek and Nico Strum also scored as the Wild improved to 9-2-1 in their past 12 games. Cam Talbot made 40 saves.

Trevor Moore and Anze Kopitar scored for the Kings, who have gone 26 games without consecutive wins but are still five points behind Arizona for the final playoff spot in the West Division. Cal Petersen made 20 saves.

"It's too bad we couldn't bury a couple more," Kings center Gabriel Vilardi said. "I thought we had some really good chances and good looks out there. Yeah, it's just one game. We got to keep going. We play tomorrow (against Arizona), big game."

Rangers 4, Flyers 1: Alexander Georgiev stopped 26 shots, Pavel Buchnevich and rookie Alexis Lafreniere each had a goal and an assist and host New York beat Philadelphia on Friday for its fifth victory in seven games.

Chris Kreider and Filip Chytil also scored and Artemi Panarin had two assists to help the Rangers bounce back a night af-

ter a 3-2 loss to the Flyers. New York pulled six points behind Boston for the fourth and final playoff spot in the East Division. The Rangers have eight games remaining, while the Bruins have 10.

Sabres 6, Bruins 4: Sam Reinhart scored three times, including a sealing empty-netter, and host Buffalo avoided a third-period collapse to beat Boston.

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen stopped 36 shots in his NHL debut, and the Sabres ended the Bruins' season-best six-game winning streak.

Rasmus Dahlin had a goal and assist to help Buffalo snap an 0-8-2 skid against the Bruins, dating to a 4-2 win Dec. 16, 2018. Casey Mittelstadt and Arttu Ruotsalainen also scored for Buffalo.

Flames 4, Canadiens 2: Sean Monahan had a goal and two assists and Jacob Markstrom made 17 saves in host Calgary's victory over Montreal.

Andrew Mangiapane had a goal and an assist, and Dillon Dube and Elias Lindholm also scored for the Flames in the first of three straight games between the teams. Calgary pulled six points behind Montreal for the fourth and final playoff spot in the North Division.

Calgary called off a morning skate saying a player tested positive for COVID-19, but no other players or staff did. Forward Josh Leivo went on the NHL's COVID protocol list Friday and the game went ahead. Calgary played 11 forwards against the Canadiens.

Predators 3, Blackhawks 1: Juuse Saros made 29 saves, Luke Kunin scored for the third straight game and visiting Nashville beat Chicago.

Ryan Johansen and Erik Haula also scored for the Predators.

Vinnie Hinostroza scored with 3:19 left in the third period to spoil Saros' shutout bid.

Nets back atop East after win over Celtics

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Kyrie Irving just missed a triple-double despite an awful shooting night, Joe Harris scored 20 points and the Brooklyn Nets regained first place in the Eastern Conference with a 109-104 victory over the Boston Celtics on Friday night.

Irving had torched his former team for 77 points in 67 minutes in a pair of victories this season, but this time shot just 4 for 19, missing all six of his 3-pointers.

But he scored 15 points, including the finishing free throws with 1.6 seconds left, and added 11 assists, nine rebounds and four steals as the Nets finished a season sweep of the Celtics, just the third in their franchise history.

Jayson Tatum had 38 points and 10 rebounds but was doing it mostly alone in the first half, when he had 25 of the Celtics' 51 points.

Both teams were without two of their three best players. Kevin Durant missed a third straight game with a bruised left thigh, remaining sidelined along with James Harden (right hamstring).

Jaylen Brown missed his second straight game with left shoulder bursitis, while Kemba Walker rested his left knee on the second night of Boston's back-to-back after beating Phoenix on Thursday.

Clippers 109, Rockets 104: Paul George had 33 points and 14 rebounds and visiting Los Angeles shook off an 11-point third quarter to beat Houston for its fourth straight victory.

The Rockets have lost eight of their last nine and 13 of their last 15. Houston is 4-34 since Feb. 4.

Wizards 129, Thunder 109: Russell Westbrook had another triple-double in his return to Oklahoma City, and Washington won its seventh straight.

Westbrook had 37 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists — his

fourth straight triple-double and his 14th in 16 games.

Darius Bazley and Theo Maledon each scored 20 points for Oklahoma City. The Thunder have lost 13th straight.

Warriors 118, Nuggets 97: Stephen Curry scored 32 points, Draymond Green had 19 assists and 12 rebounds, and Golden State welcomed back fans for the first time since the pandemic began by beating Denver.

Denver forward Will Barton went down 59 seconds into the game with a strained right hamstring and didn't return. He hit the floor awkwardly on the baseline beneath the Nuggets basket.

Fans chanted "M-V-P! M-V-P!" for Curry, who shot 11-for-18 with four threes and also grabbed eight rebounds.

Hawks 118, Heat 108: Bogdan Bogdanovich scored 21 points, John Collins added 20 and injury-depleted Atlanta surprised visiting Miami.

The Hawks, who began the game No. 5 in the Eastern Conference, improved to 33-27 after winning for the 10th time in their last 12 games against the Eastern Conference and 10th time in the last 13 overall.

Grizzlies 130, Trail Blazers 128: Ja Morant had 33 points and 13 assists and host Memphis handed Portland its fourth straight loss.

Damian Lillard overcame a slow start and finished with 27 points, and Jusuf Nurkic added 26 points and a season-high 17 rebounds. Portland has lost six of its last seven.

Hornets 108, Cavaliers 102: Miles Bridges had 25 points and 10 rebounds and Charlotte overcame a 10-point second-half deficit to beat visiting Cleveland.

P.J. Washington and Terry Rozier also each had 25 points for the Hornets.

Collin Sexton had 28 points for the Cavaliers.

DeGrom's 15 Ks lead Mets over Nats

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Jacob deGrom felt good in the bullpen.

"That made me a little nervous," he said. "Some of my best starts I've barely thrown strikes down there."

Nothing to be skittish about. He simply pitched the finest game of his eight-year career.

DeGrom struck out a career-high 15, threw a two-hitter and boosted the Mets' sagging offense with a go-ahead double from the No. 8 spot in the batting order, leading New York over the Washington Nationals 6-0 Friday night.

"You're going to be replaying that game at the end of 2021 in one of those greatest games of 2021," said Brandon Nimmo, who hit his first home run of the season and had four RBIs. "He has to be from a different planet because he just does things that seem out of this world."

DeGrom has 43 strikeouts in his last three outings and 50 this season, breaking the major league record for most in a pitcher's first four starts set last weekend by Cleveland's Shane Bieber with 48.

Perennially plagued by a lack of run support, just like Mets star Tom Seaver decades earlier, deGrom lowered his career ERA to 2.55 and overtook Seaver's 2.57 for New York's franchise lead.

The two-time Cy Young Award winner walked none and retired the final 19 batters

of his second shutout and fourth complete game in 187 starts, just the 16th time since 1901 that a pitcher had 15 or more strikeouts and no walks in a shutout. Starlin Castro singled in the second and Andrew Stevenson doubled in the third.

DeGrom also made the final putout, leaping on first base to catch Pete Alonso's toss on Josh Harrison's grounder.

DeGrom smiled and blushed when informed Mets catcher James McCann had told the team's SNY network: "He doesn't just want to beat you, he wants to take your heart and soul in the process."

"It's part of competing," deGrom said.

New York stopped a three-game slide after getting to Citi Field at 4:15 a.m. after a Thursday night game at Chicago's Wrigley Field — deGrom flew home Thursday before his teammates,

He was coming off consecutive 14-strikeout games against Miami and Colorado, and New York gave him a fifth day of rest. DeGrom (2-1) reached double-digit strikeouts for the third time this season and 49th overall. He joined Boston's Pedro Martínez in 1999 and Houston's Gerrit Cole in 2019 as the only pitchers to strike out 14 in three straight appearances.

Taking the mound to Lynard Skynyrdr's "Simple Man," deGrom was anything but.

He topped out at 101 mph and reached 100 mph on 10 pitches, five in the first inning. Since the start of the 2020 season, deGrom

has reached triple figures on 33 first-inning pitches; Miami's Sixto Sánchez is a distant second with eight, according to MLB Statcast.

"It's pretty unreal," said Kyle Schwarber, who struck out twice.

DeGrom threw 84 of 109 pitches for strikes, mixing 56 fastballs with 46 sliders at about 92 mph and seven changeups of 91-92 mph. He got seven strikeouts on sliders, and four on each of his other two pitches.

"It was one of those days where he was on," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said,

DeGrom struck out the side in the sixth and seventh innings and dropped his season ERA to 0.31 with one earned run allowed. The pandemic-limited crowd of 8,130 repeatedly chanted "M-V-P!"

He knew his previous strikeout high was 14.

"When I looked up there and I saw 12, I was like, OK, you've got to figure out a way to strike out three guys," deGrom said.

Erick Fedde (1-2) allowed three runs and four hits in five innings. He hit J.D. Davis on the back of his left leg with a one-out pitch in the fifth. Jeff McNeil worked a nine-pitch walk and deGrom lined a belt-high sinker to the opposite field into left, giving him a five-game hitting streak dating to 2019.

DeGrom singled in the eighth and is 6-for-11 (.545) at the plate this season — his 72 career hits match his wins total.

A's knock off Orioles to run streak to 12

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Oakland Athletics won their 12th consecutive game — their longest winning streak in almost two decades — with a 3-1 victory over the Baltimore Orioles on Friday night.

Oakland's string is its longest since it won a franchise-record 20 in a row in 2002. It is the Athletics' third-longest winning streak since moving to Oakland in 1968, and is the longest in the majors since Houston's 12-game run from June 6-18, 2018.

Ramón Laureano homered and Cole Irvin won consecutive starts for the first time in nearly two years as the A's improved to 13-1 since dropping their first six games.

Baltimore has lost seven of its eight home games.

Twins 2, Pirates 0: Left-hander J.A. Happ lost his bid for a no-hitter when Jacob Stallings doubled with one out in the eighth inning, and host Minnesota beat Pittsburgh.

Happ (1-0), in his first season with the Twins, walked two batters, both in the second, and struck out three.

Padres 6, Dodgers 1: Fernando Tatis Jr. hit two homers at Dodger Stadium on the 22nd anniversary of his father hitting two grand slams in one inning at the same park, and San Diego earned its third straight victory over host Los Angeles.

Cubs 15, Brewers 2: Jake Marisnick homered and

matched a career high with five RBIs and Chicago pounded visiting Milwaukee for its fourth straight victory.

Yankees 5, Indians 3: Giancarlo Stanton busted out of his slump with two rocketed home runs and his team connected four times, sending New York past host Cleveland.

Red Sox 6, Mariners 5: Xander Bogaerts hit a two-run homer all the way out of Fenway Park and added an RBI single to help Boston beat visiting Seattle.

Astros 5, Angels 4 (10): Rookie pinch-hitter Robel Garcia's RBI single in his team's three-run 10th inning lifted host Houston past Los Angeles.

White Sox 9, Rangers 7: Rookie sensation Yermín Mercedes

added to his scorching start with four more hits, including a tie-breaking double in the seventh inning, and Chicago held off visiting Texas.

Giants 5, Marlins 3: Alex Wood pitched seven crisp innings after allowing a home run on the game's third pitch and San Francisco beat visiting Miami.

Royals 6, Tigers 2: Mike Minor held host Detroit hitless until the fifth inning, and Andrew Benintendi and Ryan O'Hearn homered off Casey Mize to lift Kansas City.

Braves 5, Diamondbacks 4: Huascar Ynoa earned his first career victory, Austin Riley and Ozzie Albies homered and Atlanta beat visiting Arizona.