

Biden will ask public to mask for 100 days after inauguration

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden said Thursday that he will ask Americans to commit to 100 days of wearing masks as one of his first acts as president, stopping just short of the nationwide mandate he's pushed before to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

The move marks a notable shift from President Donald Trump, whose own skepticism of mask-wearing has contributed to a politicization of the issue. That's made many people reticent to embrace a practice that public health experts say is one of the easiest ways to manage the pandemic, which has killed more than 275,000 Americans.

The president-elect has frequently emphasized mask-wearing as a "patriotic duty" and during the campaign floated the idea of instituting a nationwide mask mandate, which he later acknowledged would be beyond the ability of the president to enforce.

Speaking with CNN's Jake Tapper, Biden said he would make the request of Americans on Inauguration Day, Jan. 20.

"On the first day I'm inaugurated, I'm going to ask the public for 100 days to mask. Just 100 days to mask — not forever, just 100 days. And I think we'll see a significant reduction" in the virus, Biden said.

The president-elect reiterated his call for lawmakers on Capitol Hill to pass a coronavirus aid bill and expressed support for a \$900 billion compromise bill that a bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced this week.

"That would be a good start. It's not enough," he said, adding, "I'm going to need to ask for more help."

Biden has said his transition team is working on its own coronavirus relief package, and his aides have signaled they plan for that to be their first legislative push.

The president-elect also said he asked Dr. Anthony Fauci to stay on in his administration, "in the exact same role he's had for the past several presidents," as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the nation's top infectious-disease expert.

He said he's asked Fauci to be a "chief

medical adviser" as well as part of his COVID-19 advisory team. Fauci told NBC's "Today" show on Friday, "I said yes right on the spot."

Regarding a coronavirus vaccine, Biden offered begrudging credit for the work Trump's administration has done in expediting the development of a vaccine but said that planning the distribution properly will be "critically important."

"It's a really difficult but doable project, but it has to be well planned," he said.

Part of the challenge the Biden administration will face in distributing the vaccine will be instilling public confidence in it. Biden said he'd be "happy" to get inoculated in public to assuage any concerns about its efficacy and safety.

Three former presidents — Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton — have said they'd also get vaccinated publicly to show that it's safe.

"People have lost faith in the ability of the vaccine to work," Biden said, adding that "it matters what a president and the vice president do."

Aquilino picked to lead INDOPACOM

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Adm. John Aquilino was nominated Thursday to be the next commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command by acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller, the Pentagon announced.

Aquilino has led U.S. Pacific Fleet, based in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, since May 17, 2018. The 1984 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy would be the 26th commander of INDOPACOM, also based in Hawaii, if confirmed by the Senate.

With President-elect Joe Biden's administration coming into office in several weeks

and the Senate in session until Dec. 18, it's unclear whether his nomination could be reconsidered or even make it through in time before the next Congress session starts.

Aquilino is a naval aviator, having flown F-14 A/B Tomcats and the F-18 C/E/F Hornet, according to his official biography. He has deployed several times, including in support of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

He is also a graduate of the Navy Fighter Weapons School, the Joint Forces Staff College, and the Harvard Kennedy School's Executive Education Program in National

and International Security, according to his biography.

Adm. Philip Davidson, the current INDOPACOM commander, is expected to retire, according to The Wall Street Journal. The command has about 380,000 service members and is responsible for all military activities in the Indo-Pacific region, involving 36 countries and 14 time zones, according to the Pentagon.

One of the biggest crises that occurred during Aquilino's tenure as Pacific Fleet commander was the coronavirus outbreak aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt in March that led to the death of one sailor.

Congress considers troop exit limits

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. lawmakers have moved to block the Trump administration's rapid drawdown of American forces from Afghanistan, with a measure in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act that would require input from other government agencies before more troops can be withdrawn.

The number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan has dropped from roughly 13,000 at the start of 2020 to around 4,500 last month, as President Donald Trump tries to make good on a 2016 campaign promise to extract the U.S. from its longest war.

While Trump suggested in October that all U.S. troops could be home by Christmas, that looks unlikely.

The measure in the NDAA, which sets out the military budget for 2021, authorizes Congress to withhold funding for further reductions unless the Pentagon and other agencies submit a report detailing how having fewer U.S. troops in Afghanistan could impact U.S. national security and other issues.

Such a report would be required before troop numbers drop below 4,000, or whatever the total number is when the bill becomes law, and again before numbers dip below 2,000, the bill says.

"The Administration has a constitutional obligation to provide the Congress and the American people with regular, timely, and comprehensive information on the status of security operations and diplomatic efforts in Afghanistan," said a report released

Thursday as House and Senate negotiators reached agreement on a final version of the bill.

After recently reducing the number of Americans deployed to Afghanistan to about 4,500, acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller announced last month that a further reduction to 2,500 will be completed by mid-January, just before Trump leaves office. Senior military officials have said conditions don't warrant fewer troops than that.

Any future troop reductions should come in coordination with allies and the Afghan government, the report said.

The compromise bill is expected to head to the House and Senate floors for votes next week before it goes to the White House for Trump's signature.

DOD spending bill funds Stars and Stripes

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The compromise Defense Department spending and policy bill lawmakers revealed Thursday would fund Stars and Stripes in 2021, maintaining the news organization that the Pentagon sought to close earlier this year.

Stars and Stripes would receive about \$15.5 million in the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, which lawmakers made public late Thursday after weeks of negotiations to merge Senate- and House-

passed versions of the legislation. If it becomes law, the bill would provide the same amount of funding that Stars and Stripes received for 2020, and it would also require the defense secretary to coordinate with the news organization on a report "detailing the business case analysis for various options for Stars and Stripes" to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees by March 1.

But the \$740.5 billion bill's future is uncertain. Senate and House leadership have signaled their chambers would quickly vote

on the bill. President Donald Trump, however, has vowed a veto of the bill for its inclusion of a provision that would strip Army bases of names honoring Confederate generals from the Civil War and its exclusion of a measure to repeal a law that shields technology companies from being held liable for their users' postings. Lawmakers however dismissed Trump's 11th-hour demand that they repeal Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act in the NDAA, saying it was unrelated to defense and inappropriate to tack onto the legislation.

Defense bill seeks study of toxic exposure at Uzbekistan base

By STEVE BEYNON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A measure that aims to kickstart medical studies of veterans who served at Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, known as K2, and were exposed to multiple cancer-causing toxins, has made it into the final 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

The K2 Veterans Toxic Exposure Accountability Act of 2020 would require the Pentagon to conduct a study of illnesses and deaths among veterans stationed at K2. U.S. forces established Camp Stronghold Freedom at K2 in Uzbekistan after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and it was used to support combat missions from 2001 to 2005.

Sens. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn.; Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis.; and Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., introduced the measure in August.

Blackburn said the effort is a critical first step to getting care to the veterans who served there. Former service members who spent time at K2 testified on Capitol Hill in February that they were aware of at least 400 individuals diagnosed with cancers who served at the base. They said at least 30 have died.

Many veterans advocates and lawmakers, including Blackburn, have said toxic exposure could be the post-9/11 generation's Agent Orange and the government cannot take decades to respond and must issue health care and compensation now to those impacted.

"One of the lessons of Agent Orange was [the Defense Department] did not pay attention early enough in the process," Blackburn said. "You still have different trials and studies going on ... but we need to pay

attention to this now."

The measure would also allow those veterans eligible to contribute to the Department of Veterans Affairs Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. The registry, created in 2014, allows service members to document their exposure and illnesses and provide data to the agency. The legislation also would grant the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine access to any studies conducted by the VA and Pentagon on K2 veterans.

VA officials remain unconvinced of toxic exposure's long-term health impact on veterans. The VA is conducting its own study that could take up to 18 months to complete.

Blackburn said she is hopeful the study authorized in the legislation could supplement whatever data that the VA finds and add to the effort to expand access to care.

US hiring slows down; 245,000 jobs added

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — America's employers sharply scaled back their hiring last month as the viral pandemic accelerated across the country, adding 245,000 jobs, the fewest since April and the fifth straight monthly slowdown.

At the same time, the unemployment rate fell to a still-high 6.7%, from 6.9% in October as many people stopped looking for work and were no longer counted as unemployed, the Labor Department said. November's job gain was down from 610,000 in October.

Friday's report of another hiring slowdown provided the latest evidence that the job market and the economy are faltering in the face of a virus that has been shattering daily records for confirmed infections. Economic activity is likely to slow further with

health officials warning against all but essential travel and states and cities limiting gatherings, restricting restaurant dining and reducing the hours and capacity of bars, stores and other businesses. Most experts say the economy and job market won't be able to fully recover until the virus is controlled with an effective and widely used vaccine.

Before the pandemic, last month's job gain would have been considered healthy. But the U.S. economy is still nearly 10 million jobs below its pre-pandemic level, with a rising proportion of the unemployed describing their jobs as gone for good. Faster hiring is needed to ensure that people who were laid off during the pandemic recession can quickly get back to work.

Most of November's job growth came

from temporarily laid-off people being recalled to their former jobs. For others, finding a new job has become increasingly difficult. People who have been out of work for six months or more — one definition of long-term unemployment — now make up nearly 40% of the jobless, the highest such proportion in nearly seven years. The long-term unemployed typically face a harder time finding work.

Friday's jobs report also reflects how the coronavirus has transformed the holiday shopping season. Transportation and warehousing firms added 145,000 jobs in November, more than half the total job gain for the month. That reflected rapid hiring by shipping and logistics firms that are benefiting from the surge in online purchases by consumers shopping at home.

California ties new rules to overwhelmed hospitals

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California is on the brink of a new stay-at-home order that would close businesses and curb travel in regions that could see hospitals overwhelmed by coronavirus patients.

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced new rules that take effect Saturday, designed to keep local health systems from collapsing under the weight of skyrocketing COVID-19 caseloads.

Previous restrictions were based on infection rates in counties.

The new order divides the state into five broad regions and restricts those with intensive care unit bed capacity below 15%.

On Thursday, Newsom said four regions — all but the San Francisco Bay area — could meet that threshold "within a day or two."

California's virus hospitalizations have nearly quadrupled since mid-October and now stand at 8,240, including 1,890 in intensive care units. The Department of Public Health reported 19,437 deaths since the start of the pandemic, including 220 health care workers.

"If we don't act now, we'll continue to see our death rate climb, more lives lost," Newsom said.

Affected regions must close hair salons, barber shops and movie theaters, ban restaurant service except for takeout and de-

livery, shutter playgrounds, and limit retail stores and shopping centers to 20% customer capacity.

The new stay-at-home order will last at least three weeks, cutting sharply into the most profitable shopping season and threatening financial ruin for businesses already struggling after 10 months of on-again, off-again restrictions and slow sales because of the pandemic.

"This means no income for the rest of the year," said Lam Nguyen, who owns a nail salon in the Sacramento suburb of Citrus Heights. "I'm sad and scared, not only for myself but all my friends with nail and hair salons. A lot of us are in debt."

UK defends its virus vaccine decision amid criticism

Associated Press

LONDON — U.K. regulators went on the offensive Friday to beat back criticism that they rushed their authorization of a COVID-19 vaccine, saying they rigorously analyzed data on safety and effectiveness in the shortest time possible without compromising the thoroughness of their review.

The comments from the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency came as the Times newspaper reported that the agency's chief executive, Dr. June Raine, planned to give a series of radio interviews so she could speak directly to people who may be concerned about getting

vaccinated.

The MHRA reiterated earlier statements that the agency is conducting rolling reviews of COVID-19 vaccine candidates, allowing regulators to speed up the review process by looking at data as it becomes available. The agency gave emergency approval on Wednesday to a vaccine produced by U.S. drugmaker Pfizer and Germany-based BioNTech.

The ability to act more quickly "does not mean steps and the expected standards of safety, quality and effectiveness have been bypassed," the MHRA said. "No vaccine would be authorized for supply in the U.K.

unless the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met."

The media blitz comes amid concerns that criticism of the approval process could undermine public confidence in the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, leading some individuals to shun shots.

Britain plans to begin vaccinating people within the next few days, starting with nursing home residents, caregivers and people over age 80.

America's top infectious disease expert late Thursday apologized for suggesting that U.K. authorities had rushed their authorization of the vaccine.

Trump continues to suffer legal blows

Associated Press

For a man obsessed with winning, President Donald Trump is losing a lot.

He's managed to lose not just once to Democrat Joe Biden at the ballot box but over and over again in courts across the country in a futile attempt to stay in power. The Republican president and his allies continue to mount new cases, recycling the same baseless claims, even after Trump's own attorney general declared the Justice Department had uncovered no widespread fraud.

"This will continue to be a losing strategy, and in a way it's even bad for him: He gets to re-lose the election numerous times," said Kent Greenfield, a professor at Boston College Law School. "The depths of his petulance and narcissism continues to surprise me."

In an Associated Press tally of roughly 50

cases brought by Trump's campaign and his allies, more than 30 have been rejected or dropped. About a dozen are awaiting action. Trump has notched just one small victory, a case challenging a decision to move the deadline to provide missing proof of identification for certain absentee ballots and mail-in ballots in Pennsylvania.

Another legal blow came Thursday, the day after Trump posted a 46-minute speech to Facebook filled with conspiracies, misstatements and vows to keep up his fight to subvert the election.

In Wisconsin, a split state Supreme Court refused to hear Trump's lawsuit seeking to disqualify more than 221,000 ballots in the state's two biggest Democratic counties, alleging irregularities in the way absentee ballots were administered. The case echoed claims that were earlier rejected by election officials in those counties during a recount

that barely affected Biden's winning margin of about 20,700 votes. Trump filed a similar lawsuit in federal court late Wednesday.

Meanwhile, in Arizona, a judge heard arguments Thursday in a case contesting the election results brought by Arizona Republican Party Chair Kelli Ward. Ward's lawyers say an inspection of 100 ballots found two problems: One person's vote for Trump was ultimately recorded as a Biden vote and another person's vote for Trump was canceled when the reproduced ballot contained votes for both the Republican incumbent and a write-in candidate.

Judges in battleground states have repeatedly swatted down legal challenges brought by the president and his allies. Trump's legal team has vowed to take one Pennsylvania case to the U.S. Supreme Court even though it was rejected.

TSA sets new rule halting service animal free-for-all

Associated Press

The days of pets flying with their owners in airplane cabins for free are coming to an end.

The Transportation Department issued a final rule Wednesday covering animals on airlines. It decided that only dogs can fly as service animals, and companions that passengers use for emotional support don't count.

The rule aims to settle years of tension between airlines and passengers who bring their pets on board for free by saying they need them for emotional help. Under a long-standing department policy, all the passengers needed was a note from a health professional.

Airlines argued that passengers abused the situation to bring a menagerie of animals on board, including cats, turtles, potbellied pigs and, in one case, a peacock.

The agency said Wednesday that it was rewriting the rules partly because passengers carrying unusual animals on board "eroded the public trust in legitimate service animals." It also cited the increasing frequency of people "fraudulently representing their pets as service animals," and a rise in misbehavior by emotional-support animals, ranging from peeing on the carpet to biting other passengers.

The Transportation Department proposed the new rule back in January and received more than 15,000 comments. While 3,000 commenters favored dropping protections for support animals, 6,000 spoke in favor of them, including people suffering from depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, the department said.

The Paralyzed Veterans of America said the mere presence of a dog, cat or rabbit — even if untrained — can help some travelers, and pet fees of up to \$175 one-way are a hardship on low-income people.

The new rule will force passengers with support animals to check them into the cargo hold — and pay a pet fee — or leave them at home. The agency estimated that airlines will gain up to \$59.6 million a year in pet fees.

Under the final rule, which takes effect in 30 days, a service animal is a dog trained to help a person with a physical or psychiatric disability. Advocates for veterans and others had pushed for the inclusion of psychiatric service dogs.

Airlines will be able to require owners to vouch for the dog's health, behavior and training. Airlines can require people with a service dog to turn in paperwork up to 48 hours before a flight, but they can't bar those travelers from checking in online.

Militants fire on army detachment in the Philippines

Associated Press

COTABATO, Philippines — Dozens of militants aligned with Islamic State opened fire on a Philippine army detachment and burned a police patrol car in a southern town but withdrew after troops returned fire, officials said Friday.

There were no immediate reports of injuries in Thursday night's brief attack by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in Datu Piang town. Nevertheless it sparked panic among residents and rekindled fears of a repeat of a 2017 militant siege of southern Marawi city that lasted for five months before being quelled by government forces.

"We are on top of the situation. This is just an isolated case," regional military commander Lt. Gen. Corleto Vinluan Jr. said in a statement.

Security officials gave differing statements on the motive of the 30 to 50 gunmen. Some said the militants targeted Datu Piang's police chief over a feud but others speculated that the militants wanted to project that they are still a force to reckon with by attacking the army detachment in the center of the predominantly Muslim town.

When reinforcement troops arrived and opened fire, the militants fled toward a marshland, military officials said.

FBI searches for 'Too Tall Bandit' in 16 bank thefts

NC CHARLOTTE — The FBI literally has a big search on its hands.

A news release from the agency says a serial bank robber it's dubbed the "Too Tall Bandit" is responsible for 16 bank robberies in North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee dating back to 2009.

According to the FBI, the suspect is a white male, possibly with brown eyes, and between 6 feet, 2 inches and 6 feet, 6 inches tall and weighs between 210 and 250 pounds. Agents say his string of robberies began in White House, Tenn. on Nov. 27, 2009, and his most recent robbery was in Etowah, N.C., on Nov. 27.

Inmate uses extinguisher, hose in brief escape from jail

TX FORT WORTH — An inmate at a North Texas county jail used a fire extinguisher and a fire hose to escape before being quickly captured, authorities said.

The inmate, Jeremiah Stevenson, 39, used the fire extinguisher and hose to escape through a fifth-floor window at the Lon Evans Corrections Center in Fort Worth, according to the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office. Stevenson was captured about 20 minutes after his escape. Authorities said Stevenson was injured during his escape and he was taken to an area hospital for treatment.

2 engines, 12 cars on freight train derail; engineer treated

NM VADO — Two engines and 12 empty cars that were part of a Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train derailed in the southern New Mexico community of Vado, the railroad said.

The train's engineer was taken to a hospital to be treated for minor injuries and cause of the derailment was under investigation, BNSF said in a statement.

The derailment left one engine on its side and the second was off the rails but upright.

The state Department of Transportation said parts of several highways were closed in Vado, which is south of Las Cruces.

Police say man driving stolen car died in crash during pursuit

KS WICHITA — A man died after a stolen car he was driving crashed during a police pursuit, Wichita police said.

Police received a report that a car that

had been left running to warm up was stolen, Police Capt. Wendell Nicholson said.

Officers saw the car a short time later and began a pursuit. The driver eventually clipped another vehicle at an intersection and crashed into a telephone pole, Nicholson said. The driver was thrown from the vehicle and died at the scene. His name has not been released.

Monolith, similar to Utah structure, appears

CA LOS ANGELES — A monolith has been spotted in Southern California that appears to be similar to one discovered in the Utah desert.

It's unclear who placed the monolith on a hiking trail in Atascadero, KEYT-TV reported. The tall, silver structure drew some hikers to the area after photos were posted on social media.

At least two other monoliths have been spotted elsewhere. A similar structure that officials said was made of riveted plates of stainless steel was toppled in Utah by a group of people who said "leave no trace," KSTU-TV reported.

It had been placed without permission on public land. Visitors left behind a mess of human waste and debris, parking cars on vegetation as well, officials said.

Wendy's manager bit teen employee's shoulder

TN MURFREESBORO — A 53-year-old manager at a Tennessee fast food restaurant was charged with simple assault after police said he admitted to biting a teenage worker on the shoulder while on the job.

The confrontation happened at a Wendy's in Murfreesboro, according to a report filed by the unnamed 17-year-old employee.

The teenager accused the manager of walking up to her during her afternoon shift and biting her on her left shoulder, the Murfreesboro Police Department said in the report. No injuries were reported.

The manager told an officer that the teen "was in the way of the fryer" when she came in for her shift, and that "he was joking when he came up to her and growled," the report said.

Councilwoman arrested, said to have fired shot in parking lot

MS MCCOMB — A Mississippi councilwoman was arrested and accused of firing a gun and attacking a woman in a Walmart parking lot, police said.

Summit Councilwoman Pauline Monley turned herself in after a viral Facebook video appears to show Monley with a gun, firing a shot toward one person and later assaulting a woman, news outlets reported.

According to WLBT-TV, one of the victims identified herself as Lillian Martin. Martin told the news outlet that her fiancé is Monley's ex-girlfriend. Martin said she ran from Monley when someone screamed that she had a gun.

After being released from jail, Monley told WJTV-TV the video does not tell the whole story. Monley told the news outlet she was attacked first, so she grabbed her gun in self-defense.

High school students receive racist emails, officials say

FL SANFORD — Public high school students in one Florida county received more than eight million racist emails with "disgusting" messages, school district officials said.

Students in Seminole County began receiving the messages and some of the emails made it to middle school students accounts as well, the Orlando Sentinel reported.

School district officials say the spamming effort was blocked, but officials were still working to delete all of the messages. Many emails included racist and derogatory messages, with some referencing Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, school district spokesman Michael Lawrence told the Sentinel in an email. The district said no student or district data was breached, and the effort did not disrupt district operations.

Mayor, formerly the police chief, arrested on drug charges

NY MASSENA — The mayor and former police chief of a northern New York town was arrested on drug charges after an undercover drug operation, authorities said.

Timmy Currier, the mayor of Massena, threw a gram of crack cocaine out of his car window before his arrest, the St. Lawrence County Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

The sheriff's office said Currier kept driving when deputies first tried to pull his car over. Currier, 55, drove for about a third of a mile before throwing the drugs out of his car and stopping, the authorities said.

Currier was arrested on charges of criminal possession of a controlled substance, tampering with physical evidence and failure to comply with a police officer.

— From The Associated Press

BYU steps in to face Coastal Carolina

Associated Press

Different opponent for No. 14 Coastal Carolina. Even bigger stakes in this Top 25 matchup between the Chanticleers and No. 8 BYU.

In another COVID-induced schedule twist, Coastal Carolina (9-0, No. 18 CFP) and BYU (9-0, No. 13 CFP) will square off after the Cougars stepped in to replace No. 25 Liberty.

"We have a great mindset," Coastal Carolina coach Jamey Chadwell said. "We'll play whoever, wherever."

The Chanticleers' ability to adjust on the fly will be tested as they get ready for the biggest game in their 18 seasons of mostly FCS football.

They had been preparing to play the Flames, Coastal's one-time bitter FCS rival when both competed in the Big South Conference. But Liberty paused all its football activities and called

off its game on Thursday due to the coronavirus.

BYU was there waiting — and ready, willing and able to travel 2,208 miles to Conway, S.C., for the chance to play.

The move heightens the big-game atmosphere that has been building at Coastal. ESPN's College GameDay is hosting its show from campus when there were clearly other options, like Baton Rouge, La., where LSU will host No. 1 Alabama.

BYU offensive lineman James Empey has tracked Coastal Carolina this season since there are many similarities between the schools — mostly that both are Power Five outsiders looking to continue stellar seasons.

"It's hard not to hear about those guys, they're making so much noise this season," Empey said.

The Cougars are an FBS inde-

pendent, scrounging to find any game they can in this COVID-19 affected season. They have won at Houston and at then-No. 21 Boise State last month, but are looking for a signature win. They've been having success with a high-flying offense led by quarterback Zach Wilson, who directs the country's fourth-best scoring attack.

The Chanticleers are also having a breakthrough season in the Sun Belt Conference. An FCS powerhouse just four years ago, Coastal was picked last in the East Division yet has clinched a spot in the title game and will host No. 20 Louisiana-Lafayette on Dec. 19 for the league crown. Should the Chants keep winning, they'd be in perfect position for the Group of Five spot among the prestigious New Year's Six bowl game should No. 7 Cincinnati falter.

Chadwell said his staff and

players started game-planning when the rumors of Liberty's situation began Wednesday. Now, he's looking for any edge over the Cougars he can get.

"I just want to kick off early. I think they're mountain time. Let's kick off about 12 p.m." Chadwell said.

Some other things to watch for when No. 8 BYU travels to No. 14 Coastal Carolina:

■ **First time, not last time:** This is the first meeting between BYU and Coastal Carolina, which spent its first 14 seasons as an FCS school before moving up to college football's top level. It might not be the last as Cougars athletic director Tom Holmoe asked Coastal counterpart Matt Hogue if the Chants would travel to Provo, Utah, for a game in the future. Hogue said they would and the two agreed to finalize things after the season.

Ohio St. returns to field after forced cancellation

Associated Press

Among the teams contending for a playoff spot, the intrigue is not about who No. 3 Ohio State is playing as much as who will be playing for the Buckeyes this weekend.

Ohio State seems to be on track to play at Michigan State on Saturday after a spike in COVID-19 cases in the program forced a cancellation of last week's road trip to Illinois.

Coach Ryan Day said he expected to the Buckeyes to be short-handed but did not elaborate. If Ohio State has one more game canceled, it would be unable to meet the Big Ten's minimum games played to be eligible for the conference title game.

Even with the uncertainty, the Buckeyes (4-0) are more than a three-touchdown favorite against the Spartans (2-4).

No. 1 Alabama, No. 2 Notre Dame and No. 4 Clemson are also

avored by at least 21 points.

There are two matchups of ranked teams, including one in the Big Ten, and an interesting road test for No. 5 Texas A&M. But otherwise, all eyes will be on who is missing for the Buckeyes.

Heisman watch

Quarterbacks usually dominate the Heisman watch lists these days, but this season, it looks as if it will be especially difficult for a non-QB to breakthrough.

From Alabama's Mac Jones and Florida's Kyle Trask at the top of the leaderboards to BYU's Wilson and Notre Dame's Ian Book a little farther down and Clemson's Trevor Lawrence and Ohio State's Justin Fields in between.

How about a little love for the guys who catch and carry the ball?

Iowa State's Breece Hall is first

in the nation in rushing (140 yards per game) among players with at least eight games played, carrying the 12th-ranked Cyclones to the cusp of a Big 12 title game appearance. Iowa State hosts West Virginia on Saturday.

Trask's favorite target, tight end Kyle Pitts, returned last week for the sixth-ranked Gators and caught three more touchdowns passes against Kentucky. He now has 11 in six games played. Florida faces Tennessee.

Then there is Jones' top receiver, DeVonta Smith. The senior has 72 catches for 1,072 yards and 12 scores. The Crimson Tide play at LSU.

Numbers to know

10 — Losing streak for No. 10 Indiana against Wisconsin. The Hoosiers have snapped long skids against Michigan and Penn State this season. They'll try to have another breakthrough

against the 18th-ranked Badgers.

20 — Number of days between No. 9 Miami's last game and it's next game Saturday at Duke. The Hurricanes had their last two games postponed because of a COVID-19 outbreak.

27 — Number of days between games for Arizona State, which had three straight games canceled because of a COVID-19 outbreak. The Sun Devils return to action against UCLA on Saturday.

59.3 — Completion percentage of Texas A&M's Kellen Mond, 11th in the Southeastern Conference. Mond is coming off a poor game throwing the ball in bad weather against LSU. The Aggies are at Auburn on Saturday. They'll try to ride their running game again, but to break a three-game losing streak against the Tigers, they could use a better game from the senior quarterback.

Bulls' Patterson now hard to ignore

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jaret Patterson was nearly inconsolable upon learning how difficult it was going to be landing a football scholarship despite a decorated high school career.

Turned down outright during a visit to Eastern Michigan, the undersized running back left his traveling party to hole up in one of the school's bathrooms where he broke down and cried.

"We had like four people walking around Eastern Michigan's football house looking for him, and James found him," Justin Winters recalled, referring to Patterson's twin brother, who was offered a scholarship.

"Literal tears. He didn't understand why he was the one who was getting slept on," said Winters, who was an assistant coach at Maryland's St. Vincent Pallotti, where the Pattersons played. "So we went in there and we talked. I told him to wipe his tears, 'Don't let nobody see you cry.'"

The memory from 2017 is a distant one now for Winters, who was a walk-on linebacker at the University at Buffalo and eventually played a key role in persuading his alma mater to take a chance on both Pattersons.

"He came here, fifth string or first string, and said, 'I can't wait until I put the pads on

and I'm going to show them,'" Winters said. "I said, 'All right.' And look what he did."

Four games into his junior season, the 5-foot-9, 195-pound Patterson has essentially rewritten the Mid-American Conference program's record book, while coming off his most impressive national attention-grabbing moment so far.

In a 70-41 win over Kent State on Saturday, Patterson finished with 409 yards rushing, the second most in FBS history and 18 shy of Samaje Perine's single-game record for Oklahoma in 2014. And he scored eight touchdowns rushing, matching the FBS record set by Illinois running back Howard Griffith in 1990.

Arizona State's Kalen Ballage, in 2016, is the only other player to score eight touchdowns (seven rushing and one receiving) in a major college game.

Coming off 301 yards rushing and four TDs in a 42-17 win at Bowling Green, Patterson joined Texas star Ricky Williams (1996) in becoming just the second player to top 300 yards rushing in consecutive games.

Overall, Patterson's 920 yards rushing this season rank fifth in the nation, with the four players ahead of him having played nine or more games.

Reminded about his emotional breakdown at Eastern Michigan, Patterson ac-

knowledged he wouldn't have envisioned this kind of production during one of the lowest moments of his life. But the memory of being overlooked is what drives him.

"It made me work even harder," Patterson said. "(Winters) always used to tell me, you only need one school to love you. And I knew whatever school me and my brother had the same offer, we were going to give them everything."

The twins were a package deal, with most schools favoring James over Jaret. The Bulls already had a commitment from running back Kevin Marks, but made room for Jaret Patterson by having him join the program the following January.

James Patterson, a linebacker, has been a three-year starter and defensive captain, and leads Buffalo with 37 tackles. It's Jaret who has become difficult to ignore.

His performance drew various player-of-the-week honors along with social media praise from Pro Football Hall of Fame running back Barry Sanders and NBA star LeBron James.

Patterson is pleased but focused. He'd rather credit his offensive line for opening holes, or look ahead to facing Ohio (2-1) on Saturday. The Bulls (4-0) are a win from clinching a berth in the MAC championship game.

No. 2 Notre Dame rolling behind talent, quality depth

Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — If No. 2 Notre Dame manages to secure its second College Football Playoff berth, coach Brian Kelly's words before his Fighting Irish secured their first one in 2018 will have proven prophetic.

"Look, we need to get better from 65 to 85 — that 65th scholarship to the 85th scholarship," Kelly said on national signing day in February 2018, more than 10 months before the 12-0 Irish faced Clemson in a CFP semifinal.

The Tigers manhandled the Irish 30-3 behind freshman Trevor Lawrence's three touchdown passes against an Irish secondary weakened with All-America cornerback Julian Love in concussion protocol. It was evident then that Notre Dame needed to improve its talent on both sides of the line of scrimmage and create adequate depth if it wanted to challenge the top CFP contenders.

Fast-forward to this season in which the Fighting Irish (No. 2 CFP) find themselves a temporary member of the Atlantic Coast Conference. The ACC announced Tuesday that Notre Dame's Dec. 12 game against Wake Forest has been canceled, which means the Irish (9-0, 8-0 ACC) are locked into the conference title game even if they lose to Syracuse (1-9, 1-8) at home on Saturday.

Led by quarterback Ian Book, running back Kyren Williams, safety Kyle Hamilton and rover Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah, Kelly's Irish have some top-level talent. As they showed in Saturday's 31-17 victory at North Carolina, the Irish also have quality depth, particularly on the offensive line.

"You feel confident that when they are called upon that they will be able to step in and significantly impact in a positive way," Kelly said.

Facing a prolific Tar Heels offense that was averaging 563.4 yards and 43.1 points,

the Irish went to the locker room tied at 17 with strong safety Shaun Crawford questionable with an injury and Hamilton ejected for targeting.

Crawford returned and the secondary got a huge lift from backups Houston Griffith and D.J. Brown replacing Hamilton.

The front seven of coordinator Clark Lea's defense had 14 players contribute and showed its physical dominance, limiting the Tar Heels to 78 total yards and no points in the second half. Reserve ends Isaiah Foskey and Justin Ademilola were credited with sacks while reserve tackle Rylie Mills and reserve linebacker Marist Liufau contributed a half-sack each as Notre Dame had six against Sam Howell, who finished with 211 passing yards, far below his 328.9 average.

"I think we have the best linebacker depth in the country," inside linebacker Drew White said, "and I think that showed with Marist stepping up and having an awesome game."

Garza, Nunge lead No. 3 Iowa to win

Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Luka Garza and Jack Nunge came to Iowa in the same recruiting class. It's a connection that Garza, the Big Ten player of the year last season, appreciates.

And with Nunge now back with the Hawkeyes, Garza couldn't be happier — for a lot of reasons.

Garza scored 35 points, 30 in the first half, and grabbed 10 rebounds as No. 3 Iowa stayed unbeaten with a 99-58 win over Western Illinois on Thursday night.

Nunge, playing his first game this season following the death of his father, matched his career high with 18 points for the Hawkeyes (3-0).

"It was incredible," Garza said. "His strength is so inspiring. That's my brother. He is so responsible for the development of myself and my game. I'm just so proud of him, and his ability to push through everything he and his family are going through."

Nunge's career has taken a different path than Garza's. Nunge took a redshirt season two years ago, then missed almost all of last

season with a knee injury.

He was expected to be a key part of Iowa's rotation this season, but he missed the first two games because of the death of his father, Mark, a physician in Newburgh, Ind.

"It's been a long road for me — it's been over a year since I've played a game," Nunge said. "To go out there and finally show what I can do felt good for me."

"It was something my dad would be proud of. He's watching me from up above. He doesn't have to worry about work or anything. He can watch me play."

Nunge shot 8-for-11 from the field in 21 minutes of action.

"It was just so incredible to see," Iowa coach Fran McCaffery said. "And I knew it was going to happen."

"Every day, it's tough," Nunge said "Being here with my teammates, talking with my family, we're getting through this. We've got to get through this, get through this together."

Garza posted his 23rd career double-double and reached 30 points in the first half for the second consecutive game. He had 36 by

halftime of last Friday's 103-76 victory over Southern.

It was the 19th straight game of 20 points or more for Garza, the lone unanimous selection on The Associated Press preseason All-America team.

That matched North Carolina State's T.J. Warren (2013-14) for the longest streak by a major conference player over the last 20 seasons.

"You can watch film all you want on Garza," Western Illinois coach Rob Jeter said. "Until you get out there, you don't know what it's like. Right now, it's too easy for him."

Joe Wieskamp added 11 points and Patrick McCaffery scored 10 for the Hawkeyes.

Iowa led 48-26 at halftime before Western Illinois (0-1) reeled off an early second-half run to get to 61-46. But the Hawkeyes outscored the Leathernecks 22-2 over the next 4:52.

Tamell Pearson had 12 points to lead Western Illinois. Rod Johnson Jr. scored 11 and Will Carius added 10.

Top 25 roundup

No. 25 Arizona State holds off Cal in Pac-12 opener

Associated Press

BERKELEY, Calif. — Remy Martin and his supporting cast delivered down the stretch each time California threatened.

Martin produced another impressive performance on Cal's home floor, finishing with 22 points, five assists and four rebounds as No. 25 Arizona State beat the Golden Bears 70-62 on Thursday night in the Pac-12 opener for both schools.

Prized freshman Josh Christopher added 14 points for the Sun Devils (3-1), and Holland Woods knocked down a key three-pointer with 2:24 remaining.

"These guys, a number of our guys, have been in some big games the last couple years," coach Bobby Hurley said.

Freshman forward Marcus Bagley had to be helped off with a lower left leg injury after he went down near midcourt with 1:42 to play. He was scheduled for an MRI and X-rays on Friday.

The injury was believed to be to Bagley's calf and initially was not considered "catastrophic," Hurley said.

Cal star Matt Bradley had 20 points and

eight rebounds but was just 1-for-9 on three-pointers. He was coming off a 26-point performance Monday in the team's home opener, a 60-49 victory against Nicholls State.

The Bears missed chances and were sloppy with the ball when it mattered.

"We knew we'd have to play fairly mistake-free to have a chance to win," coach Mark Fox said.

The Sun Devils again were without guard Alonzo Verge Jr., last season's Pac-12 Sixth Man of the Year, as he quarantines in Tempe, Arizona, for COVID-19 contact tracing. Hurley was clear Verge's absence was not injury-related or disciplinary.

In addition, Sun Devils associate head coach Rashon Burno, operations director Eric Brown and other support staff stayed back at a nearby hotel as a precaution for contact tracing after a staff member not currently with the team tested positive for the coronavirus.

No. 7 Kansas 89, Washburn 54: Bryce Thompson remembers watching the annual "Late Night" festivities that kick off every basketball season at Kansas, and how the

students and fans packed Allen Fieldhouse to the rafters to watch a glorified practice.

He never anticipated his first game in the Phog would be played with a couple hundred people in the stands.

The talented freshman must have found some energy on his own, though. Thompson scored 11 points to complement big nights from David McCormack, Ochai Agbaji and Jalen Wilson, helping the seventh-ranked Jayhawks cruise in their long-awaited home opener.

McCormack scored 17 points, Agbaji added 16 points and Wilson had 12 as the Jayhawks shot 52.5% from the field.

No. 16 Virginia Tech 64, VMI 57: Keve Aluma had 17 points and 12 rebounds and the Hokies won their 34th consecutive non-conference home game.

Tyrece Radford added 13 points and Justyn Mutts had 10 points and nine rebounds for Virginia Tech (4-0). It led 30-23 at halftime and used a 9-0 run in the second half to take control. Radford had five points in the burst, including a three-point play to finish it.