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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

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Midwestern states see drop in new cases

Associated Press

After a punishing fall that left hospitals struggling, some Midwestern states are seeing a decline in new coronavirus cases. But the signs of improvement are offset by the virus's accelerating spread on both coasts.

States including Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Nebraska have seen decreases in the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 over the past couple of weeks. All, however, are still experiencing an alarming number of deaths and hospitalizations because of the earlier surge of cases.

With winter weather driving people indoors, where the virus spreads more easily,

there's no guarantee the improving dynamic can be maintained, doctors and public health officials say.

"We have a vaccine rolling out, but that doesn't change the overall picture," Dr. James Lawler with the University of Nebraska Medical Center's Global Center for Health Security told the Omaha World-Herald. "Things could still turn south pretty easily."

But he and others are encouraged by the figures. In Iowa, for example, the number of new virus cases reported daily has declined over the past two weeks from nearly 1,800 to about 1,250. In Nebraska, it has gone from

about 1,800 a day to a little under 1,300.

"I am fingers crossed right now," said Dr. Stacey Marlow, an emergency room physician at UnityPoint Allen Hospital in Waterloo, Iowa. "The COVID patients that I am seeing are very, very sick. But there are ... less of them."

Deaths from the virus in Iowa have continued to rise sharply, to an average of 79 a day, up from 28 two weeks ago.

The hope, of course, is that the drop in infections will translate into a decline in deaths, but that could take time. Many of those now dying of COVID-19 may have been infected weeks ago.

Quartet of negotiators make progress on virus aid bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan quartet of congressional leaders is pushing hard and in tandem for a long-delayed COVID-19 relief package, hoping to seal an agreement as early as Wednesday that would extend aid to individuals and businesses, as well as help ship coronavirus vaccines to millions.

"We'll be back early and we'll be on schedule to get the job done," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., as she left the Capitol just before midnight Tuesday.

Negotiations on COVID-19 relief intensified on Tuesday after months of futility. The top Democratic and Republican leaders of Congress met twice in hopes of finally cementing a leadership agreement that would revive subsidies for businesses hit hard by the pandemic, help distribute new coronavirus vaccines, fund schools and renew soon-to-expire jobless benefits.

Republicans labored to keep the price tag for the long-delayed rescue package in check, seeking to prevail in a battle over help for state and local governments, while capping the cost of bonus jobless benefits and direct payments sought by Democrats.

After two meetings in Pelosi's Capitol suite, where Democrats pressed for more generous steps to help individuals struggling in the COVID-19 economy, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., gave an upbeat assessment.

"I think we've built a lot of trust," McCarthy said. "I think we're moving in the right direction. I think there's a possibility of getting it done."

The uptick in activity could be a sign that an agreement is near, though COVID-19 relief talks have been notoriously difficult.

"We're making significant progress and I'm optimistic that we're gonna be able to complete an understanding sometime soon," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

Pressure for a deal is intense. Unemployment benefits run out Dec. 26 for more than 10 million people. Many businesses are barely hanging on after nine months of the pandemic. And money is needed to distribute new vaccines that are finally offering hope for returning the country to normal.

McConnell is playing a strong hand in the lame-duck session and is pressuring Democrats to drop a much-sought \$160 billion state and local government aid package. Several senior Democrats, including close allies of President-elect Joe Biden — who is eager for an agreement — have said they would go along now and fight for the aid next year.

McConnell says he'll drop a demand for provisions shielding businesses from COVID-19-related lawsuits, a key priority, if Democrats agree to drop the \$160 billion state and local aid package.

Pelosi has insisted for months that state and local aid would be in any final bill, but as time is running out, Democrats appear unwilling to hold the rest of the package hostage over the demand.

"We're not going home until this is done," Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., said on CNN Tuesday morning. "We've got to get people a lifeline."

Manchin is an architect of a bipartisan \$748 billion aid package that is aimed at serving as a template for the leadership talks. President Donald Trump's chief negotiator, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, supports a package with many similar elements. There is also bipartisan support for transportation and transit assistance, funding for rural internet service and help for the Postal Service, among other provisions.

A Republican familiar with the talks said the biggest obstacles include money for state and local governments, how to handle direct payments favored by Trump and Democrats but opposed by many GOP conservatives and the restoration of a bonus jobless benefit of \$300 or so per week that would supplement regular state unemployment benefits. The Republican required anonymity because the talks are secret.

Lawmakers also worked to finalize a year-end catchall funding package that will be the basis for the last significant legislation of the Trump presidency.

Calif. surge brings field hospitals, body bags

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Hospitals are filling up so fast in California that officials are rolling out mobile field facilities and scrambling to hire more doctors and nurses to prepare for an expected surge in coronavirus patients.

Meanwhile, California is distributing 5,000 body bags mostly to the hard-hit Los Angeles and San Diego areas and has 60 refrigerated trailers standing by as makeshift morgues in anticipation of a surge of COVID-19 deaths, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Tuesday.

Fresno's Community Regional Medical Center in central California is rushing 50 beds into a building near the hospital and bringing in medical staff from outside the state to help staff the makeshift ward begin-

ning Friday.

Dr. Rais Vohra, Fresno County's interim public health officer, said alternate care sites will be needed as intensive care units fill up over the next few weeks.

"We're preparing for that moment when we say we need to start using up these other spaces because we're running out of space in the hospitals to put people, and we're just hoping that we have enough resources to match the needs," Vohra said.

Fresno County's 1 million residents are under a stay-at-home order that started last weekend when the San Joaquin Valley's regional ICU capacity dipped below 15%. On Tuesday, the region's ICU capacity was at 1.6%, state officials said.

The number of average daily deaths statewide has quadrupled from 41 a month

ago to 163 now, while positive cases have surged to more than 32,500 each day. Of those new cases, an anticipated 12% will wind up in the hospital and 12% of those hospitalized will crowd already stretched intensive care units.

That means one day's worth of cases in California can be expected to produce a staggering 3,900 hospitalizations and nearly 500 ICU patients.

"We are in the middle of the most acute peak," Newsom said, urging residents to take precautions to slow the spread.

The surge in cases throughout much of California is forcing an urgent scramble for more staff and space, a crush that Newsom and the state's top health official said might not abate for two months despite the arrival of the first doses of vaccines this week.

CNO urges all sailors to 'strongly consider' vaccine

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The Navy's top officer urged all sailors to "strongly consider" receiving the coronavirus vaccine in a message Wednesday after the Pentagon began distributing the long-awaited shots to military health care personnel the day before.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday in his message to the fleet said the vaccines "are a proven effective measure to better protect you, our Navy and our nation from this insidious threat." He also pledged to take it "shortly after it is made available" to senior Defense Department leadership.

"I ask that every member of our Navy team strongly consider receiving the vaccine not only for yourself, but for your shipmates, your family and your fellow citizens," he wrote.

The vaccine is not yet available to all hands, given the initial "finite supply," Gilday said in his message. Medical personnel and emergency workers "most

at risk of exposure" are receiving it first. Gilday said this process "will take time, likely into January."

One vaccine, produced by Pfizer and BioNTech, was approved Friday by the Food and Drug Administration for emergency use and is being distributed in the United States. Another by Moderna goes before the FDA this week. Drugs approved for emergency use require recipients to volunteer for inoculations, the Pentagon has said.

When the supply increases, Gilday said the doses will be doled out in accordance with mission needs.

"We will make the vaccine available more broadly through a tiered plan as production ramps up, prioritizing those executing our most critical missions," Gilday said in the message. "I ask for your patience until the vaccine is available for you, and your continued compliance with those health measures we currently have in place."

US Forces Korea will up its virus risk level

By JOSEPH DITZLER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. military command in South Korea is raising its coronavirus risk level and imposing new restrictions as the peninsula experiences record-breaking levels of new infections.

South Korea counted 1,078 newly infected coronavirus patients Tuesday, a pandemic record for that country, and 12 deaths, according to the country's Central Disease Control Headquarters.

U.S. Forces Korea is returning to Health Protection Condition-Charlie, which reflects a substantial risk of the virus spreading, starting at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, according to a Facebook post by the command on Wednesday evening.

Only mission-essential personnel will report for duty, according to the statement. All others will telework. USFK will review the higher protection level Jan. 4.

Defense Department schools at bases across the Korean Peninsula will close Monday for the two-week winter break. Condition Charlie status normally means schools would revert to remote learning.

Schools will switch to remote learning if condition Charlie persists after the break, according to an email Wednesday to Stars and Stripes from Todd Schlitz, chief of staff of Department of Defense Education Activity, Pacific.

In Seoul, a city of 26 million, Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said an urgent need exists for more hospital beds.

"Our country had double digit COVID-19 deaths in just a day, yesterday, for the first time," Chung said Wednesday in Seoul.

"Unfortunately, 108 COVID-19 precious lives have been sacrificed for the past one month," he said.

"Now, our top priority task is to secure sickbeds."

Trump voters accept loss 'with reservations'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Robert Reed says he will always believe the 2020 election was stolen from President Donald Trump. The retired police officer-turned-construction worker believes fraud marred the vote, no matter how many courts rejected that claim. Still, a day after the Electoral College made Joe Biden's win official, the ardent Trump supporter from the suburbs of Lancaster, Pa., was ready to move on.

"I think it's pretty much over," Reed said of Trump's ongoing quest to overturn the results of the election. "I trust the Electoral College."

For weeks, Trump has been on a mission to convince his loyal base that his victory was stolen and the contest was rigged. With help from conservative media, polls show he's had considerable success. But now that the Electoral College has formalized Biden's win and Republican officials, including Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, are finally acknowledging Biden as president-elect, many Trump voters across the country seem to be doing the same.

Interviews with voters, along with fresh surveys of Republicans, suggest their unfounded doubts about the integrity of the vote remain. But there is far less consensus on what should be done about it and whether to carry that resentment forward.

For some, like Reed, the Electoral College vote was the clear end of a process. Others have vowed to continue to protest with demonstrations like the one that turned violent in Washington, D.C., over the weekend. And some said they hoped GOP leaders would press for more investigations to put the doubts Trump sowed to rest.

They are people like Scott Adams, a retiree and Trump voter living in Rehoboth Beach, Del., who said he accepts Biden's victory — but "with reservations."

Adams said he's heard too much discussion about irregularities in the vote count on Fox News Channel and conservative talk radio to trust the election's outcome and doesn't feel he'll ever know the true margin of victory. (Biden won the Electoral College by a vote of 306 to 232.)

But Adams doesn't think the election was rigged enough to change the outcome, even if he believes it was "rigged enough that it should be questioned more." He'd like to see more investigations.

Republicans across the country — from local officials to governors to Attorney General William Barr — have said repeatedly there is no evidence mass voter fraud affected the outcome. Trump and his allies brought a flurry of lawsuits, but nearly all have been dismissed by judges. The Supreme Court, which includes three Trump-

nominated justices, denied requests to hear a pair of cases aimed at invalidating the outcome of the election in key battleground states.

Still, coming to terms with this pile of evidence has been difficult for many Trump voters. They have expressed disbelief that Trump could have lost, given the huge crowds that he drew to his rallies. Some said their suspicions were heightened by the mainstream media's reluctance to air Trump's baseless claims. And they repeatedly pointed to the slower-than-usual vote count as evidence something had gone awry.

"Something's not right here," said Reed, who lives in East Lampeter Township.

The explanation is well known — in many states, an influx of mail-in ballots, overwhelmingly cast by Democrats, were tallied later than ballots cast in person. Still, Reed said he thought the courts should have spent more time investigating.

"I'll always believe that it was stolen from him. I'll really never be able to have peace of mind that it wasn't," he said.

Others were less willing to go along.

"I don't trust that result. I think that the election was a fraud. I think the election was stolen. I don't know how anybody could not think that. All you have to do is look at the results," said Katherine Negrete, 55, a teacher living in Peoria, Ariz.

Okinawa asks Marine Corps to curb drinking incidents

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Local authorities on Okinawa turned to the Marine Corps this week to address a recurring problem: Marines and alcohol sometimes don't mix.

Japan sent representatives from national and prefectural offices to Camp Foster for an "unofficial opinion exchange" on Monday with Marine Corps Installations Pacific.

The subject was a recent spike in incidents, apparently fueled by booze, that ended with Marines under arrest. Not all alcohol-related incidents linked to the U.S. military on Okinawa involved Marines, but they account for their share.

In November, the Okinawa Times newspaper reported 10 incidents involving alcohol and U.S. service members. Half involved Marines, three involved airmen and two involved Army troops. Eight were cases of drunken driving.

"We recognize that alcohol-related misconduct is unacceptable, and our senior leadership is fully engaged and committed to reducing the incidence of alcohol-related incidents," Marine Col. Neil Owens, assistant chief of staff and director of government and external affairs for the installation command, was quoted as saying in a statement from the Marine Corps after the meeting.

Okinawan authorities, however, have charged fewer Americans with drunken driving this year than last, so far, a prefectural spokesman told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday.

This year, 31 Americans were charged with DUI between January and November; 33 were charged during the same period last year, the spokesman said. Government spokespeople in Japan often speak on condition of anonymity.

A "recent high number" of DUI cases spurred the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Okinawa office, to request the meeting with the Marines, the Okinawa Defense Bureau

and the prefecture, the prefectural spokesman said.

"It was good to have a chance to sit down at the table to discuss what Marines are doing to educate their Marines about the DUIs and to enlighten us," the spokesman explained. "We continue to expect the Marine Corps to educate their Marines thoroughly and prevent further incidents."

The III Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Corps Installations Pacific put their Alcohol Reduction Initiative into action recently, a "comprehensive and long-term" effort to identify and address factors that contribute to alcohol-related misconduct, according to the Marines' statement. They also said they have plans to curb alcohol abuse during the holidays.

"They must do their best not to worry the local community," a spokesman for the Okinawa Defense Bureau said Tuesday. "Japan and the U.S. will cooperate together to prevent future incidents."

What happens to Space Force post-Trump?

Los Angeles Times

President Donald Trump has a penchant for grandiose promises that go unfulfilled. So when he announced a plan to establish a Space Force, there was some skepticism.

Then-Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., ranking member on a Senate committee that deals with aviation and space, disliked the idea of consolidating space programs from the other military branches, saying at the time that there were “too many important missions at stake” to “rip the Air Force apart.”

The idea of the new service became fodder for late-night comedians and a Netflix sitcom.

The Space Force, however, was not merely a presidential musing. Created last year as the first new armed service since 1947, it was established with the mission of protecting U.S. interests in space from potential adversaries, be they rival nations or gobs of space junk.

Whether it can achieve that mission is an open question. Though Trump champions the initiative, he has done little to ensure it has the funding, staffing and authority to succeed. When he exits the White House next month, the Space Force’s trajectory remains unclear.

The Space Force has gained control of some space operations, but many others are still spread throughout the nation’s other military branches.

Within the Defense Department, the Air Force has the lion’s share of space programs and budget for space operations. It’s responsible for supporting and maintaining satellites for GPS, missile warning and nuclear command and control, as well as paying United Launch Alliance and SpaceX to launch national security satellites.

The Army and Navy also have their own space operations.

Consolidating these disparate programs into the Space Force has been slow. Some Air Force missions have transferred to Space Force control or are in the process of doing so — last week, Vice President Mike Pence announced that Cape Canaveral Air Force Station and Patrick Air Force Base in Florida would change their names and become the first two Space Force installations. Eventually, all Air Force space missions are supposed to follow suit. But there has been no progress on integrating the Army’s or Navy’s space missions.

“The last thing you want ... after all of this reorganization and creating a new military service is to continue to have the fragmen-

tation of our space programs and space organizations across the military,” said Todd Harrison, senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank. “The whole point of this was to consolidate.”

Compared with the budgets and personnel for the other branches of the U.S. military, the Space Force is lean. And technically it’s part of the Air Force, just as the Marine Corps is part of the Navy. Consisting of about 2,100 people as of Nov. 1, the Space Force commanded a budget of \$40 million for its operations and maintenance in fiscal year 2020. Meanwhile, the Air Force has more than 325,000 active duty personnel and a budget of \$168 billion for fiscal 2020. (The Air Force designated almost \$14 billion of that for space capabilities. These projects have since become part of the Space Force.)

The Space Force will probably always be the smallest military service, Harrison said.

“Space is more dictated by capabilities than mass,” he said. The Space Force “shouldn’t try to organize itself in the way of these much larger services because that’s not what it is. That’s not what it’s going to grow into.”

But the Space Force’s 2020 resources aren’t enough to carry out its mission of organizing, training and equipping forces to deter or defeat threats in space, said David Deptula, a retired Air Force lieutenant general and dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies think tank.

For fiscal year 2021, the Space Force is requesting a budget transfer from the Air Force of \$15.3 billion. And over time, as space programs from other services start consolidating into the Space Force, their budgets should follow.

“The nation is facing some very significant threats in the space realm,” Deptula said. “Let’s make sure that service is set up for success.”

U.S. intelligence officials have warned that China and Russia have discussed developing new electronic warfare capabilities, which could have implications for U.S. military satellite communications or GPS satellite interference. In 2007, China tested an anti-satellite weapon and destroyed one of its own inactive weather satellites.

“Space Force really needed to be stood up to remain competitive with the very real threats coming from our nearest adversaries,” said James Marceau, managing direc-

tor of aerospace and defense at consulting firm Alvarez & Marsal, who has also served as a senior adviser to the Pentagon on major strategies including the Space Force. “We can’t afford to neglect that domain.”

The strategic role of satellites came to the forefront in the early 1990s during the Gulf War, when the U.S. military began to rely on GPS coordinates to direct troops.

Over the years, congressional leaders and military officials, including former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, have weighed consolidating space operations. In 2016, the proposal gained steam when Reps. Jim Cooper, D-Tenn., and Mike Rogers, R-Ala., began advocating for a “space corps.”

The bipartisan pair later introduced legislation to pave the way. They wanted the military to commit more time and resources to space — something that wasn’t always prioritized by a fighter-pilot-heavy Air Force leadership.

But there wasn’t enough support in the U.S. Senate for the proposal. Then, in 2018, Trump seized upon the idea.

In a speech to Marines at Air Station Miramar in San Diego that March, Trump noted that the United States was doing a “tremendous amount of work in space,” adding, “maybe we need a new force” called the Space Force. (Cooper would later say Trump “tried to hijack” the idea of the space corps.)

Five months later, Vice President Mike Pence announced that the Pentagon would create a new branch of the armed forces called the U.S. Department of the Space Force. The Space Force was then included in the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by Trump last December.

At this point, it’s “highly unlikely” that the Biden administration would try to eliminate the Space Force, Harrison said. “It would be 10 times more disruptive if we tried to reverse it at this point.”

Doing so would require a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as the president’s signature, he said.

“I have not heard anyone seriously contemplating the idea of disestablishing it,” Harrison said. “It hasn’t even gotten a chance to get started yet.”

Not to mention the bureaucratic difficulties of trying to transfer back agencies and people.

The Space Force itself seems intent on sticking around.

Teen arrested after 2 people shot with compound bow

WI JANESVILLE — A 17-year-old boy was arrested after shooting two people with a compound bow in Janesville, police said.

Officers went to Mercy Hospital in Janesville after a report that two people were shot with a bow. The two told police they were shot during a disturbance. There was no word on their conditions.

The teen surrendered to police after briefly holing up at a residence, police said.

He was treated for minor injuries and then taken to the Rock County Jail on a tentative charge of first-degree recklessly endangering safety.

9 felony convictions bring sentence of 165 to 220 years

NE PAPILLION — A Sarpy County man who broke into a home, tied up and sexually assaulted a woman and then stole money from her was sentenced to 165 to 220 years in prison.

Sarpy County District Judge George Thompson sentenced Stephen R. Prior, 56, after agreeing with a jury that he met the criteria as a habitual criminal, The Omaha World-Herald reported.

Prior was found guilty Sept. 30 of nine felonies stemming from the break-in and assault at a home on Oct. 18, 2017.

Prior had served about eight years in the 1980s and 1990s for burglary and robbery.

Professor who started Flamenco program retires

NM ALBUQUERQUE — A University of New Mexico professor who started a Flamenco degree program announced that she's retiring and her daughter will take over.

Eva Encinias told Albuquerque TV station KRQE that she will continue her work at the National Institute of Flamenco during her retirement.

Encinias said she belongs to one of the Flamenco families that came to the United

States after the Spanish Civil War and her family brought the dance to New Mexico.

She said hundreds of students go through her Flamenco classes every year and come from all parts of the country plus Costa Rica and Puerto Rico.

Encinias also was responsible for starting Festival Flamenco Albuquerque.

Man gets 2 years for spitting on officer, saying he has virus

OR BEND — A central Oregon man was sentenced to more than two years in prison after spitting on a police officer and saying he was infected with COVID-19.

The Bulletin reported that Daniel Ray Stubblefield, 36, received the sentence in Deschutes County Circuit Court after pleading guilty to aggravated harassment and menacing. Three other cases against him were dismissed as part of a plea deal.

Police said Stubblefield told an officer he had COVID-19, coughed, and four times spat on the officer's face. The officer later tested negative for COVID-19.

DNR probes shootings of 2 trumpeter swans at state park

MI NEW HAVEN — State conservation officers are investigating the deaths of two trumpeter swans found fatally shot at a state park in southeastern Michigan.

Conservation officers found the carcasses of an adult trumpeter swan and a young trumpeter swan at Wetzel State Park in Macomb County.

The birds, which are a threatened species in Michigan and illegal to hunt, had multiple gunshot wounds and appear to have been shot a week ago while trying to land on a pond at the park, officials with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources said.

Police: Wrong-way driver caused crashes, injuries

VT DUMMERSTON — Multiple people were injured in a series of crashes caused by a wrong-way driver

on Interstate 91 in Dummerston, Vermont State Police said.

Police received a report of a southbound vehicle in the northbound lane. A state trooper encountered the wrong-way driver and was sideswiped by the pickup truck.

A short time later, the pickup truck collided head-on with a northbound van, causing the van to strike a third vehicle. Two other vehicles went off the road while taking evasive action.

The driver of the wrong-way vehicle and three occupants of the van were taken to Brattleboro Memorial Hospital.

Helo crews help rescue 4 people from burning boat

AL MOBILE — Four people were rescued from a commercial fishing boat after it caught fire along the Alabama coast.

A statement from the U.S. Coast Guard said its Mobile center received a report that a vessel named Alexandria Pearl was on fire about a half-mile south of Fort Morgan, or just outside of Mobile Bay.

Photos taken by a Coast Guard member show the boat deck and wheelhouse engulfed in flames.

Two MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crews that were conducting training flights nearby were sent to the scene.

One of the helicopters lowered a rescue swimmer and a life raft, and all four people aboard the boat were able to get inside.

Occupants OK after truck veers off road, falls 20 feet

AZ PHOENIX — Authorities said a delivery truck veered off the Interstate 17 freeway in Phoenix and plunged onto the roadway below.

The driver and passenger in the truck were both able to get out of the crumpled truck on their own and escaped serious injuries.

Arizona Department of Public Safety officials said the driver somehow lost control of the truck before it clipped the guardrail, then fell about 20 feet to the street below.

— From The Associated Press

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Stanford's VanDerveer passes Summitt

Associated Press

STOCKTON, Calif. — Tara VanDerveer made history, and then took a moment to tell her Stanford players what they mean to her.

"The most important thing I can do as a coach is love you," VanDerveer said. "I love the game of basketball and I want to help you be the best you can be. You're the people that I care about. Thank you."

Typical Tara, wanting to share the joy on a night when the spotlight shined brightly on her — and her alone.

VanDerveer became the winningest women's college basketball coach Tuesday night, passing the late Pat Summitt with her 1,099th victory as No. 1 Stanford romped to a 104-61 victory over Pacific.

Dressed casually in all black, VanDerveer received the game ball after the final buzzer. Her dancing players chanted "Tara! Tara!" and gave her a new oversized pullover reading "T-DAWG" to celebrate the latest milestone for the Hall of Fame coach in her 35th season on The Farm and 42nd overall as a college head coach. The wearable blanket was forward Francesca Belibi's idea.

"It's really sweet," VanDerveer said.

The 67-year-old VanDerveer improved her career record to 1,099-253. The road to this historic night began with her first head coaching job at the University of Idaho from 1978-80, and then moved to Ohio State (1980-85) and Stanford, where she is 947-202. Connecticut

coach Geno Auriemma is right behind at 1,093 wins.

"This is special because of the magnitude of that many wins," VanDerveer said. "You never go into coaching, I never thought, 'Well, I'm going to try to win 1,000 games' or anything like that. This is special, currently having the No. 1 team, being undefeated, playing in a pandemic, I will never forget this, for sure."

After the history-making win in a draped-off area upstairs that served as Stanford's locker room, VanDerveer received a plaque containing a piece of the floor from Stanford's home court at Maples Pavilion. A framed proclamation from Palo Alto Mayor Adrian Fine was another memento. White long-sleeved shirts commemorating

the night were made for the players as well as hand-held confetti poppers and individual mini cakes with an attached sticker that read, "Tara at the top." Silver balloons with the numbers 1,099 adorned the room.

Just as the humble VanDerveer prefers, she broke Summitt's mark going largely under the radar and with little fanfare given the game took place in California's Central Valley — about 80 miles from the Bay Area. No fans were allowed into Spanos Center, either.

Tennessee women's basketball posted a photo of VanDerveer and Summitt on Twitter and a message that read: "1099. Pat would be proud. Congratulations, Coach VanDerveer!"

No. 10 Tennessee rolls over Appalachian State

Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Victor Bailey had 13 points and No. 10 Tennessee put its stifling defense on full display Tuesday night in a 79-38 victory over Appalachian State.

The Volunteers held Appalachian State scoreless for the first 6:22 while jumping out to a 13-0 lead. The margin was 36-8 before the Mountaineers scored the last five points of the first half.

Tennessee came into the game holding opponents to 26% shooting from the field. Appalachian State managed 28%.

John Fulkerson and Jaden Springer each had 12 points for the Vols (3-0), who started fast and didn't slow down. Josiah-Jordan James scored 11.

The Mountaineers (4-2) were led by Michael Almonacy with nine points.

No. 12 Wisconsin 77, Loyola of Chicago 63: Brad Davison and D'Mitrik Trice each scored 17 points as the host

Badgers used sizzling three-point shooting to beat the Ramblers.

Wisconsin (5-1) went 10-for-18 from beyond the arc and made four of those long-range attempts during a 19-2 run that helped the Badgers build an 18-point advantage in the second half.

The game was set up just two days earlier after both teams had scheduled Wednesday matchups scrapped due to the pandemic. It was the first meeting between the programs since 1998.

Micah Potter had 13 points and Jonathan Davis added 12 as Wisconsin earned its 13th straight home victory.

Cameron Krutwig scored 19 for Loyola (3-1).

No. 13 Illinois 92, Minnesota 65: Kofi Cockburn scored a career-high 33 points and grabbed 13 rebounds in only 25 minutes to lead the host Illini past the Golden Gophers in the Big Ten opener for both teams.

Freshman guard Adam Mill-

er added 14 points, while Trent Frazier and Ayo Dosunmu each scored 10 for Illinois (5-2). Dosunmu also had seven rebounds and five assists.

The previous high for Cockburn was 26 points against North Carolina A&T last December. He became the first player to have at least 33 points and 13 rebounds in 25 minutes or less against a Division I opponent since Michael Beasley had 33 and 15 for Kansas State in 22 minutes versus Iowa State in January 2008, according to STATS.

Marcus Carr had 16 points for Minnesota (6-1). Carr, the team's leading scorer, was just 3-for-13 from the field.

The Illini shot 53% from the field to 28% for the Gophers.

No. 15 Florida State 74, Georgia Tech 61: Freshman guard Scottie Barnes had 16 points and six rebounds, and the host Seminoles pulled away midway through the second half to beat the Yellow Jackets.

M.J. Walker scored 14 points

and Balsa Koprivica added 10 points and eight rebounds for Florida State (4-0, 1-0 Atlantic Coast Conference), which had five scorers in double figures.

Michael Devoe had 21 points for Georgia Tech (2-3, 0-1), which used a 15-0 run to get back into the game in the second half. But the Seminoles never relinquished their lead.

Florida State shot 53% from the floor and 8-for-17 (47%) from three-point range.

Virginia Tech 66, No. 24 Clemson 60: Tyrece Radford scored 15 points and the host Hokies beat the Tigers in their Atlantic Coast Conference opener.

Keve Aluma and Nahiem Alleyne each added 13 points for Virginia Tech (5-1), which won its league opener for the fifth time in six seasons. The Hokies were 25-for-31 on free throws, including 4-for-4 in the waning seconds.

Al-Amir Dawes led Clemson (5-1) with 18 points. He hit five three-pointers.

No drama for top 4 in CFP rankings

Associated Press

Alabama, Notre Dame, Clemson and Ohio State will enter championship week-end in position to make the College Football Playoff with very little drama.

Where the semifinals will be played might be more in doubt than who will play in them.

The top five teams were locked into their places Tuesday night for the fourth straight week, with the Crimson Tide (10-0) leading the way as they prepares to play Florida for the Southeastern Conference championship.

The Fighting Irish (10-0) are second and Clemson is third going into their Atlantic Coast Conference championship game.

Ohio State (5-0) is fourth going into the Big Ten title game against Northwestern, and Texas A&M is on deck at No. 5. The Aggies play at Tennessee in their last regular-season game Saturday.

If all the favorites win — that includes Clemson (9-1) in the rematch with Notre Dame — the current top four likely would

be reordered a bit and placed in the semifinals.

If the Irish beat the Tigers for the second time this season, the selection committee's job becomes a little trickier.

After Texas A&M (7-1), Iowa State (8-2) is sixth heading into the Big 12 title game against No. 10 Oklahoma. No team with two losses has ever made the playoff.

Florida (8-2) dropped only one spot to seventh after losing as a big favorite to LSU. Georgia (7-2) is eighth and Cincinnati (8-0) is ninth after not playing for two weeks because of COVID-19 issues.

The unbeaten Bearcats host Tulsa, which is 23rd, in the American Athletic Conference title game. The semifinals are scheduled to be played Jan. 1 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif., and the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans.

The current COVID-19 restrictions in California will prohibit the Rose Bowl from having any fans in attendance, including family members of the players.

That has become a point of discussion

among the 10 FBS conference commissioners who make up the playoff management committee. Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick is also a part of the management committee.

CFP executive director Bill Hancock said the Rose Bowl remains the site of the game.

"As we move forward with our planning, we continue to hope that the Rose Bowl's appeal to government officials to allow the families of student-athletes to attend will be permitted, just as student-athlete families will be welcomed at the Sugar Bowl, the other New Years' Six games and the Championship game in Miami," Hancock said in a statement.

During a conference call, Hancock declined to say if the game would be moved.

"Under current California state guidelines, we are unable to allow for spectators of any kind at the game, however, a second appeal has been made at the state level to allow for a special exemption for player and coach guests," the Tournament of Roses said in a statement.

Wisconsin looking to spark sputtering offense

Associated Press

Quarterback Graham Mertz and the Wisconsin Badgers vow to keep trying to find ways to rejuvenate an offense that has lacked punch during a rare three-game skid.

The Badgers (2-3) have scored seven points or less in each of their last three games. Wisconsin tries to avoid its first losing season since 2001 when it hosts Minnesota (3-3) on Saturday.

"Everything in life comes down to how you respond," Mertz said Monday. "The cool thing about it is it's all on you. You can ball your fists up and go fight, or you can sit back and just relax. There's only one way out of those two that I'm going to go. I'm going to ball up my fists and go."

This marks the first time the Badgers have lost three consecutive games within the same season since dropping four straight in 2008. Their last three-game skid of any sort occurred when they lost their final two games in 2013 along with their 2014 opener.

Wisconsin fell 17-7 to No. 15 Northwestern (No. 14 College Football Playoff), 14-6 to No. 7 Indiana (No. 11 CFP) and 28-7 to No. 18 Iowa (No. 16 CFP). The last time the Bad-

gers failed to score in double figures in three straight games was in 1990, the debut season of current athletic director Barry Alvarez's coaching tenure.

That lack of production explains why Wisconsin is below .500 despite allowing the fewest yards per game of any Football Bowl Subdivision team and ranking sixth in scoring defense.

"Everyone's got to do their part," coach Paul Chryst said. "That's what's neat about the game. Everyone has an important part, and when you all do it, that's when good things happen. You've got to execute."

Mertz's up-and-down redshirt freshman season reflects this injury-riddled offense's changing fortunes.

In his first career start, Mertz went 20-for-21 and threw five touchdown passes in a 45-7 triumph over Illinois. He tied a program record for touchdown passes in a game and set a school mark for single-game completion percentage.

He tested positive for COVID-19 soon thereafter but responded with a solid performance in a 49-11 blowout of Michigan three weeks later.

Since then, he has struggled mightily.

In his first two games, Mertz completed

74.4% of his passes for seven touchdowns with no interceptions. In the three games since, he has completed 55.8% of his attempts with five interceptions and one touchdown pass.

"Obviously we're not playing the way we want to play," Mertz said after the Iowa game. "That's frustrating. In the end, it just comes down to execution. I put that on my plate. We've got to execute better. Our defense has been playing great. Special teams have been playing great. We just need to respond. I know we will and I know we can."

This figured to be a transition year for Wisconsin's offense as it replaced two-time Doak Walker Award-winning running back Jonathan Taylor, All-America center Tyler Biadasz and leading receiver Quintez Cephus from last year's team.

Leading rusher Jalen Berger didn't play against Iowa and isn't listed on this week's depth, meaning he likely won't be available Saturday. Starting center Kayden Lyles hasn't played since injuring his knee against Indiana. Wide receiver Danny Davis has missed three straight games and receiver Kendrick Pryor has played just one of Wisconsin's last three games.

NFL won't allow mandatory bubbles

Associated Press

NFL teams won't be allowed to create local bubbles during the postseason by mandating that players stay in a hotel, except for the night before a game.

"Clubs may not require players and staff to stay at a hotel in their local area," read a league memo obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press. "This decision is based upon an analysis of the frequency of positive cases in the league compared to the risk of significant spread among players and staff gathered for an extensive period of time at one hotel."

Teams will be allowed to continue paying for players who want to move into a hotel to avoid the risk of catching COVID-19 from family or roommates throughout the postseason, according to the memo.

When teams stay in hotels before games, players and staff now will be required to wear a

tracing device until they return to their rooms for the night whether staying at home or on the road.

The NFL also reminded teams that gathering socially at team hotels remains prohibited, while requirements to wear masks and physical distance from each other are still in effect.

In the postseason, teams will be reimbursed for using two planes to travel to road games. The limits on how many people can travel remain unchanged, and the NFL reminded teams to assign seats strategically to reduce risks of spreading the virus.

The NFL and NFL Players Association also agreed to update COVID-19 protocols adding a new test, clearing people to work game days, extending the time for people testing positive but asymptomatic to return, and extending testing to players' family and their ser-

vice providers, according to the memo.

Anyone testing positive but showing no symptoms will not be allowed to return until after 10 days pass from the day the positive test was collected, with the team doctor notifying Dr. Allen Sills, the NFL's chief medical officer. Previously, asymptomatic players or staff could return after two consecutive negative PCR tests.

Anyone testing positive under the new Mesa Accula Rapid PCR test must be tested again and placed on the Reserve/COVID-19 list that day rather than waiting a day for the other test result. This new test also will be used to clear close contacts the day before games and on game day.

Starting this week, anyone clearing testing on game day will be able to take part on game days.

But anyone testing positive first must clear isolation before

being able to play. That player can't travel with the team or stay at the team hotel the night before a game. Someone counted as a high-risk close contact can play if game day is the first day out of the five-day isolation period.

Newly acquired players can play if their sixth day of entry testing falls on game day but also can't travel or interact with the team until that day.

"Even as infection rates decreased across the league during the last two weeks, we continue to see community exposure as the primary means of infection for club personnel," the memo reads.

That's why teams are "strongly encouraged" to arrange testing immediately at least twice a week for players' family or roommates and people hired by players such as barbers, personal chefs, chiropractors, masseuses and stretching assistants.

Supreme Court to hear athlete compensation case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to review a court decision that the NCAA has said blurred "the line between student-athletes and professionals" by removing caps on education-related money certain football and basketball players can receive.

The case will be argued in 2021 with a decision expected before the end of June.

The high court's action comes after a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in May. The panel upheld a lower court ruling barring the NCAA from capping education-related compensation and benefits for student-athletes in Division I football and basketball programs. Division I conferences can still inde-

pendently set their own rules.

In August, Justice Elena Kagan had denied the NCAA's request to put lower court rulings in favor of the student-athletes on hold at least temporarily while the NCAA formally petitioned the Supreme Court to take up the case.

The NCAA had said the ruling "effectively created a pay-for-play system for all student-athletes, allowing them to be paid both 'unlimited' amounts for participating in 'internships' and an additional \$5,600 or more each year they remain eligible to play their sport."

In other college football news:

■ Kansas State has paused all football activities and withdrawn from bowl consideration after an outbreak of positive tests and contact tracing procedures would not have left the

Wildcats with enough players to compete in a game.

Russian doping ruling expected Thursday

LAUSANNE, Switzerland — The ruling on whether Russia can keep its name and flag for the Olympics will be announced on Thursday.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport said Wednesday that three of its arbitrators held a four-day hearing last month in the dispute between the World Anti-Doping Agency and its Russian affiliate, known as RU-SADA. WADA's requested punishments include a ban on Russia's flag, anthem and team name at next year's postponed Tokyo Olympics, the 2022 Beijing Games, and other major sporting events.

Negro Leagues reclassified by MLB

Major League Baseball has reclassified the Negro Leagues as a major league and will count the statistics and records of its 3,400 players as part of its history. MLB said it was "correcting a longtime oversight in the game's history" by elevating the Negro Leagues on the centennial of its founding.

In other baseball news:

■ Free agent catcher James McCann signed a \$40.6 million, four-year contract with the New York Mets. McCann, 30, was an All-Star with the White Sox in 2019 and this season set career highs in batting average (.289), on-base percentage (.360) and slugging percentage (.536).