

## Biden team at odds with Pentagon

*Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration and the Biden team were at odds on Friday after the acting Pentagon chief abruptly postponed transition meetings and Biden's representatives expressed concern about the decision and described pockets of resistance to cooperation within the Pentagon.

Acting defense secretary Christopher Miller said in a statement that the Defense Department "will continue to provide all required support" to the transition team, and that defense officials were working to reschedule "approximately 20 interviews with 40 officials until after January 1."

Those meetings, initially scheduled for Friday, were postponed after legal officials in the Pentagon raised concern that they could not keep up with the work, said a senior U.S. official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue. The Pentagon did not dispute that Miller's decision about meetings on Friday were a surprise to the Biden team.

Miller said that the meetings can be held

after a "mutually-agreed upon holiday pause," and that he is "committed to a full and transparent transition" with the Biden team. His "key focus" over the next two weeks, he said, is supporting requests for information about the U.S. military's involvement in the effort to distribute coronavirus vaccines, and other pandemic information, he said.

"This is what our nation expects and the DoD will deliver AS IT ALWAYS HAS," Miller said in his statement.

But the Biden team said they are concerned about delays.

Yohannes Abraham, the executive director of the transition, said in a call with reporters that there "was no mutually agreed upon holiday break" and while the Biden team has received "widespread cooperation on transition," there have been "pockets of recalcitrance, and DOD has been one of them."

Jennifer Psaki, a spokeswoman for the Biden transition, declined to say that Miller was lying, but said reporters could make their "own judgment about the information

we provided." She said, "It's not in our interest to provide inaccurate information."

Trump administration officials did not offer an explanation for why additional transition meetings in the Pentagon cannot be held before January.

The disagreement comes at a time when the Defense Department, in addition to having a leading role in overseeing vaccine distribution, is assessing what may have been compromised in a hack of government networks that analysts and U.S. officials have privately attributed to Russia, and carrying out a partial withdrawal of several thousand U.S. troops from Afghanistan by Inauguration Day at Trump's behest.

The Trump administration also has purged numerous officials from nonpartisan Pentagon advisory boards in recent days, installing Trump loyalists in their place.

The tension also comes after the transition began later than normal, as Trump disputed the election results in numerous states and spread unfounded conspiracy theories of widespread voter fraud.

## Pentagon maps out plan to expand diversity in force

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has endorsed a new slate of initiatives to expand diversity within the ranks and reduce prejudice, calling for more aggressive efforts to recruit, retain and promote a more racially and ethnically diverse force, The Associated Press learned on Friday.

Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller on Thursday signed a memo ordering the implementation of 15 broad recommendations that include a plan to crack down on participation in hate groups by service members and draft proposed changes to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The AP obtained a copy of the memo on Friday.

The plan, however, skirts the more politically sensitive issues that have roiled the nation and the Trump administration this year, such as the renaming of bases that honor Confederate leaders or removing

Confederate statues. Such steps are expected to get quick attention from Congress or President-elect Joe Biden's incoming administration next month.

"I expect all leaders to take an aggressive approach to embed diversity and inclusion practices into the core of our military culture," Miller said in the memo. "We must not accept — and must intentionally and proactively remove — any barriers to an inclusive and diverse force and equitable treatment of every service member."

The recommendations were submitted by the Pentagon's Board on Diversity and Inclusion, which was created by previous Defense Secretary Mark Esper earlier this year and ordered to deliver recommendations by last Tuesday. The plan was then to replace the temporary board with a permanent commission.

The memo lays out a series of goals to

widen pools of applicants for enlistment as well as promotions and other leadership posts, increase ROTC opportunities for minorities, review aptitude tests to remove barriers to diversity without impairing rigorous screening and make service members and workers more aware of inclusion policies. Deadlines to complete the recommendations are spread through next year.

The Pentagon, last summer, had already taken some initial steps to limit discrimination based on race and gender. In a four-page July memo, Esper ordered all military services to stop providing service members' photos for promotion boards, directed a review of hairstyle and grooming policies and called for improved training and data collection on diversity.

Based on 2018 data, roughly two-thirds of the military's enlisted corps is white, and about 17% is Black.

# Stopgap funding bill buys aid talks time

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Congress passed a two-day stopgap spending bill Friday night, averting a partial government shutdown and buying yet more time for frustratingly slow endgame negotiations on an almost \$1 trillion COVID-19 economic relief package.

The virus aid talks remained on track, both sides said, but closing out final disagreements was proving difficult. Week-end sessions were on tap, and House leaders hoped for a vote on Sunday on the massive package, which wraps much of Capitol Hill's unfinished 2020 business into a take-it-or-leave-it behemoth that promises to be a foot thick — or more.

The House passed the temporary funding bill by a 320-60 vote. The Senate

approved it by voice vote almost immediately afterward, and President Donald Trump signed it late Friday.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said both sides remain intent on closing the deal, even as Democrats launched a concerted campaign to block an effort by Republicans to rein in emergency Federal Reserve lending powers. The Democrats said the GOP proposal would deprive President-elect Joe Biden of crucial tools to manage the economy.

Negotiations continued into Friday night but an agreement wasn't likely before Saturday, lawmakers and aides said. House lawmakers were told they wouldn't have to report to work on Saturday but that a Sunday session was likely. The Senate will be voting on nomi-

nations.

The \$900 billion package comes as the pandemic is delivering its most fearsome surge yet, killing more than 3,000 victims per day and straining the nation's health care system. While vaccines are on the way, most people won't get them for months. Jobless claims are on the rise.

The emerging agreement would deliver more than \$300 billion in aid to businesses and provide the jobless a \$300-per-week bonus federal unemployment benefit and renewal of state benefits that would otherwise expire right after Christmas. It also includes \$600 direct payments to individuals; vaccine distribution funds and money for renters, schools, the Postal Service and people needing food aid.

# US clears Moderna vaccine for COVID-19

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. added a second COVID-19 vaccine to its arsenal Friday, boosting efforts to beat back an outbreak so dire that the nation is regularly recording more than 3,000 deaths a day.

Much-needed doses are set to arrive Monday after the Food and Drug Administration authorized an emergency rollout of the vaccine developed by Moderna Inc. and the National Institutes of Health.

The move marks the world's first authorization for Moderna's shots. The vaccine is very similar to one from Pfizer Inc. and Germany's BioNTech that's now being dispensed to millions of health care workers

and nursing home residents as the biggest vaccination drive in U.S. history starts to ramp up.

The two work "better than we almost dared to hope," NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins told The Associated Press. "Science is working here; science has done something amazing."

Early results of large, still unfinished studies show both vaccines appear safe and strongly protective although Moderna's is easier to handle since it doesn't need to be stored at ultra-frozen temperatures.

A second vaccine represents a ray of hope amid despair as the virus continues to spread unabated even before holiday gath-

erings that are certain to further fuel the outbreak.

The scourge has claimed more than 312,000 U.S. lives and killed 1.7 million people worldwide. New cases in the U.S. are running at over 216,000 per day on average. Deaths per day have hit all-time highs, eclipsing 3,600 on Wednesday.

The nation is scrambling to expand vaccinations as rapidly as Moderna and Pfizer can churn out doses. Moderna's is for people 18 and older; Pfizer's starts at age 16.

It's just the beginning of "what we hope will be a big push to get this terrible virus behind us, although it will take many more months to get to all Americans," Collins said.

# Space Force troops get new name: guardians

By STEVE BEYNON

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Troops serving in Space Force are now referred to as guardians, Vice President Mike Pence announced Friday.

"It is my honor on behalf of the president to announce henceforth the men and women of the United States Space Force will be known as guardians," Pence said during a ceremony to celebrate Space Force's first birthday, which is Sunday.

"Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and guardians will be defending our nation for generations to come," he said.

The announcement comes after months of troops in the military's newest branch being referred to as "space professionals," as a placeholder title.

"The opportunity to name a force is a momentous responsibility. Guardians is a name with a long history in space operations, tracing back to the original command motto of Air Force Space Command

in 1983, 'Guardians of the High Frontier,'" a tweet from the Space Force's account stated following the announcement.

Space Force has roughly 2,000 personnel, most of whom are transfers from the Air Force.

The service has recently started enlisting new recruits. Space Force hopes to recruit 300 enlisted service members in 2021 and reach 6,500 members overall in a year. Most of them will come from Air Force transfers.

# Expert: Networks need to be rebuilt

*Associated Press*

Experts say there simply are not enough skilled threat-hunting teams to duly identify all the government and private-sector systems that may have been hacked. FireEye, the cybersecurity company that discovered the intrusion into U.S. agencies and was among the victims, has already tallied dozens of casualties. It's racing to identify more.

"We have a serious problem. We don't know what networks they are in, how deep they are, what access they have, what tools they left," said Bruce Schneier, a prominent security expert and Harvard fellow.

It's not clear exactly what the hackers were seeking, but experts say it could include nuclear secrets, blueprints for advanced weaponry, COVID-19 vaccine-related research and information for dossiers on key government and industry leaders.

Many federal workers — and others in the private sector — must presume that unclassified networks are teeming with spies. Agencies will be more in-

clined to conduct sensitive government business on Signal, WhatsApp and other encrypted smartphone apps.

"We should buckle up. This will be a long ride," said Dmitri Alperovitch, co-founder and former chief technical officer of the leading cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike. "Cleanup is just phase one."

The only way to be sure a network is clean is "to burn it down to the ground and rebuild it," Schneier said.

Imagine a computer network as a mansion you inhabit, and you are certain a serial killer as been there.

"You don't know if he's gone. How do you get work done? You kind of just hope for the best," he said.

Deputy White House press secretary Brian Morgenstern told reporters Friday that national security adviser Robert O'Brien has sometimes been leading multiple daily meetings with the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the intelligence community, looking for ways to mitigate the hack.

He would not provide details,

"but rest assured we have the best and brightest working hard on it each and every single day."

The Democratic chairs of four House committees given classified briefings on the hack by the Trump administration issued a statement complaining that they "were left with more questions than answers."

"Administration officials were unwilling to share the full scope of the breach and identities of the victims," they said.

Morgenstern said earlier that disclosing such details only helps U.S. adversaries. President Donald Trump has not commented publicly on the matter, but Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on a conservative talk show Friday, "I think it's the case that now we can say pretty clearly that it was the Russians that engaged in this activity."

What makes this hacking campaign so extraordinary is its scale — 18,000 organizations were infected from March to June by malicious code that piggybacked on popular network-management software from an Austin, Texas, company called

SolarWinds.

Only a sliver of those infections were activated to allow hackers inside. FireEye says it has identified dozens of examples, all "high-value targets." Microsoft, which has helped respond, says it has identified more than 40 government agencies, think tanks, government contractors, non-governmental organizations and technology companies infiltrated by the hackers, 75% in the United States.

Florida became the first state to acknowledge falling victim to a SolarWinds hack. Officials told The Associated Press on Friday that hackers apparently infiltrated the state's health care administration agency and others.

SolarWinds' customers include most Fortune 500 companies, and it's U.S. government clients are rich with generals and spymasters.

The difficulty of extracting the suspected Russian hackers' tool kits is exacerbated by the complexity of SolarWinds' platform, which has dozens of different components.

## US plans to shutter consulates in Russia

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has notified Congress that it intends to shutter the last two remaining U.S. consulates in Russia.

The State Department told lawmakers last week that it would permanently close the consulate in the far eastern Russian city of Vladivostok and temporarily suspend operations at the consulate in Yekaterinburg just east of the Ural Mountains.

The notice was sent to Congress on Dec. 10 but received little attention at the time. That timing predates by three days the public emergence of news about a major suspected Russian computer intrusion into U.S. government and private computer systems that has raised grave cybersecurity fears.

The department's notification to Con-

gress, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, said the closures are due to caps placed by Russian authorities in 2017 on the number of U.S. diplomats allowed to work in the country.

The moves are "in response to ongoing staffing challenges of the U.S. Mission in Russia in the wake of the 2017 Russian-imposed personnel cap on the US Mission and resultant impasse with Russia over diplomatic visas," it said.

Following the closures, the only diplomatic facility the U.S. will have in Russia will be the embassy in Moscow. Russia ordered the closure of the U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg in 2018 after the U.S. ordered the Russian consulate in Seattle closed in tit-for-tat actions over the poisoning of an ex-Russian spy in Britain.

The consulate in Vladivostok had been

temporarily closed in March because of the coronavirus pandemic, and staffers there had already begun removing sensitive equipment, documents and other items. The consulates in Vladivostok and Yekaterinburg employ a total of 10 American diplomats and 33 local staff.

The exact timing of the closures has yet to be determined. The American staff are to be relocated to the embassy in Moscow.

The closures will leave the U.S. without diplomatic representation in a massive swath of Russia — everywhere east of Moscow — and present a major inconvenience for American travelers in Russia's far east, as well as Russians in the region seeking visas to come to the United States, as all consular services will be handled out of the Moscow embassy.

# Calif. hospitals struggle amid surge

*Associated Press*

LOS ANGELES — California hospitals are battling to find beds to house patients amid fears that the exploding coronavirus infection rate will exhaust resources and health care workers.

As of Friday, nearly 17,000 people were hospitalized with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infections — more than double the previous peak reached in July — and a state model that uses current data to forecast future trends shows the number could reach an unfathomable 75,000 by mid-January.

More than 3,500 confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients were in intensive care units.

Some areas of California are “just right at that cusp of getting overrun,” Dr. Anthony Fauci, the country’s top infectious-disease expert, said during an event organized by the California State University system.

Corona Regional Medical Center southeast of Los Angeles has converted an old emergency room to help handle nearly double the usual number of ICU patients. It’s using space in two disaster tents to triage ER patients because the emergency room is filled with patients who need to be hospitalized.

“There’s no room at the inn, so to speak,” hospital chief executive Mark Uffer said. “Literally every nook and cranny of the hospital is being used.”

## Arizona

WINDOW ROCK — Navajo Nation health officials on Friday reported 175 new COVID-19 cases and 10 new virus-related deaths.

In all, the tribe has reported 20,569 coronavirus cases resulting in 742 deaths since the pandemic hit the vast reservation in March.

The new statistics come as the reservation enters the latest in a string of weekend-long

lockdowns designed to limit activity that can spread the virus.

## Alaska

JUNEAU — A female clinician not known to have allergies had a probable severe allergic reaction shortly after getting a COVID-19 vaccine, a Fairbanks health system reported Friday.

The woman began experiencing “a probable anaphylactic reaction” about 10 minutes after receiving the shot Thursday in Fairbanks, the health care system Foundation Health Partners said. Symptoms included tongue swelling, hoarse voice and difficulty breathing — “traditional anaphylactic symptoms,” it said.

She received two doses of epinephrine at the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital emergency department and was discharged about six hours later, a statement from the health system said.

## Illinois

SPRINGFIELD — Deaths in Illinois from the coronavirus illness topped 15,000 on Friday, public health officials said.

The state passed the grim milestone with the addition of 181 fatalities, the same as the day before, and the sixth-highest total since the pandemic struck Illinois in February.

The slow process of inoculating the population against COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, got underway this week. Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced at his daily briefing on the pandemic that the first of two doses of the Pfizer vaccine approved by the federal government has been administered to 17,000 health care workers in Illinois.

## DC

WASHINGTON — Officials in the District of Columbia are accustomed to being short-changed in different ways.

There’s the long-standing issue of D.C.’s quest for statehood

and proper representation in Congress. And when the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus stimulus package was passed by Congress in March, Washington, D.C., was classified as a territory — a distinction that cost it \$700 million in funding.

But when the latest shortfall hit the local allotment of new COVID-19 vaccine doses, Washington’s neighboring states pitched in to help make up the difference. In a heartening demonstration of interstate collectivism, Maryland and Virginia are each sending 8,000 vaccine doses, more than tripling the amount available for health care workers in the nation’s capital.

The dosage allotments were based on population, but many of Washington’s health care workers live in the intertwined neighboring communities of Maryland and northern Virginia.

## Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma bars and restaurants have effectively won a temporary reprieve from a curfew that has been forcing them to close early since November to minimize the spread of the coronavirus.

A state judge sided with a group of bar owners Friday, granting them a 12-day stay on Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt’s order that bars and restaurants not serve food or alcohol on their premise after 11 p.m.

District Judge Susan Stallings said the stay only applied to the six plaintiffs in the case, according to *The Oklahoman*. But Keith Burt, the state’s director of the Alcoholic Beverage Laws Enforcement Commission, told the paper the agency would not enforce the curfew at any bars or restaurants until there’s a hearing on the issue Dec. 30.

## Massachusetts

BOSTON — A Massachusetts

man pleaded guilty in federal court Thursday for selling lanyards that he falsely claimed could ward off viruses.

Prosecutors in the U.S. attorney’s office said that instead of protecting the wearer against microbes, the lanyards that Jiule Lin, 38 of Quincy, sold online beginning last spring actually contained pesticide.

They say they identified 18 sales Lin made to customers in New York, Ohio, Florida, Illinois and California who each paid as much as \$19.95. No injuries have been reported that are related to the products, which were recovered by law enforcement.

## Maryland

BALTIMORE — Authorities have seized two domain names posing as biotechnology companies developing COVID-19 treatments but are apparently collecting personal information for fraud and installing malware, the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Baltimore said Friday.

An investigation was launched by Homeland Security Investigations earlier this month after corporate security for a company identified in an affidavit as Moderna, Inc., in Cambridge, Mass., located the fake website and contacted authorities, U.S. Attorney Robert K. Hur said in a news release. Moderna has developed a COVID-19 vaccine.

Hur said a review of the website’s online content showed the name and trademarked logos for the biotechnology company and found no significant differences from the genuine page, other than misspelling the company’s name. But Hur said people clicking on the “Contact Us” tab were redirected to an entry form requesting name, company/institution, title, phone, e-mail, and comments/questions. The name was registered around Dec. 8 to a company headquartered in Malaysia, according to Hur.

## Illegal winery busted at town's sewage plant

**AL** RAINSVILLE — Sheriff's officials say they've busted an illegal winery that was operating at a municipal sewage plant in a small north Alabama town.

The DeKalb County Sheriff's Office said in a statement it received an anonymous tip about an alcohol operation at a municipal building in the town of Rainsville. Investigators then uncovered what's described as a large illegal winery inside the Rainsville Waste Water Treatment Plant.

It's legal to make limited amounts of wine at home in Alabama, but it's illegal to have more than 15 gallons of homemade wine or beer at a time. Police photos show multiple fermenting vessels filled with what appears to be more than 100 gallons of white and red liquid.

## Personal watercrafts OK'd in some critical habitats

**AK** HOMER — Personal watercrafts will be allowed on some Alaska waters that are considered critical wildlife habitats for the first time in 20 years after lobbying by recreational groups and a request by the governor for departments to streamline regulations.

The Department of Fish and Game announced that a rule that banned the watercrafts, often known as Jet Skis, in parts of Kachemak Bay and the Fox River Flats had been repealed, the Homer News reported. The change will take effect Jan. 9.

A critical habitat is considered an area essential to the conservation of an endangered or threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

## Parents lose lawsuit over destruction of son's porn

**MI** GRAND HAVEN — A man who sued his parents for getting rid of his pornography collection has won a lawsuit in western Michigan and can seek compensation.

U.S. District Judge Paul Maloney ruled in favor of David Werking, who said his parents had no right to throw out his collection. He lived at their Grand Haven home for 10

months after a divorce before moving to Muncie, Ind.

Werking said boxes of films and magazines worth an estimated \$29,000 were missing, including "Frisky Business" and "Big Bad Grannys."

"There is no question that the destroyed property was David's property," Maloney said. "Defendants repeatedly admitted that they destroyed the property."

Werking's parents said they had a right to act as his landlords.

## Chinook salmon spawn in river first time in years

**WA** SPOKANE — For the first time in more than a generation, chinook salmon have spawned in the upper Columbia River system.

Colville Tribal biologists counted 36 redds, a gravelly nest where female salmon lay eggs, along an 8-mile stretch of the Sanpoil River, a tributary of the Columbia, in September, the Spokesman Review-Journal reported.

The news is a step toward full reintroduction of the migratory fish and another watershed cultural moment for the region's tribes.

Since the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams were built in the 1950s and 1930s, respectively, salmon have been blocked from returning to spawning beds in the upper Columbia River.

## 2 charged after kidnapped boy left at Goodwill

**TN** MEMPHIS — Two people from Tennessee have been charged with kidnapping a 2-year-old boy who was found at a Goodwill store in Mississippi, federal officials said.

Jeremy Fitzgerald, 34, and Turliscea Turner, 29, both of Memphis, were charged in a federal criminal complaint, U.S. Attorney D. Michael Dunavant's office said in a news release.

The complaint alleges that Turner babysat the boy overnight while Fitzgerald and the child's mother went to Nashville. Fitzgerald left the woman in Nashville and demanded money from the child's aunt for his return, federal officials alleged.

Fitzgerald, Turner and another person subsequently drove with the child to Southaven, Miss., the release said. During a stop, Fitzgerald took the child to a nearby Goodwill store and left him, the prosecutor's office said.

The suspect vehicle was seen in Shelby County, Tenn.

When law enforcement responded, Fitzgerald crashed and was taken to a hospital with minor injuries, the release said. Turner was found inside a grocery nearby, the release said. Fitzgerald and Turner were taken into custody.

## Motorist rescued after car buried by snow plow

**NY** OWEGO — A New York State Police sergeant rescued a man stranded for hours in a car covered by nearly 4 feet of snow thrown by a plow during this week's storm, authorities said.

The 58-year-old Candor man drove off the road and got plowed in by a truck, authorities said. He made several 911 calls and was stranded more than 10 hours without heat.

Sgt. Jason Cawley dug through the snow Thursday and found the vehicle in the town of Owego, outside Binghamton. The man had hypothermia and frostbite when he was removed from the car. He was taken to a hospital for treatment.

## Drug decriminalization measure adopted early

**OR** PORTLAND — Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt in Portland said he isn't waiting until February to implement a policy that will decriminalize possession of all drugs in personal use amounts.

Schmidt's office said it will immediately start treating drug possession cases exempt from prosecution under Measure 110 as a public health matter, rather than a criminal one, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. Oregonians passed the measure in November.

"It's time to move beyond these failed practices, expand access to treatment and focus our limited law enforcement resources to target high-level, commercial drug offenses," Schmidt said in a statement.

— From The Associated Press

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# Ducks knock off USC, win Pac-12 title

*Associated Press*

LOS ANGELES — Oregon didn't win its Pac-12 division, and it only got into the championship game because Washington had to drop out. The Ducks hadn't won a game in nearly a month before they took the Coliseum field Friday night.

They still ended up celebrating amid confetti and streamers in their rivals' empty stadium.

After yet another display of the big-game poise their West Coast foes so often lack, the Ducks are back-to-back conference champions.

Anthony Brown threw two touchdown passes in his unusual Oregon debut, Jamal Hill made his second interception with 2:47 to play, and the Ducks won their second straight Pac-12 title with a 31-24 victory over No. 13 Southern California.

Defensive end Kayvon Thibodeaux, the game's MVP with five tackles and a sack, jauntily wore two hats during the post-game party to symbolize the Ducks' two championships.

"We fought this year," said

Thibodeaux, a Los Angeles native. "So many trials and tribulations. So many things that kept popping up. So many excuses we could have made, and we didn't flinch. We stuck to the script and got it done."

Tyler Shough also threw two touchdown passes for the Ducks (4-2), who claimed the Pac-12's New Year's Six bowl berth despite having more losses than USC, Washington or Colorado. The Trojans were one win away from an unbeaten regular season before the Ducks took charge with a superb defensive effort and timely offense throughout the night.

"We were itching to get back to our kind of football, and we did it tonight," coach Mario Cristobal said. "(We) really just came out with an attitude, came out with a purpose and a mission."

Jaylon Redd, Hunter Kampmoyer, DJ Johnson and Travis Dye caught TD passes for the Ducks, who got into the title game after consecutive losses only because the Huskies had to

drop out Monday due to coronavirus problems.

Despite losing its two previous games to Oregon State and California, Oregon seized the opportunity to continue its domination of the Trojans on the way to the school's sixth Pac-12 championship in 12 years and its record fourth championship game victory.

When Thibodeaux was asked whether a championship won in 2020 should have an asterisk, he replied: "Everybody who's not a winner is going to say that, so who are we leaving it up to? The winners or the losers?"

Kedon Slovis passed for 320 yards with two touchdowns and three interceptions for the Trojans (5-1), whose perfect season ended with their fourth loss in their last five meetings with Oregon. The sophomore quarterback had X-rays on his shoulder after the game.

"There's a lot of hurt souls in our locker room right now," USC coach Clay Helton said. "I know our kids wanted extremely badly to win a championship,

and we came up a play too short today."

## QB surprise

The Ducks stunned almost everybody in the mostly empty Coliseum by replacing Shough occasionally with Brown, a senior graduate transfer from Boston College who hadn't recorded any statistics for Oregon this season.

Brown's first throw for the Ducks was a TD pass to Redd on Oregon's opening drive. He threw another scoring pass to Dye in the third quarter, finishing 3-for-4 for 17 yards in an offensive package set up for short-yardage situations and goal line chances.

"He's a really good player, and he deserved to play somehow, some way," Cristobal said. "Not only that, he provided an advantage for us in the (run-pass option) world. We all very much appreciate Anthony for hanging in there throughout the season, because it's a position where one player is playing for the most part."

## With 500-plus games played, season was successful

*Associated Press*

Back in August, when there was still doubt about whether a college football season would be played during the pandemic, Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby said he would look at the season as a success if he could hand out a championship trophy in December.

The virus is not going to allow for traditional trophy presentations, but Bowlsby and most of his 10 fellow commissioners in major conferences will reach that goal this weekend.

That won't be the case for the Sun Belt after its title game between No. 9 Coastal Carolina and No. 17 Louisiana-Lafayette was called off because of COVID-19 issues with the Chanticleers.

Still, no league got in more of its regular season than the Sun Belt. Despite several postponements, only one regular-season Sun Belt Conference game out of 40 did not get played. Eight of 10 schools played a full, eight-game league schedule.

"I think this is a successful season. There's no question about it," Sun Belt Commissioner Keith Gill said Friday. "We started the season knowing there would be disruption. We've kind of played through that disruption."

The Sun Belt's breakout season, its first having multiple teams ranked, will end with the Chanticleers (11-0) and Ragin' Cajuns (9-1) as co-champions. Coastal won at ULL 30-27 on Oct. 14.

Coastal Carolina (CFP No. 12) still has an outside chance to grab a New Year's Six bowl bid.

As for the rest of college football, the final weekend of the regular season was down to 19 games after Florida State's visit to Wake Forest was canceled because the Seminoles would not have enough available offensive linemen.

If no other games are called off, 541 games will be played since Labor Day weekend.

Since Power Five conferences set revised schedules in late August, AP has counted 118 games that were either postponed or canceled directly because of COVID-19 issues with one or both of the participants. Some games were called more than once and

some where eventually made up.

College football researcher and statistician Cody Kellner calculated 82 scheduled games were never played and 86.8% of the major college football season will be completed if no games are canceled Saturday.

If the Southeastern Conference gets through the weekend with no further disruptions, it will have completed 68 of 70 regular-season games and a title game, the highest success rate among the Power Five.

The Pac-12 fared worst in the Power Five, with its teams playing 32 games out of the 42 it hoped to complete when the conference started in early November and left no room to make up games.

# Reddick making impact for Cardinals

*Associated Press*

Linebacker Haason Reddick doesn't mind admitting he shed a few tears of joy after the brilliant, five-sack afternoon that etched his name into the Cardinals' record books.

The emotions were intense for the former 13th overall draft pick in 2017, who has morphed from a borderline bust to one of Arizona's best defensive players as the team makes a December playoff push for the first time in years.

Some players say they don't care about numbers or records. Reddick's not one of them.

"The game means a lot, it's important, it's one for the history books," Reddick said of his franchise-record five sacks in a 26-7 win over the New York Giants on Sunday.

"No matter what people say, or what happens from here on out, they can never take that day away from me."

It's understandable why Reddick would savor his recent success given his first four seasons in the NFL haven't always been smooth. He played for three different coaches in his first three seasons — Bruce Arians, Steve Wilks and Kliff

Kingsbury — and his role was constantly changing.

At 6-foot-1 and 235 pounds, previous coaches tried to play him at inside linebacker where he wasn't comfortable, but Kingsbury and defensive coordinator Vance Joseph eventually moved him back to the outside where he can rush the passer. Now that he's had the same coaching staff for two straight seasons, he's made steady improvement.

He's already set career highs with 10 sacks, 13 tackles for a loss and 15 quarterback hits with three games remaining. The Cardinals (7-6) need Reddick to keep producing when they host the Philadelphia Eagles (4-8-1) on Sunday and try to hang on to a spot in the NFC playoff race.

Joseph said Reddick's breakout Sunday was the product of lots of hard work.

"It was a proud moment," Joseph said. "This kid has had some rough days here the past three years. To watch him have a day like that, his teammates and coaches be so excited for him, that was fun to see. It all starts and finishes with him, his attitude and his personality.

"He never complained one

time, he never blamed anyone, he kept working and kept asking for more chances."

Arizona needed this kind of effort, especially after 2019 All-Pro linebacker Chandler Jones was lost for the season because of a biceps injury in October. Jones had 19 sacks last season and it was easy to wonder if Arizona's defense was doomed.

Reddick's rise, along with help from guys like Dennis Gardeck and Markus Golden, has made the Cardinals' pass rush much more potent than expected. They're sixth in the NFL with 37 sacks.

Against the Giants, Reddick's moves beat New York's offensive line over and over as he crashed into quarterbacks Daniel Jones or Colt McCoy, forcing three fumbles. Gardeck said Reddick's "so fast off the line you can kind of see him win before he even gets the sack."

Gardeck also had two sacks against the Giants while Golden had one.

"They have that group mentality where it's not about who gets there, it's just about getting there," Kingsbury said. "It's been awesome, couldn't

be prouder of Haason and what he's been able to do, and hopefully we can keep it going."

Reddick's used to adversity during a football career that hasn't always gone as planned. He wasn't recruited much by colleges because of injuries during high school and ended up being a walk-on at Temple.

He was a role player his first two college seasons before slowly growing into a star. During his senior year he had 22 ½ tackles for loss, 9 ½ sacks and an interception, which led to his selection in the first round by the Cardinals.

His NFL career sputtered during the early years and the Cardinals had enough reservations about his ability that they declined his fifth-year option during the past offseason. But the 26-year-old is playing very well now as he approaches free agency, and it appears he's about to get a big payday, whether it's from the Cardinals or someone else.

"I've never doubted myself. I've always believed in myself," Reddick said. "I knew it was a matter of time and the goal is to get better from this point forward."

## NHL players, owners reach deal on 56-game season

*Associated Press*

Drop the puck in mid-January? The National Hockey League is well on the way to making that happen.

The NHL and players reached a tentative deal Friday to hold a 56-game season that would begin Jan. 13. The NHLPA executive board gave the agreement a green light to proceed, but players and owners must hold formal votes and Canadian health officials give their approval before it becomes reality.

Deputy Commissioner Bill

Daly confirmed the sides have an agreement, pending the approval of various executive committees.

Players on the NHLPA's executive board call Friday night supported moving forward with the agreed-upon terms, according to a person with knowledge of the meeting. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because players had yet to officially approve the agreement.

The league's Board of Governors could vote on the plan

as soon as this weekend. Approval from health officials in the five Canadian provinces that have teams is still needed before the NHL can go ahead with the season.

Training camps for the seven non-playoff teams would open Dec. 31 and then Jan. 3 for the other 24 teams. It's unclear whether teams would play in their home arenas or in "hub" cities, though an all-divisional schedule is expected.

Exhibition games aren't expected to be included in the

leadup to the new season. Sportsnet in Canada first reported the tentative agreement.

The NHL, like the NBA, finished its previous season in a quarantined bubble — two of them, one each in Toronto and Edmonton, Alberta. Commissioner Gary Bettman awarded the Stanley Cup to the Tampa Bay Lightning in late September in Edmonton.

The NHL follows the NBA in moving toward another regular season. The basketball season opens Tuesday.

# BYU hands No. 18 Aztecs first loss

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Alex Barcello scored 22 points and Brandon Averette hit a huge three-pointer with 51 seconds left for BYU, which blew a 17-point lead before beating No. 18 San Diego State 72-62 on Friday despite Matt Mitchell's career-high 35 points.

Mitchell was remarkable in scoring 26 points in the second half. He spurred a 14-0 run with a trio of three-pointers and then had a steal and dunk that tied it 61.

But BYU (7-2) regained control and handed San Diego

State (5-1) its first loss. The Aztecs won their first 26 games last season and were the nation's last undefeated team en route to a 30-2 record.

Matt Haarms and Averette scored 10 points apiece.

Jordan Schakel had only three points on 1-for-9 shooting after scoring a career-high 25 points in San Diego State's 80-68 win at Arizona State on Dec. 10.

**No. 8 West Virginia 70, Iowa State 65:** Miles McBride scored 18 points, including the go-ahead free throws with 21 seconds left, to send the host

Mountaineers past the Cyclones.

Derek Culver had 18 points and 12 rebounds for West Virginia (7-1, 1-0 Big 12), which scored the final six points. The Mountaineers overcame poor shooting in their conference opener by making 14 of 16 free throws over the final six minutes.

Rasir Bolton scored a season-high 25 points for Iowa State (1-4, 0-2), which couldn't overcome 21 turnovers.

**No. 10 Tennessee 103, Tennessee Tech 49:** At Knoxville, Tenn., Jaden Springer

scored 21 points to lead the Volunteers over the Golden Eagles.

The 6-foot-4 freshman also had six rebounds and six assists and was one of six Tennessee players (4-0) in double figures. Josiah-Jordan James and Victor Bailey Jr. scored 15 points each, John Fulkerson had 13 points and six rebounds, Keon Johnson scored 13 points and Yves Pons had 10 points and two blocks.

Tennessee Tech (0-8) was led by Jr. Clay with 13 points. Keishawn Davidson added 12 points.

# Bielema returning to Big Ten as new Illinois coach

Associated Press

Bret Bielema, who led Wisconsin to three Rose Bowls before a disappointing run at Arkansas, is returning to the Big Ten and his home state to coach Illinois.

The Illini hired Bielema to replace the fired Lovie Smith on Saturday, hoping he can turn around a program with nine consecutive losing seasons.

Illinois said Bielema will receive a six-year contract with an annual salary starting at \$4.2 million, and begin work immediately.

He was a guest of athletic director Josh Whitman's when Illinois played at Penn State on Saturday.

A native of western Illinois, the 50-year-old Bielema is 97-58 in 12 years at Wisconsin and Arkansas.

"Illinois and the Big Ten is home for me, and I can't be any more excited about the opportunity in front of me with the Fighting Illini," Bielema said in a statement. "We want to build a program that makes Illini Nation proud and regain the passion that I've seen when Illinois wins.

He took over for Barry Alva-

rez and went 68-24 with the Badgers from 2006 to 2012 before leaving to coach the Razorbacks. He finished with a 29-34 mark at Arkansas and was fired in November 2017.

He has spent the last three seasons as an assistant coach in the NFL, first with the Patriots and then the New York Giants.

Whitman called Bielema a proven winner.

"In our conversations, it became clear to me that he is a lifelong learner who is continually looking to grow and improve, and he has enjoyed unrivaled mentorship from some of the game's most distinguished coaches, including Hayden Fry, Kirk Ferentz, Bill Snyder, Barry Alvarez, and Bill Belichick — all of them current or future Hall of Famers," Whitman said.

## Golovkin makes 21st title defense

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. — Genady Golovkin made his record 21st defense of his middleweight titles Friday night, knocking down previously unbeaten Kamil Szeremeta four times before their fight was stopped after the seventh

round.

Golovkin (41-1-1, 36 KOs) surpassed Bernard Hopkins' division record for title defenses and retained his IBF and IBO 160-pound belts with a one-sided victory in his first fight in 14 months.

The Kazakh star ended the longest ring absence of his 14-year professional career with a systematic dismantling of Poland's Szeremeta (21-1) at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino.

The 38-year-old Golovkin accepted this mandatory title defense to get back in the ring after a lengthy stretch of inactivity. He also returned to a measure of his dominant form against Szeremeta, who was gamely overmatched.

Golovkin started out with an effective jab that evoked memories of his best years in the ring, and he knocked down Szeremeta with a low left hand in the final instants of the first round.

Golovkin floored Szeremeta again in the second round with a devastating right hand, moving crisply and landing power punches at will.

Szeremeta kept fighting, but couldn't trouble Golovkin with

many of his punches. He was knocked down again in the fourth round, and Golovkin toyed with his opponent for the next three rounds despite failing to land a decisive punch.

## Payton: Saints plan to start Brees vs. Chiefs

NEW ORLEANS — Saints record-setting quarterback Drew Brees "looked good" in his first practices since returning from rib fractures and a punctured lung, and is slated to start against the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday, coach Sean Payton said.

"We went off how it felt as he went through a full practice week. And he's done a good job," Payton said after Friday's practice.

Brees has missed four games since his injury, which occurred when he was sacked against San Francisco.

Taysom Hill has started in Brees' place, going 3-1. Even before Brees' injury, Hill would intermittently take snaps under center to provide New Orleans with a change-of-pace, read-option QB. So he could continue to see snaps at QB as well.