

No religious vaccine waivers OK'd for troops

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — More than 12,000 military service members refusing the COVID-19 vaccine are seeking religious exemptions, and so far they are having zero success.

That total lack of approvals is creating new tensions within the military.

The services, urgently trying to keep the coronavirus pandemic in check by getting troops vaccinated, are now besieged with exemption requests they are unlikely to approve. Meanwhile, troops claiming religious reasons for avoiding the shots are perplexed because exemptions are theoretically available, yet seem impossible to obtain.

Caught in the middle are chaplains, who must balance the desire to offer compassionate care and guidance to personnel with the need to explain a complicated process that may well be futile. They must also assess requests from those who may be using religion as an excuse to

avoid a vaccine that, while credited with preventing needless deaths, has become politically charged.

“So many of them come in thinking that I make the decision, and if they make this case, that it’s a done deal,” said Maj. A'Shellarien Lang, an Army chaplain for the National Guard. “I don’t make the decision. And so when they find that out, it’s a kind of game-changer in the sense that they know that the process has to continue.”

According to the services, at least 30,000 service members are not yet vaccinated, but several thousand of those have gotten temporary or permanent medical or administrative exemptions approved. Of the remaining — which is likely 20,000 or more — thousands are working their way through the exemptions process, such as for religious reasons, or have flatly refused. That’s about 1.5% of the roughly 1.3 million active-duty troops.

Obtaining a religious exemp-

tion is rooted in a process that predates the pandemic and has been used for decisions such as whether troops on duty can wear head coverings or beards for religious reasons.

In addition to discussions with chaplains to determine whether they have a “sincerely held belief,” troops must meet with commanders and medical personnel. The final decision is made higher up the chain of command and is also based on whether the person’s vaccine exemption will pose a risk to the health and safety of the force, mission accomplishment, unit cohesion and readiness.

Even in the past, few troops have cleared those hurdles to get religious exemptions. Because the pandemic can directly affect the force’s health and readiness, the bar is even higher, so military leaders aren’t surprised by the lack of approved exemptions.

But for the troops and chaplains, it’s been a bit overwhelming.

“It’s just been a lot of interviews, a lot of memos,” Lang said. “I find that my colleagues are stressed just because of the logistics of getting the memo done and having to make sure they’re keeping up with the process.”

Air Force officials initially said religious exemption requests would be answered in 30 days. But they have gotten more than 4,700 requests — far more than the other military services, and the logistics of the lengthy review process has made it difficult to meet that timeline. The Navy has received about 2,700 religious exemption requests, the Marine Corps has 3,100 and the Army about 1,700. Some that were rejected have been appealed, but there is little data on that.

“We did not expect the surge of requests,” said Air Force Col. Paul Sutter, chief chaplain for religious affairs at Space Force, which is included in the Air Force.

Virus case spike leads Okinawa base to raise risk level

By MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The COVID-19 risk level was raised Friday at Camp Hansen, a Marine Corps base on Okinawa, after “multiple” Marines tested positive for the coronavirus respiratory disease, a spokesman for Marine Corps Installations Pacific said.

The Marines tested positive while in quarantine on Hansen after arriving under the unit deployment program, spokesman Lt. Col. Matthew Hilton said in a news release. He said they had no contact with the local population on the island.

“All COVID-positive personnel are currently in isolation, and we are conducting an aggressive testing, contact-tracing and

quarantine program in order to prevent the spread of the virus,” Hilton said in the statement.

The risk level on Hansen was raised to Health Protection Condition-Bravo, which represents a moderate risk of coronavirus infection and gives commanders leeway to impose further restrictions, according to a post Friday afternoon on Marine Corps Installations Pacific’s official Facebook page.

As a result, a mask mandate is back in effect for everyone on the base, regardless of vaccination status, and some base services will be reduced.

Sit-down dining has been suspended at all Marine Corps Community Services facilities, including The Palms and Chili’s

Express, according to a post on the Hansen official Facebook page. Takeout is still available.

In the unit deployment program, stateside Marine units rotate to Okinawa to train in Asian environments for typically about six months.

Little more is known about the outbreak or when the Marines arrived, what bases and facilities on the island they may have entered or their medical conditions. Marine Installations Pacific did not respond to an email seeking further information Friday afternoon.

New cases of COVID-19 among the Marine Corps on Okinawa have dwindled since August when they reported 25 to 40 new cases per day.

Marines begin offering morale leave on Okinawa

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Marine Corps joined the rest of uniformed services and have begun offering government-funded morale flights between Okinawa and Seattle so Marines and their families may visit loved ones in the United States.

The Pentagon approved the Funded Environmental and Morale Leave program Nov. 19 for service members, Defense Department civilian employees and their families on Okinawa. The program permits eligible passengers to fly aboard the Patriot Express, a government-contracted air service, between Okinawa and Seattle at government expense.

The program allows participants to return by air directly to Kadena Air Base and complete the 10-day quarantine required by Japan at home or at their home installations rather than in the Tokyo area.

The Corps took several weeks to outline its own guidance “for leaders and eligible members” so it could implement the program while keeping readiness, according to a recent state-

ment from III Marine Expeditionary Force.

The Funded Environmental Leave Program provides eligible Marines, sailors and DOD civilians in Japan, and their families, an opportunity for time off the island after nearly two years of restrictions under the coronavirus pandemic, III Marine Expeditionary Force commander Lt. Gen. James Bierman Jr. said in the Marine statement.

To enact the program, the Pentagon invoked a provision in the military leave and liberty policy that permits government-funded travel from duty locations “that are truly isolated, austere or unhealthful ...”

Eligible personnel will be briefed by an officer or a staff non-commissioned officer on available opportunities and procedures, he said.

The morale leave program is open to any service member, dependent and DOD civilian employee with orders to Okinawa for at least two years, U.S. Forces Japan spokesman Gunnery Sgt. Jonathan Wright wrote in an email Thursday to Stars and Stripes. This includes approved back-to-back 12-month tours.

Navy to dispute fuel tanks linked to tainted water

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Navy on Monday will argue against an emergency order by the Hawaii Department of Health that requires the service to drain an underground fuel storage facility near Pearl Harbor linked to widespread drinking-water contamination.

The health department issued the order Dec. 6, about a week after residents of several military housing communities near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam began complaining of foul-smelling tap water layered with an oily sheen. The contamination has affected almost two dozen communities and displaced about 3,000 military housing residents, who are now temporarily living in hotels.

The emergency order requires the removal of roughly 150 million gallons of fuel from the Red Hill Fuel Storage Facility. The Navy notified the health department Dec. 7 that it would contest the order.

An evidentiary hearing is scheduled to begin via Zoom at 8 a.m. Monday, Hawaii time, and will continue “from day to day until completed,” the health department said in a news release Thursday. The hearing will be livestreamed at youtube.com/c/HawaiiDOH.

The emergency order set forth a series of requirements for the Navy:

- Immediate suspension of operations at the Red Hill bulk fuel storage tanks, including transfers.

- Continued monitoring by the Navy.

- Immediate steps to install a drinking water treatment system, or systems, at the contaminated Red Hill water well.

- Submission of a plan to be implemented within 30 days to assess the operations and system integrity to safely remove the fuel from the tanks. The plan must be prepared by a qualified, independent third party approved by the health department.

- Remove all fuel from the underground storage tanks.

The Navy has not detailed which of the required steps it contests.

Last week, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro laid out in a memo a plan to mitigate and clean up the contamination.

Egg-tossing anti-THAAD protester in South Korea won't be charged

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The ruling party's candidate for president in South Korea has declined to press charges against a protester who threw eggs at him over the ongoing deployment of a U.S. missile defense system in their country.

Lee Jae-myung, the former governor of Gyeonggi province and the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in the March 2022 election, had at least two eggs hurled at him by a high school student during a campaign stop Monday in Seongju county. Lee was not struck by the eggs; however, his bodyguards were hit, a Seongju police officer told Stars and Stripes under the customary condition of anonymity.

Lee, in a statement released Thursday, said

he was not pursuing charges against the student protester, who alleged the Democratic candidate was wavering in his opposition against the deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense systems in South Korea.

Lee, previously an outspoken critic of the missile defense system, reiterated in his statement that his “position remains unchanged that the THAAD deployment does not completely coincide with the national interest.”

Lee acknowledged, however, that the missile defense system “already became reality” with its deployment during ousted South Korean President Park Geun-hye's conservative administration, and that as a politician, he was inclined to “maximize the national interest according to the given reality and situation.”

Manchin won't back Dems' \$2T bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin said Sunday he cannot back his party's signature \$2 trillion social and environment bill, seemingly dealing a fatal blow to President Joe Biden's leading domestic initiative heading into an election year when Democrats' narrow hold on Congress was already in peril.

Manchin told "Fox News Sunday" that he always has made clear he had reservations about the bill and that now, after five-and-half months of dis-

cussions and negotiations, "I cannot vote to continue with this piece of legislation."

The bill carries huge investments for helping millions of families with children, including extending a more generous child tax credit, creating free preschool and bolstering child care aid. There's assistance to help people pay health care costs, new hearing benefits for Medicare recipients and provisions limiting price increases on prescription drugs.

Also included are funds for caring for the elderly, housing,

job training and more than \$500 billion for tax breaks and spending aimed at curbing climate change. Nearly all of it would be paid for with higher taxes on the wealthy and large corporations.

Manchin's opposition puts it all on hold indefinitely.

Though Manchin has been Democrats' main obstacle all year to pushing the massive package through the narrowly divided Congress, his declaration was a stunning repudiation of Biden's and his party's top goal. A rejection of the legisla-

tion had been seen by many as unthinkable because of the political damage it could inflict on Democrats.

Sen Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., criticized Manchin for withdrawing his support and urged Democratic leaders to bring the bill to the floor anyway and force Manchin to oppose it.

"If he doesn't have the courage to do the right thing for the working families of West Virginia and America, let him vote no in front of the whole world," Sanders told CNN's "State of the Union."

Omicron and holidays unleash scramble for coronavirus tests

The Washington Post

Coronavirus testing was a breeze when J.D. Schroeder traveled to Abu Dhabi and Mexico this fall. Not so much at home in Pennsylvania when he felt sick Wednesday and found out he had been exposed.

The mechanical engineer started looking for an over-the-counter rapid test because the earliest antigen test appointment he could find in his Pittsburgh-area community was almost a week away. Rite Aid would only let him order online. The closest CVS pharmacies were all out of stock. He nabbed the last box at a Walgreens, which came back positive.

When he traveled to the United Arab Emirates for work last month, he paid roughly \$13 for lab tests and got results within two hours. A hotel in Mexico where he vacationed over Thanksgiving had ample rapid testing kits for guests.

"I'm 31 and I'm pretty tech savvy. I can't imagine someone who doesn't have access to a computer or isn't comfortable searching different places to figure this stuff out because it can be confusing," said Schroeder, who is now quarantining at home.

Easy access to coronavirus tests — both rapid at-home kits and PCR tests analyzed in labs — is uneven across the United States as the nation faces the prospect of explosive outbreaks linked to holiday travel and the highly transmissible omicron

variant, connected to sharp surges in cases globally. Government officials and public health experts have urged Americans to get tested before they attend big events like holiday parties and gather for Christmas. It's a way to break chains of transmission by nipping outbreaks at the bud, especially in places declining to reinstate mask mandates or social distancing measures.

Challenges accessing testing are not insurmountable, and Americans can generally find a rapid or PCR test combing through various public and private institutions offering them.

Public health experts warn each hurdle, from the price tag of a rapid test to a several day wait for a PCR test, makes it harder to battle a winter surge. A person with the sniffles who forgoes a rapid test because it's too expensive could end up spreading to others at a holiday party. A college student who tried to find a kit at three pharmacies before giving up could end up infecting a grandmother with a weak immune system at Christmas.

"Testing shouldn't be just the gold ring at the end of an obstacle course," said Adriane Casalotti, chief of public and government affairs at the National Association of County and City Health Officials.

"It should be easily accessible, it should be something that doesn't burden or take too much out of your day because that's the only way it becomes routine."

European nations take steps to curb omicron rise

Associated Press

LONDON — Nations across Europe moved to reimpose tougher measures to stem a new wave of COVID-19 infections spurred by the highly transmissible omicron variant, with the Netherlands leading the way by imposing a nationwide lockdown.

All non-essential stores, bars and restaurants in the Netherlands will be closed until Jan. 14 starting Sunday, caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte said at a hastily arranged press conference Saturday night. Schools and universities will shut until Jan. 9, he said.

In what is surely to prove a major disappointment, the lockdown terms also rein in private holiday celebrations. Residents only will be permitted two visitors except for Christmas and New Year's, when four will be allowed, according to Rutte.

"The Netherlands is going into lockdown again from tomorrow," he said, adding that the move was "unavoidable because of the fifth wave caused by the omicron variant that is bearing down on us."

It wasn't just the Dutch seeking to slow the spread of omicron. Alarmed ministers in France, Cyprus and Austria tightened travel restrictions. Paris canceled its New Year's Eve fireworks. Denmark has closed theaters, concert halls, amusement parks and museums. Ireland imposed an 8 p.m. curfew on pubs and bars and limited attendance at indoor and outdoor events.

Sudan rallies mark uprising anniversary

Associated Press

CAIRO — Sudanese took to the streets in the capital of Khartoum and elsewhere across the country for mass protests Sunday against an October military takeover and a subsequent deal that reinstated Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok but sidelined the movement.

The demonstrations mark the third anniversary of the uprising that eventually forced the military removal of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir and his Islamist government in April 2019.

Sudan then followed a fragile path toward democracy and was ruled by a joint military-civilian government. The Oct. 25 coup has rattled the transition and led to relentless street protests.

Video footage circulated online purported to show protes-

ters marching in the streets of Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman on Sunday. Protesters were seen waving the Sudanese flag and white ones with printed images of those killed in the uprising and ensuing protests.

Ahead of the demonstrations, Sudan's authorities tightened security across the capital, barricading government and military buildings to prevent protesters from reaching the military's headquarters and the presidential palace. They also blocked major roads and bridges linking Khartoum and Omdurman across the Nile River.

Security forces used tear gas to disperse protesters headed toward the palace on the bank of the Blue Nile in the heart of Khartoum, according to activist

Nazim Sirag. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

There were also protests in other cities including Atbara, the birthplace of the uprising against al-Bashir.

The protests were called by the pro-democracy movement that led the uprising against al-Bashir and struck a power-sharing deal with the generals in the months that followed his ouster.

Relations between the generals and the civilians in the transitional government were shaky and capped by the military's Oct. 25 takeover that removed Hamdok's government.

Hamdok was reinstated last month amid international pressure in a deal that calls for an independent technocratic Cabinet under military oversight led by him. The agreement included

the release of government officials and politicians detained since the coup.

Talks are underway to agree on what Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, head of the ruling Sovereign Council, described as a "new political charter" focused on establishing a broader consensus among all political forces and movements.

Addressing Sudanese late Saturday ahead of the protests, Hamdok said he struck the Nov. 21 deal with the military mainly to prevent bloodshed. He warned that the country could slide further into chaos amid economic and security challenges.

"The deal, in my view, is the most effective and inexpensive means to return to the course of civic and democratic transition," he said.

Russian nuclear-capable bombers patrol Belarus

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia sent a pair of nuclear-capable long-range bombers to patrol the skies over Belarus on Saturday, a mission intended to underline close defense ties between the two allies amid tensions with the West.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the two Tu-22M3 strategic strike bombers practiced "performing joint tasks with the Belarusian air force and air defense." Su-30 fighter jets that Russia has supplied to Belarus escorted the bombers. Saturday's four-hour patrol marked Russia's third such mission in Belarus since last month and took place amid Western concerns over a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine's border.

Moscow has denied harboring plans to invade Ukraine and pressed the U.S. for security guarantees that would exclude NATO expanding into Ukraine or deploying weapons there. The U.S. and its allies are almost certain to reject Moscow's demands.

Some Ukrainian officials have voiced concern that Russia may use Belarus as a base for attacking their country from the north. Amid his own tensions with the European Union, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said last month that his country would be ready to host Russian nuclear weapons.

The EU has accused the authoritarian Lukashenko of encouraging migrants and refugees to use his country as a backdoor to illegally enter neighboring EU member nations Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The EU imposed sanctions on Lukashenko's government for its crackdown on internal dissent after Lukashenko's disputed 2020 reelection.

The Belarusian leader wouldn't elaborate on what kind of Russian weapons Belarus would be willing to accommodate, but noted that the ex-Soviet nation has preserved necessary military infrastructure dating back to the time of the USSR.

Philippines official: Typhoon death toll likely to keep rising

Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The governor of an island province in the central Philippines said Sunday at least 72 people died in the devastation wrought by Typhoon Rai in more than half of the towns that managed to contact him, bringing the death toll in the strongest typhoon to batter the country this year to at least 146.

Gov. Arthur Yap of Bohol province said 10 others were missing and 13 injured, and suggested the fatalities may still considerably increase with only 33 out of 48 mayors able to report back to him due to downed communications. Officials were trying to confirm a sizable number of deaths caused by landslides and extensive flooding elsewhere.

In statements posted on Facebook, Yap ordered mayors in his province of more than 1.2 million people to invoke their emergency powers to secure food packs for large numbers of

people along with drinking water. Both have been urgently sought in several hard-hit towns.

After joining a military aerial survey of typhoon-ravaged towns, Yap said "it is very clear that the damage sustained by Bohol is great and all-encompassing."

He said the initial inspection did not cover four towns, where the typhoon blew in as it rampaged through central island provinces on Thursday and Friday. The government said about 780,000 people were affected, including more than 300,000 residents who had to evacuate their homes.

President Rodrigo Duterte flew to the region Saturday and promised \$40 million in aid. He met officials in Maasin City in Southern Leyte province where he was born. Duterte's family later relocated to the southern city of Davao, where he served as a longtime mayor before rising to the presidency.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Army vet again pays off past due bills for others

FL GULF BREEZE — A man who was rewarded by the Planters peanut company for being a good Samaritan is continuing to help others in his Florida Panhandle city.

Over the previous two Christmas seasons, Mike Esmond donated about \$12,000 to pay off utility bills for people in Gulf Breeze who needed some extra help. Then, in March, Planters sent Esmond a check for \$104,000 for his good works as part of the company's "A Nut Above" campaign.

The U.S. Army veteran said he was inspired to help with utility bills because of his own experience in the 1980s, when he couldn't afford to pay his gas bill in the winter.

Former doctor convicted for weight-loss scam

CA LOS ANGELES — A former Southern California doctor was convicted of falsely billing military and private insurers \$355 million for weight-loss surgeries.

Julian Omid, 53, of West Hollywood and his Beverly Hills-based company, Surgery Center Management LLC, were convicted by a federal jury of three dozen counts of wire and mail fraud, money laundering, conspiracy and making false statements related to health care matters, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney's office.

Between 2010 and 2016, Omid convinced insurers to preapprove the surgeries by having prospective patients undergo

sleep studies to determine if they had sleep apnea, a "comorbidity" that might justify the procedure, prosecutors alleged.

Omid sometimes had his employees falsify the study results and other information, including the patients' weights, prosecutors said.

Time capsule from 1887 possibly inside Lee statue

VA RICHMOND — Crews working to remove the pedestal where a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee towered over Richmond for more than a century believe they've found a time capsule that was buried there in 1887.

The massive bronze equestrian statue of Lee, erected in 1890, was taken down in September, more than a year after Gov. Ralph Northam ordered its removal.

The day after the statue was removed, work crews spent more than 12 hours searching for the time capsule in the 40-foot tall pedestal, but were unable to locate it.

On Friday, crews found a square box embedded in a granite stone. The box appears to be the copper time capsule, said Devon Henry, owner of the construction company that is working to remove the pedestal.

\$2.6M winning bid for Superman #1 comic

NY NEW YORK — A rare copy of a Superman #1 comic book that sold on newsstands for a dime in 1939 was purchased for \$2.6 million in an auction.

The comic showing Super-

man leaping over tall buildings on the cover was sold to a buyer who wishes to maintain a secret identity, according to ComicConnect.com, an online auction and consignment company.

ComicConnect announced in April that a copy of Action Comics #1, the comic that introduced Superman in 1938, sold for \$3.25 million.

Motorcycle officer struck by rock on freeway

AZ MESA — Mesa police are asking for tips after they say someone threw a rock and struck a Tempe police motorcycle officer who was driving home from work.

Police said the officer was hit in the helmet and shoulder while driving southbound on the Loop 202 freeway near the McKellips Road underpass. He was driving his marked patrol motorcycle after the end of his shift.

Authorities said the officer almost crashed but managed to safely pull over and call for help on his radio. He was treated and released from a hospital.

Woman accused of shooting at strangers

MN ST. PAUL — A Minnesota woman suspected of shooting at strangers in vehicles over the last few months, in one case injuring a driver, appeared in court on four charges of second-degree assault with a dangerous weapon.

Authorities have not released a potential motive. Latoya Weston, 44, of West St. Paul, declined to make a statement to police and her lawyer said she

is not guilty.

Weston is accused of shooting at a vehicle in St. Paul with a 21-year-old driver and a teenager and two young children inside on Oct. 19. No one was injured. Authorities said Weston shot at another vehicle in a suburb on July 1 that resulted in a head injury to the driver, who drove herself to the hospital. A 4-year-old passenger wasn't hurt.

Fraud defendant triggers brawl in courtroom

TX HOUSTON — A defendant in a criminal fraud case punched and attacked a bailiff, prosecutor and judge after he was denied bond at a court hearing in Houston, witnesses said.

Joseph Catarineau, 58, was making a routine appearance before state District Judge Danny Lacayo when the judge asked if the defendant needed an attorney, witnesses told the Houston Chronicle.

When Catarineau addressed him disrespectfully, Lacayo denied him bond and directed a bailiff to take him into custody, said Daniel Glasscock, who was waiting to appear in another case.

When the bailiff tried to take him into custody, Catarineau grabbed the bailiff's hair, took her to the ground and began punching her, according to prosecutor Jacob Salinas.

As Salinas, a former college football lineman, and Lacayo subdued the man, the bailiff retrieved the stun gun Catarineau had knocked from her hand and shot the man, giving all three men a jolt, Salinas said.

— From wire reports



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Colts get a rare win over the Patriots

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Jonathan Taylor understood the challenge long before he suited up Saturday night.

He anticipated defensive mastermind Bill Belichick would stack the line of scrimmage and dare the Indianapolis Colts to beat them with the passing game as he's done to so many other opponents.

This time, Taylor turned the tables. The second-year running back rushed for 170 yards, including a 67-yard touchdown run with 2:01 left to seal Indy's 27-17 victory over New England.

"I think it just says we're a team that's going to come in and play 60 minutes, four quarters of hard football and we're not going to give up till the clock hits zero," Taylor said after logging 29 carries. "It was just all-out effort."

Taylor's performance may have changed their season, too. By winning for the fifth time in six games and snapping an eight-game losing streak against a bitter rival, the Colts (8-6) solidified their playoff hopes with another crucial conference victory.

He's run for a score in 11 straight games, tying Hall of Famer Lenny Moore for the longest streak in franchise history.

Nobody inside the Indy locker room was surprised by his stat line — or the epic highlight of Taylor breaking through the line, eluding a tackle and sprinting to the front corner of the end zone.

"I almost called a pass there because I thought we needed a first down and I talked it over with Marcus Brady and said 'No, let's call one more run,'" coach Frank Reich said referring to his offensive coordinator. "There's no way anybody's catching him."

For the Patriots (9-5), it marked the end of a seven-game winning streak and dropped them out of the No. 1 slot in the AFC playoff chase. And it was mostly of their own making.

A bevy of uncharacteristic mistakes put the team in a 20-0 hole and Taylor's long run made sure it couldn't come all the way back. The game had a little bit of everything — drama, physical play, shouting matches, even a fight that led to the ejections of New England safety Kyle Dugger and Colts re-

ceiver Michael Pittman Jr.

But Indy won this one by stealing a page out of Belichick's playbook — using the ground game to chew up the clock and closing it out with a back-breaking play in the waning minutes. It was the Colts' first win over the Pats since 2009.

"I've said it like five times, I can say it another five times," Belichick said. "We didn't do anything well enough to win tonight."

Taylor and Indy had the upper hand from the start. The Colts opened the second series with seven straight running plays before Taylor took a direct snap, handed off to Carson Wentz and then Wentz flipped the ball to Nyheim Hines for an 8-yard scoring pass and a 7-0 lead.

Matthew Adams followed that by blocking Jake Bailey's punt that E.J. Speed recovered in the end zone for a 14-0 lead — New England's largest deficit since a Week 3 loss to New Orleans. Two field goals made it 20-0 early in the third.

"It seems like they just had good force on the play," Patriots special teams star Matthew Slater said.

Browns get some relief from COVID-related delay

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Gifted two days by the NFL to possibly get healthier, the Browns practiced for a game they expected to play Saturday.

Nothing has gone as scheduled during another wild week in Cleveland.

With a protracted COVID-19 reserve list seemingly changing by the hour, if not the minute, the Browns got in lively, indoor workout as they got ready for Monday's postponed game against the Las Vegas Raiders — still not knowing what players will be available.

Cleveland currently has 24 players, including quarterback Baker Mayfield and 11 other starters on the COVID-19 list, after the virus swept through the team in recent days and threatened to derail the team's playoff hopes.

The NFL's decision to relax some testing policies could re-

sult in the Browns getting back some key players by Monday, but coach Kevin Stefanski, who is still isolating after a positive test and remains uncertain for the game, isn't counting on anything.

"Things are very fluid, so we'll see how it goes in terms of going to the list," said Stefanski, who watched Saturday's workout on Zoom. "In terms of guys who are coming back, we don't know. "There's uncertainty there and if guys make it back, great."

"If they don't, that's fine, too." Stefanski has stayed stoic. It's about the only thing that hasn't changed.

With it looking as if they would have to trot out mostly backups and start third-string QB Nick Mullens against the Raiders, Cleveland (7-6) got a reprieve Friday when the NFL budged from its hard stance to press forward and moved Saturday's game — along with two others —

due to the uptick in COVID-19 cases across the league.

The move brought needed relief to the team. Vegas owner Mark Davis complained it left his team with a "competitive disadvantage" and Raiders cornerback Casey Hayward wondered on Twitter if the Browns got a break because center JC Tretter is the NFL Players Association president.

"We'll be ready on Monday at 5 p.m. when the game is scheduled," Cleveland linebacker Anthony Walker said in response to the Raiders' gripes. "That is all I have to say about that one. Thanks, JC, for being on the Browns."

It's possible the Browns may also benefit from the league and NFLPA agreeing to change testing protocols, which now require players to produce just one negative COVID-19 test instead of two to be eligible to return and play.

While the modification looks promising, Cleveland defensive end Takk McKinley is the only player to be activated from the list so far under the policy change. Walker, who missed last week's game and was activated Friday, said he twice tested negative.

McKinley's return was offset by the Browns losing another starting offensive lineman. Rookie right tackle James Hudson III went on the list, joining right guard Wyatt Teller and left tackle Jedrick Wills Jr., who tested positive earlier.

Walker felt fortunate to have mild symptoms.

For Mullens, Cleveland's COVID-19 outbreak has brought an unexpected chance for him to jump start his career.

The 26-year-old, who started 16 games for San Francisco over three seasons, has spent this year staying ready in case of an emergency.

Magic beat short-handed Nets, end skid

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Robin Lopez had 20 points and 10 rebounds and the Orlando Magic beat the short-handed Brooklyn Nets 100-93 on Saturday night to snap a seven-game losing streak.

Gary Harris added 17 points, Chuma Okeke had 15, and Franz Wagner 14 to help the Magic improve to 6-25.

Patty Mills led the Nets with 23 points. David Duke Jr. had 18 points and 14 rebounds, Blake Griffin added 17 points, and Cam Thomas had 15. Eastern Conference-leading Brooklyn dropped to 21-9. The Nets had won four in a row.

Brooklyn entered the game with 10 players in COVID-19 protocol, after returning star guard Kyrie Irving and MVP candidate Kevin Durant were placed into protocols Saturday.

The team announced about an hour before the game rookie forward Day'Ron Sharpe would join them, as well as De'Andre Bembry, Bruce Brown, Jevon Carter, LaMarcus Aldridge, James, Johnson, Paul Millsap and James Harden. The Nets signed James Ennis III and Shaquille Harrison prior to the game.

Raptors 119, Warriors 100: Fred VanVleet had 27 points and 12 assists, Scottie Barnes scored 21 points and host Toronto beat short-handed Golden State.

The Warriors were without Steph Curry

(rest), Draymond Green (right hip), Andre Iguodala (right knee), Otto Porter Jr. (left foot) and Andrew Wiggins (left knee). The five returned to California after a victory Friday night in Boston rather than risking COVID-19 exposure, and a potential quarantine, in Canada.

Jonathan Kuminga scored 26 points for Golden State.

Celtics 114, Knicks 107: Josh Richardson scored a season-high 27 points, Jayson Tatum had 25 and host Boston beat New York with each team missing six players because of COVID-19 protocols.

Jaylen Brown added 23 points for the Celtics. After blowing a 15-point halftime lead, Boston won for just the second time in its last six games.

Evan Fournier, who played with the Celtics last season, led the Knicks, matching his season-high with 32 points. New York has lost five of six. Kemba Walker, who also played with Boston the last two seasons, started for the Knicks and scored a season-high 29 points before fouling out.

Thunder 104, Clippers 103: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander hit a 27-foot three-pointer at the buzzer to lift host Oklahoma City past Los Angeles.

On Wednesday night, Gilgeous-Alexander hit a 30-footer with 1.4 seconds to tie the game against New Orleans, but Devonte Graham drained a 61-foot heave as time ex-

pired for the winner.

Cavaliers 119, Bucks 90: Cedi Osman scored 23 points, Darius Garland had 22 points and Cleveland won at short-handed Milwaukee to extend its winning streak to six.

Garland made 10 of 13 shots to pace a Cavaliers offense that shot 50% from the floor and made 16 of 45 three-point attempts.

Rockets 116, Pistons 107: Christian Wood had 21 points and eight rebounds and visiting Houston sent Detroit to its 14th straight loss.

The streak matches the longest single-season skid in Pistons history, including 14-game streaks in 1979-80 and 1993-94. They had a 21-game streak spread between the 1979-80 and 1980-81 seasons.

Saddiq Bey had 23 points for Detroit.

Wizards 109, Jazz 103: Bradley Beal scored a season-high 37 points and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope hit a late three-pointer to help Washington win at Utah.

With the Wizards up 105-103, Washington's Raul Neto won a jump ball with Mitchell, and Caldwell-Pope hit a three-pointer with 11.6 seconds to play. Neto had 15 points and a career-high seven rebounds, and Caldwell-Pope finished with 13 points to help the Wizards snap a four-game losing streak.

Donovan Mitchell scored 32 points for the Jazz, who lost on consecutive nights after winning eight straight

Sanheim's overtime goal lifts Flyers past Senators

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Travis Sanheim scored 1:35 into overtime and also had an assist to lead the Philadelphia Flyers to a 4-3 victory over the Ottawa Senators on Saturday night.

Sanheim netted the game-winner on a wrister from close range after being set up by Cam Atkinson in the 3-on-3 session.

"It's just confidence right now," said Sanheim, who has upped his season total to 10 points with five in the last three contests. "I'll take those, enjoy them, especially when they're game-winners."

Claude Giroux, Oskar Lindblom and Joel Farabee also scored for the Flyers, who have won four of five. Giroux moved in to a tie for second on the franchis-

e's all-time scoring list.

Backup goalie Martin Jones started in place of Carter Hart, who missed the contest due to a non-COVID illness, and made 28 saves.

Artem Zub, Tim Stütze and Alex Formenton scored for the Senators. Anton Forsberg had 34 saves.

Stars 4, Blackhawks 3 (OT): John Klingberg scored on the power play 2:13 into overtime to lift host Dallas.

Joe Pavelski had two power-play goals and two assists, and Jason Robertson also scored for the Stars. Jake Oettinger stopped 20 shots to help Dallas end a five-game losing streak that followed a franchise-record seven-game winning streak.

Dominik Kubalik, Alex DeBrincat and Dylan Strome scored for Chicago, and Kevin Lankinen had 35 saves. The Blackhawks have lost three of four (1-2-1).

Oilers 5, Kraken 3: Warren Foegele scored twice, including the go-ahead goal in the third period, and visiting Edmonton beat Seattle.

Evan Bouchard and Connor McDavid each had a goal and an assist for the Oilers, who have won two straight after a six-game losing streak.

Ryan Donato, Jared McCann and Carson Soucy scored for Seattle, and Jordan Eberle had two assists. Chris Dreidger had a season-high 36 saves as the Kraken fell to 1-4-1 in their last six games.

Red Wings 5, Devils 2: Dylan

Larkin got his first career hat trick and added an assist as host Detroit handed New Jersey its fifth straight loss.

Tyler Bertuzzi had two goals for the Red Wings and Thomas Greiss made 32 saves.

Michael McLeod and Dawson Mercer scored for the Devils, and Akira Schmid made 26 saves in his second career start.

Hurricanes 5, Kings 1: Jesperi Kotkaniemi and Jesper Fast scored in the opening two minutes and they each added an assist for host Carolina.

Brett Pesce, Teuvo Teravainen and Jack Drury also scored for the Hurricanes. Brady Skjei had two assists to help Carolina win for the sixth time in its last seven games.

UAB tops No. 12 BYU in Independence Bowl

Associated Press

SHREVEPORT, La. — Dylan Hopkins broke the Independence Bowl record for completion percentage, connecting on 19 of 23 passes for 189 yards and three touchdowns in UAB's 31-28 victory over No. 12 BYU on Saturday.

With the Blazers (9-4) facing fourth-and-7 with six minutes remaining, coach Bill Clark passed on a field-goal attempt, and Hopkins threw a 14-yard, go-ahead touchdown pass to Trea Shropshire, the only player from Louisiana on either roster.

The Cougars (10-3) appeared to be in good position to at least tie it game, but Samson Nacua fumbled after making a catch inside UAB's 25 with 3:36 remaining.

DeWayne McBride ran for 183 yards and a score on 28 carries for the Blazers.

LendingTree Bowl

Liberty 56, Eastern Michigan 20: Malik Willis passed for 231 yards and accounted for five touchdowns and the Flames rolled over the Eagles in Mobile, Ala.

Willis, a potential NFL first-round pick, completed 13 of 24 passes, with touchdowns of 54 yards to DJ Stubbs, 20 yards to Johnny Huntley and 3 yards to Demario Douglas.

Willis also ran for 58 yards, with touchdowns of 2 and 35 yards.

Liberty (8-5) improved to 3-0 in bowls.

New Orleans Bowl

No. 16 Louisiana-Lafayette 36, Marshall 21: Levi Lewis passed for 270 yards and a touchdown and rushed for another 74 yards, and the Ragin' Cajuns defeated the Thundering Herd to end its season on a program-record 13-game winning streak.

Emani Bailey rushed for two TDs in the fourth quarter to help new Louisiana-Lafayette coach Michael Desormeaux win his first game in charge. He took over after the Cajuns (13-1) won the Sun Belt Championship under recently hired Florida coach Billy Napier.

Rasheen Ali rushed for 160 yards and three touchdowns for Marshall (7-6).

New Mexico Bowl

Fresno State 31, UTEP 24: Jordan Mims ran for 165 yards and two touchdowns and caught five passes for 71 yards and another score to help the Bulldogs beat the Miners in Albuquerque, N.M.

Fresno State (10-3) won the bowl game for the first time in three tries.

Jake Haener was 26-for-41 for 286 yards

and a touchdown. His status had been in doubt when he briefly entered the transfer portal after coach Kalen DeBoer took the job at Washington.

Boca Raton Bowl

Western Kentucky 59, Appalachian State 38: Bailey Zappe capped his record-setting season by passing for 422 yards and six touchdowns and the Hilltoppers handed Appalachian State its first bowl loss, beating the Mountaineers in Boca Raton, Fla.

Zappe finished the season with 5,977 yards and 62 touchdowns for Western Kentucky (9-5). He topped the previous marks of 5,833 yards set by Texas Tech's B.J. Symons in 2003 and 60 touchdowns set by LSU's Joe Burrow in the Tigers' run to the national championship in the 2019 season.

Jerreth Sterns caught 13 passes for 184 yards and three touchdowns.

Celebration Bowl

South Carolina State 31, Jackson State 10: At Atlanta, Cory Fields threw for four touchdowns, three to Shaquan Davis, to lead South Carolina State past Jackson State in a game considered to be the national championship of historically Black colleges and universities.

Ex-Razorback Iyiola lifts Hofstra by No. 24 Arkansas

Associated Press

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The 24th-ranked Arkansas Razorbacks were not out to rack up style points against Hofstra on Saturday night. They were simply looking to bounce back from their first college basketball loss of the season with a win.

The Pride instead walked away with an 89-81 win — their first in three tries against a ranked team this season.

Hofstra (7-5) was led by former Arkansas big man Abayomi Iyiola, who finished with 18 points and 14 rebounds.

The Razorbacks (9-2) failed to put their 22-point loss to Oklahoma a week ago behind them, and has now lost back-to-back games for the first time since mid-January 2021. JD Notae scored 20 points for Arkansas and Chris Lykes had 19.

No. 5 Gonzaga 69, No. 25 Texas Tech 55: Andrew Nembhard scored 16 points, Rasir Bolton added 15 and

the Bulldogs outlasted the Red Raiders in the Colangelo Classic in Phoenix.

Gonzaga (9-2) withstood Texas Tech's defensive pressure most of the afternoon in the desert, limiting turnovers while working the ball around for open looks.

No. 1 Baylor 78, Oregon 70: Kendall Brown and James Akinjo each scored 17 points and the top-ranked Bears won on the road.

Providence 57, No. 20 UConn 53: A.J. Reeves scored 16 points and the visiting Friars held off the Huskies in the Big East opener for both teams.

No. 2 Duke 87, Elon 56: The host Blue Devils beat the last-minute replacement Phoenix after two different opponents bowed out due to COVID-19 issues.

No. 3 Purdue 77, Butler 48: Jaden Ivey scored 22 points and Zach Edey finished with 14 points and 11 rebounds Saturday to help the Boilermakers rout the Bulldogs in the Crossroads Classic in Indianapolis.

No. 6 Alabama 65, Jacksonville State 59: Keon Ellis had 20 points and 10 rebounds, giving the host Crimson Tide's sputtering offense just enough to beat the Gamecocks.

No. 7 Kansas 80, Stephen F. Austin 72: Remy Martin hit a three-pointer with one minute to go to extend a three-point lead and help the host Jayhawks get past the Lumberjacks.

No. 8 Arizona 84, Cal Baptist 60: Azuolas Tubelis had 19 points and Benedict Mathurin added 14 as the host Wildcats shook off a slow start to beat the Lancers.

No. 10 Southern California 67, Georgia Tech 53: Boogie Ellis scored 16 points, Drew Peterson added 14 and the Trojans overcame a shaky start to beat the Yellow Jackets in the Colangelo Classic in Phoenix.

No. 13 Auburn 74, Saint Louis 70: Walter Kessler scored 19 points, grabbed nine rebounds and blocked four shots, Wendell Green Jr. scored

15 points and Jabari Smith scored 13 points to help the visiting Tigers overcome a 13-point deficit.

No. 14 Houston 72, Oklahoma State 61: Jamal Shead scored 18 points, Fabian White had 15 points and 10 rebounds, and the Cougars beat the Cowboys in the Hoop Hype XL College Basketball Showcase in Fort Worth, Texas.

No. 19 LSU 66, Louisiana Tech 57: Tari Eason scored 21 points, Darius Days added 13 with a career-high 18 rebounds and the visiting Tigers rallied from a 13-point deficit to beat the Bulldogs.

No. 21 Kentucky 98, North Carolina 69: Sahvir Wheeler scored 26 points and the Wildcats beat the Tar Heels in the CBS Sports Classic in Las Vegas.

No. 22 Xavier 80, Marquette 71: Dwon Odom scored a career-high 19 points and Nate Johnson added 17 to lift the host Musketeers over the Golden Eagles in their Big East Conference openers.