

Virus outbreak delays warship's departure

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A coronavirus outbreak aboard the USS Milwaukee has delayed the littoral combat ship's scheduled departure from Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, service officials said Friday.

The ship was at Guantanamo for a regularly scheduled port visit when the outbreak occurred. The Milwaukee had been underway less than two weeks after leaving its homeport of Naval Base Mayport, Fla., on Dec. 14, according to the Navy.

All crew members are vaccinated against the coronavirus and those who have tested positive have been isolated aboard the ship away from other sailors, the service said in a statement Friday.

"The vaccine continues to demonstrate effectiveness against serious illness," the Navy said in its statement.

The service did not say how many crew members tested positive.

The Navy has not yet determined which variant of the virus affected the sailors. After the delta variant's outbreak in August, the omicron variant has been spreading rapidly throughout the United States this month.

"The ship is following an aggressive mitigation strategy in accordance with Navy and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines," the Navy said.

The ship had been conducting operations against illicit trafficking in the Caribbean Sea before stopping at Guantanamo, according to the Navy.

The Pentagon in August required all service members to receive the coronavirus vaccine. As of Wednesday, more than 98% of active-duty sailors had been vaccinated, the Navy said in a Wednesday coronavirus data update.

It is the first publicly known ship outbreak since the Navy's vaccination deadline passed Nov. 28.

About 5,361 active-duty sailors remained unvaccinated as of Wednesday. Those sailors have either refused the shots, started a vaccination series but have not yet completed it, are awaiting decisions on exemption requests or "have not had access to the vaccination due to operational schedule and/or remote location," according to the Wednesday update.

So far, the Navy has ap-

proved seven permanent and 140 temporary medical exemptions across the active-duty force. About 2,844 active-duty sailors have requested vaccine waivers for religious reasons, but none have been approved.

Since the pandemic began, 51,230 sailors have caught the coronavirus, 17 of whom have died.

The first major Navy ship outbreak happened in March 2020, when the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt diverted to Naval Base Guam mid-deployment as more than 1,271 sailors — or about a fourth of its crew — contracted the virus. One sailor died from that outbreak.

The Roosevelt in February suffered another outbreak, with three sailors testing positive. The ship was operating in the Indo-Pacific at the time.

Navy tests drone capable of fueling aircraft in flight

Daily Press

Aircraft carrier flight decks are busy places with no margin for mistakes, so to make sure a new drone designed to refuel aircraft in flight won't get in the way, the Navy has been running tests on USS George H.W. Bush while it's been operating in the Atlantic.

The 50-foot-long MQ-25 drone, which can fly 500 nautical miles carrying a load of 16,000 pounds of fuel, will be the world's first operational, carrier-based unmanned aircraft.

Tests on the Bush focused on the MQ-25 deck handling system during both day and nighttime operations, Naval Air Systems Command said.

Those included taxiing and parking on the flight deck, connecting to the catapult and clearing the landing area. MQ-25 "deck operators" used Boeing's new Deck Control Device — basically, packs that op-

erators carry on their backs and arms, to operate the drone.

As part of the testing, the Navy and experts from Boeing collected simulated launch and landing of the MQ-25 with the new Joint Precision Landing System, a software-based navigation and approach landing system.

The system automates much of the fancy stick and throttle work, pilots testing and certifying on it during spring flight operations on USS Gerald R. Ford have said.

The simulations on the Bush will help refine the system's software for MQ-25 operations, with critical data on how motions of a carrier affect landings.

"There is no better way to determine the success of a carrier aircraft design and its integration into the air wing than to put that new aircraft through testing at sea," said Capt. Chad Reed, Unmanned Carrier

Aviation program manager.

"Our initial look at taxi operations on the flight deck successfully demonstrated the MQ-25's ability to maneuver just like a manned aircraft in the shipboard environment," he said.

The MQ-25 completed its first aerial refueling this summer.

The Navy said the MQ-25 will be an important part of future carrier air wings by providing an aerial refueling capability that will extend the range of air wing aircraft. Carrier air wings do not currently include tanker aircraft, so when they do refuel, as USS Dwight D. Eisenhower's air wing did when providing air cover for the withdrawal from Afghanistan, they have to coordinate that with land-based tankers.

During its recent exercises in the Atlantic, the Bush also launched and landed F-35s, still a fairly new operation for U.S. Navy carriers.

Space telescope launched on daring quest

Associated Press

The world's largest and most powerful space telescope rocketed away Saturday on a high-stakes quest to behold light from the first stars and galaxies and scour the universe for hints of life.

NASA's James Webb Space Telescope soared from French Guiana on South America's northeastern coast, riding a European Ariane rocket into the Christmas morning sky.

"What an amazing Christmas present," said Thomas Zurbuchen, NASA's science mission chief.

The \$10 billion observatory hurtled toward its destination 1 million miles away, or more than four times beyond the moon. It will take a month to get there and another five months before its infrared eyes are ready to start scanning the cosmos.

First, the telescope's enormous

mirror and sunshield need to unfold; they were folded origami-style to fit into the rocket's nose cone. Otherwise, the observatory won't be able to peer back in time 13.7 billion years as anticipated, within a mere 100 million years of the universe-forming Big Bang.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson called Webb a time machine that will provide "a better understanding of our universe and our place in it: who we are, what we are, the search that's eternal."

"We are going to discover incredible things that we never imagined," Nelson said following liftoff, speaking from Florida's Kennedy Space Center. But he cautioned: "There are still innumerable things that have to work and they have to work perfectly ... we know that in great reward there is great risk."

Intended as a successor to the aging Hubble Space Telescope,

the long-delayed James Webb is named after NASA's administrator during the 1960s. NASA partnered with the European and Canadian space agencies to build and launch the new 7-ton telescope, with thousands of people from 29 countries working on it since the 1990s.

With the launch falling on Christmas and a global surge in COVID-19 cases, there were fewer spectators at the French Guiana launch site than expected. Nelson bowed out along with a congressional delegation and many contractors who worked on the telescope. Around the world, astronomers and countless others tuned in, anxious to see Webb finally taking flight after years of setbacks. Last-minute technical snags bumped the launch nearly a week, then gusty wind pushed it to Christmas. A few of the launch controllers wore Santa caps in

celebration.

The telescope's showpiece: a gold-plated mirror more than 21 feet across. Protecting the observatory is a wispy, five-layered sunshield, vital for keeping the light-gathering mirror and heat-sensing infrared detectors at sub-zero temperatures. At 70 feet by 46 feet, it's the size of a tennis court.

If all goes well, the sunshield will be opened three days after liftoff, taking at least five days to unfold and lock into place. Next, the mirror segments should open up like the leaves of a drop-leaf table, 12 days or so into the flight.

In all, hundreds of release mechanisms need to work — perfectly — in order for the telescope to succeed. Such a complex series of actions is unprecedented — "like nothing we've done before," noted NASA program director Greg Robinson.

Marines help Santa above Arctic Circle in Alaska

Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska — Marines on snowmobiles helped Santa this month while delivering toys to boys and girls in Alaska's Arctic.

Marines flew to Kotzebue, which is 549 miles northwest of Anchorage and 26 miles above the Arctic Circle, on a KC-130 operated by Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152 based on Okinawa, Japan. From there, they rode commercial flights and snowmobiles to get toys to 2,500 children in 11 villages, the Juneau Empire reported.

Cpl. Brendan Mullin, who took pictures of the event, could hear children gasp when a Marine Santa entered a pre-kindergarten classroom.

"When you can see the smile through the mask, you know it's a big, genuine smile," Mullin said.

Their joyful job was part of the Toys for Tots program run by the Marine Corps and a nonprofit foundation. Started in 1947, the program now delivers 18 million toys to 7 million less fortunate children each year.

"It's really just to benefit kids. The sparkle in the kids' eyes, that makes it worth it," said Capt. Keith G. Lowell, a Marine stationed in Anchorage who oversaw the mission to Alaska's Northwest Arctic Borough.

The half-dozen Marines who participated were primarily from Delta Company of the 4th Law Enforcement Battalion, a Reserve unit. The Okinawa-based crew has partnered with Delta Company on the program the past few years, Lowell said. Traveling to Alaska helps them get the flight hours they need, he said.

US firm ordered to pay \$65M over military housing fraud

BY NIKKI WENTLING

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — One of the largest private companies that manages military family housing and pleaded guilty to fraud was sentenced Thursday to pay nearly \$32 million in restitution to the U.S. military.

Balfour Beatty Communities LLC was also ordered to pay \$33.6 million in criminal fines. The company must also go on probation for three years, during which it will undergo close monitoring for compliance.

According to the Justice Department, company employees engaged in a scheme to alter maintenance records to appear as though Balfour Beatty was meeting goals required for financial bonuses from the U.S. Air Force when it was not.

"Instead of promptly repairing housing for U.S. service members as required, BBC lied about the repairs to pocket millions of dollars in performance bonuses," Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco said in a statement.

The company pleaded guilty to one count of major fraud as part of a plea deal. The deal was accepted by U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan.

Balfour Beatty, headquartered in Malvern, Pa., operated privatized military housing communities at 55 Air Force, Navy and Army bases across the nation, which were occupied by tens of thousands of service members and their families. The decision Thursday marked a "global resolution" of the Justice Department's criminal and civil investigations into the company.

2nd COVID Christmas brings worry, hope

Associated Press

Christmas arrived around the world Saturday amid a surge in COVID-19 infections that kept many families apart, overwhelmed hospitals and curbed religious observances as the pandemic was poised to stretch into a third year.

Yet there were still homilies of hope, as vaccines and other treatments become more available.

Pope Francis used his Christmas address to pray for more vaccines to reach the poorest countries. While wealthy countries have inoculated as much as 90% of their adult populations, 8.9% of Africa's people are fully jabbed, making it the world's least-vaccinated continent.

Only a few thousand well-wishers turned out for his noontime address and blessing, but even that was better than last year, when Italy's Christmas lockdown forced Francis indoors for the annual "Urbi et Orbi" ("To the city and the world") speech.

"Grant health to the infirm and inspire all men and women of goodwill to seek the best ways possible to overcome the current health crisis and its effects," Francis said from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica. "Open hearts to ensure that necessary medical care — and vaccines in particular — are provided to those peoples who need them

most."

In the United States, many churches canceled in-person services, but for those that did have in-person worship, clerics reported smaller but significant attendance.

"Our hopes for a normal Christmas have been tempered by omicron this year ... still filled with uncertainties and threats that overshadow us," the Rev. Ken Boller told his parishioners during midnight Mass at the Church of St. Francis Xavier in New York City. "Breakthrough used to be a happy word for us, until it was associated with COVID. And in the midst of it all, we celebrate Christmas."

In Britain, Queen Elizabeth II noted another year of pain — particularly personal after losing her husband, Prince Philip, in April — and urged people to celebrate with friends and family.

"Although it's a time of great happiness and good cheer for many, Christmas can be hard for those who have lost loved ones," the queen said in the prerecorded message broadcast when many British families were enjoying their traditional Christmas dinner. "This year, especially, I understand why."

The head of intensive care at a hospital in Marseille, France, said most COVID-19 patients over Christmas were unvaccinated, while his staff are exhausted or can't work

because they are infected.

"We're sick of this," said Dr. Julien Carvelli, the ICU chief at La Timone Hospital, as his team spent another Christmas Eve tending to COVID-19 patients on breathing machines. "We're afraid we won't have enough space."

On the other side of the globe, hundreds of thousands of people in the Philippines, Asia's largest Roman Catholic nation, spent Christmas without homes, electricity or adequate food and water after a powerful typhoon left at least 375 people dead last week and devastated mostly central island provinces.

Gov. Arthur Yap of hard-hit Bohol province, where more than 100 people died in the typhoon and about 150,000 houses were damaged or destroyed, appealed for help. He was happy many Filipinos could celebrate Christmas more safely after COVID-19 cases dropped, but he pleaded: "Please don't forget us."

At least one American Christmas tradition was revived after the pandemic drove it online last year: the annual reenactment of George Washington's daring crossing of the Delaware River in 1776.

Reenactors in three boats completed the crossing Saturday. Crowds were in the hundreds, down from the usual thousands.

Canceled flights snarl holiday travel for thousands

Associated Press

After hundreds of canceled flights disrupted holiday celebrations during one of the busiest travel times of the year, staffing problems tied to COVID-19 extended the nation's travel woes beyond Christmas on Sunday with no clear indication when normal schedules would resume.

More than 700 flights entering, leaving or flying within the United States were called off, according to the flight-tracking website FlightAware. That figure was down from nearly 1,000 on Saturday. More than 50 flights were already canceled for Monday.

Delta, United and JetBlue have blamed the omicron variant of the coronavirus for staffing shortages that forced cancella-

tions.

"This was unexpected," United spokesperson Maddie King said of omicron's impact on staffing.

Globally, airlines scrapped about 2,200 flights as of Sunday morning, down from more than 2,800 from the day before, FlightAware's data showed. The site does not say why flights are canceled.

JetBlue scrapped 10% of its flights Sunday. Delta canceled 5% and United canceled 4%, according to FlightAware. The three airlines canceled more than 10% of their scheduled flights on Saturday.

Delta and JetBlue did not respond to questions Saturday.

American spokesperson Derek Walls said the cancellations stemmed from "COVID-related

sick calls." European and Australian airlines have also canceled holiday-season flights because of staffing problems tied to COVID-19.

For travelers, that meant time away from loved ones, chaos at the airport and the stress of spending hours standing in line and on the phone trying to rebook flights. Peter Bockman, a retired actor, and his daughter Malaika, a college student, were supposed to be in Senegal on Saturday celebrating with relatives they hadn't seen in a decade. But their 7:30 p.m. flight Friday from New York to Dakar was canceled, which they found out only when they got to the airport. They were there until 2 a.m. trying to rebook a flight.

"Nobody was organizing, trying to sort things out," he said,

faulting Delta for a lack of customer service. "Nobody explained anything. Not even, 'Oh we're so sorry, this is what we can do to help you.'"

Their new flight, for Monday evening, has a layover in Paris, and they are worried there will be issues with that one as well. They already missed a big family get-together on Saturday.

To ease staffing shortages, countries including Spain and the United Kingdom have reduced the length of COVID-19 quarantines.

Delta CEO Ed Bastian was among those who have called on the Biden administration to take similar steps or risk further disruptions in air travel. On Thursday, the U.S. shortened COVID-19 isolation rules for health care workers only.

Anti-apartheid activist Tutu dies at age 90

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG — Desmond Tutu, South Africa's Nobel Peace Prize-winning activist for racial justice and LGBT rights and retired Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, has died, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced Sunday. He was 90.

An uncompromising foe of apartheid — South Africa's brutal regime of oppression against the Black majority — Tutu worked tirelessly, though non-violently, for its downfall.

The buoyant, blunt-spoken clergyman used his pulpit as the first Black bishop of Johannesburg and later Archbishop of Cape Town as well as frequent public demonstrations to galvanize public opinion against racial inequity both at home and globally.

Tutu's death on Sunday "is another chapter of bereavement in our nation's farewell to a generation of outstanding South Africans who have bequeathed us a liberated South Africa," Ramaphosa said in a statement.

"From the pavements of resistance in South Africa to the pulpits of the world's great cathedrals and places of worship, and the prestigious setting of the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, the Arch distinguished himself as a non-sectarian, inclusive champion of universal human rights."

Tutu died peacefully at the Oasis Frail Care Center in Cape Town, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Trust said in a statement Sunday.

Tutu had been hospitalized several times since 2015, after being diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1997.

Throughout the 1980s — when South Africa was gripped by anti-apartheid violence and a state of emergency giving police and the military sweeping powers — Tutu was one of the most prominent Blacks able to speak out against abuses.

A lively wit lightened Tutu's hard-hitting messages and warmed otherwise grim protests, funerals and marches. Short, plucky, tenacious, he was a formidable force, and apartheid leaders learned not to discount his canny talent for quoting apt scriptures to harness righteous support for change.

The Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 highlighted his stature as one of the world's most effective champions for human rights, a responsibility he took seriously for the rest of his life.

With the end of apartheid and South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, Tutu celebrated the country's multi-racial society, calling it a "rainbow nation," a phrase that captured the heady optimism of the moment.

Nicknamed "the Arch," Tutu was diminutive, with an impish sense of humor, but became a towering figure in his nation's history, comparable to fellow Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela, a prisoner during white rule who became South Africa's first Black president. Tutu and Mandela shared a commitment to building a better, more equal South Africa.

Spanish eruption's end brings 'emotional relief'

Associated Press

MADRID — Authorities on one of Spain's Canary Islands declared a volcanic eruption that started in September officially finished Saturday following 10 days of no lava flows, seismic activity or significant sulfur dioxide emissions.

But the emergency in La Palma, the most northwest island in the Atlantic Ocean archipelago, is not over due to the widespread damage the eruption caused, the director of the Canaries' volcanic emergency committee said in announcing the much-anticipated milestone.

"It's not joy or satisfaction — how we can define what we feel? It's an emotional relief. And hope," Pevolca director Julio Pérez said. "Because now, we can apply ourselves and focus completely on the reconstruction work."

Fiery molten rock flowing down toward the sea destroyed around 3,000 buildings, entombed banana plantations and

vineyards, ruined irrigation systems and cut off roads. But no injuries or deaths were directly linked to the eruption.

Pérez, who is also the region's minister of public administration, justice and security, said the archipelago's government valued the loss of buildings and infrastructure at more than \$1 billion.

Volcanologists said they needed to certify that three key variables — gas, lava and tremors — had subsided in the Cumbre Vieja ridge for 10 days in order to declare the volcano's apparent exhaustion. Since the eruption started on Sept. 19, previous periods of reduced activity were followed by reignitions.

On the eve of Dec. 14, the volcano fell silent after flaring for 85 days and 8 hours, making it La Palma's longest eruption on record.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called the eruption's end "the best Christmas present."

Taliban dissolve Afghan election commissions

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — The Taliban dissolved Afghanistan's two election commissions as well as the state ministries for peace and parliamentary affairs, an official said Sunday.

Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban-run government, said the country's Independent Election Commission and Electoral Complaint Commission have been dissolved.

He called them "unnecessary institutes for the current situation in Afghanistan." He said if there is a need for the commissions in the future, the Taliban government can revive them.

The international community

is waiting before extending formal recognition to Afghanistan's new rulers. They are wary the Taliban could impose a similarly harsh regime as when they were in power 20 years ago — despite their assurances to the contrary.

Both elections commissions were mandated to administer and supervise all types of elections in the country, including presidential, parliamentary and provincial council elections.

Karimi said the Taliban also dissolved the Ministry for Peace and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. He said they were unnecessary ministries in the government's current structure.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man suspect for murder faces cannibalism charge

ID SANDPOINT — An Idaho man accused in the September killing of a man has been charged with the additional crime of cannibalism and authorities in court documents said the suspect believed he could “cure his brain” by eating some of the victim.

The new charge was filed by the prosecutor in northern Idaho’s Bonner County against suspect James David Russell, 39, who already faced a first-degree murder charge, the Bonner County Daily Bee newspaper reported.

Russell was arrested Sept. 10 in the killing of David Flaget, whose body was found that day in his pickup truck after officials were called to the scene near the small town of Clark Fork. Authorities said parts of Flaget’s body were found at Russell’s home.

Russell believed that he could “heal himself by cutting off portions of flesh” to “cure his brain,” the newspaper reported, citing court documents. Authorities said some of Flaget’s remains have not yet been found.

Thieves fake delivery, tie up family, raid piggy bank

NY NEW YORK — A man claiming to be a UPS delivery man pushed his way inside a New York City apartment and demanded residents bind themselves with zip ties before he and an accomplice broke into a safe and a children’s piggy bank and made off with a pair of iPhones, an iPad and more than \$7,500 in cash, police said.

The man showed up to the Bronx apartment holding a box and wearing a brown winter hat with stickers pasted on the front spelling out “UPS,” police said. The man claimed to have a gun in the box and pushed past the 60-year-old woman who answered the door, police said.

He and an accomplice then held the woman, her 63-year-old husband and their 8-year-old grandson and 6-year-old granddaughter at gunpoint, grabbed the electronics and cash and fled, police said.

The couple and grandchildren were not physically harmed, police said. No arrests have been made.

Police say man shot his neighbor with a crossbow

MO FULTON — A central Missouri man is jailed without bond after allegedly using a crossbow to attack a neighbor.

Fulton police were called to a home to help a 42-year-old man who had been shot in the abdomen with an arrow from a crossbow. The man is hospitalized but a news release from police did not offer details about his condition.

Investigators said a 63-year-old got into a verbal altercation with the victim before using his crossbow to attack him. Formal charges had not been filed.

Triples, multiple twin sets born at hospital

MS MERIDIAN — Triplets were born for the first time in nearly 10 years at an east Mississippi hospital — and the births happened around the same time as multiple sets of twins.

Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian is caring for two different sets of twins and a set of triplets, WTOK-TV reported.

The hospital delivered three sets of twins from three different couples last weekend, marking the first time the hospital has delivered so many twins in one weekend.

Stolen goose statue found at recycling center

MN ST. PAUL — A bronze goose statue stolen from a St. Paul park has reappeared — at a recycling center.

The statue was reported stolen from its pedestal in a fountain in Cochran Park, according to the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

The statue reappeared at a St. Paul metal recycling center and turned over to city staff. The base had sustained minor damage but the statue itself was unharmed. An investigation is underway.

The goose is 28-inches high with a 19-inch wingspan. It’s one of four goose statues in the fountain. They ring a sculpture called “Indian Hunter and His Dog,” created by Paul Manship in 1926. The geese were installed around that statue in 1927.

Brawl breaks out inside airport; 2 charged

FL MIAMI — Two travelers are facing charges following a brawl with police at Miami International Airport, authorities said.

Mayfrer Serranopaca, 30, of Kissimmee, Fla., and Alberto Yanez Suarez, 32, of Odessa, Texas, were arrested, accord-

ing to Miami-Dade police reports.

The confrontation began when Serranopaca hopped onto a cart driven by an airport employee and refused to move until the worker gave him information about his delayed flight, according to the arrest report. The employee said he didn’t work for the airline and didn’t have any information about the flight. The worker eventually called for airport police.

Two officers responded and tried to calm Serranopaca, police said. Serranopaca attempted to incite the nearby crowd and began to fight with the officers, authorities said.

As additional officers arrived and attempted to take Serranopaca into custody, officials said Yanez Suarez intervened and attempted to pull the police off of Serranopaca, prompting officers to arrest him, as well.

Woman charged with stealing neighbor’s gifts

AL ATHENS — An Alabama woman who allegedly broke into a neighbor’s home and stole items from under the Christmas tree was charged with burglary, news outlets reported.

A homeowner told investigators that the woman was spotted kneeling between two hedges near the home’s back porch. Confronted, the woman then ran away toward her own residence.

Deputies found gifts, clothing and a debit card in the yard, said a statement from the Limestone County Sheriff’s Office said, and jewelry and loose change inside the home of the woman.

— From wire reports



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Sisters toughened up Tide's Anderson

Associated Press

Will Anderson Jr. has muscled past or blown by blockers with enough regularity to become a unanimous All-American. His five older sisters were tougher to dominate.

"I always tell people, they terrorized me every day," Alabama's sophomore linebacker said, laughing. "Every day of my life, they terrorized me."

"But," he added, "it's all fun."

It's all good-natured fun in the Anderson family, as close-knit as ever since those days packing into a three-bedroom house in suburban Atlanta, where baby brother shared a room with two of his sisters.

Anderson has emerged from that female-dominated family full of volleyball, basketball and track athletes as one of college football's most dominant defensive players heading into the top-ranked Crimson Tide's playoff semifinal matchup against No. 4 Cincinnati on Friday.

Anderson leads the nation with 15½ sacks and 32½ tackles for loss, ranking third and second in the school's single-season list, respectively. He won the Bronko Nagurski Award as the nation's top defensive player and was fifth in the Heisman Trophy voting won by Alabama quarterback Bryce Young.

The player nicknamed The Terminator is the most dominant pass rusher at Alabama since the late Hall of Famer Derrick Thomas. Intense-looking and businesslike when he's in the football building — just like his coach, Nick Saban — he does have a lighter side. Around the locker room, teammates call him "one of the nicest, meanest guys." He tries to greet neighbors and others with a smile, not the demeanor he calls

"football Will."

Quarterbacks, not so much.

He relaxes by fishing at Lake Nicol when in Tuscaloosa with teammates such as Drew Sanders.

At home in Georgia, the Andersons gather and often watch comedies. He figures he has seen *Lavell Crawford's* Netflix special "Can A Brother Get Some Love?" at least five times.

"And it's funny every time," Anderson said.

Anderson is, "a silly person," sister Shanice said.

"Who you see is who you get, but he does laugh a lot," Shanice said. "He's really silly. He's really cool. So he definitely is a 20-year-old boy."

But he's also one who had the benefits and challenges of all those older sisters.

"It had its pros and cons," Anderson said. "The pros were, they took great care of you. As long as you were on their good side, they took care of you. But then when they were in momma mode and forced you to do stuff, that was the cons." Then there's "football Will," the ultraserious one, who even surprises his teammates on occasion with how locked in he gets even a few weeks before a game.

Saban thinks it's the intangibles that make players great, regardless of their physical tools. The focus. The mindset. The desire to keep improving.

"And Will's A-plus in all those intangible areas," Saban said. "Plus, he's got really good physical ability, and the guy is an overachiever, even at that with all the physical ability that he has because of the mindset that he has. He's a great effort player.

He's very conscientious."

Coach and star linebacker share that businesslike approach to football and the often-intimidating intensity. When they lock eyes on the field, Anderson said, there are no smiles but "always a serious look."

Who has the better scowl? "Probably him," Anderson said.

A starter since arriving as a five-star recruit, Anderson didn't get a sack in his first seven games as a freshman. Then his confidence started to build, along with the ability to react quickly and stop thinking so much.

And the vocal leadership, which he demonstrated by calling out the defense publicly after Alabama's narrow win at Florida and its lone loss at Texas A&M.

Now he's putting up numbers only one Alabama pass rusher has before. Thomas had 27 sacks in 1988 and 18 the year before. That record is unlikely to be threatened this season, but the 39 tackles for loss could go down if Alabama makes the championship game.

Anderson has spent some time studying Thomas since he started hearing his name more.

"I'm nowhere near as dominant as he was, but just to be in the conversation with his name is just a blessing and an honor," he said. "But he was like a legit dog. It was almost inhuman what he was doing. His numbers were surreal."

Anderson has topped him in one regard. Thomas was 10th in the Heisman voting in 1988, and Anderson was fifth this year. The Heisman Trust only invited the top four to this year's ceremony, so Anderson was the odd man out.

Grainger lifts Georgia State to rout in Camellia Bowl

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Darren Grainger and Georgia State saved their best for the last game of the season — and especially for a thoroughly dominating third quarter.

Grainger passed for 203 yards and three touchdowns and ran for 122 yards and a fourth TD to lead Georgia State to a 51-20 victory over Ball State in the Camellia Bowl on Saturday.

The Panthers (8-5) finished with their seventh victory in eight games, dominated the lone bowl played on Christmas Day and set a season record for wins.

Coach Shawn Elliott called it "the best performance Georgia State football has had this year."

"I think we finished Christmas Day with one of the best presents we could have ever asked for, and that's a commanding, dominating win," El-

liott said. It was the first time the program had won back-to-back bowl games.

Grainger completed 15 of 19 passes and carried 11 times, including a play-fake midway through the third quarter when he scampered 34 yards untouched into the end zone. It was his first 100-yard rushing game, and he was named the game MVP.

The Cardinals (6-7) couldn't summon many big plays after

Drew Plitt's 56-yard TD bomb to Jayshon Jackson for an early lead.

Ball State finished with a losing record a year after coach Mike Neu led his alma mater to its first Mid-American Conference championship since 1996.

"This group of young men has changed our program, and I mean that," Neu said. "A few years ago, we were struggling, we were down and out. These guys stuck together."

Banged-up Colts beat Cardinals

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — The Indianapolis Colts have beaten some teams with Jonathan Taylor's legs, some with Carson Wentz's arm and a few with stellar defense. They added another formula for a victory Saturday night: sheer grit.

"We've got a ton of ways to beat you," receiver T.Y. Hilton said. "You just pick the way you want to get beat."

Wentz threw two touchdown passes, Taylor ran for 108 yards and banged-up Indianapolis continued its late-season surge with a hard-earned 22-16 win over the fading Arizona Cardinals on Saturday night.

The Colts (9-6) have won three straight and six of seven. They got the road win despite missing 2020 All-Pro linebacker Darius Leonard — who was put on the reserve/COVID-19 list earlier Saturday — and four starting offensive linemen.

"This is one of the best team wins I've ever been a part of, considering everything," Colts coach Frank Reich said. "I'm sure

there are some other good ones, but this is up there."

Wentz made the game's biggest play midway through the fourth quarter, when he bounced around in the pocket for a few seconds before hitting Dezmon Patmon for a 14-yard touchdown on a perfectly placed ball in the back of the end zone. That gave Indianapolis a 22-13 lead.

The Cardinals (10-5) failed to clinch a playoff spot for a third straight week and are 3-5 since starting the season 7-0. Kyler Murray threw for 245 yards and a touchdown while also running for 74 yards.

Arizona's Matt Prater missed two field goals, including a potential go-ahead try early in the fourth quarter, and an extra point.

"We continue to find ways to lose, critical situations, penalties, things of that nature," Cardinals coach Kliff Kingsbury said. "We've got to get it turned around somewhere."

Arizona grabbed a 13-12 lead early in the

third quarter when Murray hit Antoine Wesley for a 24-yard touchdown, which was the first of Wesley's NFL career.

Suddenly, the onus was on the Colts' patchwork offense to produce. That wasn't easy for a unit that came into the game missing three starting offensive linemen. By the end of the first half, left tackle Eric Fisher and tight end Jack Doyle were also on the sideline with injuries.

The team managed to cobble together a drive late in the third quarter capped by a 37-yard field goal for a 15-13 lead. Indianapolis caught a break a few minutes later in the fourth quarter when Prater's 41-yard field goal bounced off the right upright.

That set up a seven-play, 69-yard Colts drive that ended with Wentz — who completed 18 of 28 passes for 225 yards — connecting with Patmon.

"I saw him at the last second, screaming at the back of the end zone," Wentz said. "I gave him a chance and he made a great play."

Rodgers sets team record as Pack holds off Browns

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Rasul Douglas and the Green Bay Packers' pass defense didn't let the Cleveland Browns spoil Aaron Rodgers' milestone day.

Rodgers surpassed Brett Favre to become Green Bay's all-time leader in touchdown passes, and the Packers intercepted Baker Mayfield four times in a 24-22 victory over the Cleveland on Saturday. The Browns nearly came all the way back from a 12-point second-half deficit before Douglas' second interception of the day sealed the game with 43 seconds left.

"We've got to do a better job of closing games out," Rodgers said. "Our defense has closed out a lot of games, the last two weeks stopping that two-point conversion (in a 31-30 victory at Baltimore) and Rasul coming up with that big pick. It's nerve-wracking, but winning is difficult in this league."

Rodgers went 24-for-34 for 202 yards with three touchdown pas-

ses to increase his career total to 445. Favre threw 508 touchdown passes during his Hall of Fame career, 442 of them with Green Bay.

But it was the Packers' defense that clinched this victory by sacking Mayfield five times and forcing him into his first career four-interception performance. All three touchdowns by Green Bay (12-3) came after Mayfield interceptions.

"It was just missed throws," Mayfield said. "Uncharacteristic, and I hurt this team. That's the most frustrating thing for me, because I thought our defense played tremendous against a really, really good offense. But when you turn the ball over on your own territory, in the red zone and around midfield and give them extra opportunities, they're going to take advantage of it."

Mayfield was 21-for-36 for 222 yards with two touchdowns as well as those four picks in his return from the reserve/COVID-19

list, which caused him to miss a 16-14 loss to the Las Vegas Raiders on Monday.

Nick Chubb ran for 126 yards and a touchdown to lead Cleveland's 219-yard rushing effort that kept it in the game.

The Browns (7-8) trailed 24-22 and had third-and-10 at the 50 when Douglas picked off Mayfield's pass intended for Donovan Peoples-Jones at the 40.

Since getting signed off the Arizona Cardinals' practice squad in early October, Douglas has a team-high five interceptions. He had a game-clinching interception in the final minute of a victory at Arizona earlier this season.

"Coaches told me as long as I keep catching them, they'll keep coming," Douglas said. "I'm just trying to catch them when they come."

Darnell Savage and Chandon Sullivan also had interceptions. Rashan Gary had two of the Packers' five sacks against Cleveland, whose offensive line was decimated with left tackle Jedrick

Wills and center JC Tretter both on the COVID-19 list.

Until the Browns produced their second-half threat, the day belonged to Rodgers, who broke Favre's record by throwing an 11-yard TD pass to Allen Lazard in the first quarter.

"Aaron breaks so many records," Lazard said. "Literally every week it's almost like I get on Instagram Monday morning and someone's always posting some new record that Aaron's breaking. For us, in a sense, it's another day at the office. Obviously this one's a bigger milestone in that sense."

Rodgers spent his first three NFL seasons backing up Favre before taking over in 2008. Favre sent a message to Rodgers in a video that aired on the Lambeau Field scoreboard after the record-breaking touchdown pass.

"Hey, 12, congratulations, man, on passing my touchdown record," Favre said. "I have one request. Go get us another Super Bowl. Congrats."

NHL postpones 14 games; will restart Tuesday

Associated Press

The NHL pushed back its return from an already extended holiday break an extra day by postponing its entire 14-game Monday schedule for COVID-19 testing reasons.

The league said Friday that it now plans to resume play Tuesday in a decision that increases the total of postponed games to 64 this season.

Teams are still scheduled to resume practicing Sunday, but

won't be allowed to take the ice until players, coaches and traveling officials are cleared following a round of COVID-19 tests. The decision to delay the resumption of play will allow what the NHL called "an adequate opportunity to analyze league-wide testing results and to assess clubs' readiness to play."

The NHL said it will provide further updates on its return to play plans Sunday.

The move comes after the NHL

opened its annual holiday break on Wednesday, two days earlier than scheduled, because of a significant jump in players landing in the league's COVID-19 protocols, and with 10 teams' schedules paused.

The sudden rash of postponed games also led the NHL to exercise its right to withdraw from participating in the Winter Olympics in February. The league will instead use its previously scheduled Olympic break, which runs

from Feb. 6-22, to make up its postponed games in order to complete an 82-game season.

Toronto forward William Nylander entered the NHL's COVID-19 protocols Friday, giving the Maple Leafs 13 players on the list. Maple Leafs captain John Tavares, defenseman Morgan Rielly and goaltender Jack Campbell are also in the protocols along with coach Sheldon Keefe, two assistants and four other members of the organization.

Claxton posterizes LeBron with alley-oop dunk to seal Nets' win

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES—Short-handed and on the verge of a crushing fourth-quarter collapse, the Brooklyn Nets went right at Lakers star LeBron James.

"Until this is over, until we can get our full roster, I think the motto is, 'find ways to win,' and we've been doing that," Nets guard James Harden said.

This time, that meant right over James' head.

Nic Claxton threw down a tiebreaking alley-oop over James with 40.7 seconds left, and Harden and Brooklyn returned from a week-long COVID-19 hiatus to beat Los Angeles 122-115 Saturday night.

Harden had 36 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. The last helper was a lob that Claxton caught with two hands while soaring over James, who had just helped the Lakers erase a 20-point deficit. Claxton posterized the 17-time All-Star, then made a free throw for a three-point play and a 118-115 lead.

It had been more than two weeks since Harden last played, missing time because of a stint in the NBA's health and safety protocols before the Nets had their past three games postponed because they didn't have enough players.

Jazz 120, Mavericks 116: Donovan Mitchell scored 33 points and host Utah beat COVID-19-depleted Dallas.

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 25 points and Mike Conley had 22 to lift the Jazz (23-9) to their 13th win in their last 15 games.

It wasn't the Christmas night matchup the NBA hoped for, with Luka Doncic among the Mavs stuck in the league's health and safety protocols. Still, it was competitive to the end

despite several new signees getting significant minutes for Dallas.

Tim Hardaway Jr., Maxi Kleber, Reggie Bullock, Trey Burke, JaQuori McLaughlin and Josh Green were also sidelined in the health and safety protocols for the Mavericks. In addition, Willie Cauley-Stein was out for personal reasons and Dorian Finney-Smith missed the game with a non-COVID illness.

Bucks 117, Celtics 113: Giannis Antetokounmpo returned from the NBA's healthy and safety protocols to score 36 points, and Wesley Matthews hit a three-pointer with 30.3 seconds left to give host Milwaukee its first lead in a victory over Boston.

Seeing his first action since Dec. 12, Antetokounmpo played 30 minutes and connected on 13 of 23 shots while shooting 10-for-15 from the free-throw line. The Bucks also got center Bobby Portis and guard Donte DiVincenzo back from COVID-19 protocols.

The Celtics had just eight players available after putting Dennis Schroder in the protocols earlier Saturday, but took control behind Jaylen Brown, who scored 14 of his 25 points in the opening quarter. Jayson Tatum also scored 25 points for Boston, which led by as many as 19 and went into halftime with a 35-22 advantage.

Knicks 101, Hawks 87: Kemba Walker became the seventh NBA player with a triple-double on Christmas, and host New York beat depleted Atlanta for its first victory on the holiday in a decade.

Julius Randle had 25 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks in a matchup of teams that met in the first round of last season's playoffs. But the Hawks were missing Trae Young among nine players in the NBA's health and safety protocols.

Curry, Warriors roll past Suns

Associated Press

PHOENIX—The Golden State Warriors kept it close despite being short-handed, setting the stage for a player to take over down the stretch.

One did — and it wasn't Stephen Curry. Otto Porter Jr. took late-game honors.

Curry had 33 points, Porter scored seven of his 19 during a key late stretch and the Warriors regained to top spot in the NBA from Phoenix, beating the Suns 116-107 on Saturday.

"I drew up every play, I completely organized every aspect of it," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said sarcastically. "Otto was great. He's just added so much to our team with his shooting from that position and his rebounding and defense."

Golden State arrived in the desert short-handed, missing three of its top four scorers to health and safety protocols: Andrewiggins, Damion Lee and Jordan Poole.

Curry carried most of the load, overcoming a mediocre shooting night to crack 20 points for the first time in nine Christmas games. He finished 10-for-27, including 5-for-16 on threes to help the Warriors end Phoenix's 15-game home winning streak.

Porter hit a step-back three and a pair of jumpers in a span of 1:02.

The Suns had their chances, keeping it close until the closing minutes in a raucous home atmosphere. They couldn't close it out, failing to score over the final 3:01 to lose for the third time in 28 games.

Chris Paul had 21 points and eight assists to take up some of the slack from leading scorer Devin Booker, who was held to 13 points on 5-of-19 shooting.