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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Countries take action as virus spreads

Associated Press

BANGKOK — Saudi Arabia cut travel to Islam's holiest sites, South Korea toughened penalties for those breaking quarantines and airports across Latin America looked for signs of sick passengers Thursday as the new virus troubled a mushrooming swath of the globe.

With the illness pushing its way onto a sixth continent and the number of sick and dead rising, the crisis gave way to political and diplomatic rows, concern that bordered on panic in some quarters and a sense that no part of the world was immune to the disease's spread.

"Viruses don't know borders and they don't stop at them," said Roberto Speranza, the health minister in Italy, where northern towns were on army-guarded lockdowns and supermarket shelves were bare.

As growing parts of Europe and the Middle East saw infections and a first case was found in South America, air routes were halted and border control toughened. But for an illness transmitted so easily, with its tentacles reaching into so many parts of the world, leaders puzzled over how to keep the virus from proliferating seemed willing to try anything to keep their people — and economies — safe.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called for schools across the country to close for weeks, a decision that impacted

12.8 million students.

"The most important thing is to prevent infections," said Norinobu Sawada, vice principal of Koizumi primary school, "so there aren't many other options."

In South Korea, the hardest-hit country outside China, four Busan markets known for colorful silks and a dizzying array of other wares were shuttered while the country's military sent hundreds of its doctors and soldiers to aid in treatment and quarantines.

In Iran, the front line of Mideast infections, officials loosened rules barring the import of many foreign items to allow sanitizers, face masks and other necessities, and removed overhead handles on Tehran subways to eliminate more germ sources.

Peru put specialists on round-the-clock shifts at its biggest airport, Argentina took the temperature of some new arrivals and El Salvador added bans for travelers from Italy and South Korea.

The holy city of Mecca, which able-bodied Muslims are called to visit at least once in their lives, and the Prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina were cut off to potentially millions of pilgrims, with Saudi Arabia making the extraordinary decision to stop the spread of the virus.

With the monarchy offering no firm date for the lifting of the restrictions, it posed the possibility of affecting those planning

to make their hajj, a ritual beginning at the end of July this year.

"We ask God Almighty to spare all humanity from all harm," the country said in announcing the decision.

Disease has been a constant concern surrounding the hajj, with cholera outbreaks in the 19th century killing tens of thousands making the trip.

More recently, another coronavirus that caused Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, prompted increased public health measures, but no outbreak resulted.

COVID-19's westward creep had some countries warning their people to obey measures intended to keep a single case from blossoming into a cluster that could paralyze a community.

A man originally from Wuhan, the Chinese city at the center of the global outbreak, who contracted the virus was charged alongside his wife in Singapore for allegedly lying about their whereabouts as officials tried to stem further infections.

In Colombia, which has yet to report any cases, officials reminded residents that they could be jailed for up to eight years if they violate containment measures.

And in South Korea, the National Assembly passed a law strengthening the punishment for those violating self-isolation, more than tripling the fine and adding the possibility of a year in prison.

New case reported in US after Trump urges calm

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump declared that a widespread U.S. outbreak of the new respiratory virus sweeping the globe isn't inevitable, even as top health authorities at his side warned Americans that more infections are coming.

Shortly after Trump spoke Wednesday, the government announced a worrisome development: Another person in the U.S. is infected — someone in California who doesn't appear to have the usual risk factors of having traveled abroad or being exposed to another patient.

At a White House news conference,

Trump sought to minimize fears as he insisted that the U.S. is "very, very ready" for whatever the COVID-19 outbreak brings. Under fire about the government's response, he put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of coordinating the efforts.

"This will end," Trump said of the outbreak. "You don't want to see panic because there's no reason to be panicked."

But standing next to him, the very health officials Trump praised for fighting the new coronavirus stressed that schools, businesses and individuals need to get ready.

"We do expect more cases," said Dr. Anne Schuchat of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If the CDC confirms that the latest U.S. case doesn't involve travel or contact with an infected person, it would be a first in this country and a sign that efforts to contain the virus' spread haven't been enough.

"It's possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19," the CDC said in a statement.

More than 81,000 cases of COVID-19, an illness characterized by fever and coughing and, in serious cases, shortness of breath or pneumonia, have occurred since the new virus emerged in China.

The newest case from California brings the total number of infected in the U.S. to 60, most of them evacuated from outbreak zones.

US and S. Korea delay drills due to virus

BY KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States and South Korea postponed joint military exercises that had been slated to start next week due to the coronavirus crisis, the allies said Thursday.

The U.S. military also reported that a South Korean employee had tested positive for COVID-19 in the southeastern city of Daegu — its third confirmed case.

Only one American soldier has been infected so far. The widow of a military retiree who had base access also contracted the pneumonia-like illness, U.S. Forces Korea said earlier this week.

Meanwhile, the State Department urged Americans to reconsider travel to South Korea, and the Indo-Pacific military command barred all nonessential service members

and Defense Department-affiliated civilians from traveling to South Korea as officials struggled to contain the respiratory virus.

South Korea raised its alert level to severe as the number of confirmed cases nationwide jumped to 1,766 on Thursday, with 13 deaths. Most of the infections — including the first American service member to test positive — have been in Daegu and surrounding areas.

The Daegu Army garrison released details on Thursday after analyzing the on-post locations recently visited by the 23-year-old infected soldier, who is stationed at Camp Carroll. He was taken to Camp Humphreys by ambulance and placed in an isolation unit after he was confirmed as positive on Wednesday.

He was at the Materiel Support Command-Korea headquarters on Camp Carroll on Feb. 18, 20, 22 and 24. The sol-

dier, who lives with his family off-post, was also in the parking lot of the Army clinic on Camp Walker on Feb. 24.

Finally, he used the bathroom at the gym on Camp Carroll and went to the Troop Medical Clinic on Camp Walker on Feb. 25.

The garrison did a similar breakdown of base facilities visited by the widow of a military retiree who tested positive for the virus earlier this week.

“We have contacted those people who are at risk of exposure, and they have been quarantined,” the garrison said on its Facebook page, reassuring the 9,000-strong local military community that affected facilities had been cleaned before reopening.

The South Korean employee who tested positive worked at Camp Carroll but had not had any contact with the military community since Feb. 20, U.S. Forces Korea spokesman Col.

Lee Peters said.

South Korean health authorities determined that no trace history was required because the man had been self-quarantined at home since his wife had tested positive, Peters said.

The U.S.-led Combined Forces Command released a statement that stressed the need to prioritize the safety of U.S. and South Korean service members. The U.S. military has implemented restrictions on movements and base access in a bid to contain the pneumonia-like illness.

“The decision to postpone the combined training was not taken lightly,” the statement said. “The [South Korean]-U.S. alliance remains committed to providing a credible military deterrence and maintaining a robust combined defense posture to protect [South Korea] against any threat.”

Bahrain School extends closure through March 10

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN

Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — The U.S. Navy base school in Bahrain will close through March 10 as a precautionary measure due to coronavirus concerns, after several more cases were reported in the country.

Bahrain’s Health Ministry said Thursday it had confirmed 33 cases of infected citizens in the small island kingdom, which is home to the U.S. Navy Central Command headquarters and the largest number of U.S. service members and their families in the Middle East.

The outbreak led to a two-week closure of all public schools in Bahrain. The Bahrain School, run by Department of Defense Education Activity, said Tuesday that it would close for the week but announced the

extension to parents via email and text message Thursday. The closure includes all scheduled events and extracurricular programs.

“Our families can expect in the coming days information on how their students can continue their academic progress while away from school,” the statement said.

DODEA schools elsewhere are also making adjustments in light of the outbreak. In Europe, plans are being developed to “deliver digital learning experiences,” DODEA spokesman Stephen Smith said Thursday. Those plans differ based on community needs, he said.

There were no confirmed cases of coronavirus reported among the Defense Department community in Bahrain as of Thursday.

Japan bases hold town halls amid virus concerns

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS

Stars and Stripes

CAMP ZAMA, Japan — Authorities at U.S. military bases across Japan are taking steps to reduce the likelihood that COVID-19 finds its way onto those installations.

Rumor control is part of that effort. At a town hall meeting Wednesday evening at Camp Zama, home to U.S. Army Japan headquarters, one man asked whether dependents would be evacuated.

“No,” U.S. Army Japan Maj. Gen. Viet Xuan Luong told a packed ballroom of service members, civilian employees and their families.

That’s a possibility if the coronavirus outbreak reaches pandemic status “months from now,” he said, but advised the audience not to “worry about

that right now.”

Misawa Air Base held a virtual town hall on its Facebook page Thursday evening to address coronavirus concerns. One change announced was that security forces working at base entry points will no longer handle ID cards, but will instead have entrants hold up their IDs for scanning.

U.S. Forces Japan on Wednesday said that base commanders may impose health screenings for those entering installations in Japan and urged them to cancel public base gatherings.

Military units were instructed to place bulk orders for masks, gloves, eye protection, alcohol, hand gel, sanitation wipes, bleach and towels, according to a copy of the public health order obtained Thursday by Stars and Stripes.

Pentagon alters child care priority policy

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Pentagon policy change will ensure more military families have priority access at base child care centers as high demand for spots has created long waitlists.

Due to frequent moves and only a few years at each installation, many military families face challenges finding consistent child care, according to Nicole Russell, the deputy director of government relations at the National Military Family Association, a private nonprofit advocacy group based in Alexandria, Va.

“When you’re moving from one duty station to the next, a service member needs to make

sure that their family is taken care of and their children zero to 12 [years old] have the child care that they need,” she said.

The high demand for care has caused increased waits for spots at the facilities, which offer more hours of care to meet military schedules, Russell said. She also said a military spouse friend in Hawaii has been told the waitlist for her child is six to nine months.

To address the growing problem, Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Friday signed a memorandum that changes the policy that determines who is selected for child care first, making more military spouses a greater priority.

Active-duty service members are listed in the top pri-

ority bracket as are military spouses with jobs, Russell said. However, included in the top priority are also Defense Department civilians, who now receive a higher priority than military spouses who are seeking work or attending school. The change elevates the status of these military spouses. The unemployment rate for military spouses is 24%, she said, much higher than the civilian population.

“The DOD’s system of child care was established to assist service members as they face the unique challenges associated with the demands of military service,” Esper wrote in his memo. “Over time, child care access expanded to serve the total force, but we must not

lose sight of the service member and mission requirements.”

During a House Armed Services Committee hearing Wednesday about the Defense Department’s fiscal year 2021 proposed budget, Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, supported Esper’s policy change and he said prioritizing children of service members over others who do not have a parent in uniform will “make a big difference, I think, in terms of these waitlists.”

“There’s probably nothing more important than taking care of our families in order for the soldier, the sailor, the airman and Marine to focus on their job and maintain the high levels of readiness,” he said.

USMC to rid installations of Confederate paraphernalia

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps’ top officer has directed the removal of “all Confederate-related paraphernalia” from the service’s installations, a document posted online revealed.

B.A. Friedman, a military analyst specializing in amphibious warfare, tweeted a photo Wednesday showing part of the document. It shows a directive that was tasked to headquarters staff but isn’t yet a published order. A Marine Corps spokesman confirmed that Commandant Gen. David Berger issued the guidance but offered few details.

“Last week, the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed specific tasks to be reviewed or addressed by Headquarters Marine Corps staff,” service spokesman Capt. Christopher Harrison said in an email. “Many of the tasks were published on Twitter Friday (Feb. 21). Other tasks not published are mostly administrative matters.”

Berger’s spokesman first confirmed the directive

Wednesday in a report by Task and Purpose. It remains unclear whether the ban would apply to barracks rooms or if it would require removing any existing features on bases.

Berger had outlined his “most important matters for immediate execution” in a series of posts, including moves to advance gender integration into fields previously closed to women, expand and update parental leave policies and raise the intelligence standard for infantry Marines.

Confederate symbols, such as the battle flag used by states that seceded during the Civil War, have long been displayed by Southerners who view the banner as an emblem of their heritage. Others view the flag, which has been used by white supremacist groups, as racist or treasonous.

Two Marines were separated from the service for their ties to white supremacist or extremist organizations, after they were charged with trespassing for hanging a white nationalist banner during a Confederate Memorial Day rally in Graham, N.C., in May 2017.

DOD approves tenant bill of rights for military families

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department’s top officials signed a tenant bill of rights Tuesday that includes 15 of the 18 rights Congress mandated all military families have while living in privatized base housing, according to a news release.

The document takes effect May 1 and offers rights for the roughly 10% of military service members and their families who live in base housing managed by private companies. Those rights ensure they have access to “safe, quality and well-maintained homes and communities on DOD installations,” according to the two-page document signed by Defense Secretary Mark Esper and the three service branch secretaries.

The need for the bill of rights, which reiterates many safety issues and lease requirements already required of rental housing through federal and state laws, comes after reports of poor conditions of some military housing, including mold and pest infestations, lead paint and inadequate mainte-

nance systems. In December, Congress approved the largest reform of military housing since it was privatized in 1996 and mandated the creation of a tenant bill of rights.

Rep. Kendra Horn, D-Okla., a member of the House Armed Service Committee, said while she’s happy to see the bill of rights rolled out for military families, there is much more work to do.

“It is moving us in the right direction, but, to me, we aren’t finished,” she said Wednesday.

In many cases, the service member and spouse will move separately — so some of the rights target specific challenges faced by military families.

Those include the right to a “plain-language” briefing from the housing office before signing a lease and 30 days after move-in that outlines processes for utilities, work orders and dispute resolution, the right to report housing concerns to the landlord, chain of command and base housing office without fear of reprisal, and the right to a tenant advocate or legal assistance attorney to prepare for dispute resolution.

Survey says about 40% of US adults are obese

Associated Press

NEW YORK — About 4 in 10 American adults are obese, and nearly 1 in 10 is severely so, government researchers said Thursday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention findings come from a 2017-18 health survey that measures height and weight. More than 5,000 U.S. adults took part.

The survey found that the obesity rate was 42% — higher than the 40% found in a similar 2015-16 study. The severe obesity rate was more than 9% in the new survey, up from the 8% figure in the previous one.

Those increases aren't considered statistically significant: The survey numbers are small enough that there's a mathematical chance the rates didn't truly rise.

But it's clear that adult obesity rates are trending up, said the CDC's Cynthia Ogden, one of the report's authors.

A half-century ago, about 1 in 100 American adults was severely obese. Now it's 10 times more common.

The obesity rate has risen about 40% in the last two decades.

The findings suggest that more Americans will get diabetes, heart disease and cancer, said Dr. William Dietz, a George Washington University obesity expert.

It also will be increasingly difficult for doctors to care for so many severely obese people, Dietz said. He has estimated that on average, every primary care doctor treating adults has about 100 severely obese patients.

Dietz faulted the government for not pushing for more measures to promote physical activity and better eating. Building more sidewalks and passing a national tax on sugary beverages could make a big difference, he said.

Gunman kills 5 at Wis. brewery

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — An employee opened fire Wednesday at one of the nation's largest breweries in Milwaukee, killing five fellow workers before taking his own life, police said.

The assailant who attacked the Molson Coors complex was identified as a 51-year-old Milwaukee man, police said.

"There were five individuals who went to work today, just like everybody goes to work, and they thought they were going to go to work, finish their day and return to their families. They didn't — and tragically they never will," Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said.

Authorities offered no motive for the attack and did not release details about the shooter or how the shooting unfolded.

Police said that identities of the victims would not be released for at least 24 hours. There were no additional

injuries.

Officers worked for hours to clear the more than 20 buildings in the complex where more than 1,000 people work. Police Chief Alfonso Morales said authorities believe the shooter acted alone.

President Donald Trump addressed the shooting before speaking at the White House about his administration's efforts to combat the coronavirus.

"Our hearts break for them and their loved ones," the president said. "We send our condolences. We'll be with them, and it's a terrible thing, a terrible thing."

The attack occurred at a sprawling complex that includes a mix of corporate offices and brewing facilities. The complex is widely known in the Milwaukee area as "Miller Valley," a reference to the Miller Brewing Co. that is now part of Molson Coors.

Molson Coors CEO Gavin Hattersley called the shooter "an active brewery employee."

"I am devastated to share that we lost five other members of our family in this tragic incident," he said in an email sent to employees. "There are no words to express the deep sadness many of us are feeling right now."

He said that the office would be closed the rest of the week and the brewery shuttered to give people time to cope.

"We are all a family. We work a lot of hours together, so we're all very sad," said Selena Curka, a brewery employee who was about to start her shift when the complex went on lockdown and she was turned away.

"It's just weird, because nine times out of 10 you're going to know the shooter," said another employee Thomas Milner. "It's a tight-knit family. Within the brewery we all interact with each other."

Dems worry about House as Sanders rises

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bernie Sanders' ascendancy as Democrats' leading presidential hopeful fueled growing unease Wednesday, as lawmakers openly expressed anxiety that the self-proclaimed democratic socialist could cost them House control and questions abounded over what party leaders should do.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., projected calm — and neutrality — as she batted away reporters' queries about whether it was time for her to try thwarting Sanders to protect her party's majority.

"We're not going to lose the House," she said. "We're going to be united by whomever is the candidate for president. But we are taking responsibility for winning the House, and we're not assuming anything. But we feel very confident."

She delivered a similar message to colleagues at a closed-door meeting Wednesday morning, when she told them, "We cannot show any division. This has to be about unity, unity, unity." Her remarks were described by a Democratic aide on condition of anonymity to relay private comments.

Yet with Sanders, I-Vt., riding high after early nominating contest wins in New Hampshire and Nevada and a virtual first-place tie in Iowa, other House Democrats were less sanguine.

Time was growing short to head Sanders off. South Carolina holds its primary Saturday, followed three days later by Super Tuesday, when contests in 14 states and one territory will decide one-third of the delegates to this summer's Democratic convention.

Rep. Tom Malinowski, a freshman from a closely divided New Jersey district, said Democrats have "a simple path" to defeating President Donald Trump by focusing on health care, the economy and a promise that their presidential candidate won't lie. "I don't want to squander that opportunity" by nominating a contender who divides Democrats, he said in an unspoken reference to Sanders.

Freshman Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., who defeated an incumbent Republican in 2018 in a swing district in coastal Virginia, said a Sanders candidacy would be "incredibly divisive" and endanger more centrist lawmakers like herself. The former Navy commander said of GOP efforts to paint all Democrats as socialists, "Bernie Sanders just adds fuel to that fire."

Rep. Scott Peters, D-Calif., a leader of his party's House moderates, said there is widespread concern among lawmakers from competitive districts "that a Sanders candidacy would sink their reelections."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Company rejects PETA billboard honoring cows

NC WINSTON-SALEM — An advertising company says it likely won't accept a request from an animal rights group to erect a billboard memorializing 21 cows killed in a tractor-trailer crash in North Carolina.

Lamar Advertising Co. of Baton Rouge, La., received a request from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to place the billboard, but the company said it doesn't accept advertising from the advocacy group, spokeswoman Allie McAlpin told the Winston-Salem Journal on Tuesday.

PETA said in a statement Monday that it was seeking to place a billboard near where a truck overturned on Interstate 40 near Winston-Salem on Feb. 18 "in honor of the cows who were injured and killed."

Pilot sent to prison for transporting marijuana

CT NEW HAVEN — A pilot from Connecticut has been sentenced to 2½ years in prison for his role in a marijuana trafficking operation that made millions of dollars by moving about two tons of pot across the country in a small plane, federal prosecutors said.

Donald Burns, 62, of Milford, was also sentenced Tuesday in federal court in New Haven to two years of probation.

The Federal Aviation Administration in 2016 began investigating a single-engine aircraft owned by Burns that was making regular flights between Stratford, Conn., and northern California via the southwest U.S., prosecutors said. Authorities who searched the plane after one of those trips in June 2017 found about 400 pounds of marijuana on board, authorities said.

Judge fines man for poaching raptor

WI MADISON — A federal judge fined a former master falconer from Michigan \$10,000 on Tuesday for poaching a Wisconsin raptor.

According to prosecutors and court documents, Edward Taylor, 64, of Fruitport, was a master falconer and raptor propagator. He traded a captive-bred Finnish goshawk for a female northern goshawk that his co-conspirator, James Kitzman, illegally removed from a nest on state land in Wisconsin's Vilas County in May 2017. Selling or bartering northern goshawks is illegal under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Police: Man used fake bills on Scouts' cookies

OR SALEM — A Salem man was arrested after he purchased Girl Scout cookies more than once using counterfeit money, police said.

Camden Ducharme, 36, was charged with forgery and theft, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Earlier this month, Tiffany Brown said a man visited the cookie booth she and her daughters were running outside a Walmart Supercenter in Salem.

Brown said the man seemed "fidgety." He paid for a \$5 box of Tagalongs with a \$20 bill and received \$15 in change, but Brown's 13-year-old daughter, Ava, noticed the bill seemed odd.

It was slightly smaller, had a bluish tint, and the texture of the paper wasn't quite right. Brown said police confirmed it was fake.

Police identified Ducharme and arrested him at the store Sunday.

City to pay landlord for damage to wrong door

NE LINCOLN — The Lincoln City Council has decided to pay a landlord more than \$950 to repair an apartment door police busted through in error.

The Lincoln Journal Star reported that officers knocked on the door and announced their presence one morning last year. Apartment 2 was what the warrant they were serving said. They followed procedure and waited 30 seconds before breaking in, guns drawn. It turns out the person inside hadn't heard them.

It also turns out the warrant was wrong: It should have said Apartment 4. They eventually entered that apartment without incident and served the warrant.

Landlord Russ Pinyan filed a claim against the city. The council voted 5-2 to approve the claim.

Almost \$4M in work planned at Devils Tower

WY GILLETTE — The National Park Service is about to begin facility and trail work totaling almost \$4 million in Devils Tower National Monument in northeastern Wyoming.

The work will include making an overlook trail more accessible to people who are in wheelchairs or have other physical limitations.

Devils Tower is what remains of magma that pushed up through the earth and solidified some 50 million years ago. The formation stands about 900 feet above the surrounding landscape. Established in 1906, Devils Tower was the first U.S. national monument.

Valentine's Day balloons retrieved from ocean

CA LAGUNA BEACH — Boaters have been fishing balloons out of the ocean off Southern California since Valentine's Day, and some say it's a predictable problem, The Orange County Register reported.

"It was crazy. Everywhere I looked," said Rich German, who rode his personal watercraft off Laguna Beach after Valentine's Day and picked up 31 balloons in a few hours.

A Feb. 17 trip by Pacific Marine Mammal Center staff collected 20 balloons in a few hours, said spokeswoman Krysta Higuchi.

"It's not only dangerous for marine mammals, but for marine birds and the whole ecosystem in general," she said.

Video shows deacon being tackled at mass

FL POMPANO BEACH — A man was captured on surveillance video tackling a deacon who was conducting a service Saturday evening at a Florida church.

Security video from the church shows the man sitting in a front pew at St. Coleman Catholic Church on Pompano Beach while the deacon was speaking to the congregation. The man then stood up and charged the deacon. As stunned parishioners looked on, several other churchgoers ran to help as the man tussled with the deacon on the floor in the church, news outlets reported.

Thomas Eisel, 28, was arrested on charges of battery and disturbing the peace.

The Archdiocese of Miami told WSVN the deacon suffered some bruises but is OK.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

Brute force: Azubuike has powered Kansas

Associated Press

Oklahoma State coach Mike Boynton had just finished watching Udoka Azubuike bully his way to 19 points and 16 rebounds against his overmatched Cowboys when he pulled the 7-footer aside and pointed to the rafters in Allen Fieldhouse.

“Keep it up,” Boynton whispered into the ear of the Kansas center, “and your name will be up there, too.”

There are certain requirements for a player to have his jersey raised above the south seats in the old field house, among them becoming an All-American or winning the Big 12’s player of the year award. It’s not an honor that the Jayhawks bestow on just anyone.

The way Azubuike has been playing lately, it won’t be long before his No. 35 joins the jerseys of the great Wilt Chamberlain, Clyde Lovellette, Jo Jo White and Danny Manning hanging from the ceiling.

“I don’t watch a whole lot of national basketball,” Boynton said later, “but I’d be hard-

pressed to find a better national player of the year candidate than he is. The way he’s playing now is pretty special. Obviously there’s a special kind of fan base here and they appreciate it, but I don’t know if people appreciate him nationally.”

Azubuike has certainly opened some eyes over the last month.

His run began with 17 points and 12 rebounds against Texas, then continued with 20 points and 15 boards at TCU. Azubuike had another double-double against Oklahoma, then had 23 points and 19 rebounds last Saturday as the Jayhawks (25-3, 13-1) beat then-No. 1 Baylor on the road to regain the top spot in the nation and forge a tie atop the Big 12 standings.

Along the way, Azubuike reached the 1,000-point mark for his career — a nice benchmark considering he missed much of his first couple seasons to injury. His total of 35 rebounds in the past two games are the most since Thomas Robinson had that many during the 2011-12 season, and his 42 points and 35 rebounds

allowed him to join Robinson, Dedric Lawson, Wayne Simien and Drew Gooden as the only players with at least 40 points and 30 or more rebounds in a two-game span.

Azubuike has also been able to steer clear of foul trouble. His conditioning has improved to the point that he can easily play more than 30 minutes per game. And his defense has been unparalleled, almost single-handedly shutting down the entire paint.

“We’ve been trying to tell Doke all along he can dominate a game without getting a lot of touches. If that’s the case, he’s quickly becoming as good a center or the best defensive center since I’ve been here, and we’ve had some good ones,” Kansas coach Bill Self said.

Azubuike has come a long ways since his childhood in Delta, Nigeria. He was an exceedingly raw prospect coming out of high school, and his only offensive move early on was a dunk. But his game has improved over time to where he is a more well-rounded player — even his chronically poor

foul shooting has reached an acceptable level.

Most mock drafts have the senior center going in the second round, if at all, primarily because teams are wary of drafting a prototypical center the way the game has evolved. And whereas Azubuike can dunk his way to big numbers in college, those easy looks at the rim will be much harder to find in the pros, and his mid-range game remains a work in progress.

“If he plays to his athletic ability that’s how he’ll get paid,” Self said. “He’ll never get paid by shooting 15-foot fadeaways or whatever it is. That’s not who he is. So, can he guard a ball screen? Can he get to the rim? Can he defend outside his area? If he can do those things he has a chance to make it.”

Most of the names hanging from the rafters in Allen Fieldhouse also took their team deep into the NCAA Tournament, and the best of them ushered the Jayhawks to the Final Four and beyond. Azubuike has been there once, helping Kansas to the semifinals as a sophomore.

Top 25 roundup

Morsell’s late three lifts No. 9 Maryland

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Down by double digits for most of the game and trailing by eight points near the two-minute mark, Maryland could’ve chalked up an off night at Minnesota to the rigor of Big Ten road play and still returned home in first place.

Darryl Morsell and his teammates refused to concede.

Morsell drained the go-ahead three-pointer with 1.9 seconds left for No. 9 Maryland on Wednesday night, capping a furious comeback for a 74-73 victory with a 10-1 run over the final 2:06.

“Foul troubles, everything, I didn’t know if we were ever going to get over the hump,” coach Mark Turgeon said. “But we’ve got a team of fighters.”

Jalen Smith had 16 points and 12 rebounds, including a soaring rebound and slam with 14.5 seconds remaining that pulled the Terrapins within 73-71. Gabe

Kalscheur short-armed the front end of a one-and-one free throw with 12 seconds to go for the Gophers, who missed three foul shots in the final 39 seconds. Then the Terrapins hustled the ball up to find Morsell, who had 13 points and nine rebounds, for the winner from NBA range from the top of the key.

“When it left my hand, honestly, I thought it was going to hit off the backboard and go in,” Morsell said. “It looked good. I knew I wasn’t going to miss short.”

Aaron Wiggins scored 16 points and Anthony Cowan Jr. had 10 points, nine assists and six rebounds for Maryland (23-5, 13-4), which maintained a two-game lead for first place in the Big Ten with three games to go. This was the the third comeback victory from 15-plus points by the Terrapins this season, and the 17-point deficit overcome marked their largest of the last 10 years.

No. 16 Penn State 65, Rutgers 64: Myles Dread hit a go-ahead three-pointer with 28 seconds left to lift the Nittany Lions over the Scarlet Knights after Penn State blew a 21-point lead.

Izaiah Brockington scored 16 points and Lamar Stevens added nine for the Nittany Lions (21-7, 11-6 Big Ten).

Jacob Young scored 13 points for Rutgers (18-11, 9-9).

No. 12 Villanova 71, St. John’s 60: Saddiq Bey scored 23 points and Justin Moore added 21 to lead the host Wildcats past the Red Storm.

Villanova (22-6, 11-4 Big East) had trouble shaking St. John’s until late on a night the program honored former star Kyle Lowry, a five-time All-Star guard for the NBA champion Toronto Raptors, who played two seasons for the Wildcats.

Astros still being booed, hit by pitches

Associated Press

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — George Springer could only stand there all alone and listen.

The Houston Astros leadoff man had no choice when he stepped into the batter's box a bit too early and was showered with loud boos Wednesday at an exhibition game against the New York Mets.

Mets pitcher Noah Syndergaard turned and looked at the scoreboard clock that showed 1:09 p.m. — he waited for the minute to change so the game would officially reach the 1:10 start time, leaving Springer nowhere to go as the crowd heckled him.

“Cheater! Cheater! Cheater!” one Mets fan along the first-base side chanted at Springer.

Less than an hour south in West Palm Beach, the Astros were playing the St. Louis Cardinals in a split-squad game. Houston's Alex Bregman hit his first homer of spring training in the third inning, then was hit in the back in the fifth inning by a breaking ball from reliever Ramon Santos, making Breg-

man the seventh Astros player plunked in five spring training games.

“It was a splitter,” Bregman said. “It just got away from him.”

Dustin Garneau was hit Sunday against Washington, and Jose Altuve was grazed Monday against Detroit, when Osvaldo Duarte and Alex De Goti also were hit. Aledmys Diaz and Jake Meyers were hit Tuesday by Miami.

In Port St. Lucie, the normal tranquility of February games again was broken as a split squad of Astros continued the team's latest stop on their spring training tour of derisive boos and catcalls, the result of their exposed sign-stealing scheme.

Two days after Altuve, Bregman, Carlos Correa and Yuli Gurriel got jeered for a game at Detroit's park in Lakeland, it was the Mets' turn to host at newly renovated Clover Park in Port St. Lucie.

Vilified this offseason by the baseball world due to their scam, the Astros brought a

pedestrian lineup to face the Mets. Springer and fellow outfielder Michael Brantley were the top Astros who started.

So it wasn't mainly the names on the back of the jerseys that angered the small midweek crowd in attendance at New York's spruced-up ballpark, which had \$57 million of renovations and additions put in starting a year ago.

It was the logo and colors worn by Houston, ironically a similar orange-and-blue color pattern to what the Mets wore.

Jim Masotti, a Connecticut native who lives in Port St. Lucie seven months of the year, sported a dark New York Yankees T-shirt and deplored the cheating scam. But he stopped short of saying the 2017 World Series title should be stripped from the Astros.

“As a Yankees fan, it's extremely discouraging,” said Masotti, who followed Springer's career as a star at UConn. “I think it's a travesty for the integrity of baseball. What happened is something that may not go away for a while,

unfortunately.”

After Springer worked a two-out walk in the bottom of the ninth inning in Game 6 of the AL Championship Series in Houston last October, Altuve hit a walk-off homer off Yankees reliever Aroldis Chapman that sent the Astros to their second World Series in three years.

A native of New Britain, Conn, and the MVP of 2017's scandalous World Series, Springer drew the loudest boos. He had three at-bats and departed after a fifth-inning bloop single.

“The only guy I feel for — I'm a UConn alum — is Springer. I saw him play in college. I feel bad for him, I really do,” Masotti said.

Springer flied out in the first, and Brantley batted next. Brantley grew up playing baseball in this area, starred in high school in nearby Fort Pierce and is an offseason resident of Port St. Lucie.

Despite the local roots, he also drew a heaping dose of boos from his locals, though not like Springer did.

Dobbins, Taylor continue RB rivalry at NFL combine

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Jonathan Taylor and J.K. Dobbins spent three seasons vying for the title of Big Ten's best running back.

Dobbins' case begins with the three shiny conference championship rings he won playing at Ohio State. Taylor's argument shows up in a trophy case full of hardware he earned at Wisconsin.

Now two of the conference's most prolific runners find themselves engaged in yet another competition: Becoming the first running back selected in this spring's NFL Draft.

“It's been fun, especially this past year,” Taylor said, standing at the same podium Dobbins used just a few minutes earlier. “I've always enjoyed going against those guys just

because you come to the Division I level to play against the best guys in the country and O-State is one of those teams that is an elite team. So you have to enjoy that competition.”

Taylor leaves nothing to chance when taking on the opposition. He worked out with the Badgers track team to become a more explosive runner. He used the JUGS machines to improve as a receiver. He learned to modify his breathing, which he credits for helping him maintain focus, and last year he added yoga to his workout routine because it helped with his flexibility and recovery time.

The results have been staggering.

He's the only FBS player to rush for more than 6,000 yards in three seasons, the only FBS player with three straight sea-

sons over 1,900 yards and the only Wisconsin player with three top-10 finishes in Heisman Trophy voting. He won the Doak Walker Award each of the past two years, was selected as the Big Ten's top freshman in 2017 and its best runner the past two seasons.

So here in Indianapolis for the league's annual scouting combine, Taylor is trying to regain the upper hand.

“I'm trying my best to show I can crack 4.4 (seconds), trying to show I have that long-distance speed,” he said, referring to his time in the 40-yard dash. “I know it shows up on film, but they still want to put a number on a sheet of paper.”

If he hits that mark, the 5-foot-10, 226-pound Taylor would go a long way to being the first running back drafted in Las Vegas in April.

The 5-9, 209-pound Dobbins has other plans.

His impressive résumé includes being the first Ohio State runner to have a 2,000-yard season and the only one with 1,000-yard seasons as a freshman and sophomore. He's second on the Buckeyes rushing list, behind two-time Heisman winner Archie Griffin, and he matched Griffin's school record with three consecutive 1,000-yard seasons.

But Dobbins contends his 3-0 record against Wisconsin gives him bragging rights.

“I don't really see it as a rivalry because he plays on a different team,” he said. “He's not on defense, so I'm not necessarily going against him. If there is a rivalry, I think I won the better of that because we beat them every time we played them.”

NBA roundup

76ers' Embiid injured in loss to Cavs

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Collin Sexton scored 28 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers routed Philadelphia 108-94 on Wednesday night after 76ers center Joel Embiid left in the first quarter because of a sprained left shoulder.

The 76ers, already playing without All-Star guard Ben Simmons, never led against the team with the worst record in the Eastern Conference and fell to 9-21 on the road.

Embiid collided with Cavaliers center Ante Zizic while being fouled late in the first quarter. The 7-footer held his shoulder in obvious pain but stayed in the game and missed both free throws.

The Sixers pulled Embiid at the next time stoppage and he walked to the locker room while rubbing his shoulder.

Tristan Thompson had 14 points and 13 rebounds, and Larry Nance Jr. had 13 points for Cleveland.

Mavericks 109, Spurs 103: Luka Dončić had 26 points, 14 assists and 10 rebounds for his 13th triple-double of the season,

helping visiting Dallas beat San Antonio.

Kristaps Porzingis added 28 points and 12 rebounds for Dallas.

DeMar DeRozan had 27 points, nine assists and eight rebounds for San Antonio.

Celtics 114, Jazz 103: Jayson Tatum had 33 points and 11 rebounds to lead Boston to a win at slumping Utah.

Jaylen Brown added 20 points and Marcus Smart had 17 for the Celtics. All five starters scored in double figures to help Boston finish 3-1 on a road trip out West.

Donovan Mitchell scored 37 points to lead the Jazz. Mike Conley chipped in with 15 and Royce O'Neale added 14 for Utah, which lost its fourth straight game — all at home.

Rockets 140, Grizzlies 112: Russell Westbrook scored 33 points, James Harden had 30 and host Houston sailed past Memphis for its fifth straight win.

Harden say out the fourth quarter. Westbrook sat down for good with about six minutes left.

Dillon Brooks had 22 points for the Grizzlies. They went 0-4 on their longest trip of the season.

Timberwolves 129, Heat 126: Jordan McLaughlin's layup with just under nine seconds left put Minnesota ahead for good, D'Angelo Russell led all scorers with 27 points and the Timberwolves won at Miami.

Malik Beasley scored 21 points, Juancho Hernangomez tied a season-high with 17 and McLaughlin added 13 for Minnesota. The Timberwolves were down by 12 with 3:59 left, then closed on a 20-5 run to get just their second victory in 20 games.

Kendrick Nunn led the Heat with 24 points.

Wizards 110, Nets 106: Jerome Robinson hit a three-pointer with 8.4 seconds left to lift host Washington past Brooklyn.

After Robinson gave the Wizards a 108-106 lead, the Nets' Spencer Dinwiddie missed a three-point attempt and Robinson added two free throws as Washington won after squan-

deing an 18-point lead.

Bradley Beal led the Wizards with 30 points after consecutive games of 53 and 55 points.

Magic 130, Hawks 120: Evan Fournier scored 28 points, Aaron Gordon added 25 and Orlando pulled away in the fourth quarter to win at Atlanta.

Solidifying their hold on the final playoff spot in the East, the Magic put away the Hawks with a 14-5 spurt after Trae Young's drive cut Orlando's lead to five with 6:20 remaining.

Hornets 107, Knicks 101: Terry Rozier scored 26 points and host Charlotte handed New York its fifth straight loss.

The slumping Devonte Graham returned from a team-mandated night off to add 21 points.

Julius Randle had 18 points and nine rebounds for the Knicks.

Clippers 102, Suns 92: Kawhi Leonard scored 24 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, Marcus Morris added 18 points and visiting Los Angeles defeated Phoenix for its second straight win.

NHL roundup

Cousins, Fleury help Golden Knights shut out Oilers

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Nick Cousins scored in his Vegas debut and the Golden Knights beat the Edmonton Oilers 3-0 on Wednesday night in a matchup of the top teams in the Pacific Division.

Marc-Andre Fleury made 29 saves to earn his 61st career shutout, tied for 17th on the career list with Turk Broda. The 16-year-veteran netminder is now 5-0-0 in his last five starts.

Cousins, acquired from Montreal at the NHL's trade dead-

line Monday, knocked home a rebound on a power play for his sixth overall goal to give the Golden Knights a 2-0 lead midway through the third period.

Max Pacioretty and Shea Theodore also scored for Vegas, which won its seventh straight game.

With the victory, the Golden Knights increased their lead to four points ahead of the Oilers and Vancouver, each with 74 points. Just six points separate the top four squads in the Pacific as Calgary holds the top wildcard spot, two points better than Nashville.

Kings 2, Penguins 1: Blake Lizotte had a power-play goal and an assist, Cal Petersen made 36 saves and host Los Angeles spoiled the debuts of Patrick Marleau and two more of Pittsburgh's deadline acquisitions.

Lizotte posted his second career multi-point game and Trevor Lewis also scored as the last-place Kings hung on for their fourth win in seven games.

Tristan Jarry stopped 20 shots in Pittsburgh's fourth consecutive loss. Bryan Rust scored with 13:18 to play, but the Penguins couldn't get the equalizer

past Petersen, who was strong in his seventh career victory.

Avalanche 3, Sabres 2: J.T. Compher broke a tie on a wrist shot with 8:06 remaining, Martin Kaut scored his first NHL goal and banged-up host Colorado won its fourth straight.

Gabriel Landeskog also scored to help the Avalanche vault into second place in the Central Division.

Pavel Francouz was sharp in stopping 31 shots, including several sprawling saves in the closing minute after the Sabres pulled their goalie for an extra skater.