

Impeachment process proves imperfect

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three Republican senators spent an hour talking strategy with lawyers for the accused. The entire Senate served as jurors even though they were also targets of the crime. No witnesses were called. And the outcome was never in doubt.

The second impeachment trial of Donald Trump laid bare the deep imperfections in the Constitution's only process for holding a president accountable, for "high crimes and misdemeanors." The proceedings packed an emotional punch and served as history's first accounting of the Jan. 6 riots on the U.S. Capitol, but the inherently political process never amounted to a real and unbiased effort to determine how the insurrection unfolded and whether Trump was responsible.

The results were ultimately unsurprising: a fast impeachment in the Democratic-led House followed by acquittal in the Senate, where 17 Republicans were needed to convict. Only seven voted guilty, an insufficient number but a record for votes from an opposition party.

Congress has rarely deployed its power to hold a president accountable for crimes and misdemeanors: impeaching Andrew

Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in the 1999 and Trump twice over the past year. The House also launched impeachment proceedings against Richard Nixon, but he resigned from office before a vote on charges. Each of the other instances ended with the president — or in this most recent instance, former president — acquitted, and few satisfied with the process.

If any alleged presidential offense could have resulted in a more palatable process, it initially seemed as though Trump's role in the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection on the Capitol was the one. The siege left lawmakers shaken and Congress on edge. Many Republicans who had stood by Trump throughout his presidency were furious that he had encouraged his supporters to head to the Capitol as they voted to affirm the results of the 2020 election, whipping them into a frenzy with lies about the integrity of the vote. The fact that Trump was also on the brink of leaving office also seemed to lessen his hold on the GOP.

Democrats moved swiftly to lodge a single charge against Trump: impeachment for "inciting violence against the government of the United States." Ten House Republicans joined them in voting to impeach — just a sliver of the GOP caucus yet

enough to make it the most bipartisan impeachment vote in modern U.S. history.

But politics ground down the Senate trial even before it started. In the closing days of his tenure as majority leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell used his power to stall the trial until after Trump was out of office, giving some Republican senators a procedural out: They could lean on the notion that it was unconstitutional to hold an impeachment trial for a former president instead of deciding the case on the merits.

When an eleventh-hour opportunity arose on Saturday to call witnesses, Democrats abruptly backed away out of concern that doing so would prolong the trial and complicate Biden's efforts to quickly pass a sweeping pandemic relief package.

There was also this reality for Democrats: Even with witness testimony, there was almost no chance that enough Republicans would vote to convict Trump. The deep anger some Republicans privately held toward the president was overshadowed by the reality that he remains the most powerful force in GOP politics. Others, particularly those seeking to pick up the mantle of Trumpism for future White House runs, made clear from the start that they were not impartial jurors.

Army may adjust CFT scoring for males, females

By COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army could adjust how it scores its new Combat Fitness Test to account for the "biological differences" between men and women, a service spokeswoman said Friday.

The reevaluation of the ACFT comes weeks after Congress delayed its implementation over concerns the new test created an unfair disadvantage to female soldiers.

Army leaders are now looking at ways to apply scoring based on gender for the six-event, CrossFit-inspired fitness test, said Lt. Col. Peggy Kageleiry, a spokeswoman for the Army's Center for Initial Military Training, which has led the

ACFT's development. The test was designed as a gender- and age-neutral fitness evaluation meant to simulate strength and conditioning challenges faced by soldiers in combat.

"We are addressing these concerns in coordination with Army senior leaders, Congress, and with those it impacts the most, our American soldiers," Kageleiry said.

The ACFT was initially planned to be implemented across the service last year, replacing the decades-old, three-event Army Physical Fitness Test, which was scored based on age and gender. But the Army chose not to implement the new test officially because of limited training opportunities for its soldiers due to the

coronavirus pandemic.

Congress later stepped in and ordered in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act that the Army halt further implementation efforts until a study of the test by a non-Pentagon entity determined whether it was fair for women and its impact on retention and recruiting. Congress cited initial Army data that showed women struggled to pass the test, especially its leg tuck event.

Army testing showed women failed the ACFT at a consistent 65% rate, while men failed at about a 10% rate, according to Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., who sought the pause on the service's implementation of the ACFT.

USAF plans more scrutiny for promotions

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Air Force officers with negative actions on their records may soon face greater scrutiny when being considered for promotions.

Starting March 1, the Air Force will provide selection boards with “adverse information” when they consider officers for promotion in the ranks of major and above, the service said in a statement Thursday.

Wing commanders and others previously authorized to do so will no longer have the discretion to remove adverse information from an officer’s selection record, the statement said.

Previously, the services were

only required to provide this information to general officer promotion boards.

All Defense Department services were required to begin making the changes following guidance issued in December. For reservists called up to active duty, adverse information must be provided to boards considering O-6 and above promotions.

The adverse information includes any substantiated findings or conclusions from an officially documented investigation or inquiry, a guilty verdict at a court-martial, non-judicial punishment, a letter of reprimand, relief of command and conclusions from an official investigation, a service statement said.

Boards for captain and above will also receive “reportable information,” which is when allegations receive significant media attention or are of interest to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The new rule applies to all active duty, reservist and guard officers.

The policy will help “ensure we are promoting leaders of character and competence,” said Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services. “This additional mechanism in the promotion process will promote transparency and accountability for everyone.”

In some cases, adverse infor-

mation dating back to Jan. 1, 2012, will now be filed in an officer’s selection record, the statement said.

Kelly said the service anticipates concern from officers on how this might affect promotion opportunity.

“We often hear about it being a one-mistake Air Force, which really had not been true,” Kelly said, adding that the service’s selection boards and the Senate “have consistently shown the ability” to be objective and recommend and confirm officers for promotion if an incident is “indicative of a mistake and not a character flaw.”

“We expect this to continue,” he said.

Many overseas tours for new airmen, guardians extended

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The Air Force is extending overseas tour lengths from 24 to 36 months for unaccompanied airmen and Space Force guardians on their first permanent duty assignment at bases in Europe and the Pacific, the service said.

The change, which takes effect March 1, was first outlined last month in an Air Force memorandum. It applies to both enlisted service members and officers at nearly two dozen bases and locations, a statement said Thursday.

The duty stations include RAF Mildenhall, RAF Lakenheath, RAF Alconbury, RAF Croughton, London, Menwith Hill, Fairford, Welford, and Moleworth in the United Kingdom; Aviano Air Base, Italy; Stavanger Air Base, Norway; in Germany, all military assignments in the Kaiserslautern area, as well as at Spangdahlem Air Base; and Kadena, Yokota and Misawa air bases in Japan.

An unaccompanied overseas tour at a permanent duty station is one served with-

out command-sponsored dependents, when dependents are authorized at that location.

The new tour length will give the unit more time to train and develop service members while providing them with more stability, the Air Force said.

“During these moves, service members not only have to adjust to their new jobs, but also to a new culture and country, which takes time,” Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services, said in the statement. “A 24-month tour was not adequate for our new Airmen and Guardians to thrive, nor was it enough time to provide the continuity needed for the unit.”

The policy does not apply to retrainees, those switching career fields and prior service members who receive a commission, the Air Force said. The overseas tour lengths for accompanied service members remain the same — 36 or 48 months — depending on the tour type.

In 2019, the Army extended tour lengths for single soldiers to Europe or Japan from 24 to 36 months under similar reasoning as the Air Force.

Okinawa-based Marine suspected of assault arrested

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — An Okinawa-based Marine accused of shoving a Japanese police officer last month has been arrested again on suspicion of indecent assault.

Pfc. Marvin Earl James Jr., 24, a transmission systems operator with 3rd Marine Division at Camp Courtney, was initially taken into custody Jan. 31 on suspicion of interfering with public duties. He was still at Naha Police station Thursday when he was formally arrested again on a related matter.

A police spokesman alleged Friday that James forcibly tried to kiss a woman in a parking lot at about 5 a.m. Jan. 31. She threatened to call police and James fled, the spokesman said.

James was approached about an hour later by a responding police officer, who said James, walking alone in the Kumoji area of Naha, looked suspicious, a police spokesman said. The officer attempted to question James, who had been drinking, and James shoved him, the spokesman said.

Neither the officer nor the unidentified woman was injured, according to police.

Coronavirus might linger in some version for years

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — What if COVID-19 never goes away?

Experts say it's likely that some version of the disease will linger for years. But what it will look like in the future is less clear.

Will the coronavirus, which has already killed more than 2 million people worldwide, eventually be eliminated by a global vaccination campaign, like smallpox? Will dangerous new variants evade vaccines? Or will the virus stick around for a long time, transforming into a mild annoyance, like the common cold?

Eventually, the virus known as SARS-CoV-2 will likely become yet "another animal in the zoo," joining the many other infectious diseases that humanity has learned to live with, predicted Dr. T. Jacob John, who studies viruses and was at the helm of India's efforts to tackle polio and HIV/AIDS.

But no one knows for sure. The virus is evolving rapidly, and new variants are popping up in different countries. The risk of these new variants was underscored when Novavax Inc. found that the company's vaccine did not work as well against mutated versions circulating in Britain and South Africa. The more the virus spreads, experts say, the more likely it is that a new variant will become capable of eluding current tests, treatments and vaccines.

For now, scientists agree on the immediate priority: Vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible. The next step is less certain and depends largely on the strength of the immunity offered by vaccines and natural infections and how long it lasts.

"Are people going to be frequently subject to repeat infections? We don't have enough data yet to know," said Jeffrey Shaman, who studies viruses at Columbia University. Like many researchers, he believes chances are slim that vaccines will confer lifelong immunity.

If humans must learn to live with COVID-19, the nature of that coexistence depends not just on how long immunity lasts, but also how the virus evolves.

Will it mutate significantly each year, requiring annual shots, like the flu? Or will it pop up every few years?

As new variants emerge — some more contagious, some more virulent and some possibly less responsive to vaccines — scientists are reminded how much they don't yet know about the future of the virus, said Mark Jit, who studies viruses at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

"We've only known about this virus for about a year, so we don't yet have data to show its behavior over five years or 10 years," he said.

Parkland seniors' high school years marked by tragedy

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — They were baptized by gunfire their freshman year, bonded as they spent hours hiding under desks, inextricably linked by tragedy. For the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Class of 2021, high school would never be about Friday night football and innocent first kisses.

Seventeen students and staff were killed in the 2018 Valentine's Day shooting. As the Parkland students struggled to define high school apart from tragedy, their senior year has been punctuated by the coronavirus pandemic, upending their lives once again.

The majority are isolated at home on a computer, their hard-fought normal routines altered and their support systems splintered.

The shooting catapulted some students into the spotlight as they rallied for gun control and landed on the cover of Time magazine. But that was just a sliver of the experience of those in this largely affluent, palm-tree studded suburb. In the shadows, many struggle at times to manage daily life.

Their only full year at Stoneman Douglas was as sophomores — a time tinged with triggers from fire alarms and fireworks. Many students felt retraumatized every time they walked by the now cordoned-off freshman building, the site of the shooting.

Like millions of students across the country, proms and pep rallies were forgotten in the wake of the pandemic, depriving Price and the Parkland seniors yet again of traditional rites of passage and a normal high school experience.

Even graduation remains in limbo as closure to their high school years bookended by tragedies.

"At the very most, we're going to have a digital graduation," senior Ryan Servaites said. "And that's going to be the ceremonial end to four years of trauma."

On the brink of their next step, many of the students are finding the balance between mourning a tragedy and moving forward, for themselves and those who died.

"As children, we are supposed to be the innocent ones; we are supposed to be un-touchable," 18-year-old Servaites said. "Now we're at this point where we can't get that childhood we deserve, and as a result, we're angry, we're upset, and we're just trying to do something about it."

China blasts US claims of censorship

Associated Press

BEIJING — China fired back at the United States on Sunday over allegations from the White House that Beijing withheld some information about the coronavirus outbreak from World Health Organization investigators.

In a statement on Saturday, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said Washington had "deep concerns about the way in which the early findings of the COVID-19 investigation were communicated and questions about the process used to reach them."

"It is imperative that this report be independent, with expert findings free from intervention or alteration by the Chinese government," he said, referring to the WHO mission investigating the origins of the pan-

demic in the central city of Wuhan.

China responded Sunday with a statement from its Washington Embassy that said the U.S. had already "gravely damaged international cooperation on COVID-19" and was now "pointing fingers at other countries who have been faithfully supporting the WHO and at the WHO itself."

Following allegations of Chinese withholding of data in The New York Times and other media outlets, investigation team member Peter Daszak tweeted, "This was NOT my experience on @WHO mission."

"As lead of animal/environment working group I found trust & openness w/ my China counterparts. We DID get access to critical new data throughout. We DID increase our understanding of likely spillover pathways," Daszak tweeted.

Muted Mardi Gras hits New Orleans

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Parades canceled. Bars closed. Crowds suppressed. Mardi Gras joy is muted this year in New Orleans as authorities seek to stifle the coronavirus's spread. And it's a blow to the tradition-bound city's party-loving soul.

"This year, it'll be heart-break," said Virginia Saussy, a member of the Muses parade "krewe" whose home, like many along a major parade route, usually overflows with people this time of year. "I think that people have to realize how unusual it is to have this pause in our culture."

Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, is the annual pre-Lenten bash celebrated along much of the Gulf Coast — with the biggest celebration in heavily Catholic New Orleans. Last year's revelry is now believed to have contributed to an early surge that made Louisiana a Southern COVID-19 hot spot.

This year, bars are being forced to close during the final weekend of the season, which began Friday. Parades that generally start 12 days before the big day have been stilled. Mayor LaToya Cantrell is promising a crackdown on large crowds.

Some locals are making the best of it, decking their houses like parade floats. A giant carton of popcorn, huge lollipops and a Paul Bunyan-sized ice cream cone are among the decorations on one two-story "house float" aptly titled "Snacking in Place." Meanwhile, motorists can drive by an array of idled floats at New Orleans' City Park.

New York

ALBANY — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo wrote a book on managing the COVID-19 crisis. Now he faces intensifying accusations that he covered up the true death toll of the pandemic on nursing home residents, attacks that challenge his reputa-

tion for straight-shooting competency and could cloud his political future.

State lawmakers called for investigations, stripping Cuomo of his emergency powers and even his resignation after new details emerged last week about why certain nursing home data was kept under wraps for months, despite requests from lawmakers and others.

Top aide Melissa DeRosa told lawmakers the data was delayed because officials worried that the information was "going to be used against us" by the Trump administration's Department of Justice.

The Cuomo administration for months dramatically underreported the statewide number of COVID-19 deaths among long-term care residents. It is now nearly 15,000, up from the 8,500 previously disclosed.

The new toll amounts to about one-seventh of the roughly 90,000 people living in nursing homes as of 2019 in New York, which has among the most care home residents in the nation.

Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — The number of people hospitalized in Arkansas with the coronavirus fell below 700 on Saturday, according to the Arkansas Department of Health.

There were 690 virus hospitalizations, 22 fewer than Friday, the department reported, while the number of reported virus cases rose by 954 and there were an additional 40 deaths due to COVID-19.

There have been a total of 312,562 cases and 5,252 deaths since the pandemic began.

Arkansas had the sixth most new cases per capita in the nation with 631.92 per 100,000 residents, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Wisconsin

MILWAUKEE — Kenosha County officials say they are

cracking down on Illinois residents who are crossing the border to get the COVID-19 vaccine in Wisconsin.

Kenosha Health Officer Jen Freiheit said in a statement that vaccination clinics are for people who live or work in Kenosha County who are age 65 and over or in the 1A category. Those currently eligible include health care workers, residents and staff in skilled nursing and long-term care facilities, EMTs, police officers, firefighters and corrections officers.

"We are trying our best to discourage non-residents and some might have slipped through, but we are working to crack down on that going forward," Freiheit said, adding: "While we want to get as many shots in arms as possible, Kenosha County residents are our priority."

North Dakota

BISMARCK — North Dakota health officials reported Saturday that an additional 91 people in the state have contracted COVID-19, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 98,551.

No new COVID-19 deaths were reported on Saturday. A total of 1,431 people have died from complications due to the virus since the pandemic began.

Also Saturday, 36 people were hospitalized with the virus, three fewer than a day before.

So far, 94,854 people in North Dakota have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and a total of 45,851 people — or 6.3% of the state's population — have had two doses.

Kansas

LAWRENCE — Members of five fraternities have been banned from the University of Kansas campus for 10 days after they violated public health guidelines aimed at stemming the spread of the coronavirus.

In a campus message Friday

announcing the ban, Vice Provost for Student Affairs Tamara Durham wrote that the university was "disappointed in the poor judgement demonstrated by these individuals."

The Lawrence Journal-World reports that the ban affects members of Delta Tau Delta, Phi Delta Theta, Phi Kappa Psi, Sigma Chi and Sigma Phi Epsilon. University spokesperson Erinn Barcomb-Peterson said the members of those fraternities would be prohibited from entering any "property, buildings, or other facilities of the University of Kansas, excluding Watkins Health Center."

Other than saying that the students' activities violated KU's and Douglas County's public health guidelines, no information has been provided about what sorts of activities led to the bans.

Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota health officials urged this week that people wear masks — and wear them properly — as the state reported an additional seven COVID-19-related deaths on Saturday and 964 new infections.

As Gov. Tim Walz scaled back some restrictions on bars, restaurants, fitness centers and private social gatherings last week, health officials reminded the public that wearing masks properly can help protect people from contracting the virus.

The Star Tribune reported Saturday that surveys showed 57% of Minnesotans always wore masks in public in August, but the rate has since increased to 78%, according to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluations in Washington state. The rate of Minnesotans who at least say they wear masks most of the time is above 93%.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man leaves \$5 million to pet border collie

TN NASHVILLE — It won't be a dog's life for a Tennessee canine whose owner recently died.

Lulu, an 8-year-old border collie, will be living the good life in Nashville after inheriting \$5 million in her owner's will, WTVF-TV reported.

Martha Burton, Lulu's caretaker, told the station Lulu's owner, Bill Dorris, was a successful businessman who wasn't married and died late last year. His will states the money should be put into a trust for Lulu's care. It allows for Burton to be reimbursed for reasonable monthly expenses in the care of Lulu.

"He just really loved the dog," said Burton, who was friends with Dorris and would take care of the dog when he traveled.

Man proposes using rings from other lover

FL ORANGE CITY — A Florida man stole an engagement ring and wedding bands from a girlfriend and used them to propose to another girlfriend, according to authorities.

Volusia County Sheriff's deputies said they have issued an arrest warrant for Joseph Davis, 48, who had not been found.

Their investigation started when a woman from Orange City, Fla., told detectives she had discovered her boyfriend was actually engaged to someone else. When she looked up the fiancée's Facebook page, she noticed a photo of her wear-

ing a wedding band and engagement ring that was identical to her own from a prior marriage, the sheriff's office said in a news release.

The Orange City woman reached out to the fiancée and they both called it off with Davis, who also went by the names "Joe Brown" and "Marcus Brown," the sheriff's office said.

The fiancée, who lives in Orlando, told detectives she had been duped too.

Bicycle rider charged in attack on police officer

KS TOPEKA — A Topeka man who police said attacked an officer has been charged with five criminal counts, Shawnee County District Attorney Mike Kagay said.

Justin Reed, 22, was charged with aggravated battery on a law enforcement officer, two counts of interference with law enforcement, marijuana possession and possession of drug paraphernalia.

The officer was responding to a call about people in a boarded-up home when Reed rode by on his bicycle and tried to get the officer's attention.

When the officer told him to wait, Reed attacked him and tried to take his gun, police said.

Civil War reenacting chicken found

AL CULLMAN — A Mississippi teen who lost his Civil War-reenacting pet chicken Peep outside a Cracker Barrel restaurant in Alabama was reunited with the bird courtesy of a farmer who helped find

the fowl.

Thomas Ramsey, who founded a military reenactment group for youth, told The Cullman Times he was headed home from a weekend event at Spring Hill, Tenn., when he stopped with a friend at the restaurant in Cullman. He left Peep, a rooster that participates in simulated battles, tied to his truck in the parking lot.

Ramsey, 18, said he and his friend walked out about an hour later to discover the chicken had flown the coop and was nowhere to be seen.

With no sign of Peep, Ramsey continued the drive home. Then he got a message that the bird had been found outside the Cracker Barrel.

Store owner convicted for money laundering

VA ROANOKE — A former Virginia store owner was sentenced to eight years in federal prison for her part in a money laundering operation involving an international drug cartel, a federal prosecutor said.

Ana Bella Sanchez-Rios, 48, was sentenced for moving more than \$4.3 million from her Martinsville store for the Mexican-based Jalisco New Generation Cartel, Acting U.S. Attorney Daniel Bubar said in a news release.

According to the news release, Sanchez-Rios admitted in court documents that from May 2016 through September 2018 she used her business to launder the drug trafficking proceeds on behalf of CJNG. Sanchez-Rios also admitted wiring

money to Mexico in small amounts using fake names and addresses as senders.

Party bus bust: 14 arrests, 8 guns found

NY NEW YORK — New York City police busted a packed party bus and arrested more than a dozen people after they were alerted to social media posts showing some passengers board posing with firearms, police said.

The bus, loaded with more than 40 people for a birthday party, was stopped near the Brooklyn waterfront, police said. At least 14 people were taken into custody, including several juveniles, police said. Eight loaded handguns were recovered.

Police have not released the names of the people who were arrested. Charges against them are pending, police said.

Ex-jail guard arrested for smuggling phones

AL OPELIKA — Alabama officials have arrested a former jail guard, saying he illegally smuggled cell-phones and phone accessories to an inmate in return for bribes from the inmate's relatives.

Lee County sheriff's deputies announced they had arrested D'Mario Jones, 27, of Columbus, Ga., on two counts of promoting prison contraband.

Jones was working full-time at the Lee County Detention Center when the alleged incidents took place. Deputies said more arrests are expected.

-From The Associated Press



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Usman takes out Burns in UFC 258

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Kamaru Usman stopped Gilbert Burns with punches 34 seconds into the third round at UFC 258 on Saturday night, retaining his welterweight title with his 13th consecutive UFC victory.

Usman (18-1) defended his title for the third time and broke Georges St. Pierre's UFC record for consecutive welterweight victories with another resourceful, clever performance that ended with a fierce display of power to stop Burns (19-4), his former teammate and sparring partner.

After Usman got dropped in the first round, he recovered impressively to control the second. He ended the fight in the third, putting Burns flat on his back with a perfectly placed right hand just 25 seconds into the round.

Usman pounced and landed another strike that bounced Burns' head off the canvas. He continued to pound the challenger on the ground until referee Herb Dean stepped in.

The Nigerian-born Texan jumped up and yelled to the mostly empty gym to "put some respect on my name!"

"I'm the varsity guy," Usman said. "My fight IQ is different. It's different when you're in the gym with me, and when you get in (the cage), it's a different ballgame. I'm a whole 'nother savage."

Only Anderson Silva, who won 16 straight fights as the UFC's long-reigning middleweight champion, has won more consecutive UFC bouts than Usman, who also tied Khabib Nurmagomedov's mark for the second-most consecutive wins to start a UFC

career. Usman joined six fighters who have racked up 13 straight UFC victories.

Mexican flyweight Alexa Grasso beat young contender Maycee Barber by unanimous decision in the co-main event of the UFC's first pay-per-view show since it returned from Fight Island to the Apex gym on its corporate campus in Las Vegas.

Usman and Burns were longtime teammates in South Florida before Usman moved his training camp to Colorado early last year, partly in anticipation of this showdown. MMA teammates typically don't fight each other, but Usman and Burns had no problem setting aside their history to fight.

"This was a tough one for me to deal with," Usman said. "Gilbert is a guy that I've known from the start. I love him."

NFL: ANALYSIS

Management missteps beginning to add up for Texans

Associated Press

J.J. Watt is gone from the Houston Texans, and Deshaun Watson wants out, too.

The Texans have been making plenty of headlines this off-season. Not one has been good.

Watt was released on Friday, ending the tenure of the face of the franchise, and things could get even worse in Houston with a possible standoff looming with the star quarterback. Watson has requested a trade. New general manager Nick Caserio has said they have "zero interest" in trading him, and coach David Culley said he expects him to be the team's quarterback next season.

The story line is a familiar one in Houston, where the Rockets recently dealt with a similarly stormy situation involving superstar James Harden. Rumors swirled all offseason that Harden wanted to leave, but the Rockets didn't deal him before the season began. That led to a miserable Harden stuck on a team that limped to a 3-6 record. His time in Houston was punctuated by a postgame rant after a blowout loss to the Lakers when he berated the Rockets,

saying, "We're just not good enough."

He was shipped to Brooklyn the next day, but not before being banned from practice and drawing the ire of his teammates for his attitude and comments.

Could the Texans be headed for the same fate with Watson? If he doesn't want to be on the team would refusing to trade him make anything better?

Watson, who signed a four-year, \$156 million contract last year, has been unhappy with the direction of the team for some time. Sports Illustrated reported weeks ago that Watson was upset the Texans didn't initially request to interview Kansas City offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy for their coaching vacancy. They eventually did interview Bieniemy before hiring Culley.

Some have put the blame for the current state of the Texans on owner Cal McNair, who has run the team since the death of his father Bob McNair in November 2018. Although there's plenty of blame to go around, former coach and general manager Bill O'Brien, fired after an

0-4 start, deserves his fair share of criticism for decisions he made while in charge.

The worst of those moves came last March when he traded receiver DeAndre Hopkins to Arizona for running back David Johnson and a second- and fourth-round draft pick.

There are also questions about the rise of Jack Easterby, the executive vice president of football operations and a former chaplain for the Patriots with no personnel experience who gained power in the wake of O'Brien's dismissal.

Houston could have tried to trade Watt instead of releasing him, likely receiving at least one draft pick in return. But the defensive end asked McNair to be released and the owner agreed.

"We felt this did right by J.J.," he said. "Not every decision is easy or easy to understand. You want to do what's right for our players. We want to focus on bringing championships to Houston."

So why is Houston refusing to acquiesce to Watson's request after happily complying with the one from Watt? Keeping Watson on the team until train-

ing camp only to have him hold out is sure to be more detrimental to the Texans than getting a big haul in exchange for the quarterback.

Watson's contract makes a trade more difficult because of the future dead money for Houston, which gave him a \$27 million contract bonus that is prorated.

The Texans are coming off a 4-12 season and don't have a first-round draft pick. So even if they keep the electric Watson, it's hard to envision them being much better next season.

McNair wouldn't discuss Watson's future on Friday, other than to say their conversations are "private." But he did insist letting Watt go is not a sign that they're rebuilding.

"Let's be clear. We're here to win. We're here to win today," he said. "The NFL's so competitive that there's really no time for rebuilding."

"And every decision we make, even if it's difficult it's done with one (thought). And that's: 'Is it going to help us bring a trophy to Houston?' And that's our goal."

Reaves, Sooners hold off Mountaineers

Associated Press

MORGANTOWN, W. Va — Austin Reaves scored four of his 28 points in the final minute of the second overtime and No. 12 Oklahoma held off No. 14 West Virginia 91-90 on Saturday.

Umoya Gibson added 21 for the Sooners (13-5, 8-4 Big 12), who had relinquished a nine-point lead in regulation.

Derek Culver had his 10th double-double of the season with a career-high 29 points and 14 rebounds for the Mountaineers (14-6, 7-4). Sean McNeil added 21 points, all after halftime, and Miles McBride scored 19.

Culver scored seven points in the second overtime to put West Virginia ahead 88-85 with 2:12 left. De’Vion Harmon’s layup and two free throws by Reaves gave the Sooners the lead before McBride’s layup with 41 seconds left put the Mountaineers ahead 90-89.

No. 19 Creighton 86, No. 5 Villanova 70: Marcus Zegarowski scored a season-high 25 points, Mitch Ballock had 17 of his 20 points in the second half and the Bluejays’ offense was at its high-tempo best in a rout of the visiting Wildcats

Creighton (16-5, 12-4 Big East) won for the sixth time in seven games.

No. 1 Gonzaga 100, San Francisco 61: Drew Timme scored 28 points and grabbed 10 rebounds as the visiting Bulldogs reached at least 20 wins for the 24th consecutive season.

Aaron Cook, Joel Ayayi and Corey Kispert each scored 12 points for Gonzaga (20-0, 11-0 West Coast), which won its 24th consecutive game dating to last season.

Earlier Saturday, the Bulldogs were the No. 1 overall seed in rankings released by the NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Committee. Selection Sunday is a month away. They played like the top seed against the Dons.

No. 4 Ohio State 78, Indiana 59: E.J. Liddell scored 19 points and Justice Sueing had 16 as the host Buckeyes pulled away for their sixth consecutive victory.

Ohio State (17-4, 11-4 Big Ten) has won nine of its past 10 and has settled into a style of play that has become its identity — good shooting, timely three-pointers, multiple contributors and fewer mistakes than their opponents.

No. 9 Virginia 60, North Carolina 48: Jay Huff had 18 points and 12 rebounds and the host Cavaliers took control early and beat the Tar Heels for the seventh consecutive time.

Sam Hauser added 17 points for Virginia (15-3, 11-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) and Trey Murphy III had 12 as ACC-leading Virginia won its fourth in a row.

Arkansas 86, No. 10 Missouri 81 (OT): Justin Smith scored 19 points to lead the visiting Razorbacks to an 86-81 overtime victory over the Tigers.

Moses Moody scored 15 and Jalen Tate added 14 for Arkansas (16-5, 8-4 Southeastern Conference).

No. 11 Alabama 115, Georgia 82: Herbert Jones scored 17 of his career-high 21 points in the first half and the host Tide had a blistering shooting night.

Freshman Josh Primo scored 19 points, all after the half, for Alabama (17-5, 12-1 Southeastern Conference), which had five players score in double figures and reached a season high in points.

No. 13 Texas 70, TCU 55: Andrew Jones scored 19 points to lead the Longhorns to their first home win in nearly a month.

Texas (13-5, 7-4 Big 12) started sloppy with three straight turnovers but soon cleaned up those problems. Jones found it easy to create on his way to 13 points in the first half.

No. 15 Iowa 88, Michigan State 58: Joe Wieskamp scored 21 points to lead the visiting Hawkeyes’ balanced offense in a win over the Spartans.

LSU 78, No. 16 Tennessee 65: Cam Thomas scored 25 points, JaVonte Smart added 20 and the host Tigers knocked off the Volunteers.

Tennessee (14-5, 7-5 Southeastern Conference) was within 50-46 nearly midway through the second half but made just six field goals in the final 12 minutes, and the Tigers stretched their lead.

No. 17 Florida State 92, Wake Forest 85 (OT): RaiQuan Gray scored 24 points and pulled down 12 rebounds in the host Seminoles’ first game in two weeks.

No. 20 USC 76, Washington State 65: Tahj Eaddy scored a season high 29 points, Evan Mobley had 20 points, 11 rebounds and six blocked shots and the visiting Trojans beat the Cougars for the 10th straight time.

No. 22 Loyola Chicago 81, Drake 54: Aher Uguak scored 20 points while leading the visiting Ramblers over Missouri Valley Conference rival Bulldogs

No. 23 Oklahoma State 67, Kansas State 60: Cade Cunningham scored 15 points to help the host Cowboys defeat the Wildcats.

No. 25 Rutgers 64, Northwestern 50: Ron Harper Jr. had 14 points and 11 rebounds, Myles Johnson controlled the paint with 12 points and 14 rebounds for the host Scarlet Knights.

Colgate 84, Army 74: Jordan Burns and Nelly Cummings scored 16 points apiece as the Raiders extended their winning streak to seven games.

Fresno State 67, Air Force 64: Orlando Robinson had 21 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Bulldogs. Nikc Jackson had 13 points for the Falcons (4-16, 2-14).

Down but not out, Serena advances to quarterfinals

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Serena Williams tumbled to the ground, her heavily taped right ankle turning, her body contorting, her racket flying.

This was early in the second set of a competitive-as-can-be matchup in the Australian Open’s fourth round against a younger version of herself — stinging serves, huge groundstroke cuts, a fierce streak — and

during a stretch Sunday when things seemed to be slipping away.

Williams quickly put up a hand to indicate she was OK, retied the laces of her right shoe and, while it took her a bit to regain control, she did so, just in the nick of time. Grabbing the last two games, Williams pulled out 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 victory over No. 7 seed Aryna Sabalenka to reach the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park.

Two years ago at this tournament, Wil-

liams was on the verge of a quarterfinal win when she hurt her ankle and ended up losing.

“Well, my first thought was, ‘Not another ankle sprain in Australia.’ But I knew immediately that it wasn’t. Then I was more embarrassed than anything. I was like, ‘Oh, my goodness.’ I don’t like falling,” Williams said. “But I was fine. I mean, once I realized I didn’t twist my ankle, like at all, I was like, ‘OK, I’m good, let me just get up.’”

Nets rout Warriors in Durant's return

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Kevin Durant offered hugs and handshakes all around, then left a winner in his reunion with the Warriors.

Durant did a bit of everything in his first trip back to the Bay Area to play the team he helped capture two championships over three years, scoring 20 points in the Brooklyn Nets' 134-117 victory against Golden State on Saturday night.

"My time here at Golden State was so much fun," Durant said. "It was such a big learning experience, especially learning the game of basketball, a different philosophy. I'm going to take that with me for the rest of my life."

The NBA Finals MVP during both title runs, Durant missed his initial three shots before making a three-pointer at the 5:49 mark of the first quarter and finished 8-for-19 from the floor and 1 of 6 on threes.

Pal Stephen Curry didn't have his best stroke either, go-

ing 10 of 17 for 27 points and 2-for-9 from deep as the cold-shooting Warriors lost their third straight to the Nets and missed a chance at their first three-game winning streak of the season.

Golden State paid video tribute with "Welcome back KD!" during a first-quarter timeout and plans to do so again during his next visit to Chase Center when fans have returned.

"This is something that is such a no-brainer. When Kevin came here and gave us three years of just incredible basketball the least we could do is welcome him back with open arms," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "... A guy that gave everything to us for three years then left with a devastating injury. There should be a lot of love, he did so much for us."

Brooklyn had lost three of four but welcomed back Durant after he missed the past three games under COVID-19 quarantine protocols.

Jazz 112, Heat 94: Donovan

Mitchell scored 26 points to help host Utah beat Miami for its seventh consecutive victory.

Bojan Bogdanovic added 19 points, and Rudy Gobert had 16 points, 12 rebounds and three blocks for the Jazz. Georges Niang chipped in 14 points and a career-high five assists.

NBA-leading Utah improved to 22-5. It has won 18 of 19 games since a 4-4 start.

Kendrick Nunn scored 20 points for the Heat. Jimmy Butler added 15 points, eight rebounds and five assists.

Suns 120, 76ers 111: Devin Booker scored 36 points, Chris Paul added 18 points and 10 assists and host Phoenix beat Philadelphia for its fifth straight victory.

The Suns have won eight of their past nine games and improved to 16-9. They shot 61% and got a big game from their bench, especially from Dario Saric. He scored 15 points in his first game back after missing 10 straight.

Joel Embiid had 35 points on

12-of-23 shooting for the 76ers. They have lost two in a row but still hold the top spot in the Eastern Conference at 18-9. Ben Simmons and Tobias Harris each added 18 points.

Knicks 121 Rockets 99: Julius Randle and rookie Immanuel Quickley each scored 22 points and host New York sent Houston to a season-high fifth straight loss.

Derrick Rose added 16 points for the Knicks, who had no problem in their first game after losing starting center Mitchell Robinson to a broken right hand Friday night in a victory at Washington.

Pacers 125, Hawks 113: Doug McDermott scored 26 points, Myles Turner had 19 points and 10 rebounds and won at Atlanta for its second straight victory.

Indiana scored 41 points in the final period and used a 27-7 run to take control. Aaron Holiday was the spark with the outcome on the line, scoring 13 of his 18 points in the fourth.

Blues end Coyotes' run at 3 games

Associated Press

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Mike Hoffman beat goalie Antti Raanta over the shoulder with a wrist shot 1:49 into overtime to lift the St. Louis Blues past the Arizona Coyotes 5-4 Saturday in the sixth of seven straight games between the teams.

Islanders 4, Bruins 1: Mathew Barzal scored on a power-play goal in the third period and host New York ended Boston's points streak at 10 games.

Lightning 6, Panthers 1: Tyler Johnson scored two of Tampa Bay's four second-period goals and the visiting Lightning avenged a loss to Florida two nights earlier.

Canadiens 2, Maple Leafs 1: Brendan Gallagher scored with 3:07 left, Carey Price made 21 saves and Montreal won at Toronto to cut the Maple Leafs' North Division lead to three points, Tyler Toffoli tied it for the Canadiens at 6:11 of the third period, with Gallagher assisting on the play.

Hurricanes 4, Stars 3 (SO): Vincent Trocheck scored the only goal in the shootout after Joe Pavelski tied it for Dallas late in regulation, and Carolina beat the host Stars for their fourth win in four tries this season against the defending Western Conference champions.

Blackhawks 3, Blue Jackets 2 (OT): Alex DeBrincat scored 35 seconds into overtime and host Chicago rallied to beat Columbus.

Senators 2, Jets 1: Brady Tkachuk tipped in Mike Reilly's shot from the point with 8.2 seconds remaining to lift Ottawa to a win at Winnipeg.

Red Wings 4, Predators 2: Luke Glendinning had a goal and two assists, Jonathan Bernier made 21 saves and Detroit won at Nashville.

Canucks 3, Flames 1: Tyler Myers' goal with just over five minutes remaining proved to be the winner and host Vancouver snapped a six-game losing streak with a victory over Calgary.

Knights ruin Sharks' return

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Jonathan Marchessault scored the first of Vegas' three power-play goals and the Golden Knights spoiled San Jose's first home game in nearly a year with a 3-1 victory over the Sharks on Saturday.

Mark Stone and Chandler Stephenson also scored as Vegas took advantage of its first three opportunities with the man advantage to win for the fourth time in five games. Marc-Andre Fleury made 24 saves.

"I thought that our entries were a lot better, we kept a pretty simple mindset, move the puck and and try to get shots to the net," defenseman Alec Martinez said. "They aren't always going to be pretty. ... You have to get to the hard areas to score goals. That's what we did."