

## Yokosuka counts 8 new cases; Iwakuni 'back to zero cases'

By JOSEPH DITZLER  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, reported eight coronavirus new infections since Friday, according to a Facebook post.

Two are recent arrivals to Japan and six were discovered during contact tracing. Twelve patients have recovered since Friday, and the base is monitoring 43 in all.

Other U.S. commanders in Japan provided no new case tallies between Friday evening and Tuesday.

Col. Lance Lewis at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni near Hiroshima declared the air station free of known COVID-19 patients, according to a Facebook post Tuesday.

The year began, Lewis wrote, with a COVID outbreak on base.

"That outbreak occurred because of unauthorized gatherings and was, in all manners of speaking, preventable," he said. "As an installation, we rose to the challenge the outbreak presented and now, I can proudly say, we are back to zero cases of COVID on MCAS Iwakuni."

On Friday, two other U.S. in-

stallations — Naval Air Facility Atsugi southwest of Tokyo and Sasebo Naval Base on Kyushu — said they had cleared their last known coronavirus patients.

Yokota Air Base, the headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan in Tokyo, announced Friday it had one patient still under observation.

At MCAS Iwakuni, Lewis lifted a prohibition on visiting Hiroshima on liberty, according to his statement Tuesday. Service members, Defense Department civilians, contractors and family members must be out of Hiroshima between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. Exceptions apply to anyone on official business or who lives there.

Orders on wearing masks, maintaining six feet separation between individuals and frequent handwashing still apply, both commanders said.

The greater Tokyo metro area and parts of central Honshu, including Osaka and Kyoto, remain in a state of emergency until March 7. The emergency brought with it voluntary measures, including early closing of businesses, increased telework and a reduction in travel.

## Virus again hits USS Theodore Roosevelt

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS  
*Stars and Stripes*

Three sailors have contracted the coronavirus on the same aircraft carrier where an outbreak of the disease last year led to the firing of the skipper and the resignation of the secretary of the Navy.

The USS Theodore Roosevelt sailors have not experienced symptoms and are isolated on the ship, the Navy said Tuesday. Those who have had recent contact with the sailors are now quarantining.

"The ship is following an aggressive mitigation strategy in accordance with Navy and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines to include mandatory mask wearing, social distancing and proper hygiene and sanitation practices," a Navy statement said.

The Theodore Roosevelt last year suffered the Navy's largest coronavirus outbreak aboard a ship to date. It diverted to Guam on March 26 to address that outbreak, which resulted in 1,271 testing positive for the virus. One crew member died.

That outbreak made additional

headlines when then-Navy Secretary Thomas Modly fired the Theodore Roosevelt's commander, Capt. Brett Crozier, after a letter he wrote seeking help was leaked to the San Francisco Chronicle.

His dismissal elicited an immediate backlash from Washington, but Chief of Naval Operations Mike Gilday ultimately upheld the decision, citing failures in Crozier's leadership aside from the letter.

This is not the first time since the major outbreak that a Theodore Roosevelt sailor has tested positive for the coronavirus. At least two tested positive in October and were evacuated as the carrier trained off California, the Navy said at the time. The Theodore Roosevelt last week joined the USS Nimitz in the South China Sea for a dual-carrier exercise.

Despite the three sailors testing positive, the ship "is currently underway and remains fully operational," according to the statement. The Navy did not say where the San Diego-based carrier is operating, but official photos showed it in the South China Sea on Saturday.

## Contractor killed, 9 injured in attack on US base in Iraq

By CHAD GARLAND  
*Stars and Stripes*

A rocket attack killed a civilian contractor and injured nine others, including a U.S. service member, at an airfield in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region Monday, the military said.

Of 14 rockets fired, three 107 mm rounds hit Irbil International Airport, Army Col. Wayne Marotto, a military spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, said Tuesday in a

statement on Twitter. The slain contractor was not an American, he said.

Eight of the wounded were contractors, Marotto said. Five Americans, including the service member, were being examined for concussions, he said.

The commercial airport shares space with a base for U.S. and other anti-Islamic State coalition troops.

Three civilians were injured by rockets that overflew the base and

hit residential areas, Kurdistan Regional Government officials said.

The small truck that fired them was found between Irbil and Gwer, a town about 30 miles to the city's southwest, the region's Interior Ministry said in a statement Tuesday. A similar vehicle was used in the last attack on the airport in September, it said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged to support an Iraqi investigation and efforts to hold the

perpetrators accountable, he said in a statement after a call with Kurdish Prime Minister Masrour Barzani.

The group Saraya Awliya al-Dam, whose name means "Guardians of Blood Brigades," claimed responsibility in a statement shared online. It previously claimed several attacks on contractor convoys, said Evan Kohlmann, one of the founders of the risk intelligence firm Flashpoint.

# Pelosi plans 9/11-style commission for riot

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Monday that Congress will establish an independent, Sept. 11-style commission to look into the deadly insurrection that took place at the U.S. Capitol.

Pelosi said the commission will “investigate and report on the facts and causes relating to the January 6, 2021, domestic terrorist attack upon the United States Capitol Complex ... and relating to the interference with the peaceful transfer of power.”

In a letter to Democratic colleagues, Pelosi said the House will also put forth supplemental spending to boost security at the

Capitol.

After former President Donald Trump’s acquittal at his second Senate impeachment trial, bipartisan support appeared to be growing for an independent commission to examine the deadly insurrection.

Investigations into the riot were already planned, with Senate hearings scheduled later this month in the Senate Rules Committee. Pelosi, D-Calif., asked retired Army Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré to lead an immediate review of the Capitol’s security process.

In her letter Monday, Pelosi said, “It is clear from his findings and from the impeachment trial that we must get to the truth of

how this happened.”

She added, “As we prepare for the Commission, it is also clear from General Honoré’s interim reporting that we must put forth a supplemental appropriation to provide for the safety of Members and the security of the Capitol.”

Lawmakers from both parties, speaking on Sunday’s news shows, signaled that even more inquiries were likely. The Senate verdict Saturday, with its 57-43 majority falling 10 votes short of the two-thirds needed to convict Trump, hardly put to rest the debate about the Republican former president’s culpability for the Jan. 6 assault.

“There should be a complete

investigation about what happened,” said Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, one of seven Republicans who voted to convict Trump. “What was known, who knew it and when they knew, all that, because that builds the basis so this never happens again.”

Cassidy said he was “attempting to hold President Trump accountable,” and added that as Americans hear all the facts, “more folks will move to where I was.” He was censured by his state’s party after the vote.

An independent commission along the lines of the one that investigated the Sept. 11 attacks would probably require legislation to create.

## NC GOP censures Burr over impeachment vote

New York Daily News

North Carolina’s Republican Party formally censured Sen. Richard Burr on Monday over his vote to convict Donald Trump at his impeachment trial last week — the latest GOP lawmaker to draw backlash at home for finding the former president guilty of inciting the attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The 25 members of the Tar Heel State GOP unanimously voted to deliver the stinging rebuke of Burr during a closed-door meeting of the group’s central committee, the party said in a statement.

“The NCGOP agrees with the strong majority of Republicans in both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate that the Democrat-led attempt to impeach a former President lies outside the United States Constitution,” the party’s statement said.

Burr, who’s retiring at the end of this term, was among seven Republican senators who voted to convict Trump during his unprecedented second impeachment trial on Saturday. An uncompro-

missing conservative, Burr’s vote for conviction took Republicans by surprise and infuriated many of his supporters in North Carolina.

In explaining his vote, Burr said Trump “bears responsibility” for the Jan. 6 attack — which left five people dead, including a police officer — and lambasted the ex-president for using his office to “inflare the situation instead of immediately calling for an end to the assault.”

“By what he did and by what he did not do, President Trump violated his oath of office to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution,” Burr said in a statement after the vote. “My hope is that with today’s vote, America can begin to move forward and focus on the critical issues facing our country today.”

As Burr’s vacating his seat in 2023, his state party’s rebuke has limited impact. But the move — along with similar actions against other Republicans who turned on Trump — shows the enduring strength of Trump’s support within the GOP, especially at the state and local level.

## Biden's commitment to hike in minimum wage questioned

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Union activist Terrence Wise recalls being laughed at when he began pushing for a national \$15 per hour minimum wage almost a decade ago. Nearly a year into the pandemic, the idea isn’t so funny.

The coronavirus has renewed focus on challenges facing hourly employees who have continued working in grocery stores, gas stations and other in-person locations even as much of the workforce has shifted to virtual environments. President Joe Biden has responded by including a provision in the massive pandemic relief bill that would more than double the minimum wage from the current \$7.25 to \$15 per hour.

But the effort is facing an unexpected roadblock: Biden himself. The president has seemingly undermined the push to raise the minimum wage by acknowledging its dim prospects in Congress, where it faces political opposition and procedur-

al hurdles.

That’s frustrating to activists like Wise, who worry their victory is being snatched away at the last minute despite an administration that’s otherwise an outspoken ally.

“To have it this close on the doorstep, they need to get it done,” said Wise, 41, a department manager at a McDonald’s in Kansas City and a national leader of Fight for 15, an organized labor movement. “They need to feel the pressure.”

The minimum wage debate highlights one of the central tensions emerging in the early days of Biden’s presidency. He won the White House with pledges to respond to the pandemic with a barrage of liberal policy proposals. But as a 36-year veteran of the Senate, Biden is particularly attuned to the political dynamics on Capitol Hill and can be blunt in his assessments.

“I don’t think it’s going to survive,” Biden recently told CBS News, referring to the minimum wage hike.

# Massive winter storm blasts across US

*Associated Press*

RALEIGH, N.C. — At least three people were found dead early Tuesday after a tornado tore through a seaside town in North Carolina at the rough edge of a blast of winter weather across the United States. Millions of people remained without power amid subfreezing temperatures, and authorities warned of treacherous travel conditions in many states.

The massive winter storm that overwhelmed a Southwestern power grid and immobilized the Southern Plains was carrying heavy snow and freezing rain eastward, with bad weather spreading through into New England and the Deep South, the National Weather Service said.

The storm system left behind record-setting cold temperatures with wind-chill warnings extending from Canada into Mexico. Chicago woke up to a foot-and-a-half of snow, forcing the closure of in-person classes for Chicago Public Schools.

The worst U.S. outages were in Texas, affecting more than 4 million homes and businesses Tuesday. More than 250,000 people also lost power across parts of Appalachia, and another quarter-million were still without electricity following an ice storm in northwest Oregon, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility outage reports. Another 4 million people lost power in Mexico.

The Southwest Power Pool, a group of utilities covering 14 states, imposed rolling two-hour blackouts to ease the extreme de-

mand for heat and electricity. It said the outages were “a last resort to preserve the reliability of the electric system as a whole.”

The outages forced a Texas county to scramble to get more than 8,000 doses of Moderna’s coronavirus vaccine into arms. The Harris County Public Health facility lost power after 1 a.m. on Monday and its backup generator also failed, said Rafael Lemaitre, a spokesman for Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo.

Looking for large groups of people in places where they wouldn’t have to drive and with appropriate medical personnel on hand, county officials distributed the doses at three hospitals, Rice University and the county jail.

“It feels amazing. I’m very grateful,” said Harry Golen, a 19-year-old sophomore who waited for nearly four hours with his friends, much of it in the frigid cold, and was among the last people to get the shots, which otherwise wouldn’t have reached students until March or April.

Hidalgo, the top elected official in Houston, said she didn’t believe any of the vaccines were lost. But the worsening conditions also delayed vaccine deliveries. More than 400,000 additional vaccine doses due in Texas now won’t arrive until Wednesday at least, officials said.

The tornado in Brunswick County, N.C., killed 3 people and injured at least 10 as it tore through a golf course community and another rural area just before midnight Monday, destroying dozens of homes. Gov.

Roy Cooper said rescue operations were continuing Tuesday.

“The sky lit up and there was a lot of pop-pop-popping. And the loud thunder. And then it sounded like a train, a freight train coming through. The roar of a freight train. That’s when all the damage occurred,” said Sharon Benson, 63. She said her roof was damaged, the garage door was blown off, windows were shattered and nearby trees were uprooted.

Authorities in multiple states reported deaths in crashes on icy roads from this weather front, including two people whose vehicle slid off a road and overturned in a waterway in Kentucky on Sunday, state police said.

Deaths in Texas included a woman and a girl died from suspected carbon monoxide poisoning in Houston, at a home without electricity from a car running in an attached garage, police said. Law enforcement also said subfreezing temperatures were likely to blame for the deaths of two men found along Houston-area roadways.

With more frigid days expected, frustration mounted over power outages affecting Texas and surrounding states. The surging demand and the loss of some power stations in the cold forced blackouts typically only seen in 100-degree Fahrenheit summers.

More than 500 people were hunkering down at one shelter in Houston, but Mayor Sylvester Turner said other warming centers had to be shut down because those locations, too, lost power.

## Deaths highlight rare Rockies avalanche danger

*Associated Press*

DENVER — The deaths of two Colorado men caught in avalanches and a third in Montana over the frigid Presidents Day weekend show how backcountry skiers and others in the Rocky Mountain wilderness risk triggering weak layers of snow that have created the most hazardous conditions in a decade, forecasters say.

At least 25 people have been killed in avalanches in the United States so far this year — more than the 23 who died last winter. Typically, 27 people die in avalanches in the U.S. annually.

Avalanche forecasters say they have rarely seen the danger as high as it is now — and it will grow as more snow moves into the Rockies, adding weight and stress on a weak, granular base layer of snow

that’s susceptible to breaking apart and triggering especially wide slides on steep slopes.

The main culprit is that ground layer of snow that dropped in October. A dry November weakened it, which is anywhere from several inches to several feet thick, and despite more snow falling, it’s stayed the consistency of granular sugar, said Dave Zinn, an avalanche forecaster for the Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center in southwestern Montana.

“That layer consists of large, sugary crystals that don’t bond together well. It’s impossible to make a snowball from it. And when it becomes weighted down, it becomes fragile and breaks,” bringing down the heavier layers on top of it, Zinn said.

“It’s the weakest link in the chain. When

you pile on more snow, there’s always one spot that’s going to break,” said Ethan Greene, director of the Colorado Avalanche Information Center.

On Sunday, backcountry skier Craig Kitto, 45, of Bozeman, Mont., was fatally injured when the forest slope he and a companion were climbing cracked without warning, collapsed and swept him downhill into a tree. The other person wasn’t hurt.

Similar conditions may have led to the death of 57-year-old David Heide, a backcountry skier whose body was found in an avalanche debris field Sunday in central Colorado’s Clear Creek County. In neighboring Grand County, an avalanche carried a snowmobiler onto a frozen lake Sunday, and his body was found buried in snow. A coroner is investigating.

# Calif. prioritizes 2nd shot, closes stations

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco is the latest California city to temporarily shutter a mass vaccination site due to lack of vaccine, joining Los Angeles in pausing inoculations amid a national shortage, even as new federal-state vaccination sites open.

The mayor of Los Angeles said Monday that the city will prioritize people needing second shots after closing its mass vaccination site at Dodger Stadium and other locations last week when it received just 16,000 doses of vaccine, far fewer than usual.

In San Francisco, mass vaccinations are on hold at the Moscone convention center for a week until supply ramps up, officials announced Sunday. They also said vaccinations at City College of San Francisco will stop then restart Friday, but only for second dose appointments.

## Minnesota

DULUTH — Canadian officials on Monday began enforcing tighter restrictions on non-essential travel across its border, which many northern Minnesota business owners view as a move in the wrong direction.

Canada has kept its border closed to nonessential visitors for nearly 11 months because of the coronavirus. New measures to require COVID-19 tests when entering the country are meant to discourage travel by Canadians to the U.S. and elsewhere.

While some Minnesota border businesses have been saved by in-state residents heading north during the pandemic, the closure has taken a toll on resort owners who have been hoping for looser restrictions or some exemptions, the Star Tribune reported.

## Kentucky

FRANKFORT — Kentucky's rate of positive COVID-19

cases fell again Monday and the state had a fifth straight week of decline in the number of cases, Gov. Andy Beshear said.

It's the first time the state has had five weeks of declining cases since the initial case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Kentucky last March, Beshear said.

The state reported 723 new cases Monday, the lowest since Oct. 12, Beshear said. It had 9 deaths and a positivity rate of 6.57%.

Meanwhile, Beshear said child care workers have been moved up in priority for the coronavirus vaccine. He said they are now included in phase 1B and can sign up anywhere in the state currently offering vaccines.

## New York

NEW YORK — New York City's subways will run for two more hours every day starting later this month, and the nightly system shutdown for cleaning will be reduced as part of a phased reopening, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority said Monday.

Starting Feb. 22, subways will run until 2 a.m., and start again at 4 a.m., the first expansion of operating hours since shutdowns were instituted in May of last year to allow for cleanings during the pandemic.

The cleanings that had gone on between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. will continue in the shortened shutdown period, she said.

The shutdown of New York City's famously all-hours subway system was jarring to many. Barring short-term interruptions by events like severe weather or labor disputes, the subways had been run as a continuous, around-the-clock operation since 1904.

## Tennessee

KNOXVILLE — Officials in eastern Tennessee have hired an external auditor and asked

police to investigate after a box of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines went missing.

Public health officials announced last week the 975 doses were likely thrown out by accident.

Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs said on Monday that he reached out to external auditing firm Pugh CPA after seeking advice from District Attorney General Charme Allen's Office. In addition, Knox County Health Department Director Dr. Martha Buchanan asked the Knoxville Police Department to investigate.

Knox County said state health officials confirmed that the doses were shipped to the region, but local officials said they have no record of receiving them.

Buchanan has said that based on GPS data, she believes the box containing the doses was probably discarded by someone who thought they were throwing out dry ice. Due to security reasons, vaccine doses are shipped without any readily identifiable information attached.

## Missouri

JEFFERSON CITY — Just over 10% of Missouri's population has received at least one shot of the COVID-19 vaccine as of Monday, the state health department said.

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services data showed 873,675 vaccine doses were distributed, with 239,293 people receiving both doses. A vast majority of the shots have gone to older residents, with those 85 and older receiving 34.4%, followed by 22.4% for those between 75 and 84, and 24.8% for those between 65 and 74.

Gov. Mike Parson's administration on Sunday announced several more mass vaccination sites across the state for this week, but residents were urged to check to ensure the events

were not postponed because of frigid weather and snow that has settled over the state.

On Monday, Missouri reported 471,662 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 7,455 deaths since the pandemic began. That's an increase of 1,555 confirmed cases and three deaths since Friday.

## Oregon

BEND — An outbreak of COVID-19 traced to Summit High School students who attended a party a week ago had infected 24 students as of Saturday, and extended the closure of in-person classes at the Bend school through Friday.

School principal Michael McDonald said in an email that Deschutes County had confirmed 24 cases of COVID-19 among youth who attend Summit High and were primary or secondary exposures from the party, the Bend Bulletin reported.

While Summit had in-person classes Feb. 8 and 9, there was no confirmed spread of the virus at school, he said.

To prevent the potential spread of the virus, however, the school will return to distance learning through Friday, with an expected return to in-person classes and activities Feb. 22. That will allow the equivalent of a 10-day quarantine from the last time students were in the school building with academics or activities, McDonald said.

Students who did not attend the party or have contact with those who did, and who have no symptoms, are considered low risk for COVID-19 exposure, McDonald said. But health officials encouraged anyone who may have been in contact with others who were exposed or who live with elderly or medically fragile family members to consider isolating from those family members and assume the youth or adult may be contagious.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Sheriff offers Valentine's 'special' for ex-lovers

**NC** NASHVILLE — A North Carolina sheriff's office gave people a chance on Valentine's Day weekend to show their former lovers they're still wanted by turning them in if they have outstanding warrants.

The Nash County Sheriff's Office offered what it called a "Valentine's Day Weekend Special," which it described as "a special too sweet to pass up."

The "offer" posted on its Facebook page included what the sheriff's office described as a set of limited-edition platinum bracelets, free transportation with a chauffeur and a one-night minimum stay in "our luxurious (five-star) accommodations." It tops the offer with a special Valentine's dinner.

### Pandemic is making state's roads trashier

**SC** CHARLESTON — South Carolina's roads are getting trashier because of COVID-19.

The pandemic is keeping inmate crews and volunteers from gathering to clean up highways, anti-litter group Palmetto Pride told The Post and Courier of Charleston.

The problem is compounded by more people going to drive-thrus for food and then tossing disposable containers out their vehicles, South Carolina Department of Transportation Secretary Christy Hall said.

"We're seeing an epidemic of litter all across the highways, and we can't keep up with it," Hall said.

The department hired contractors to pick up roadside litter for the first time, paying

\$668,000 for them to collect 544,000 pounds of trash, Hall said.

### Cousins catch 16-foot python on family property

**FL** ZOLFO SPRINGS — Two Florida cousins recently captured a huge Burmese Python after spotting it slithering on their property in central Florida.

Aaron Brown told Fox13 that he was recently driving down the street near his home in Zolfo Springs when he spotted the large snake, the station reported.

Brown called his cousin, William Wilkinson, and the two of them, along with Wilkinson's son, Hunter, worked to hook and shoot the snake after it moved into a culvert.

At about 16 feet and 300 pounds, the python was the largest reported snake to be found in the area.

### Man arrested after van hits occupied ambulance

**DE** DOVER — A Delaware man is facing charges after police said he crashed his van into an occupied ambulance.

The incident happened when a van driven by Justin Pawlowski, 35, slammed into the rear of the ambulance, according to Dover police.

Three occupants of the ambulance, including two ambulance staffers, were taken to the hospital with injuries.

The patient who was being transported in the ambulance was not injured.

Pawlowski was pinned inside his vehicle and suffered a broken leg and other minor injuries. A passenger inside the van was

taken to the hospital for treatment of a shoulder injury.

Police said Pawlowski will be charged after being released from the hospital with three counts of vehicular assault, reckless endangering, drunken driving and traffic offenses.

### Funeral home van with body inside stolen

**MO** ST. LOUIS — A funeral home van carrying a woman's body was stolen in north St. Louis County when the driver stopped at a convenience store and left it running, police said.

The white cargo van belongs to William C. Harris Funeral Directors. St. Louis County police said the 2012 Nissan NV1500 has a green wreath with the letter H on the back.

A woman's body was inside the van, which was taken from a Quik Trip parking lot, county police Sgt. Benjamin Granda said in a statement.

### Learjet production to end, cut 1,600 jobs

**KS** WICHITA — The Learjet, which became synonymous with lifestyles of the rich and famous, is about to fade into aviation history.

Canada's Bombardier announced that it will stop production of the Learjet later this year to focus on more profitable planes. That means the elimination of 1,600 jobs in Canada and the United States, another blow to aircraft manufacturing, which has withered in the pandemic.

The iconic jet was among the first private luxury planes. William Lear based his design in

part on military jets.

### Bartender charged in sturgeon caviar probe

**WI** MADISON — Prosecutors have charged a Fond du Lac County bartender in a sweeping investigation into illegal bartering for sturgeon caviar around Lake Winnebago.

Online court records showed Shawn Wendt, 51, of Oakfield, was charged with two misdemeanor counts of unlawfully selling or bartering eggs.

Wendt told the warden that he has been processing sturgeon eggs into caviar for 15 years. He said people would bring him eggs, he would process them into caviar and then keep some for himself to serve at the restaurant. He denied paying for the eggs or making pre-arrangements on how much caviar he would keep as compensation.

### Major makeover of WWI exhibit at museum

**MS** CAMP SHELBY — Visitors to the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby will get to experience some major updates to the museum's World War I exhibit as well as some other improvements.

WDAM reported that the museum has added information about airmen who served in World War I as well as Black Mississippians who also served in that conflict. The exhibit also has new photographs, artifacts and panels to give visitors a greater understanding of the war. A walk-through trench that is part of the exhibit also has new stories about Mississippi troops.

— From wire reports

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# NHL forced to adjust COVID-19 protocols

Associated Press

Sabres coach Ralph Krueger marked his return to practice Sunday with an upbeat but cautionary message following a 10-day bout with what he called “moderately severe symptoms” of COVID-19.

“Definitely a time to realize how lethal this COVID is,” the 61-year-old Krueger said, while expressing relief his wife hasn’t been infected. “I’m feeling quite well but, of course, scarred by the experience.”

The first month of the NHL’s pandemic-shortened season has been a bumpy one. The Sabres are among eight teams that paused their seasons, and 35 games have been postponed. From Jan. 13 through Saturday, 120 players from 26 of 31 teams have spent at least one day on the COVID-19 list. Some tested positive, others were identified as close contacts and a few had to quarantine after traveling from another country.

Buffalo returned from a 15-day break with a 3-1 loss to the New York Islanders on Monday. The Colorado Avalanche resumed play at Vegas on Sunday. Minnesota and New Jersey were scheduled to return Tuesday, while the Philadelphia Flyers, who currently have seven players on the NHL COVID-19 list, are on pause until at least Thursday.

The NHL completed last season’s playoffs in tightly secured bubbles in Toronto and Edmonton, Alberta. Without those, outbreaks were considered inevitable.

“This is the new normal, unfortunately,” Golden Knights forward Mark Stone said. “I think you’re a little bit naïve to think we were going to go through a whole season without one guy testing positive. I think now we’re learning as a group and as a league.”

The NBA had a three-week head start on the NHL, and after

an initial rash of postponements and more than 20 positive cases, the NBA has had just 13 players test positive since the NHL began play.

What’s in question is how quickly the NHL addressed concerns before enhancing its safety protocols twice over the past two weeks, including the introduction of game-day rapid testing for players, staff and on-ice officials.

The tipping point coincided with the Sabres hosting New Jersey for a two-game series on Jan. 30 and 31, when the league allowed the second game to be played after two players were added to the Devils’ COVID-19 list following Buffalo’s 4-3 shootout win.

New Jersey, which peaked with a league-high 19 players on the list, had its season paused a day later. The Sabres then had as many as nine players sidelined at once, plus Krueger.

The NHL had 22 players on

the COVID-19 list on Jan. 30, and that number ballooned to a season-high 59 on Friday. The number dropped to 45 on Saturday, its first decrease since Jan. 29.

Krueger questioned the NHL’s decision to proceed with the second game of the Sabres-Devils series by calling it “a rough weekend,” but he’s praised the league for how it has responded since.

“I’m happy the NHL has been as constructive as possible in learning from the experience that we had,” Krueger said. “So it seems to make it worthwhile.”

Sabres forward Taylor Hall believes the league has learned from what happened.

“This is everyone’s first time going through this, and there’s going to be mistakes that are not on purpose,” said Hall, who tested positive but was asymptomatic while spending 10 days in isolation before being cleared on Saturday. “We’re all trying our best here.”

## Panthers gain ground on division-leading Lightning

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Jonathan Huberdeau scored to help the Florida Panthers defeat the Tampa Bay Lightning 6-4 on Monday and gain ground on the Central Division leaders.

The Panthers won two of three games between the teams in a five-day span and pulled within a point of the Lightning in the standings.

Aleksander Barkov, Anton Stralman, Owen Tippett, Anthony Duclair and Frank Vatrano also scored for Florida, which recorded its first win at Tampa Bay since March 26, 2016, a span of eight games.

Chris Driedger finished with 27 saves, and the Panthers improved to 4-0 in games following a loss this season.

**Islanders 3, Sabres 1:** Semyon Varlamov stopped 20 shots and New York extended

its point streak to seven games with a win at COVID-19-depleted Buffalo, which was playing its first game in two weeks.

The Sabres still had six regulars sidelined, including three defensemen, in returning after a coronavirus-forced break, which began two days after a 5-3 loss to New Jersey on Jan. 31. Rust and fatigue played a factor in a game in which Buffalo failed to get a shot on goal in the third period (12-0) and was outshot 29-21 overall.

**Senators 6, Maple Leafs 5 (OT):** Evgenii Dadonov scored his second goal of the game in overtime, and Ottawa overcame a four-goal deficit for the first time in franchise history in a win at Toronto.

The Senators trailed 5-1 late in the second period before

charging back, improving to 1-237-3 when trailing by at least four goals. Conor Brown and Nick Paul each had a goal and an assist. Drake Batherson and Artem Zub also scored, and Marcus Hogberg stopped 33 shots.

**Jets 6, Oilers 5:** Blake Wheeler snapped a third-period tie, lifting Winnipeg to the victory at Edmonton.

Mark Scheifele had a goal and two assists for the Jets. Kyle Connor, Mason Appleton, Nikolaj Ehlers and Mathieu Perreault also scored.

**Blackhawks 3, Red Wings 2 (OT):** Dominik Kubalik scored his second goal of the game 4:43 into overtime, sending Chicago to a win at Detroit.

Kubalik and Mattias Janmark staked the Blackhawks to a two-goal lead in the first

period that they slowly lost before stepping up in the extra session. Kubalik slipped a shot between Thomas Greiss’ pads, finishing a 2-on-1 rush with Pius Suter late in overtime.

**Sharks 3, Ducks 2:** John Leonard scored his first career goal and host San Jose earned just its second regulation win of the season with a victory over Anaheim.

Sharks captain Logan Couture and Kevin Labanc added goals in a rare productive second period for San Jose to help coach Bob Boughner earn his 100th NHL win. Martin Jones made 26 saves.

**Flames 4, Canucks 3 (OT):** Johnny Gaudreau scored 23 seconds into overtime to lift Calgary to a win at Vancouver.

The Flames recovered after squandering a 3-2 lead in the final minute of regulation.

# Clarkson, Jazz win showdown vs. 76ers

*Associated Press*

SALT LAKE CITY — Even without Joel Embiid, the Philadelphia 76ers were scoring every time down the court.

But the Utah Jazz didn't blink. They just gave the ball to Jordan Clarkson.

Clarkson had a season-high 40 points off the bench to send the streaking Jazz past Philadelphia 134-123 in a matchup of conference leaders Monday night despite a career-best 42 points from Ben Simmons.

"I've never played with anyone like JC in my lifetime," teammate Joe Ingles said. "It's pretty cool to play with someone that's so locked into what his role is and so comfortable in the role."

Utah (23-5) has won eight straight games and 19 of 20. Clarkson has been a sparkplug in several of those victories.

A leading candidate for NBA Sixth Man of the Year already, Clarkson knows his role is to score — and there aren't many shots he'll turn down. Nicknamed the Flame Thrower, Clarkson was so hot he didn't want to come off the court.

"What Jordan did tonight was special," Utah coach Quin Snyder said. "He and I just laughed about me telling him that I appreciate him at least hiding (his disappointment) when he comes out."

Clarkson hit a career-high eight three-

pointers and Donovan Mitchell added 24 points to help the Jazz overcome an early 14-point deficit. The 76ers have dropped three straight.

Philadelphia (18-10) was minus Embiid, a late scratch because of back tightness. Simmons had 12 assists and nine rebounds.

**Wizards 131, Rockets 119:** Bradley Beal scored 37 points in an entertaining matchup in ex-teammate John Wall's return to Washington.

Wall, traded in December for Russell Westbrook and a first-round pick, had season highs of 29 points and 11 assists for the Rockets, who were missing leading scorer Eric Gordon along with Victor Oladipo, Christian Wood and P.J. Tucker. Houston dropped its sixth straight.

Westbrook had 16 points, 15 assists and 13 rebounds for his sixth triple-double of the season.

**Nets 136, Kings 125:** Kyrie Irving scored a season-high 40 points, James Harden had his fifth triple-double with Brooklyn and the visiting Nets beat Sacramento as injured Kevin Durant watched from the bench.

Irving went 15-for-22 and made nine of the Nets' franchise-record 27 three-pointers. Harden had 29 points, 14 assists and 13 rebounds, his ninth straight game with a

double-double. The club record is 10.

Hassan Whiteside had 26 points and 16 rebounds for the Kings.

**Knicks 123, Hawks 112:** Julius Randle scored a season-high 44 points, making a career-best seven three-pointers and leading host New York past Atlanta for its third straight victory.

Randle added nine rebounds and five assists, finishing one point shy of his career high.

**Bulls 120, Pacers 112 (OT):** Zach LaVine scored 12 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter to help visiting Chicago force overtime, and the Bulls then pulled away from Indiana.

Domantas Sabonis scored 25 points and Malcolm Brogdon had 23 for the Pacers, who had won two in a row.

**Warriors 129, Cavaliers 98:** Stephen Curry scored 36 points in three quarters and host Golden State routed Cleveland.

Draymond Green tied his career high with 16 assists.

**Clippers 125, Heat 118:** Marcus Morris had season highs of 32 points and six three-pointers, and host Los Angeles beat Miami for its fourth straight victory.

The Clippers won without Kawhi Leonard and Paul George, who were out for the second straight night because of injuries.

## Duke's Jalen Johnson enters NBA Draft, ends college career

*The (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer*

Jalen Johnson is ending his Duke career early.

The freshman, named a preseason all-ACC selection back in November, met with coach Mike Krzyzewski and decided to declare for the NBA Draft and no longer play for the Blue Devils this season, the school confirmed Monday night.

"I appreciate everything about my time at Duke," Johnson said in a statement released by the school. "Coach K, my teammates and the program have been nothing but supportive throughout this season, especially during the rehab of my foot injury. My family, Coach and I have made the decision that I should not play the remainder of this season so I can be 100 percent healthy in preparation for the NBA Draft. This was not easy but we feel it's best for my future. I have nothing but love for the Brotherhood and thank my teammates and everyone as-

sociated with the program. Duke will always have a special place in my heart and will always be a part of me."

The news was first reported by Zagsblog.com.

Johnson played 11 games for the Blue Devils this season, missing three games and most of another with a foot injury in December and January. He is remaining in school and will continue to receive treatment from Duke's staff until he hires an agent.

"While we are encouraged by what we are seeing medically, for Jalen's future, we believe this decision is in his best interest," Krzyzewski said in a statement. "We are ultimately careful with every one of our players and will continue to support Jalen as he progresses toward his goal of playing professional basketball. He deserves to be fully healthy for the upcoming NBA Draft."

The 6-9 forward averaged 11.2 points and 6.1 rebounds for the Blue Devils.

## No. 16 FSU routs No. 7 Virginia

*Associated Press*

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — M.J. Walker scored 17 points and No. 16 Florida State built a big first-half lead, beating No. 7 Virginia 81-60 on Monday night in a showdown between the top two teams in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

RaiQuan Gray had 15 points as the Seminoles (12-3, 8-2) handed the 2019 national champion Cavs their worst ACC loss in four years. He has scored in double figures for seven straight games. Walker made five of Florida State's season-high 13 three-pointers.

"We can play anybody in the country when we're locked in and focused on our opponent and the game plan and execute it," Gray said. "We have to keep that focus the rest of the year."

The Seminoles have won 24 straight ACC home games dating to a defeat of Clemson on Jan. 22, 2019.

# Serena earns berth in Aussie Open semis

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Serena Williams was not pleased with the way her play suddenly was slipping in the Australian Open quarterfinals.

After one mistake against No. 2 seed Simona Halep — who won the last time they played each other — Williams pointed at her racket strings and made a sour face, as if to indicate it wasn't her fault. After another, Williams looked up at her guest box with palms up and asked, "What is happening?"

That dismay didn't last long. Williams recalibrated her shots with the help of terrific footwork, overcame 33 unforced errors and claimed the last five games, beating Halep 6-3, 6-3 Tuesday to return to the final four at Melbourne Park for the first time since she won the tournament in 2017. That was her most recent Grand Slam title.

"I just realized I was making a lot of unforced errors in those

games that I lost. And I knew that I had an opportunity to play better," said Williams, now two wins away from claiming her record-tying 24th major singles championship. "So I was just like, 'Just stay in there. You just can keep going.' And that's what I just did."

She set up a showdown against No. 3 Naomi Osaka, a three-time Slam champ who will carry a 19-match winning streak into Thursday's semifinals.

"She's Serena," Osaka said. "I feel really intimidated when I see her on the other side of the court."

This will be their fourth matchup; the most memorable, of course, was Osaka's victory in the 2018 U.S. Open final.

On that night, Williams got into an argument with the chair umpire after her coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, was caught trying to relay a signal — that's not allowed in Grand Slam play — and

wound up being docked a game. Osaka's win closed with thousands of fans filling Arthur Ashe Stadium with boos, and both of the athletes in tears during the trophy ceremony.

"We both have had closure," Williams said, "and we have reached out to each other."

There were no spectators Tuesday in Rod Laver Arena, because they've been banned from the tournament during a five-day government lockdown in response to a local rise in COVID-19 cases (the applause and other crowd noise TV viewers hear is added to the broadcast feed and isn't actually happening in the stadium).

Displaying the improved movement that Mouratoglou says has been a point of emphasis and Williams says is a result of a problematic left Achilles tendon finally healing, the 39-year-old American covered the court impeccably. She stretched points with defense or swung at

balls while they were still on the rise, trying to take time away from Halep.

"I know that, throughout my career, speed has been one thing that's been super good in my game," Williams said.

In men's action, 114th-ranked qualifier Aslan Karatsev of Russia became the first man in the professional era to get to the semifinals in his first Grand Slam appearance, defeating No. 18 seed Grigor Dimitrov 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2. His degree of difficulty will increase against his next opponent, top-ranked Novak Djokovic.

Defending champion Djokovic fended off sixth-seeded Alexander Zverev 6-7 (6), 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (6) in a night match to reach the Australian Open semifinals for the ninth time. He has never lost at Melbourne Park when he makes it to the last four.

Osaka overpowered 71st-ranked Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan 6-2, 6-2.

## Former NFL wide receiver Jackson found dead at 38

Associated Press

BRANDON, Fla. — Former NFL wide receiver Vincent Jackson was found dead Monday at a Florida hotel room, days after authorities spoke with him as part of a welfare check, according to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office.

A housekeeper discovered the 38-year-old's body at around 11:30 a.m. Monday, official said.

There were no signs of trauma and the medical examiner's office was looking into a cause of death at the Homewood Suites in Brandon, near Tampa.

Sheriff's officials said his family initially reported Jackson missing on Wednesday. Deputies tracked him down to the hotel two days later, spoke with him and canceled the missing persons case.

Sheriff Chad Chronister said

his department has opened an investigation.

Jackson played for the San Diego Chargers for seven seasons before becoming a free agent because of a contract dispute. He then went on to play five seasons with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, making his last appearance in 2016. He recorded 57 receiving touchdowns and was selected to the Pro Bowl three times.

The son of military parents, Jackson founded the Jackson In Action 83 Foundation, a nonprofit to support military families.

### Lakers' Davis to rest injured Achilles

LOS ANGELES — Forward Anthony Davis' injured Achilles tendon is not ruptured, and he will be reevaluated when the

Los Angeles Lakers return from their road trip.

The defending NBA champions made the announcement Monday after an MRI exam for Davis, who is out indefinitely.

The All-NBA first-teamer left the Lakers' game at Denver in the second quarter Sunday night with an apparent aggravation of the tendonitis that has bothered his right heel for at least two weeks. The seven-time All-Star had already missed five games this season with various minor injuries.

The Lakers (21-7) have nine games left before the All-Star break, starting Tuesday at Minnesota. Sitting in second place in the Western Conference, they are likely to be cautious with their superstar big man with an eye on keeping him healthy for the stretch run.

In other NBA news:

■ The San Antonio Spurs are dealing with a coronavirus outbreak among four players, the NBA said Tuesday, meaning the Spurs will not play until the middle of next week at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms — whose city was picked to play host to the NBA All-Star Game and skills competitions on March 7 — raised major concerns about the notion of fans coming to the city for the events. "People should not travel to Atlanta to party," she said in a statement to The Associated Press.

The NBA on Tuesday postponed five more games: the next three for the Spurs — at Cleveland on Wednesday, at New York on Saturday and at Indiana on Monday — as well as the next two for the Charlotte Hornets.