

GAO: Women pay more for uniform items

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Female active-duty service members have significantly higher out-of-pocket costs for uniform items than their male counterparts and are more often affected by expensive uniform changes, a congressional watchdog agency said in a report released last week.

The hardest hit are female Marines, who pay nearly 10 times more uniform expenses out of their own pockets than males do over a 20-year career, said the report released Thursday by the Government Accountability Office. That equates to thousands of dollars, it said.

For example, when the manufacturer of the dress and service hats worn by female Marines told the service they were halting production, the Corps opted for a new, gender-neutral cap — but only women had to buy it, the report said.

Next year, the Marines will require women to replace the white service dress coat with a blue one, which looks similar

to what male Marines wear, the GAO said. The new women's dress coats cost about \$380, \$100 more than the white coats they're replacing.

In the Army, female enlisted soldiers pay nearly double what enlisted men pay for out-of-pocket uniform items; in the Navy, it's around three times as much, and female airmen pay \$1,627 over 20 years while their male counterparts usually enjoy a surplus of around \$2,000, it said.

The GAO also found that reimbursements paid to women for uniform items were lower than what men got. In the Air Force, for instance, men were reimbursed for around 91% of costs, compared with just 76% for women.

Gender differences in uniform expenses also affect the officer ranks, with women paying more than men, it said.

Enlisted members receive a clothing allowance when entering the military to pay for items not provided by the services, such as running shoes, and an annual allowance to replace or purchase mandato-

ry uniform items. Officers also receive an initial clothing allowance but are expected to pay for their own uniforms.

"This report shows that both enlisted women and female officers are required to spend many times more than men on their uniforms — which is at odds with the Department of Defense's principle of equal pay for equal work," Congresswoman Julia Brownley, D-Calif., said in a statement.

Brownley, who chairs the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs' task force for women veterans pledged to craft "legislation to rectify the concerns laid out in this report."

Defense Department officials said they will work with the services to fix the issues outlined in the report. One recommendation made by the GAO was for the Pentagon and the services to hold periodic reviews of clothing replacement allowances to address out-of-pocket cost differences and ensure consistency across the services and by gender.

FDA grants emergency approval of 3rd vaccine

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Food and Drug Administration late Saturday granted emergency use authorization to Johnson & Johnson's single-dose coronavirus vaccine, providing the United States with a long-anticipated tool that adds firepower and flexibility to the nation's accelerating inoculation effort — but also presents new challenges.

Health authorities now have three effective vaccines, a singular scientific achievement that few would have predicted a year ago, when a pandemic emerged that has killed 2.5 million people worldwide, including more than 500,000 in the United States. It comes at a particularly fraught time, as Americans are whipsawed by encouraging developments, including sharp declines in nursing home deaths, and concerning news such as the emergence of potentially menacing variants.

With demand for vaccines outracing supply and officials scrambling to get much of the population vaccinated before variants spoil an

improving picture, a third vaccine is "really good news," said Eric Toner, senior scholar with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. The vaccine will not have a big effect initially on supply shortages. Only a few million doses will be shipped to states in the days immediately after authorization, though production will ramp up in coming weeks, with 20 million doses to be delivered by the end of March and 100 million total in the first half of the year, according to the company.

The new vaccine has clear practical and logistical advantages over the first two vaccines — it does not have to be kept frozen, and there is no need for a second round of appointments. That makes it a boon for rural areas and other hard-to-reach communities, and for distribution to community health centers and physician offices that might not have the freezers needed for the other vaccines, public health officials say.

But the Johnson & Johnson shot also has a lower efficacy rate, leading some public

health experts and government officials to worry that it will be viewed as substandard compared with the other vaccines. The Johnson & Johnson efficacy rate is 66% overall and 72% in the U.S. in preventing moderate to severe cases of COVID-19.

The vaccines by U.S. pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech and by the biotech company Moderna are about 95% effective following their two-shot regimens.

Some experts say it is important for people to understand there might be differences between vaccines in preventing moderate cases of COVID-19, because even those infections could have long-term consequences. At the same time, some doctors say they are encountering people saying they prefer the Johnson & Johnson vaccine because they don't want to have to get a second shot.

For now, consumers are unlikely to have a choice of vaccines because there simply isn't enough supply.

Marine reflects on rise through ranks

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — When Maj. Gen. Michael Langley was up and coming in the 1980s, corporate recruiters had their eyes on the young Black Marine lieutenant.

The lure of a well-paid management job in the private sector competed with dreams of a longer career with the Corps, Langley recalled. But then the commander of the 10th Marine Regiment made an offer he couldn't refuse: battery commander, a position normally reserved for captains.

"A lieutenant taking a battery here in 10th Marines, the largest artillery regiment in the free world, this hasn't happened since Vietnam," the colonel told Langley. "That was a defining moment in my career. I could tell corporate to shove it."

Langley, who assumed command of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa in November after his predecessor was removed amid allegations of using a racial slur

for African Americans in front of troops, said the decision to stick with the Corps was based on trust won that day more than 30 years ago.

Yet Langley, as one of only six Black generals in the Marines, is a statistical outlier in the Corps and the military more broadly, where minorities have long been underrepresented in the senior ranks.

Now, the Pentagon under Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is grappling with how to build a more diverse and inclusive force as it also contends with concerns about the number of white supremacists in the ranks. The situation has prompted Austin, who has pledged to diversify his senior ranks, to order an upcoming militarywide, daylong stand down to focus on issues of race and discrimination.

"The job of the Department of Defense is to keep America safe from our enemies. But we can't do that if some of those enemies lie within our own ranks," Austin told Congress in January.

Langley said the military, like society in general, is "evolving" when it comes to racial issues. Still, Langley said his personal experiences in the Marines have been almost exclusively positive on racial matters.

"Ninety-nine percent of my experiences coming up through the ranks have been positive ones that can be characterized as opportunities to excel, to gain success," he said. "As far as adversity, it came in moments. They were always learning experiences to me. But they were few and far between."

Now, leading Marines in Europe, he said he tries to make sure he is developing a command culture in which his staff can raise concerns if they encounter bias.

Regarding Austin's stand-down mandate, Langley said Corps leadership is still working on the plan for how it will execute the directive.

"We encourage the Marines to communicate up if something doesn't look right," he said.

Defense radar system in Alaska nears completion

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

After months of construction delays last year due to coronavirus restrictions, a long-range missile defense radar system in Alaska is largely complete and will begin initial operations late this year, the Missile Defense Agency said Wednesday.

All "major production activities" on the Long-Range Discrimination Radar at Clear Air Force Station have been completed, the agency said in a news release. The station is about 90 miles southwest of Fairbanks in central Alaska.

Initial fielding had originally been scheduled for 2020, but steps taken to reduce the possible spread of the coronavirus delayed construction.

The Government Accountability Office said in a July re-

port the system was expected to be transferred to the Air Force late in the fiscal year that begins October 2022.

The Long-Range Discrimination Radar system — whose massive arrays measure 60 feet by 60 feet — will be capable of tracking incoming missiles while at the same time distinguish lethal warheads from decoys or other nonlethal objects. That will increase the nation's defensive capacity by reducing the number of "interceptors" potentially needed to destroy incoming objects, according to the release.

Manufactured by Lockheed Martin, the radar is part of the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System, intended to protect the U.S. from intercontinental ballistic missiles from around the globe.

Air Force building standoff weapons facility on Guam

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon has awarded a \$42 million contract to build a standoff weapons complex on Guam, according to an announcement Thursday.

Granite-Obayashi JV of Watsonville, Calif., was selected from three applicants to build the complex at Yigo, Guam's northernmost point, according to the Department of Defense.

"The work to be performed provides for construction of an adequately sized and configured missile maintenance and assembly complex for loading, unloading, transferring, storing, testing and preparing missiles for operational use," the announcement said.

The new contract, funded by the Air Force in fiscal year 2021 and expected to be fulfilled by

March 2023, includes a facility to support preloading rotary launchers, improvements to roads to support the vehicles carrying munitions to an airfield and earth-covered storage magazines, the announcement said.

Standoff weapons include cruise missiles, glide bombs and short-range ballistic missiles. Rotary launchers are typically carried in the bomb bay of aircraft, the B-52 Stratofortress, for example. The rotary launcher allows the weapon to be precisely positioned for launch and takes up less space than a conventional bomb bay.

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Pacific project manager Wayne Acosta in a statement Thursday said the contract was a top priority and awarded ahead of schedule and under budget.

Biden team preps wide infrastructure package

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Looking beyond the \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill, President Joe Biden and lawmakers are laying the groundwork for another top legislative priority — a long-sought boost to the nation’s roads, bridges and other infrastructure that could run into Republican resistance to a hefty price tag.

Biden and his team have begun discussions on the possible outlines of an infrastructure package with members of Congress, particularly mindful that Texas’ recent struggles with power outages and water shortages after a brutal winter storm present an opportunity for agreement on sustained spending on infrastructure.

Gina McCarthy, Biden’s national climate adviser, told The Associated Press that the

deadly winter storm in Texas should be a “wake-up call” for the need for energy systems and other infrastructure that are more reliable and resilient.

“The infrastructure is not built to withstand these extreme weather conditions,” said Liz Sherwood-Randall, a homeland security aide to the president. “We know that we can’t just react to extreme weather events. We need to plan for them and prepare for them.”

A White House proposal could come out in March.

“Now is the time to be aggressive,” said Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, a former South Bend, Ind., mayor who knows potholes.

At a conference with state and local highway officials Thursday, he referred to the often-promised, never-

achieved mega-initiative on roads, bridges and the like from the Trump administration.

“I know you are among those who are working and waiting most patiently, or maybe impatiently, for the moment when Infrastructure Week will no longer be a kind of Groundhog’s Day promise — but actually be something that delivers generational investments,” he said.

Much of America’s infrastructure — roads, bridges, public drinking and water systems, dams, airports, mass transit systems and more — is in need of major restoration after years of underfunding, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. In its 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, it gave the national infrastructure an overall grade

of D+.

Both chambers of Congress will use as starting points their unsuccessful efforts to get infrastructure bills through the last session.

Democrats passed a \$1.5 trillion package in the House last year, but it went nowhere with the Trump administration and the Republican-led Senate. A Senate panel approved narrower bipartisan legislation in 2019 focused on reauthorizing federal transportation programs. It, too, flamed out as the United States turned its focus to elections and COVID-19.

Biden has talked bigger numbers, and some Democrats are now urging him to bypass Republicans in the closely divided Congress to address a broader range of priorities urged by interest groups.

Tensions in Minneapolis grow as trial in George Floyd’s death looms

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Barbed wire and concrete barriers surround the courthouse where the former Minneapolis police officer charged with killing George Floyd will soon go on trial, a sign of the deep uneasiness hanging over a city literally set ablaze almost a year ago in the anger over his death.

Mayor Jacob Frey and Gov. Tim Walz, both Democrats, were sharply criticized for failing to move faster to stop last summer’s looting and destruction, which included the torching of a police station. Anything less than a murder conviction for Derek Chauvin is likely to test them — and the city — once again.

Jury selection begins March 8 with opening statements March 29. Floyd, who was Black, died May 25 after Chauvin, who is white, pressed his knee on Floyd’s neck while he was handcuffed and pleading that he couldn’t breathe. Chauvin faces second-degree murder and manslaughter charges; three other fired officers go on trial in August.

Thousands of people took to the streets of

Minneapolis after Floyd’s death, with many demonstrating peacefully. But for several nights, the unrest spiraled into violence, with stores looted and set ablaze along the Lake Street commercial artery that included the 3rd Precinct police station, which was home to the officers who arrested Floyd. The station itself was eventually abandoned by police and burned by rioters. Some nervous neighborhoods formed watch groups, setting up checkpoints and sometimes armed patrols. The violence finally subsided after National Guard troops arrived in sufficient numbers.

As the city moves to make the courthouse virtually impenetrable, some people worry about what might happen elsewhere if Chauvin is acquitted.

Frey said more than 3,000 law enforcement officers from across the state and Minnesota National Guard soldiers will be at the ready when the case goes to the jury, expected in late April or early May.

Frey last week declared that Minneapolis remains “open for business,” and said people should go about their lives as usual.

UN Human Rights Office: 18 killed in Myanmar strike

Associated Press

YANGON, Myanmar — Security forces in Myanmar opened fire and made mass arrests Sunday as they sought to break up protests against the military’s seizure of power, and a U.N. human rights official said it had “credible information” that 18 people were killed and 30 were wounded.

That would be the highest single-day death toll among protesters who are demanding that the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi be restored to power after being ousted by a Feb. 1 coup.

“Deaths reportedly occurred as a result of live ammunition fired into crowds in Yangon, Dawei, Mandalay, Myeik, Bago and Pokokku,” the U.N. Human Rights Office said in a statement referring to several cities, adding that the forces also used tear gas, flash-bang grenades and stun grenades.

“We strongly condemn the escalating violence against protests in Myanmar and call on the military to immediately halt the use of force against peaceful protesters,” its spokesperson, Ravina Shamdasani, was quoted saying.

NY mandates dance 'zones' at weddings

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York's new coronavirus-era dance rules aren't exactly "Footloose" strict, but don't plan on cutting loose and kicking off the Sunday shoes with just anybody.

The state says that when wedding receptions resume next month, guests will be allowed to hit the dance floor only with members of their immediate party, household or family seated at the same table.

Even then, the rules say, dancers must wear face masks and stay within their own "dancing areas or zones" — spaces that should be at least 36 square feet in size and positioned at least 6 feet apart from other dance zones and tables.

There's no switching dance zones, either.

Happy couples can still take a twirl for a ceremonial first dance, and other couples can join in, but they must all stay 6 feet apart.

Live music performers and other entertainers are allowed, but if they're unmasked or playing a wind instrument, they must be separated from attendees by 12 feet or an appropriate physical barrier.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo previously announced that weddings can begin again on March 15. Venues will be restricted to 50% of capacity, up to 150 guests, and all must be tested for coronavirus beforehand.

Arizona

WINDOW ROCK — The Navajo Nation is continuing on a downward trend in the number of daily coronavirus cases.

Tribal health officials on Saturday evening reported seven new cases of COVID-19, down significantly from around the holidays. The latest numbers bring the total to 29,719 cases since the pandemic began.

Three additional deaths also were reported Saturday, bringing the total to 1,168.

Health facilities on the reservation and in border towns are conducting drive-thru vaccine events or administering doses by appointment. The Navajo-area Indian Health Service has vaccinated more than 100,000 people so far.

A daily curfew from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. and a mask mandate remain in effect for residents of the vast reservation that covers parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah to prevent the spread of the virus.

Arkansas

The number of people hospitalized in Arkansas because of the coronavirus continued to plummet to levels unseen since the fall, state health officials said Saturday.

According to the state Department of Health, the number of people in Arkansas hospitalized because of the coronavirus dropped by 29 to 475 on Saturday.

The state's coronavirus cases now total 318,638 since the pandemic began, the department said, and 10 new pushed the Arkansas pandemic death toll to 5,407.

Maryland

COLLEGE PARK — The University of Maryland's flagship campus will resume in-person instruction on Monday after having suspended live classes for a week due to COVID-19 outbreaks, according to school leaders.

Improving coronavirus figures on the College Park campus have contributed to the resumption. An order from last week requiring residents in student housing to "sequester in place" also has been lifted, The Baltimore Sun reported Saturday.

University President Darryll Pines and the chief medical officer for the university's health center credited the campus community for working to curb

the spread. The number of cases has slowed and the testing positive rate is low, according to their announcement.

"We recognize that these measures created challenges for many of our students — both physically and mentally — and we want to express our sincere gratitude for your compliance and ongoing commitment to stop the spread of COVID-19," their statement said.

Missouri

SPRINGFIELD — Missouri State University President Cliff Smart said he anticipates an August start to the new school year that will be as close to normal, adding that the university has learned a lot of lessons from the pandemic and created changes that will remain.

"We are not going to abandon or discard what we have learned," he said.

The university tested all students who planned to live on campus before the start of the spring semester, identifying 41 students who were positive for COVID-19. That proactive approach combined with hundreds of weekly tests helped the campus avoid repeating a major spike in cases.

Board Chair Amy Counts encouraged Smart to "open it up to a more regular semester in the fall with, obviously, a back-up plan."

Nebraska

LINCOLN — Nebraska health officials said Saturday they have found the first known cases in the state of a California variant of COVID-19.

The Department of Health and Human Services said in a news release that the variant has been identified by the Nebraska Public Health Lab in 13 cases in four different jurisdictions of the state.

Nine cases were identified in Douglas County, two in the Public Health Solutions district

(which includes Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Saline and Thayer counties), one in the East Central district (Boone, Colfax, Nance and Platte counties), and one in Lancaster County.

Nevada

LAS VEGAS — The Department of Corrections has been incorrectly reporting COVID-19 cases in facilities because of data entry errors, state officials in Nevada said.

The prison system and the Department of Health and Human Services released a joint statement on Friday that said errors were found in data posted to the state coronavirus dashboard, which tracks cases and deaths in state facilities.

Records obtained by the Las Vegas Review-Journal said the errors caused cumulative case counts among prisoners and staff to drop by 268 since last week.

The number of COVID-19 cases at the Florence McClure Women's Correctional Center in North Las Vegas dropped from 142 cases to 74 this week after some prisoner and staff cases were removed from the data.

Texas

AUSTIN — Texas reported 164 more deaths Friday from the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, but COVID-19 hospitalizations continue to plummet.

The Texas Department of State Health Services said the state's COVID-19 deaths totaled 42,739. The state's confirmed and probable coronavirus cases rose to 2,640,209. An estimated 161,316 of those cases were active Saturday, 88,917 fewer than on Friday, officials said.

Of those active cases, 5,912 required hospitalization as of Friday, the state's most recent total made available. That was 1,067 fewer than Sunday and 273 fewer than Thursday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Pilot reports unidentified object in skies

NM SANTA FE — American Airlines said one of its pilots flying a passenger jet sent a radio transmission reporting an unidentified object flying at high speeds in skies above northern New Mexico during a flight from Cincinnati to Phoenix.

A recording of the pilot's transmission was made by Steve Douglass, a self-described "stealth chaser" from Amarillo.

"Do you have any targets up here? We just had something go right over the top of us," the pilot of American Airlines Flight 2292 told traffic controllers.

White Sands Missile Range spokesperson Scott Stearns told The Arizona Republic that the range in southern New Mexico conducted no tests that day and that "we never test in that area."

Heat from fire caused gun to shoot firefighter

WI CONRATH — The heat from a fire caused a loaded gun to discharge, critically wounding a firefighter who was working to douse flames in northwestern Wisconsin, fire officials said.

Justin Fredrickson, 35, is out of the intensive care unit and recovering, the Cornell Area Fire Department said in an update on Facebook.

"The bullet traveled through an exterior wall, striking Fredrickson in the abdomen," Chief Dennis Klass said. "The loaded firearm discharged due to heat conditions caused by the fire."

Pipes fall from trailer, cause crash and 1 death

KS TOPEKA — Highway officials in Kansas said a freak accident in which a load of large steel pipes fell off a moving trailer and rained down on other drivers in downtown Topeka led to multiple crashes and the death of a woman.

The Kansas Highway Patrol said the incident happened when the load of metal pipes broke free from an eastbound semitrailer and crashed onto the road.

The pipes bounced over a concrete barrier into oncoming traffic in the westbound lanes, hitting multiple vehicles and sending motorists skidding across lanes, investigators said.

One motorist — Brooke Rees, 29, of Manhattan — died when one of the pipes landed on top of her car, which was then read-ended by a pickup truck, sending her car spinning into a bridge rail.

Peppa Pig theme park set for Legoland in 2022

FL WINTER HAVEN — A standalone Peppa Pig theme park is set to open next year at the Legoland Florida Resort, park officials announced.

The new park, based on the popular preschool animated television series, will be located near the main Legoland theme park, but will be separately ticketed, according to a news release.

The Peppa Pig theme park will feature rides, interactive attractions, themed playscapes, water play areas and live shows,

officials said. Families will also be able to meet Peppa and her friends.

Former cemetery worker arrested, stole markers

RI MIDDLETOWN — A Rhode Island man was arrested for allegedly damaging graves and taking grave markers from a Middletown cemetery.

Police said that Kendall Maloney, 32, faces three counts of breaking and entering, desecration of a grave and removal of markers from veterans' graves.

Middletown Police Capt. Jason Ryan told WJAR-TV that Maloney was a former employee of the cemetery and was selling the statues to a scrapyards in Westport.

Bookkeeper sentenced for stealing \$1.5M

MA BOSTON — A bookkeeper was sentenced to nearly six years in prison for embezzling more than \$1.5 million from two employers, federal prosecutors said.

Jessica Greenan, 42, of Barnstable, embezzled more than \$1.1 million from a Cape Cod store from October 2014 until she was fired in March 2018 by wiring funds from the store's bank account to pay personal credit card bills on more than 500 occasions, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney's office in Boston.

She got a position as the bookkeeper for a construction company in August 2018 and immediately began stealing company funds, prosecutors said.

Man gets 5-year sentence in illegal weapons case

AZ TUCSON — A Tucson man was sentenced to five years in federal prison for possessing illegal weapons.

Prosecutors said Raymundo Lopez Casillas, 20, unlawfully possessed three machine guns, six pipe bombs and a firearm silencer.

Casillas previously pleaded guilty to unlawful possession of unregistered firearms.

Casillas discharged a firearm in his bedroom, prosecutors said. The bullet traveled through the wall and struck his 17-year-old nephew in the head, killing the teenager.

Woman arrested for death after fake car theft

NV HENDERSON — Henderson police said a 33-year-old woman allegedly made up a story about a carjacking attempt and was arrested on suspicion of murder in the death of a Las Vegas man struck by his own car.

Danika Cain was arrested in the death of Kent Reed, 44, after detectives determined that aspects of Cain's initial account didn't check out, police said.

According to police, Cain had said that a stranger tried to steal Reed's car when she was in it and then struck Reed with the car before running away.

Police said that Cain and Reed were involved in a "domestic-related" verbal argument and that Reed got out of the vehicle before being struck.

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Brewers' Yelich eager for fresh start

Associated Press

Milwaukee Brewers outfielder Christian Yelich has never believed the results of one season have any carryover effect into the next year.

He didn't think that when he was coming off an MVP season in 2018 or a second straight batting title in 2019. Nor does he feel that way that now as he tries bouncing back from the most disappointing season of his career.

"Good or bad, the previous year really doesn't mean anything," the 29-year-old Yelich said Friday from the Brewers' spring training site in Phoenix. "You can't do anything about it. Whether you were the MVP the previous year or you sucked, everybody starts at zero in spring training and the new year. We live in a business where it's, 'What have you done for me lately?' What I've done lately is play terribly, so I'm looking forward to a fresh start and starting a new year."

During a pandemic-shortened 2020 season in which many stars struggled, Yelich arguably was the most notable example. He hit .205 after winning NL batting titles in 2018 and 2019.

He still produced a .356 on-base percentage thanks to 76 walks and had 12 homers and 22 RBIs in 58 games. But his .786 OPS was his lowest since 2015 and significantly

off his NL-leading totals in of 1.000 in 2018 followed by 1.100.

"I thought I was pretty much all-around terrible," Yelich said. "It just wasn't good. But it is what it is. This is baseball. That stuff happens. You can't change it now and you can't do anything about it."

The Brewers hope for Yelich to bounce back after signing him to a \$215 million, nine-year contract prior to last season. Their hopes for a fourth straight playoff berth depend largely on him returning to form.

But they aren't showing any signs of concern regarding their franchise player. Brewers manager Craig Counsell said at the start of spring training camp that Yelich "wants to be better, and he's going to be better."

"I just don't worry much about Christian," hitting coach Andy Haines said.

Yelich ranked sixth in the majors in hard-hit percentage, behind only Fernando Tatis Jr., Miguel Sano, Ronald Acuña Jr., Corey Seager and Eloy Jiménez. The problem was that he struck out over 30% of the time. Before last season, Yelich had struck out in only 19.6% of his career plate appearances.

He said Friday he has a few ideas over what went wrong and feels he now has a handle on the situation, though he declined to go into specifics. Yelich also says he spent

time this offseason working with Haines in Nashville, Tenn.

While Yelich hasn't used the unusual circumstances of 2020's pandemic-delayed season as an excuse, he acknowledged that "whatever routine you had last year pretty much got thrown out the window." Even before the pandemic started, Yelich already was having a different type of year.

He spent the initial stages of spring training in 2019 working his way back after a fractured kneecap had ended his 2019 season prematurely. The Brewers believe he will benefit from having this entire pre-season to get ready for a more typical 162-game campaign.

Just don't assume the disappointment of 2020 has put a chip on Yelich's shoulder. Yelich doesn't believe any additional incentive is necessary.

"I feel like you need to be motivated every year," Yelich said. "If you're not motivated, stay at home, kind of, in my opinion. A major league season requires so much out of you. It asks for a lot. And you have to give the game a lot. If you're not willing to meet the game at that level, it's not going to go well for you. So like I said, previous seasons are irrelevant, in my opinion. They have no bearing on what you need to do in the future. Every year's a fresh start."

Alvarez keeps belts with TKO of Yildirim

Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Saul "Canelo" Alvarez outclassed Avni Yildirim and retained his world super-middleweight titles with a technical knockout after Yildirim failed to answer the bell for the fourth round Saturday night.

Alvarez, of Mexico, dropped the Turkish challenger with a left right combination to the head midway through the third round. Alvarez followed with additional combinations, pinning Yildirim on the ropes. Yildirim survived the round but absorbed sufficient punishment to force his trainer Joel Diaz to stop the fight.

With the victory, Alvarez (55-1-2, 37 KOs) successfully defended his World Boxing Council and World Boxing Association belts.

"I came and did what I had to do," Alvarez said. "I had to win by knockout and I accomplished it."

The fight headlined the first boxing event at 34-year-old Hard Rock Stadium, home of the Miami Dolphins.

In a methodical first round, Alvarez set the pace early with lead left jabs to the head and lefts and rights to the body.

Alvarez landed uppercuts and continued to score with combinations to the body in the second. Yildirim (21-3)

rarely threw punches and the few he did, Alvarez blocked or slipped. Alvarez stayed within punching range and increased his output but also was effective from distance and connected with a flush counter right to the head.

"It doesn't matter if he is stronger or taller," Alvarez said about Yildirim, who began his career at light-heavyweight before moving down to the 168-pound class. "It doesn't matter if he has a good trainer. I came to do my job."

Saturday's bout was the first of what Alvarez hopes will be a busy year seeking unification fights. Alvarez said there have been prelimi-

nary conversations for a bout with Billy Joe Saunders, the World Boxing Organization titleholder, in May. Caleb Plant holds the fourth sanctioning body belt.

"Everybody wants a piece of Canelo but I am not going to let them take anything," Alvarez said.

As he continues to solidify his spot among the sport's pound-for-pound elite, Alvarez also is gaining additional ground for inclusion on the short list of best fighters in boxing rich Mexico's history.

Inactive since February 2019, Yildirim landed the match against Alvarez after the WBC designated him a mandatory challenger.

No. 17 Kansas hands No. 2 Baylor 1st loss

Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Kansas finally put a blemish on second-ranked Baylor's perfect season.

David McCormack bruised his way to 20 points, Marcus Garrett added 14 on his senior night, and the No. 17 Jayhawks beat the Bears 71-58 on Saturday to leave top-ranked Gonzaga as the nation's only unbeaten team.

They also made sure Baylor (18-1, 11-1) would need to wait at least a few more days to clinch its first conference title since 1950.

No. 1 Gonzaga 86, Loyola-Marymount 69: Corey Kispert made six three-pointers and finished with 24 points, and the host Bulldogs remained the only unbeaten in the country with a win over Loyola Marymount.

No. 3 Michigan 73, Indiana 57: Franz Wagner scored 21 points and Isaiah Livers had 16 points and 10 rebounds, helping the host Wolverines to pull away for the win. Michigan (18-1, 13-1) took another major step toward the Big Ten title.

No. 5 Illinois 74, No. 23 Wisconsin 69: Kofi Cockburn scored 19 points, and the visiting Illini completed their first regular-season sweep of the Badgers since 2005.

No. 6 Alabama 64, Mississippi State 59: Jaden Shackelford scored 10 of his 15 points in the second half, and the visiting Crimson Tide clinched their first Southeastern Conference regular-season championship since 2002.

Oklahoma State 94, No. 7 Oklahoma 90: Freshman Cade Cunningham scored 10 of his season-high 40 points in overtime, leading the visiting Cowboys to the upset.

Cunningham's previous scoring high was 29 points. In his first Bedlam rivalry game, he made 12 of 21 field goals.

No. 10 West Virginia 65, Kansas State 43: Sean McNeil scored 16 points and the host Mountaineers used two big second-half runs to beat Kansas State.

North Carolina 78, No. 11 Florida State 70: Freshman Walker Kessler scored a season-high 20 points, and the host Tar Heels boosted their NCAA Tournament chances while giving coach Roy Williams his 900th career victory.

Xavier 77, No. 13 Creighton 69: Paul Scruggs scored 23 points and Zach Freemantle added 17, helping the Musketeers bolster their NCAA Tournament hopes.

No. 18 Texas Tech 68, No. 14 Texas 59: Mac McClung had 16 points to lead five Red Raiders players in double figures, and host

Tech snapped a three-game losing streak.

No. 16 Virginia Tech 84, Wake Forest 46: Keve Aluma scored 23 points and Tyrece Radford had 15, leading the host Hokies to the runaway victory.

Utah 71, No. 19 Southern California 61: Alphonso Plummer scored 19 points, Timmy Allen added 15 points and eight assists, and the host Utes pulled away late in the second half.

No. 20 Arkansas 83, LSU 75: Justin Smith had 19 points and 10 rebounds, helping the host Razorbacks to their sixth straight win.

No. 21 Loyola Chicago 65, Southern Illinois 58 (OT): Cameron Krutwig had 20 points and the host Ramblers scored the last eight points in overtime.

No. 22 San Diego State 62, Boise State 58: Matt Mitchell hit two free throws with 3.3 seconds left and fellow senior Jordan Schakel made four free throws in the final 8.7 seconds, leading the host Aztecs to their 10th straight victory.

Auburn 77, No. 25 Tennessee 72: Allen Flanigan scored a season-high 23 points and had seven rebounds, leading the host Tigers to the victory. Auburn (12-13, 6-10 Southeastern Conference) snapped a three-game losing streak.

Carter's career high leads Navy past Loyola

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — John Carter Jr. tied a career-high 26 points and Navy defeated Loyola (Md.) 73-67 on Saturday.

Greg Summers added 20 points and grabbed eight rebounds for the Midshipmen (14-2, 11-1 Patriot League) as Navy forced a season-high 24 turnovers. Santi Aldama had 27 points, seven rebounds and three blocks for the Greyhounds (4-9, 4-9). Jaylin Andrews had a career-high 11 rebounds and Cam Spencer and Isaiah Hart each scored 10.

Boston University 75, Army 63: Jonas Harper posted 18 points and six rebounds as the Terriers took a road win.

Harper hit 6 of 9 three-pointers.

Jack Hemphill had 11 points for Boston University (6-9, 6-9 Patriot League). Walter Whyte added 11 points. Sukhmail Mathon had nine rebounds.

Javante McCoy, the Terriers' leading scorer heading into the matchup at 16 points per game, shot only 14% in the game (1-for-7).

Alex King had 17 points for the Black Knights (10-8, 6-7). Josh Caldwell added 15 points.

Colorado State 72, Air Force 49: Isaiah Stevens had 19 points and David Roddy posted 19 points and eight rebounds as the Rams rolled to a home win.

Adam Thistlewood had 14 points for Colorado State (15-4, 12-3 Mountain West Conference). A.J. Walker had 13 points for the Falcons (5-18, 3-16).

Louisville tops Duke in OT

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Carlik Jones scored seven of his 25 points in overtime, sophomore Quinn Slazinski opened the scoring in OT with a three-pointer and Louisville fended off Duke 80-73 on Saturday night, halting the Blue Devils' late-season win streak at four games.

Jones, a graduate transfer from Radford, scored 24 points when the Cardinals defeated Duke 70-65 on Jan. 23 — marking this the first regular-season sweep for Louisville against the Blue Devils.

Jae'Lyn Withers scored 16 points with nine rebounds for the Cardinals while Samuel Williamson scored 14 with 12 rebounds.

Duke (11-9, 9-7) still leads the overall series with Louisville,

10-9, but the Cardinals have won three straight.

Clemson 66, Miami 58: Amir Simms and Al-Amir Dawes each scored 19 points and the host Tigers beat the short-handed Hurricanes for their fifth straight victory.

Clemson took the first double-digit lead of the game during a 6-0 run to make it 57-44 with 9:17 to go. Miami scored the next 10 to get within three points at 5:16 but the Hurricanes only made one more field goal the rest of the way.

Georgia Tech 84, Syracuse 77: Moses Wright dunked his way to 31 points, tying his season high, and the host Yellow Jackets strengthened their NCAA Tournament chances with their fourth consecutive win.

Lightning zap Stars in Cup rematch

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Andrei Vasilevskiy made 20 saves for his second straight shutout and 23rd overall and the defending champion Tampa Bay Lightning beat the Dallas Stars 5-0 on Saturday night in the first Stanley Cup rematch of the season.

The teams will meet again Tuesday night in Dallas. They had four previous scheduled meetings season postponed because of COVID protocols and weather issues in Dallas.

Steven Stamkos and Anthony Cirelli each had a goal and an assist for Tampa Bay, and Ondrej Palat, Brayden Point and Pat Maroon also scored for the Lightning. Tampa Bay scored two power-play goals and one short-handed to extend its winning streak to four games.

Flyers 3, Sabres 0: Philadelphia's Brian Elliott stopped 23 shots to shut out host Buffalo for a second time this season.

The Flyers were spurred by a replenished lineup in which four players returned after spending two weeks in the NHL's COVID-19 protocol. They included Scott Laughton, who scored a breakaway goal to make it 3-0 late in the second period.

Maples Leafs 4, Oilers 0: Jack Campbell made 30 saves for his third NHL shutout, Mitch Marner had a goal and an assist and NHL-leading Toronto won the first of a three-game set in Edmonton.

William Nylander, Jason Spezza and Zach Hyman also scored for the Maple Leafs.

Blues 7, Sharks 6: Marco Scandella scored his second goal of the game to break a tie in the third period and visiting St. Louis rallied after starting goalie Jordan Binnington lost his cool when getting pulled.

Binnington went after three San Jose players when he was replaced after allowing his fourth goal on 19 shots. Ville Husso stopped 19 of 21 shots he faced in relief and the Blues got the win.

Predators 2, Blue Jackets 1: Mattias Ekholm scored a pair of second-period goals, and Juuse Saros made 29 saves for host Nashville, a winner of three of the past four games.

Capitals 5, Devils 2: Garnet Hathaway and Daniel Sprong scored in the opening 5:06 for streaking Washington. Lars Eller added the third goal in a big first period and Jabub Vrana gave the visiting Capitals breathing room with a third-period breakaway.

Flames 6, Senators 3: Juuso Valimaki, Mikael Backlund, Elias Lindholm, Sean Monahan, Andrew Mangiapane and Matthew Tkachuk scored for visiting Calgary, which ended Ottawa's three-game winning streak.

Penguins 4, Islanders 3 (OT): Kris Letang got his second goal of the game 4:34 into overtime, giving visiting Pittsburgh the win.

Sidney Crosby had a goal and an assist for the Penguins, who won for the sixth time in eight games. The Islanders went 7-2-2 in

February — with all the losses coming against the Penguins.

Hurricanes 4, Panthers 3 (SO): Martin Necas scored the winning goal in a shootout for visiting Carolina, which also got goals from Vincent Trocheck, Jake Bean and Warren Foegele in regulation.

Patric Hornqvist scored his ninth goal of the season with 1:54 remaining in the third period as Florida rallied for the second time in the contest and forced the OT.

Wild 4, Kings 3 (OT): Matt Dumba scored in the final second of overtime to lift host Minnesota to the win.

With time running out, the Wild's Mats Zuccarello dug the puck out of a scrum on the side boards and slipped a pass to Dumba in the slot. The defenseman made a move and flipped a wrist shot past Calvin Peterson with 0.3 seconds left.

Red Wings 5, Blackhawks 3: Frans Nielsen had a goal and an assist and visiting Detroit won its second straight.

Avalanche 6, Coyotes 2: Jacob MacDonald broke a tie with his first goal of the season and visiting Colorado swept the two-game, two-day series.

Golden Knights 3, Ducks 2 (OT): William Karlsson scored two goals, including the winner in overtime, and visiting Vegas continued its mastery of Anaheim.

Jets 2, Canadiens 1 (OT): Paul Stastny scored in the first minute of overtime to extend host Winnipeg's winning streak to four games.

Doncic, Mavericks snap Nets' winning streak at 8

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Luka Doncic scored 27 points, Kristaps Porzingis added 18 in his return from injury and the Dallas Mavericks snapped the Brooklyn Nets' eight-game winning streak with a 115-98 victory Saturday night.

James Harden had 29 points for the Nets, but only four after halftime while playing as Brooklyn's solo superstar. Kevin Durant missed his seventh straight game with a left hamstring strain and Kyrie Irving rested his surgically repaired right shoulder.

That took more than 56 points

per game away from the NBA's highest-scoring team and the Nets couldn't keep up with a Mavs club that shot 52% from the field.

Porzingis missed the past three games with lower back tightness and shook off his rust after halftime to help Dallas break open the game.

Jalen Brunson scored 14 points for the Mavericks, who split games against the East's top teams after losing at Philadelphia on Thursday.

Jazz 124, Magic 109: Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points and Joe Ingles filled in well again at point guard in place of

Mike Conley to help Utah win at Orlando.

The Jazz bounced back from a loss a night earlier in Miami, improving to 6-1 following a defeat. NBA-leading Utah has lost consecutive games just once all season and not since Jan. .

Cavaliers 112, 76ers 109 (OT): Collin Sexton scored 28 points, Darius Garland had 25 and visiting Cleveland beat the Eastern Conference-leading Philadelphia in overtime.

Wizards 128, Timberwolves 112: Bradley Beal scored 34 points, Russell Westbrook added 19 as part of his NBA-leading 10th triple-double, and Washing-

ton used a 44-point third quarter to beat visiting Minnesota.

Nuggets 126, Thunder 86: Jamal Murray continued his hot scoring with 26 points and Nikola Jokic had his eighth triple-double of the season to help Denver roll to a rout at Oklahoma City.

Spurs 117, Pelicans 114: DeMar DeRozan had 32 points and 11 assists and short-handed San Antonio held on to beat visiting New Orleans.

Knicks 110, Pacers 107: Julius Randle had 28 points and 10 rebounds and host New York beat Indiana get back to .500 at 17-17.