

House moves to impeach Trump again

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is on the verge of being impeached for a second time in a fast-moving House vote, just a week after he encouraged loyalists to “fight like hell” against election results and then a mob of supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

During the debate Wednesday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi asked Republicans and Democrats to “search their souls” ahead of the historic afternoon vote. Trump would be the first American president to be impeached twice.

Trump “must go,” Pelosi said. “He is a clear and present danger to the nation we all love.”

Security was exceptionally tight Wednesday, shocking images of National Guard troops massed at the iconic Capitol, with secure perimeters around the complex and metal-detector screenings required for lawmakers entering the House chamber.

While Trump’s first impeachment in 2019 brought no Republican votes in the House, a small but significant number of leaders and lawmakers are breaking with the party to join Democrats, saying Trump violated his oath to protect and defend U.S. democracy.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell believes Trump committed impeachable of-

fenses and considers Democrats’ impeachment drive an opportunity to reduce the divisive, chaotic president’s hold on the GOP, a Republican strategist told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

McConnell also called major Republican donors this weekend to gauge their thinking about Trump and was adamantly told that Trump had clearly crossed a line. McConnell told them he was through with Trump, said the strategist, who demanded anonymity to describe McConnell’s conversations.

The New York Times first reported McConnell’s views on impeachment on Tuesday.

The stunning collapse of Trump’s final days in office, along with warnings of more violence ahead, leaves the nation at an uneasy and unfamiliar juncture before Democrat Joe Biden is inaugurated Jan. 20.

Trump, who would become the only U.S. president twice impeached, faces a single charge of “incitement of insurrection.”

The four-page impeachment resolution relies on Trump’s own incendiary rhetoric and the falsehoods he spread about Biden’s election victory, including at a White House rally on the day of the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, in making its case for “high crimes and misdemeanors” as demanded in the Constitution.

Trump took no responsibility for the riot,

suggesting it was the drive to oust him rather than his actions around the bloody riot that was dividing the country.

“To continue on this path, I think it’s causing tremendous danger to our country, and it’s causing tremendous anger,” Trump said Tuesday, his first remarks to reporters since last week’s violence.

A Capitol Police officer died from injuries suffered in the riot, and police shot and killed a woman during the siege. Three other people died in what authorities said were medical emergencies. Lawmakers scrambled for safety and hid as rioters took control of the Capitol, delaying by hours the tally of Electoral College votes that was the last step in finalizing Biden’s victory.

The outgoing president offered no condolences for those dead or injured, only saying, “I want no violence.”

At least five Republican lawmakers, including third-ranking House GOP leader Liz Cheney, of Wyoming, were unswayed by the president’s logic. The Republicans announced they would vote to impeach Trump, cleaving the Republican leadership, and the party itself.

“The President of the United States summoned this mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack,” said Cheney in a statement.

Joint Chiefs condemn riot, affirm Biden’s win in memo

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The senior officers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff condemned the deadly riot at the Capitol last week, saying it was a “direct assault” on the constitutional process and illegal, according to a memo sent to the entire military.

“We witnessed actions inside the Capitol building that were inconsistent with the rule of law. The rights of freedom of speech and assembly do not give anyone the right to resort to violence, sedition and insurrection,” according to the one-page undated memorandum.

The document, signed by all eight members of Joint Chiefs of Staff including its

chairman, Army Gen. Mark Milley, reiterates to the force that the U.S. military will obey lawful orders from civilian leadership and “remains fully committed” to protecting and defending the Constitution.

“Any act to disrupt the constitutional process is not only against our traditions, values and oath; it is against the law,” the memo reads.

The FBI said Tuesday that it had opened more than 160 criminal cases as a result of the Capitol riot, and 70 people had been charged so far. The FBI is combing through more than 100,000 videos and other digital media of the attacks and is expecting hundreds of people to be identified and charged.

“Even if you left D.C., agents from our local field offices will be knocking on your door if we find out that you were part of the criminal activity at the Capitol,” Steven D’Antuono, assistant director in charge of the FBI’s field office in Washington, said Tuesday afternoon during a news conference.

The Joint Staff’s memo stated Biden will be the next president and commander in chief.

“On January 20, 2021, in accordance with the Constitution, confirmed by the states and the courts, and certified by Congress, President-elect Biden will be inaugurated and will become our 46th commander in chief,” the memo reads.

Experts warn senators on waiver for Austin

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

Retired Army Gen. Lloyd Austin, President-elect Joe Biden's pick for defense secretary, should commit to working closely with career civilians to craft Defense Department policy without surrounding himself exclusively with military officials, experts told a panel of senators Tuesday.

Lawmakers should challenge Austin on how he would approach the role of defense secretary differently than he did the jobs that he held during his four decades as an Army officer, Lindsay Cohn, an associate professor at the U.S. Naval War College whose research focuses on civil-military relations, told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The committee met Tuesday to examine whether to grant Austin a waiver to a law mandating military officers spend seven years out of uniform before serving as the

Pentagon's top civilian. Austin retired from the Army in 2016, after leading U.S. Central Command.

"The civilian side of the Department of Defense has lost both civilian influence and respect over the last several years, and I think that is a problem," Cohn said, arguing that defense secretaries must think "about defense and security in policy terms and not just in what we might think of as practical military terms."

"It is a short step to the belief that only professional military officers know how to govern military forces," she said.

If confirmed by the Senate, Austin would become the first Black defense secretary. Austin is slated to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Jan. 19, one day before Biden's inauguration. But his confirmation is not expected to come until sometime after the new president takes office be-

cause the full Congress is unlikely to grant him a waiver ahead of time. The House Armed Services Committee has set a hearing to examine his fitness for a waiver on Jan. 21. Austin will testify at that hearing.

Cohn said presidents should typically be granted the Cabinet officials they want to serve in their administrations, and Biden had labeled Austin uniquely fit for defense secretary at this moment in U.S. history. She also acknowledged his selection could help "break down significant barriers faced by people of color and underrepresented groups."

Cohn also worried that granting him a waiver from the so-called "cooling-off period" between serving in uniform and leading the Pentagon could set a "dangerous precedent" so closely on the heels of the last such waiver. That was granted in 2017 to President Donald Trump's first defense secretary, retired Marine Gen. Jim Mattis.

Iran holds short-range missile drill in Gulf of Oman

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's navy began a short-range missile drill in the Gulf of Oman on Wednesday and inaugurated its largest military vessel, state TV reported, amid heightened tensions over Tehran's nuclear program and a U.S. pressure campaign against the Islamic Republic.

The two-day missile drill was being held in the gulf's southeastern waters, and two new Iranian-made warships joined the exercise:

the missile-launching Zereh, or "armor," and the country's largest military ship, the Makran, a logistics vessel with a helicopter pad named for a coastal region in southern Iran.

In recent weeks, Iran has increased its military drills. On Saturday, the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard held a naval parade in the Persian Gulf, and a week earlier, Iran held a massive drone maneuver across half the country.

Iran on occasion announces military

achievements that cannot be independently verified. The country began a military sufficiency program in 1992 under which Tehran says it produces mortars to fighter jets.

State TV said the 121,000-metric ton Makran is Iran's largest military ship at 748 feet long, 138 feet wide and 70 feet tall. The Makran, a logistics ship that supports combat ships in the fleet, can travel for nearly three years without docking and carries information collection and processing gear.

YouTube suspends Trump's channel for at least a week

Associated Press

HONG KONG — YouTube has suspended U.S. President Donald Trump's channel for at least a week amid concerns over "ongoing potential for violence," making it the latest platform to limit the president's on-line activities.

The Google-owned platform said it removed content that was uploaded Jan. 12 from the Donald J. Trump channel for inciting violence, although it was not immediately clear which videos in question were in violation.

"After careful review, and in light of con-

cerns about the ongoing potential for violence, we removed new content uploaded to the Donald J. Trump channel and issued a strike for violating our policies for inciting violence," a YouTube spokesperson said in an emailed statement.

Under the suspension, Trump's channel is temporarily prevented from uploading new videos or live streams for at least seven days, although the channel remains live, YouTube said.

Under YouTube's policies, a second strike would result in a two-week suspension, while a third strike would get the ac-

count banned permanently.

The move to curtail Trump's social media activity comes after a mob of his supporters, urged on by his rhetoric, stormed the Capitol last week to try to stop Congress from certifying President-elect Joe Biden's win.

Tech companies have moved to suspend Trump's online postings, with Facebook and Instagram suspending Trump at least until the end of his term and Twitter permanently banning his account. Other sites have also banned Trump. Online shopping platform Shopify has pulled Trump stores off its platform.

US executes 1st female inmate in nearly 70 years

Associated Press

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. — A Kansas woman was executed Wednesday for strangling an expectant mother in Missouri and cutting the baby from her womb, the first time in nearly seven decades that the U.S. government has put to death a female inmate.

Lisa Montgomery, 52, was pronounced dead at 1:31 a.m. after receiving a lethal injection at the federal prison complex in Terre Haute, Ind. She was the 11th prisoner executed at the facility since July when President Donald Trump, an ardent supporter of capital punishment, resumed federal executions following 17 years without one.

As a curtain was raised in the execution chamber, Montgomery looked momentarily bewildered as she glanced at journalists peering at her from behind thick glass. A woman standing over her shoulder leaned over, gently removed Montgomery's face mask and asked if she had any last words.

"No," Montgomery responded in a quiet, muffled voice. She said nothing else.

At 1:30 a.m., an official in black gloves with a stethoscope walked into the room, listened to her heart and chest, then walked out. She was pronounced dead a minute later.

"The government stopped at nothing in its zeal to kill this damaged and delusional woman," Montgomery's attorney, Kelley Henry said. "Lisa Montgomery's execution

was far from justice."

It came after hours of legal wrangling before the Supreme Court cleared the way for the execution to move forward. Montgomery was the first of the final three federal inmates scheduled to die before next week's inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden, who is expected to discontinue federal executions.

In a separate ruling Tuesday, which the government can still seek to overturn, another federal judge halted the scheduled executions later this week of Corey Johnson and Dustin Higgs. Johnson and Higgs both tested positive for COVID-19 last month.

The men's attorneys argued that lung damage caused by the coronavirus would make it more likely that the lethal injection would cause them severe pain. If they aren't executed before Biden becomes president, they may likely never be put to death.

Montgomery killed 23-year-old Bobbie Jo Stinnett in the northwest Missouri town of Skidmore in 2004. She used a rope to strangle Stinnett, who was eight months pregnant, and then cut the baby girl from the womb with a kitchen knife. Montgomery took the child with her and attempted to pass the girl off as her own.

The last woman executed by the federal government was Bonnie Brown Heady on Dec. 18, 1953, for the kidnapping and murder of a 6-year-old boy in Missouri.

US senior-level overseas travel is canceled

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has canceled what would have been his final official trip abroad, the State Department said Tuesday.

Less than 18 hours after announcing that Pompeo would be traveling to Brussels this week to close out his tenure as America's top diplomat, the department said it had pulled down all senior-level overseas travel, including the secretary's. Pompeo was to have met with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg and Belgium's foreign minister while in Brussels. Initial plans for a stop in Luxembourg had already been scrapped due to the coronavirus pandemic, officials said.

Spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said the decision had been made to assist in the transition to the incoming Biden administration, which will assume office on Jan. 20. Since last week's deadly assault on the U.S. Capitol by rioters encouraged by President Donald Trump, concerns have been raised about the security of Biden's inauguration. Officials said the cancellation of Pompeo's trip was intended to support the transition and was not related to fears of violence.

"The Department of State is well along in its transition efforts with President-elect Biden's team," Ortagus said in a statement. "Both the department and the President-elect's team have been fully engaged for several weeks toward this end, and we are pleased with the level of cooperation and professionalism that has been displayed."

Biden picks former UN envoy for elevated US aid post

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President-elect Joe Biden announced Wednesday that he has picked Samantha Power, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under President Barack Obama, to run the agency overseeing American foreign humanitarian and development aid.

If confirmed by the Senate, Power will head the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has an annual budget of about \$20 billion. Biden also announced that he is elevating the position to the National Security Council within the White House, a signal that he will prioritize outreach to other nations.

Biden said USAID will coordinate America's work to lead a global response to combat the coronavirus and help the most vulnerable nations.

He called Power, 50, who was born in Britain to Irish parents, raised in Ireland, and became a U.S. citizen in 1993, "a world-renowned voice of conscience and moral clarity."

Power, a graduate of Yale University and Harvard Law School, worked as a journalist during the Balkan wars in the early 1990s and served as U.N. ambassador from 2013 to 2017. She won a Pulitzer Prize in 2003 for her book "A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide," about the U.S.

foreign policy response to genocide.

"As a journalist, activist, and diplomat, I've seen the world-changing impact of USAID," she said in a tweet. "At this critical moment, I feel immensely fortunate to have the chance to serve again, working with the incredible USAID team to confront COVID-19, climate change, humanitarian crises, & more."

Power is married to constitutional scholar Cass Sunstein. She had been critical of Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries in 2016 and famously called her a "monster" in an interview with a Scottish newspaper.

Virus toll shows up on college applications

Associated Press

In a college application season like no other, students who have seen every aspect of their lives disrupted by the coronavirus are grappling with how to show their potential.

High school seniors are facing January and February college application deadlines without SAT and ACT entrance exam scores, community service records and résumés flush with extracurricular activities — all casualties of an era of social distancing and remote learning that has carried over from their junior year.

The pandemic has prompted colleges to make tests optional and find new ways to evaluate students.

For the first time, the Common Application that allows students to apply to multiple institutions at the same time added an optional space so students can explain in 250 words or less the pandemic's impacts.

A sampling of responses provided to The Associated Press illustrate the pandemic's academic, emotional and financial toll.

"My parents losing their jobs made it very hard financially and we struggled to get by," a student wrote. "It was already hard before the pandemic but with the low amount of money flowing in as a result of COVID-19's safe to say our situations got even worse."

Others wrote of struggling to focus alongside siblings and parents in noisy households disrupted by work and school Zoom calls, or of money and technology challenges.

California

SAN JOSE — State and local officials have fined two Kaiser Permanente Bay Area hospitals more than \$184,000 in recent months for failing to report when employees were infected with COVID-19, officials said.

Cal/OSHA, the state agency that oversees workplace safety, fined the health care giant's San

Jose facility more than \$85,000 in November after it kept quiet when one of its employees was hospitalized for a week with COVID-19 early in the pandemic, the Mercury News reported.

Santa Clara County officials fined that same hospital \$43,000 this month for failing to report a deadly coronavirus outbreak that may have been caused by an inflatable holiday costume worn by an unknowingly infected staffer on Christmas Day. The number of cases linked to that outbreak has reached 60 employees and one staffer has died.

Santa Clara County officials said they learned of the Christmas Day outbreak in January after the Oakland-based hospital chain issued a press statement. They issued \$1,000 fines for each of the initial 43 cases. Kaiser is responsible for the timely reporting of cases, the county said.

Cal/OSHA also fined Kaiser's hospital in Antioch \$56,000 in December after the hospital failed to immediately report that two employees were hospitalized with coronavirus in May and July, among other violations to maintain a safe work environment in the midst of the pandemic.

Georgia

ATLANTA — Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp is again urging patience among people waiting to be vaccinated against the coronavirus even as he threatens to take vaccines away from large hospital systems that his administration says aren't moving fast enough to administer the shots.

"If this issue continues, the state will take possession of those doses and ensure that vaccinations continue," Kemp told reporters. "And if it takes me firing up my pickup truck and doing it myself, so be it."

The Republican governor made the statements Tuesday as infections and hospitalizations ran at record levels and more school systems pulled back from in-person instruction.

One person in every 154 people was diagnosed with COVID-19 in Georgia in the seven days that ended Monday, behind only Alabama and South Carolina in terms of infection rates, according to figures kept by The Associated Press.

Louisiana

NEW ORLEANS — A Louisiana Supreme Court order says no jury trials can be launched in the state until March 1 because of coronavirus concerns.

The order, dated Monday, says any criminal or civil jury trials can continue if they have already begun. But new jury trials must be delayed to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

Other types of court proceedings can continue in person. But proceedings should use no more than 50% of a courtroom's capacity and social distancing must be practiced. And the Supreme Court order urges the use of telephone or video conferencing.

Michigan

Operators scheduling COVID-19 vaccinations for elderly Detroit residents were receiving 600 to 700 calls per hour Tuesday for appointments as people seek more vaccines than currently are available.

The city has started scheduled vaccinations for residents 75 and older and will begin offering them to people 65 and older once more doses are received from the federal government, Mayor Mike Duggan told reporters Tuesday.

Detroit received about 120,000 calls Monday, but many were not eligible yet for the vaccine, Duggan added.

About 40,000 people in Detroit are 75 or older, Duggan said.

About 2,000 vaccine doses received earlier are being used for firefighters, city health department workers and residents at assisted living centers. Detroit received 3,900 doses of the Pfizer vaccine Monday that will be used to vaccinate residents 75 and older.

West Virginia

MADISON — A county health department in West Virginia has been barred from distributing the coronavirus vaccine until state officials conduct a "clinical monitoring visit," officials said.

The Boone County Health Department hasn't received any vaccine since Dec. 30, when it mistakenly gave 44 people an antibody treatment instead of vaccinations, news outlets reported, citing a statement from the Department of Health and Human Resources.

The county agency can resume giving vaccinations after state officials conduct the visit, which will include "a review of agency policies and procedures," Health and Human Resources spokeswoman Allison Adler said. The visit is expected this week, she said.

Texas

AUSTIN — The Austin area opened a field hospital in a convention center Tuesday as cases of the disease caused by the coronavirus continue to soar.

The opening came as state health officials reported that Texas had surpassed 14,000 hospitalized COVID-19 patients for the first time, as well as 22,000 more newly confirmed cases.

For now, the Austin field hospital will have 25 beds and can expand if needed.

Missouri

The coronavirus pandemic has wiped out live performances for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra through at least May.

A statement from the symphony said the decision was based on advice from city health officials and experts at the Washington University School of Medicine.

The symphony also announced that musicians have agreed to temporary pay cuts that will help offset some of the millions of dollars in losses blamed on the shutdown of performances due to the pandemic.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man stabbed cashier in her head over price of milk

CT WATERBURY — A Connecticut man was arrested for stabbing a Walmart clerk over the price of milk, police said.

The assault happened in Waterbury, the Republican-American reported.

Hichman Asfir, 40, of Stamford, stabbed the cashier in the head with a folding knife after she scanned a gallon of milk and told him the price, police said. Asfir was arrested on charges including first-degree assault, police said.

The 19-year-old victim was hospitalized for treatment of a puncture wound behind her left ear. She was in stable condition.

Man gets prison for shooting neighbor's dog with air rifle

NJ MOUNT HOLLY — A judge sentenced a New Jersey man to five years in prison for shooting his neighbor's dog with an air rifle, causing the animal to be euthanized.

The sentence was the result of a plea agreement with William Stroemel, 65, of Maple Shade, the Burlington County Prosecutor's Office said. Stroemel pleaded guilty in April to possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose and animal cruelty.

Authorities said Stroemel shot Toby with an air rifle as the 9-year-old Pomeranian-poodle mix passed his home in September 2019. A veterinarian determined the dog had been shot in the head and Toby was euthanized the next day.

University earns contract to help Army prepare for flooding

LA BATON ROUGE — The U.S. military awarded Louisiana State University \$9.3 million to help the military prepare to deal with climate-related problems such as flooding and rising seas, the university said in a news release.

The money will be given out over the next four years and is part of a collaboration between LSU, the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center's Environmental Laboratory and the University of De-

laware, the university said.

The military has bases and other pieces of infrastructure in flood hazard zones, the university noted. LSU will use computer modeling techniques and engineering to help the military improve the resilience of its military facilities now and in the future.

Inmates escape jail using 'homemade rope'

CA MERCED — Authorities in central California were searching for six inmates who used a "homemade rope" to escape from a county jail, sheriff's officials said.

All six escapees should be considered armed and dangerous, the Merced County Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

"A preliminary investigation has determined that the inmates were able to gain access to the roof of the facility and utilize a homemade rope to scale down the side of the jail," the sheriff's office said.

All but one of the suspects are charged with violent felonies, including murder.

Man rams police car, kills deputy set to retire

FL TAMPA — A Florida sheriff's deputy with one shift left before retirement was intentionally hit and killed by a man fleeing law enforcement, officials said.

Cpl. Brian LaVigne, 54, had spent three decades at the department and was set to work his final day, Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister said.

Deputies took Travis Zachary Gabriel Garrett, 28, into custody and multiple charges are pending, the sheriff said.

Deputies were called to Garrett's apartment regarding erratic behavior. Garrett had reportedly thrown furniture and clothing off his balcony at an apartment complex in Brandon, near Tampa. Deputies spoke to Garrett through the door, but since no crime had been committed, they cleared the call, the sheriff said.

A short time later, residents called the sheriff's office saying Garrett was nude and was throwing food at neighbors, the sheriff said. This time when deputies arrived, Garrett began attacking them, hitting Deputy Mi-

chael Durig Jr. in the head multiple times, officials said.

Garrett then got into a car. The sheriff said Garrett rammed through a back gate and crossed two lanes of traffic to intentionally hit LaVigne's marked patrol car on the driver side with the front of his car, Chronister said.

Police: Girl, 14, stole squad car, led chase that reached 110 mph

IA PERRY — A 14-year-old girl stole a police car over the weekend and led officers on a dangerous high-speed chase, police in west-central Iowa said.

The incident began in Coon Rapids when the girl jumped behind the wheel of a Coon Rapids Police Department car and took off, television station KCCI reported. A chase ensued, involving officers from Coon Rapids, Perry, and Dallas, Guthrie and Greene counties, and reportedly reached speeds over 110 mph, the Iowa State Patrol said.

Officers eventually used tire-puncturing strips to disable and stop the stolen police car, the patrol said. The girl was arrested on suspicion of first-degree theft, theft of firearms, eluding and several traffic violations.

3 charged with possessing a still, making illegal moonshine

AL HURTSBORO — State authorities charged three men with operating an illegal moonshine still in Alabama.

Investigators with the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency made the arrests after discovering a 48-barrel still in rural Russell County, al.com reported.

Alabama Trooper Joel Hart said authorities seized about 325 gallons of illegal moonshine found hidden in various areas of the site. Investigators also seized items they suspect were stolen including a horse trailer, flatbed trailers and a rifle.

They arrested Manuel Eugene Davis, 58; Manuel Eugene Davis Jr., 34, and Gabriel Immanuel Mitchell, 37, on charges including possession of a moonshine still and illegal manufacture or distribution of moonshine whiskey.

— From wire reports

STARS AND STRIPES®

Single source convenience, reliably independent. Visit www.stripes.com.

Reporting
World, National
and Military News

Playing amid pandemic difficult for NBA

Associated Press

When Washington coach Scott Brooks was a player and would ask coaches about their profession, the response was always the same: It is a lonely job.

Never more so than now, probably.

As if playing games in arenas that are somewhere between mostly and entirely empty during a still-raging coronavirus pandemic wasn't hard enough, the rules for players and coaches — both home and on the road — are getting even tougher. The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association on Tuesday agreed to stiffer protocols, including ones where players and coaches will essentially have to stay in their hotels during road trips except for team activities and without receiving visitors.

"We have to keep everything in perspective," Brooks said. "It's tough, but we get to do something we really, really love to do and we're fortunate. It's a privilege to be able to be in the NBA, to coach, to play. I've been fortunate enough to be

able to do both."

Even without the new rules, solitude and loneliness have been hallmarks of road trips already this season. Denver coach Michael Malone couldn't go see family when the Nuggets visited New York — his birthplace and where his NBA coaching career began with the Knicks. He wanted to see his parents on the Nuggets' recent trip there; he couldn't, and now hasn't in nearly two full years.

"A big part of coming back has always been a chance to see my mother and my father, brothers, sisters, friends and so on and so forth, and that is not the case this year," Malone said. "So, definitely takes away from this opportunity."

The NBA's rules are superseded by local regulations, which in Los Angeles County have been among the most restrictive. Residents are under a stay-at-home order, indoor and outdoor dining isn't allowed, and Chicago coach Billy Donovan said the Bulls could only have one person at a time in a workout room set up in the ho-

tel when they played the Lakers and Clippers at Staples Center.

"Guys are pretty much locked up in their rooms," Donovan said. "There's very, very little anybody can do. Days are long for these guys."

For at least the next couple of weeks, from an NBA perspective, L.A. will be like the rest of the U.S.

"It's difficult. You know, games end and you go back and get a little plastic dish of food," said San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich, who loves visiting restaurants on the road, particularly the ones with magnificent wine offerings. "I'm not complaining — we have it very good — but you go back to your room and you eat your food. You don't eat with your team or your coaches or anything like that. So, the camaraderie part of team sport and all that is kind of out the window."

The latest rules were agreed to by the league and the NBPA but weren't unanimously well-received. Oklahoma City guard George Hill, who was with the Milwaukee Bucks last season

and was one of the drivers of their decision to sit out a playoff game in response to the Jacob Blake shooting by police in Wisconsin, made clear he wasn't a fan of the new restrictions — including the ones saying players and coaches had to essentially isolate again on the road.

"If it's that serious, then maybe we shouldn't be playing," Hill said.

Utah guard Donovan Mitchell missed 15 of his 23 shots when the Jazz lost to the Knicks on a recent trip.

He didn't think the fan-less atmosphere was the reason, though it certainly made Madison Square Garden feel far different than the place Mitchell attended growing up not far from the city.

The celebrities in the seats and the memories of the massive events the arena has staged have never been lost, no matter how many games the Knicks have. But the noise now comes from piped-in fan reactions, not Spike Lee leaping out of his seat to do it himself.

Embiid scores 45 points as Sixers top Heat in OT

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Joel Embiid had 45 points and 16 rebounds, Dakota Mathias' only basket of the game was a go-ahead three-pointer with 26.1 seconds left and the Philadelphia 76ers hung on to beat the undermanned Miami Heat 137-134 in overtime on Tuesday night.

Embiid had one of the great games of his career and carried the Sixers with a perfect third quarter and clutch buckets in OT to put them on the brink of victory.

Mathias, who went undrafted in 2018 and signed this season with the Sixers as a two-day G League player, got the ball from the top of the arc and buried it for

the 134-132 lead.

Tyler Herro helped the Heat overcome Embiid's dominant effort when his three-pointer tied the game 115-all with 2:25 left.

Nets 122, Nuggets 116: Kevin Durant had 34 points, 13 assists and nine rebounds, Bruce Brown made a huge contribution while starting for the absent Kyrie Irving, and host Brooklyn rallied from 18 down to beat Denver.

Brown scored 16 points, including the tying and go-ahead baskets down the stretch. Durant followed with the Nets' next six points, including a three-pointer that essentially put it away at 120-113 with 27 seconds to play.

Lakers 117, Rockets 100:

LeBron James scored 26 points in just more than three quarters and Los Angeles never trailed in a rout at Houston.

Anthony Davis added 19 points and 10 rebounds in three quarters to help the Lakers to their second straight blowout over the Rockets after a 120-102 victory Sunday night.

Spurs 112, Thunder 102: Lonnie Walker IV scored 24 points and visiting San Antonio finished a five-game trip with four wins.

Keldon Johnson added 18 points for the Spurs, who won their 2,200th game since joining the NBA in 1976. The team committed a season-low four turnovers.

Pacers 104, Warriors 95:

Myles Turner made a go-ahead three-pointer with 2:59 to play and scored 22 points as visiting Indiana stymied Golden State.

The Pacers kept Stephen Curry in check by regularly playing him with a tough box-and-1 defense, though the two-time MVP still had 20 points.

Jazz 117, Cavaliers 87: Donovan Mitchell scored 27 points and visiting Utah rolled over injury-depleted Cleveland, wrapping up its six-game road trip.

The Jazz are headed home with a victory, albeit a little earlier than expected. Utah was scheduled to play Wednesday at Washington, but the NBA postponed the game because the Wizards do not have the minimum eight available players.

No. 7 Michigan routs No. 9 Wisconsin

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Juwan Howard watched his team turn another highly anticipated matchup into a blowout.

First, Michigan pushed its lead to 17 at halftime. Then it was 30. Then, unbelievably, the Wolverines led No. 9 Wisconsin by 40 points near the midway point of the second half.

“It says a lot about their maturity — understanding that every possession counts and matters,” said Howard, in his second season as Michigan’s coach. “Wisconsin’s a team that’s capable of going on runs, and basketball is based on runs.”

On this night, it was No. 7 Michigan that made the big run — and that’s an understatement. The Wolverines outscored the Badgers 43-6 over a stretch that spanned parts of both halves, and Michigan remained unbeaten with a 77-54 win Tuesday.

Mike Smith had 16 points and six assists for the Wolverines. Franz Wagner added 15 points and 10 rebounds. It was another masterpiece for Michigan (11-0, 6-0 Big Ten), which became first team in college basketball history to beat three ranked opponents in a row by at least 19 points.

“They’re coached very well. They have a lot of players and they have playmakers on both ends of the floor,” said D’Mitrik Trice, who led Wisconsin with 20 points. “A lot of

guys that can get up and run the floor. A lot of shooters. And, they space the floor really well. They’re very disciplined in what they need to get accomplished. It just shows.”

Michigan set the tone for this one with its rim protection. The Badgers (10-3, 4-2) struggled to finish plays around the basket early on, and the Wolverines had six blocked shots in the first half alone.

Michigan led 26-23 before scoring the last 14 points of the half. A steal and dunk by Wagner made it 33-23. Smith followed that with a steal and a layup. Wagner then drove the baseline and dunked for a 14-point advantage.

The start of the second half wasn’t any better for Wisconsin. A three-pointer by Eli Brooks made it 47-26, and a three by Smith made it 54-26. Finally, a layup by Chaundee Brown gave Michigan an almost impenetrable 69-29 lead.

No. 20 Virginia Tech 74, No. 19 Duke 67: Tyrece Radford had 18 points and 12 rebounds to lift the host Hokies.

The double-double was the first of the season for Radford, who helped Virginia Tech (10-2, 4-1 Atlantic Coast Conference) jump to an 18-point, first-half lead and hold off the Blue Devils’ second-half rally to win for the sixth time in seven games.

Keve Aluma added 17 points and seven rebounds, and Jalen Cone finished with 14

points for the Hokies. Jeremy Roach led Duke (5-3, 3-1) with a game-high 22 points.

Oklahoma State 75, No. 6 Kansas 70: Cade Cunningham scored 18 points, and the host Cowboys held off a late rally by the Jayhawks.

Kansas trailed by three in the closing seconds and had possession, but Oklahoma State’s Bryce Williams stole the ball, drove the length of the floor and dunked as time expired.

The Cowboys blew a 19-point lead in a loss to West Virginia eight days earlier and squandered a 16-point lead in the second half of this one before scoring the game’s final eight points.

Williams scored 17 points and Avery Anderson III added 14 for Oklahoma State (9-3, 3-3 Big 12). It was the fifth time in the past eight tries that the Cowboys have beaten the Jayhawks at Gallagher-Iba Arena. David McCormack scored a season-high 24 points for Kansas (10-3, 4-2).

North Carolina 81, Syracuse 75: Garrison Brooks and Armando Bacot each had a double-double, and the host Tar Heels pulled away in the last three minutes.

North Carolina (8-4, 3-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) became the first men’s basketball program to play 1,000 regular-season ACC games. The Tar Heels are 708-292 and have the most wins in ACC history.

Coaches finding dressing up no longer suits them

Associated Press

Let’s just say Gabriele D’Annunzio isn’t on board with the new fashion trend for college basketball coaches.

Coaches across the country have eschewed the traditional game day attire of coats, ties and dress slacks in favor of polos, quarter-zips and warmup pants. Notre Dame’s Mike Brey went so far as to coach a game in shorts.

The 76-year-old D’Annunzio is the personal tailor for the best dressed man in the game, Villanova’s Jay Wright. It nearly broke D’Annunzio’s heart when Wright told him about the vote by Big East coaches to go casual this season.

“The coaches shouldn’t look exactly the same as the players and everyone that’s affiliated with basketball — a pair of warmup pants and all that,” D’Annunzio said. “For a game, you need to look the part and be re-

spectful for the position. It’s a little disappointing but I understand. This is just a difficult time.”

NBA coaches went casual when the league restarted its season over the summer at Walt Disney World in Florida and college coaches have followed their lead. The idea picked up serious momentum for the general public during pandemic lockdowns, too.

Dressing down isn’t a new concept in college athletics. Bob Knight and his red sweater were inseparable. George Raveling was wearing a tracksuit on game days at Iowa in the 1980s, well before Bob Huggins made the look cool.

“Bob Huggins is light years ahead of all of us,” Brey said. “Maybe we should all stay in the Huggins look.”

Creighton’s Greg McDermott said he doesn’t plan to dress up for games again.

“I think it makes way more sense,” he said.

On the women’s side, Stanford’s Tara VanDerveer and UConn’s Geno Auriemma traded in their blazers for quarter-zips while Arizona’s Adia Barnes, known for her trendy wardrobe and Gucci shoes, coached a game in a long-sleeved T-shirt.

So does Wisconsin’s Greg Gard, who said Raveling had the right idea with those tracksuits.

“I’m not going to go as far as Mike Brey has at Notre Dame and start wearing shorts on the sideline,” Gard said, “but I do love the casual.”

Brey said he took the notion of acceptable coaching attire to a “ridiculously new level” last Saturday. He sensed his team was tight going into a game at North Carolina on Jan. 2, and he wanted to loosen them up, so he put on gray shorts along with a blue polo.

“I get it. Hey, the suit look is classy,” Brey said. “I’m a physical education major. I like dressing like a PE major for game day.”

Friends face each other as playoff foes

Associated Press

Green Bay Packers coach Matt LaFleur and Los Angeles Rams coach Sean McVay say their friendship and shared history shouldn't have much of an impact on their teams' upcoming NFC divisional playoff matchup.

LaFleur was the Rams' offensive coordinator in 2017 during the first year of McVay's head coaching tenure after they spent four seasons as assistants on Mike Shanahan's Washington staff. The top-seeded Packers (13-3) host the Rams (11-6) on Saturday with an NFC championship game berth at stake.

"It's not something that even comes to my mind once throughout the game-planning process," LaFleur said. "You're focused on what you're seeing on tape and trying to focus on some of the things you do well and maybe trying to implement some new things. The sole focus has always got to be on the opposition, 100% of your effort has got to be on the opposition and less about who you have personal relationships with."

LaFleur says he learned his lesson as a first-year head coach

last season matching up twice with the San Francisco 49ers, whose staff included his younger brother Mike as passing game coordinator. San Francisco's head coach is Kyle Shanahan, who worked at Washington with Matt LaFleur and McVay from 2010-13.

The 49ers beat the Packers soundly both times, including a 37-20 decision in the NFC championship game.

"I probably maybe thought about it more last year, whereas I've kind of been there, done that, in regard to that," LaFleur said. "(Los Angeles) is a damn good football team. If you're focusing on anything other than who you're going against, then you're wasting time."

McVay says facing a friend and former colleague is somewhat different because each coach knows a little about the other's tendencies. But he said that factor "can be a little bit blown out of proportion" and pointed out that both of them have evolved since their years working together.

"I don't think you want to be naïve to the fact that they know a couple of things that you want to

make sure you're aware of," McVay said. "But I also think you've got to be careful of not overthinking it. It's about your team versus the opposing team."

LaFleur's had a couple of opportunities already this season to match up against one of his former bosses.

Green Bay beat Atlanta 30-16 on Oct. 5 before Dan Quinn was fired as the Falcons' coach and knocked off Tennessee 40-14 on Dec. 29. LaFleur was the quarterbacks coach on Quinn's Atlanta staff from 2015-16 and worked for Mike Vrabel at Tennessee in 2018.

LaFleur has a deeper history with McVay.

"That's one of my closest friends in life," LaFleur said. "I love him like a brother."

McVay credits his time working on Mike Shanahan's staff with LaFleur and the Shanahans for helping mold him into the coach he is now. LaFleur says he sensed McVay was a coaching star on the rise as soon as they met.

"He's like my brother, like my big brother," McVay said of LaFleur. "We've been close for a

long time. I can remember even just going back to when we started working in Washington, he and his wife lived across the street, right when they had their first son, Luke. That was before I had met my fiancée, and so I'd come third-wheel it with them a lot. They kind of took me under their wing."

After Mike Shanahan was fired at the close of a 3-13 season in 2013, McVay remained at Washington as part of Jay Gruden's staff while LaFleur spent a year as Notre Dame's quarterbacks coach before heading to Atlanta.

They reunited in 2017 when McVay became the Rams' head coach and hired LaFleur. During their lone season together in Los Angeles, the Rams went 11-5 and won an NFC West title after going 4-12 the year before their arrival.

LaFleur left the following year to become offensive coordinator for the Tennessee Titans and have the play-calling responsibilities he lacked at Los Angeles. One year later, he became the Packers' head coach.

Both men have enjoyed extraordinary early success.

NHL gambles on having a season without a bubble

Associated Press

When the NHL charter flight back from the Edmonton bubble landed in New Jersey, Gary Bettman's phone started ringing.

The commissioner thought he'd get a couple of weeks to exhale after awarding the Stanley Cup to the Tampa Bay Lightning. Instead, it was back to work.

Of course, planning for the 2021 season began well before late September. It took a long-term extension of the collective bargaining agreement between the league and players' union, layers of health and safety protocols, realigned divisions and

convincing multiple government agencies that it is safe to play.

The season opened Wednesday and Bettman estimates the league will lose over \$1 billion even by playing. It's a gamble everyone was willing to make to keep hockey going during the pandemic.

"It would be cheaper for us to shut the doors and not play," Bettman said Monday. "We're coming back to play this season because we think it's important for the game, because our fans and our players want us to, and it may give people, particularly those who are back in isolation or where there are curfews, a

sense of normalcy and something to do."

None of the four major North American men's professional sports leagues rely as much on attendance as the NHL: Roughly 50% of all revenue comes from ticket sales, concessions and other in-arena elements. That's why the league and players prioritized extending the CBA before completing last season in twin playoff bubbles; they knew no fans slashes revenue for everyone.

The agreement gave the NHL a blueprint to operate and labor peace through at least 2026.

"You always have to make

judgments about what you think the future's going to hold and how do you attempt to maximize the benefits and minimize the detriments, mitigate your risks, take advantage of opportunities and so on," NHLPA executive director Don Fehr said in a phone interview.

Living by the terms of that agreement means some short-term pain for owners now, and Bettman warned recently that players could have to repay some money later based on the 50/50 split of revenue. But that was just one part of the puzzle of pulling all this together, which started with when to begin play and how to do it.