

Chinese submariners risk psych issues

By **WYATT OLSON**

Stars and Stripes

A fifth of sailors assigned to Chinese submarines patrolling the South China Sea have experienced some degree of mental health problems, according to a study published last month.

“This study demonstrates for the first time that soldiers and officers in the submarine force in the South China Sea are exposed to a number of mental health risks and are suffering from serious psychological problems,” Chinese researchers concluded in the study published Jan. 7 in the journal *Military Medicine*.

The study’s five authors are affiliated with the Institute of Military Health Management at Naval Medical University in Shanghai, China.

It assessed the “self-perceived” mental health of Chinese submariners, then compared those findings to “Chinese military male norms,” the study said.

The authors noted that the state of mental health in members of the Chinese military has been the subject of greater scrutiny since the country’s Ministry of National Defense announced in 2006 that psychological testing would be included in the official recruitment examination.

“One group of military personnel at high risk of mental health problems is the submarine force, especially in the South China Sea,” the study said. “Not only is the South

China Sea located in the tropical convergence zone, where the climate is characterized by high temperatures and high humidity, but it also has a geographical importance from a political perspective: Vietnam, the Philippines and other countries around the South China Sea have intensified their territorial claims since 2007. Attributable to the tense relations between these countries, China has increased the number of cruising and sea maneuvers to strengthen protection of the South China Sea.”

While the United States maintains no territorial claims there, the U.S. Navy conducts routine freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea with surface vessels for what it describes as a means of supporting “a free and open Indo-Pacific.”

The frequency and scope of U.S. Navy submarine patrols beneath the sea has not been made public.

A submariner’s life is not an easy one, with sometimes-lengthy confinement to small spaces, manufactured air and artificial light. The U.S. Navy began embedding psychologists aboard aircraft carriers in 1996 to address medical evacuations due to mental health issues, and over the next decade, mental health providers were inserted into other Navy and Marine Corps units.

The findings of the just-published study — which the authors say was “arguably the

first” to examine the topic — was based on responses to questionnaires by 511 submariners of five corps of the submarine force in the South China Sea.

Submariners assessed their psychological symptoms using the Symptom Checklist-90-R, a brief but well-established instrument used in the mental health field for self-assessments. It is divided into nine broad categories of symptoms, such as obsessive-compulsive behavior, anxiety and hostility.

Researchers found that the scores of symptoms by submariners in four categories “were significantly higher than the Chinese military male norms, indicating that the submarine force in the South China Sea had more serious psychological problems and symptoms of psychopathology.”

Those categories were obsessive-compulsive behavior, anxiety, phobic anxiety and somatization, which is when a mental state, such as depression, manifests itself in physical symptoms.

Just over 21% — or 108 submariners — “rated positive for psychological problems,” the study said.

Submariners with a college education or higher had greater odds of experiencing mental health problems.

Researchers found that the groups of submariners ages 26-30 or those who had been serving between six to 10 years had lower odds of such problems.

Airman honored for work with military dogs

By **SETH ROBSON**

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A young airman who worked around coronavirus restrictions to fly 11 military working dogs to Japan last year was honored Thursday by a two-legged, three-star general at the home of U.S. Forces Japan.

The dogs, trained to sniff out bombs and contraband or chase down and tackle intruders on U.S. bases, routinely flew to Japan on commercial aircraft before the pandemic. That option ended last spring due to air travel restrictions threatening the ca-

nine supply at U.S. bases all over Japan.

Military working dogs typically retire after 10-12 years on the job. By the time the pandemic hit, Yokota was down to 60% of its military working dog force and other bases had dropped as low as 35%, according to the Air Force.

Staff Sgt. Seth Shannon, 26, of Mount Vernon, Ohio, the kennel master with Yokota’s 374th Security Forces Squadron, decided to do something about it. He pored over regulations and discovered a way to transport dogs from Hawaii.

“I coordinated with a bunch of agencies to

move the dogs on military aircraft,” said Shannon, who oversees nine military working dogs at Yokota.

Last year, the Air Force twice sent handlers to Hawaii to collect two shipments comprising 11 dogs for the service, as well for as the Navy and Marine Corps, he said.

USFJ commander Lt. Gen. Kevin Schneider praised Shannon’s “ingenuity and initiative” as he pinned an Air Force Achievement Medal on him while defenders, human and canine, stood in formation at the security forces headquarters on Yokota.

Navy in Naples offers vaccine to all US adults

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — The U.S. Navy base in Naples is among the first places where all adult Americans who want a coronavirus vaccination can get one.

All those who sought out the shots during the base's Phase 1 — which began Jan. 8 and included health care providers, first responders, essential workers, deploying troops and people age 65 and older — have received them, Navy officials said.

"We are on Phase 2, which is persons over 18 for our community," Christina Clark, a spokeswoman for U.S. Naval Hospital Naples, said Friday.

Walk-ins were welcome Saturday, she said, adding that family members are also eligible, but local nationals are not.

Officials at the Defense Health Agency in Washington were not able to comment on how far along other U.S. military bases had come in their vaccination campaigns Friday.

The Navy in Naples sent out an email Thursday announcing an open call to those interested in getting the vaccine,

lasting through Saturday. It said all active duty, Defense Department civilian and U.S. contractors who had not received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine could report to the community center.

"We've had a dedicated team and we worked through all the (priority lists)," Clark said. "We've touched every command, we went through our high-riskers and we've moved on. We're trying to get shots into arms and protect the community."

Clark said the hospital had been receiving doses of the Moderna vaccine regularly and anticipated that would continue.

"We're glad the people in this community want the vaccine," she said.

Other U.S. bases in the country, including U.S. Army Garrison Italy in Vicenza and Aviano Air Base in Italy's northeast, hadn't announced a Phase 2 transition as of Sunday.

"We are not there yet, not on the Army side," Gino Mattorano, a spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe, said Friday. "I'm pretty sure we have not gone beyond Phase 1 at any Army (military treatment facility)."

US pauses plan to vaccinate Gitmo inmates

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is backing off for now on a plan to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to the 40 prisoners held at the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Pentagon chief spokesman John Kirby said in a tweet Saturday that the Defense Department would be "pausing" the plan to give the vaccination to those held at Guantanamo while it reviews measures to protect troops who work there.

Kirby said no prisoners had yet received the vaccination. The plan drew some criticism after The New York Times reported that the vaccination of prisoners would start in the coming days.

"We're pausing the plan to move forward, as we review force protection protocols," Kirby said. "We remain committed to our obligations to keep our troops safe."

The U.S. military announced last month that it planned to offer the vaccine to prisoners as it vaccinated all personnel at the detention center.

At the time, U.S. Southern Command said it expected to have enough vaccine for all of the approximately 1,500 personnel assigned to the detention center.

Official: US-South Korea drills to start in March

BY SETH ROBSON
AND YOO KYONG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Forces Korea will take part in a command post exercise with the South Korean military in March, the U.S. ally's defense minister told reporters Thursday.

South Korean Defense Minister Suh Wook at a press conference in Seoul said the military is preparing for computer-simulated defensive drills with U.S. forces, according to a partial transcript of Wook's remarks provided by the defense ministry.

A USFK spokesman declined to confirm the minister's remarks.

"As a matter of USFK policy, we do not comment on planned or executed training, but rather view training as something all

professional militaries conduct to maintain proficiency, credibility, trust and readiness," Col. Lee Peters said in email Friday.

The two countries canceled a bilateral exercise last spring due to the coronavirus pandemic but conducted a two-week drill in August focused on defending South Korea from an attack by the North.

Large-scale exercises involving U.S. troops on the peninsula — Ulchi Freedom Guardian, Key Resolve and Foal Eagle — were canceled in 2018 by then-President Donald Trump, who called them overly expensive and provocative to North Korea, after an unprecedented meeting with that nation's leader, Kim Jong Un.

The upcoming exercise won't involve troops maneuvering, Suh told reporters.

However, it could be impacted by the coronavirus, he said.

"Military exercises can be threatening to North Korea," said Kim Hyun-wook, an American studies professor at Korea National Diplomatic Academy in Seoul. However, he added in a telephone interview Friday, Pyongyang might not have a big problem with upcoming drills since they are computer-based and defensive in nature.

The exercise will be reassuring to South Korea and not overly provocative to the North, said Jeff Kingston, director of Asian studies at Temple University's Tokyo campus, in a telephone interview Friday.

North Korea showed off some advanced weapons during a Jan. 14 military parade in Pyongyang.

2 lawyers leave team defending Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Former President Donald Trump has parted ways with his lead impeachment lawyers just over a week before his Senate trial is set to begin, two people familiar with the situation said Saturday.

Butch Bowers and Deborah Barbier, both South Carolina lawyers, are no longer with Trump's defense team. One of the people described the parting as a "mutual decision" that reflected a difference of opinion on the direction of the case. Both insisted on anonymity to discuss private conversations.

One said new additions to the legal team were expected to be announced in a day or two.

The upheaval injects fresh uncertainty into the makeup and strategy of Trump's defense team as he prepares to face charges that he incited the insurrection at the U.S.

Capitol on Jan. 6. However, all but five Senate Republicans this week voted in favor of an effort to dismiss the trial before it even started, making clear a conviction of the former president is unlikely regardless of his defense team.

According to a different person with knowledge of the legal hires, Bowers and Barbier left the team because Trump wanted them to use a defense that relied on allegations of election fraud, and the lawyers were not willing to do so. The person was not authorized to speak publicly about the situation and requested anonymity.

Trump has struggled to find attorneys willing to defend him after becoming the first president in history to be impeached twice. He is set to stand trial the week of Feb. 8 on a charge that he incited his supporters to storm Congress before President Joe Biden's inauguration in an attempt to halt the

peaceful transition of power.

After numerous attorneys who defended him previously declined to take on the case, Trump was introduced to Bowers by one of his closest allies in the Senate, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Bowers, a familiar figure in Republican legal circles, had years of experience representing elected officials and political candidates, including then-South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford against a failed impeachment effort that morphed into an ethics probe.

Republicans and Trump aides have made clear that they intend to make a simple argument in the trial: Trump's trial is unconstitutional because he is no longer in office.

While Republicans in Washington had seemed eager to part ways with Trump after the deadly events of Jan. 6, they have since eased off of their criticism, weary of angering the former president's loyal voter base.

Push to reopen schools could exclude millions

Associated Press

President Joe Biden says he wants most schools serving kindergarten through eighth grade to reopen by late April, but even if that happens, it is likely to leave out millions of students, many of them minorities in urban areas.

"We're going to see kids fall further and further behind, particularly low-income students of color," said Shavar Jeffries, president of Democrats for Education Reform. "There's potentially a generational level of harm that students have suffered from being out of school for so long."

Like some other officials and education advocates, Jeffries said powerful teachers unions are standing in the way of bringing back students. The unions insist they are acting to protect teachers and students and their families.

In a call Thursday evening with teachers unions, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the federal government's top infectious disease expert, said the reopening of K-8 classrooms nationally might not be possible on Biden's time frame.

Biden is asking for \$130 billion for schools to address concerns by unions and school officials as part of a broader coronavirus relief package that faces an uncertain

fate in Congress. If his reopening goal is realized, millions of students might still have to keep learning from home, possibly for the rest of the school year.

California was an epicenter of infection in the first part of January, and public health officials say many of the state's districts are in areas where transmission remains too high to reopen. But a statewide group called Open Schools California is pushing for reopening as soon as public health standards are met.

It's hard to tally exactly how many schools are open in person now because of the size and diffuse nature of the nation's school system — and because districts' approaches change frequently.

Jeffries acknowledges that there are reasons it's harder to open schools in cities: They're more densely populated, meaning the virus can spread faster; more people rely on public transportation, a potential hot spot for contamination; and more parents have front-line jobs that could expose them, and, in turn, their children, to the virus.

But he said the major obstacle to reopening city schools is political. "The teachers unions tend to be pretty obstinately opposed to going back to school," Jeffries said.

Northeast braces for major storm

Associated Press

After days of frigid temperatures but little else weather-wise, the Northeast braced for a whopper of a storm that could dump well over a foot of snow in many areas, create blizzard-like conditions and cause travel problems for the next few days.

Three to 5 inches of snow arrived in central Ohio by early Sunday, making for some slippery roads. A few more inches was in the forecast for Sunday, but by the afternoon, the snow was expected to reach Pennsylvania.

Heavy snow falling at an inch to 3 inches an hour was forecast for Monday in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, the National Weather Service said. Much of the region could see blizzard-like conditions, with a foot to 18 inches of snow.

Temperatures were expected to be in the upper 20s to lower 30s for New York City metro area.

The snow was expected to start falling in Massachusetts on Monday morning, bringing up to a foot of snow to impact the evening commute. The storm will reach northern New England later that night, meteorologists said.

Virus declining in Calif.; more dying than ever

From wire reports

LOS ANGELES — In what has become California's deadliest coronavirus surge, an average of 544 people died every day in the last week. On Saturday, the state reached the grim milestone of 40,000 deaths overall, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

In barely a year since the virus was first detected in the state, 1 in 1,000 Californians have died from it.

California's death toll has climbed rapidly since the worst surge of the pandemic started in mid-October. New cases and hospitalizations surged to record highs, but have declined rapidly in the last two weeks.

Deaths remain staggeringly high, however, with more than 3,800 in the last week.

Maryland

BALTIMORE — Baltimore public health officials are canceling some COVID-19 vaccination appointments scheduled for next week after overbooking hundreds of first-dose appointments.

The city health department did not specify how many appointments would be canceled, or why the overbooking happened, The Baltimore Sun reported.

The department issued a statement saying it was working to identify potential issues in the state's scheduling system, and the possibility that links to second-dose appointments were shared via email or social media.

Officials said they are prioritizing giving second doses to people who have already gotten their first shot because of limited inventory.

Meanwhile, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan announced Saturday that state health officials have confirmed a case of COVID-19 caused by the new variant of the virus that was first detected in South Africa.

Massachusetts

Two members of Congress from Massachusetts have tested positive for the coronavirus, one after receiving both doses of the vaccine, a reminder that people can still be vulnerable to infection after being vaccinated, particularly in the two weeks after receiving the second dose.

Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., tested positive for the virus on Friday afternoon after a staff member in his Boston office tested positive earlier in the week, his spo-

keswoman Molly Rose Tarpey said.

Lynch received a second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine before the inauguration of President Joe Biden on Jan. 20, but his office declined to specify the date it was administered. Lynch had tested negative for the virus before attending the inaugural ceremonies, Tarpey said.

Another Democrat from Massachusetts, Rep. Lori Trahan, announced Thursday that she had tested positive for the virus and was asymptomatic. Trahan, whose staff members have been working remotely, also said she planned to vote by proxy next week.

Michigan

LANSING — A few hundred high school athletes, their parents and other supporters rallied outside Michigan's Capitol in Lansing in support of the reopening of sports programs shut down by COVID-19 restrictions.

Saturday's "Let Them Play" demonstration was held as the state reported 1,358 newly confirmed cases of the coronavirus and 104 deaths.

Orders released earlier last month by Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services bans contact winter sports like basketball, wrestling, hockey and competitive cheerleading.

Various coaching associations have written letters to Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and other state officials urging that their sports be allowed to continue, according to the Lansing State Journal.

Whitmer's administration extended the ban on youth contact sports through Feb. 21, three months after it began. Non-contact winter sports like bowling, boys swimming and gymnastics are allowed to begin their seasons.

Nevada

LAS VEGAS — Clark County School District Superintendent Jesus Jara said isolation and stress produced by the COVID-19 pandemic have taken a toll on the mental health of students and staff.

Jara said Friday in his annual State of the Schools address that student suicides reached a "nearly unthinkable" level of 20 since schools were closed in March, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported.

Jara cited steps taken by the district to address mental health, including having the district police department conduct home wellness checks and using software that alerts schools to self-harm language in

students' posts and searches.

Nevada on Saturday reported 1,070 additional known COVID-19 cases and 46 deaths, increasing the state's pandemic totals to 277,349 cases and 4,264 deaths.

New York

NEW YORK — New York City restaurants will be able to reopen for indoor dining at a quarter of capacity by Valentine's Day, and big weddings can return statewide in March, if infection rates continue to drop, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Friday.

The announcements are part of a gradual loosening of economic restrictions in New York state as a post-holiday bump in infections slows down. Statewide COVID-19 hospitalizations have dropped by 916 since Jan. 19 to 8,357.

Cuomo said the indoor dining ban at city restaurants that went into effect Dec. 14 is on track to be partially lifted on Feb. 14, a big day for dinner dates.

New York City is home to roughly 24,000 restaurants, and many owners have complained this winter that the ban was destroying their livelihoods. The head of an industry group said Friday that faster, more sweeping action was needed.

Washington

SEATTLE — The last shots were given at about 3:45 a.m., out on the street, with literally no time to spare.

All night, staff and volunteers with Seattle's Swedish Health Services had been rushing to administer hundreds of doses of the coronavirus vaccine set to expire early in the morning after a freezer malfunction. Finally, they had only a few dozen shots left and about 15 minutes to get them into people's arms.

By the last shots, staff and volunteers were running out to the road on a cold night, at one point jabbing someone through the window of a car, Brooks said. One elderly woman in flip flops was photographed rolling up her sleeve on the sidewalk just as the clock ran out.

It was a familiar story: Faced with expiring vials, health care workers distribute vaccine doses at top speed, sometimes to whomever they can find. These impromptu giveaways have been controversial at times, with both waste and out-of-turn vaccinations sparking anger. Officials are juggling strict plans meant to prioritize the most vulnerable with the urgency of inoculating as many people as possible as quickly as possible against a deadly virus.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Sheriff: Boy arrested over threats at school

FL PALM COAST — Sheriff's deputies in Florida arrested an 11-year-old boy who was accused of threatening to blow up his school and use a gun on his classmates. It was the second threat in a week in the city of Palm Coast, the sheriff said.

A can of mace and a pocket-knife were found in the backpack of the boy, who was booked on a charge of making a false report of a bomb threat at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School and released to his parents, Flagler County Sheriff's officials said.

The school's principal, Barbara Kavanagh, contacted deputies after a parent emailed saying their daughter had heard the young boy making threatening comments during lunch, officials said.

Couple, dog rescued from fall into icy lake

NE OMAHA — Rescue crews pulled a couple and their dog to safety after all three fell through the ice of a western Omaha lake, officials said.

The incident happened on the pond at Lakeside Park, the Omaha World-Herald reported.

Authorities said the man and wife, both 30, were walking their yellow Labrador retriever when the dog ran onto the ice to chase ducks and fell through. The husband then fell through the ice trying to rescue the dog, and the wife fell in trying to rescue her husband, officials said.

First responders spotted the couple in the water about 30

feet from the shore. Firefighters pulled them to safety, and the man and woman were taken to a hospital for treatment of hypothermia. The dog was not injured, officials said.

Exhibit to show Black achievement in aviation

KY LOUISVILLE — Bowman Field in Louisville will host an exhibit that features Black achievement in aviation, official said.

The exhibit, called "The Sky's the Limit: A Celebration of the History of Black Achievement in Aviation," will feature 14 individuals and organizations throughout February in honor of Black History Month, the Louisville Regional Airport Authority said in a statement.

Visitors will get to see how those featured got their start in aviation, how they handled any adversity and how they rose to prominence, the statement said.

"We hope the stories of these pioneers and leaders inspire a new generation of aviation professionals," said Dan Mann, Executive Director of the Louisville Regional Airport Authority.

Man charged with fraud in lottery scam

MA DETROIT — A suburban Detroit man was charged with cheating investors out of \$19 million to fuel his lottery habit.

Viktor Gjonaj, 43, was buying as much as \$1 million in Daily 3 and Daily 4 Michigan lottery tickets every week, the government alleged.

Gjonaj was a "well-respected

businessman who unfortunately developed a gambling addiction that led to this situation," attorney Steve Fishman told The Detroit News.

The Macomb County man used his experience as a real estate broker to persuade people to give him money for what he touted as lucrative property deals, prosecutors said.

11 face charges for drugs, dog-fighting

GA MACON — Ten Georgia residents and one from Alabama have been indicted on federal charges including drug and dogfighting violations.

According to a 136-count federal indictment, 10 of the defendants were involved in a conspiracy between May 2019 and February 2020 to possess with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine and 28 grams or more of cocaine base. In addition, five of them were involved in a conspiracy to sponsor and exhibit dogs in a dog fight, and possess, train, transport, deliver and receive dogs for the purpose of having the dogs participate in a dog fight, federal prosecutors said in a news release.

2 suspected in attempted thefts

NV CARSON CITY — Authorities were looking for two suspects who attempted to steal merchandise from Home Depot stores in Reno, Sparks and Carson City by placing higher-valued goods inside the boxes of lower-priced items.

The Carson City Sheriff's office said the practice is known

as "box stuffing."

Deputies were called to the Carson City Home Depot when employees observed two suspects attempting to make such a switch. They said the same suspects had been identified in an attempted theft at the Spanish Springs Home Depot in Sparks and at one in Reno in recent weeks.

In Carson City, the suspects placed a large amount of power tools inside a bathtub box, paid for the bathtub and exited the store. They tied the box on the roof and began driving away as patrol units approached.

The bathtub box fell off when they swerved and deputies gave chase but ended the pursuit when it reached unsafe speeds, the sheriff said.

Woman sued over feeding of stray cat

FL TAMPA — A condominium association in Florida is suing a 78-year-old woman over the feeding of a stray cat.

A lawsuit filed in Tampa accuses Joan P. Hussey of breaking the rules by attracting and feeding "stray cats/animals" in and around the common areas of the Tampa Racquet Club Condominium, the Tampa Bay Times reported.

The lawsuit doesn't specify the number of cats or other animals Hussey is alleged to be feeding.

"The continued presence of the stray cats may also induce unwanted health issues to those surrounding neighbors and/or tenants and could cause unwarranted damage to the Association's common elements," the lawsuit said.

— The Associated Press

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Rams trade Goff, picks for Lions' Stafford

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Gambling is against NFL rules, but the Rams rolled the dice Saturday night in betting their immediate future on quarterback Matthew Stafford, who has never won a playoff game.

Then again, risk is in their DNA.

They were the club who took the decisive step toward Los Angeles. They spent a record sum on their \$5-billion stadium. They traded up from No. 15 to No. 1 to take Jared Goff in 2016 — the quarterback they're now discarding — and haven't had a first-round pick since. They hired a 30-year-old head coach.

So of course they made a splash move to get Stafford.

Houston's Deshaun Watson was out of their price range. They considered making a hard run at Aaron Rodgers, but Green Bay was adamant it wasn't trading him.

Stafford was within reach, and Sean McVay was increasingly convinced this was the player who could lift his team to the next level — even though Stafford never actually experienced that level with the Lions.

So that's the question, and one we'll figure out in short order: Was the problem Stafford, or the team around him?

Stafford has two years left on his contract, and the Rams weren't able to extend him beyond that. If he has a great 2021 season, that's a double-edged sword, because the Rams will have to break the bank to extend him, and they're making it clear with this move that he's their future.

That was the case with cornerback Jalen

Ramsey. The Rams didn't get an extension on him when they made a trade with Jacksonville and subsequently signed him to a record-breaking deal.

Regardless, the news of the moment is the Rams were able to wriggle out of the handcuffs of Goff's contract and acquire a highly respectable quarterback looking to make the most of that talent in his second act. Is Stafford worth two first-round picks and a third? That will be hotly debated, especially if he doesn't make an immediate and dramatic impact. But the Rams had to sweeten the deal enough that the Lions would take Goff's massive contract off their books.

The Rams upgraded at quarterback, and they didn't have to go to lengths they would deeply regret to get one. They didn't have to, say, trade Aaron Donald.

Giving up two first-round picks is steep. But if you figure a Hall of Fame general manager hits on about 50% of selections in the opening round — if he gets two good starters out of four first-rounders that's a respectable rate — then a pair of first-rounders isn't too much ... as long as team is getting a franchise quarterback.

There's no easy path to winning in the NFL, and no sure-fire formula for success.

Drew Brees will be a first-ballot Hall of Famer, and with him at quarterback, the New Orleans Saints have tried for a decade to get back to the Super Bowl.

Rodgers, as great as he is, has been to one Super Bowl — a victory over Pittsburgh — and just lost in the NFC championship game for the second consecutive season.

In their four seasons under McVay, the Rams are tied for third in the league in wins, have had double-digit victories three times, got to the playoffs three times, and reached the Super Bowl. With Goff as their quarterback, it should be noted.

Goff had his moments. Remember his first season under McVay, with six passer ratings of 110 or higher? His four touchdowns and 413 yards passing in that 54-51 thriller over Kansas City in 2018?

But as this season wore on, he seemed to hemorrhage confidence. When the offense was clicking, he was good. But when he had to make that off-schedule throw, scramble and improvise, the plays just weren't there. There wasn't a feeling of, "We can put this game on Goff's shoulders and let him carry us," or, "The 49ers left too much time on the clock for Goff."

The Rams need a fresh start, and so does he. He didn't take as pronounced a downturn as Carson Wentz in Philadelphia, the No. 2 pick behind him in 2016, but Goff's season was one to forget.

So now the spotlight swings to Stafford, who turns 33 on Super Bowl Sunday. He's entering a phase in which a lot of good quarterbacks have caught their second wind.

And remember this: The Rams are sharing a stadium with the Chargers, who have one of the league's most promising young quarterbacks in Justin Herbert. Did McVay want to start every week with a crippling case of quarterback envy?

The Rams took a risk. There was no other option.

SEC players show off talent in Senior Bowl

Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — Texas A&M's Kellen Mond was the Senior Bowl Most Valuable Player but two fellow Southeastern Conference Western Division products made the decisive big play.

Arkansas' Feleipe Franks threw a 21-yard touchdown pass to Mississippi tight end Kenny Yeboah in the fourth quarter to help seal the National team's 27-24 victory over the American team Saturday.

Franks, a graduate transfer from Florida, set up the all-SEC West scoring connection with a 29-yard completion to Louisville's Dez Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick had six catches for 90 yards in the showcase game for senior and graduate NFL prospects, earning offensive player of the game honors.

Mond was the MVP with a huge third

quarter when he passed for 141 of his 173 yards and a pair of touchdowns after a slow start.

"It was a great feeling whether it was a simple drop back or making an insane play," the former Aggies standout said. "Obviously, kind of shaky at the beginning but it definitely shows a lot of poise to be able to bounce back."

North Carolina running back Michael Carter also had a big game. Carter scored on a pile-driving 12-yard run late in the third quarter to help the National team retake the lead after a Mond-led comeback.

Jamie Newman completed a 10-yard touchdown pass to Trevon Grimes with 49 seconds left for the American team after Franks and Yeboah made it a two-score game. The former Wake Forest quarter-

back, who transferred to Georgia but opted out before the season, set it up with a 35-yard completion to Bowling Green tight end Quintin Morris.

Tulane defensive lineman Cam Sample was the defensive player of the game. Sample had seven tackles and a share of a sack in a game blending players from Group of Five, small college and Power Five teams.

"We don't play the Alabama's or Ohio State's every week but we're always hungry," he said.

The game was played for the first time at South Alabama's new Hancock Whitney Stadium, with Miami Dolphins coach Brian Flores leading the National team and Carolina's Matt Rhule coaching the American team. It also switched from the traditional North versus South format.

Unbeaten No. 2 Baylor rolls past Auburn

Associated Press

WACO, Texas — This Baylor win was for Davion Mitchell, and the junior guard did his part against his former team.

Mitchell swished a three-pointer after losing a shoe and finished with 13 points and seven assists, helping the Bears stay undefeated with an 84-72 win over Auburn in the Big 12/SEC Challenge on Saturday.

"This was a tough game because it was emotional," coach Scott Drew said. "The team wanted to win it for Davion, and obviously Davion wanted to play well being a transfer from Auburn."

Matthew Mayer soared for two highlight dunks when scoring 10 of his 13 points in a

short spurt as Baylor (16-0) built its lead in the second half. Adam Flagler, a transfer like Mitchell, scored a season-high 19 points. Jared Butler finished with 16, and MaCio Teague had 15.

The Bears have gone deeper into a season without a loss only once — a 17-0 start in 2011-12.

Jaylin Williams had 17 points to lead five players in double figures for the Tigers (10-8), who had won four of their previous five games. Freshman guard Sharife Cooper added 15 points, and JT Thor finished with 13. Allen Flanigan scored 11 and Devan Cambridge 10.

Auburn coach Bruce Pearl said his young backcourt got outplayed by Baylor's veter-

an guards.

"And that's OK, because Butler, and Teague and Davion Mitchell and Flagler are all really good," Pearl said. "But I think our guys are good too. But that was disappointing."

Mitchell was coming off a career-high 31 points in Baylor's 107-59 win over Kansas State on Wednesday night. He played 34 games at Auburn as a freshman in 2017-18 before transferring to the Bears and Butler was initially enrolled at Alabama, though he never played for the Crimson Tide.

The sock-footed shot by Mitchell, who got a sudden pass from Butler after coming out of his shoe, put Baylor up 59-43 with about 11½ minutes left.

Short-handed Oklahoma knocks off No. 9 Alabama

Associated Press

NORMAN, Okla. — Alabama coach Nate Oats tried to warn his team.

Sure, Oklahoma would be without leading scorer Austin Reaves and starting guard Alondes Williams because of COVID-19 protocols. But Oats told his players that the Sooners still would be a problem for the Crimson Tide.

His players didn't listen, and they paid for it. De'Vion Harmon scored 18 points to help No. 24 Oklahoma defeat No. 9 Alabama 66-61 on Saturday in the SEC/Big 12 Challenge.

"Sometimes, when teams are down a couple of players, there's a galvanizing effect," Oats said. "It's happened for us and against us. I thought these guys (the Sooners), they play hard to begin with, and then when they're down two starters, they really bought in. We tried to tell our guys. I've got to do a better job making sure we're ready to play."

Elijah Harkless scored 14 points and Brady Manek added 12 for Oklahoma (11-4), which became the second team in the past 25 years to beat three top 10 teams in a row after wins over Kansas and Texas.

It also was the fourth victory for the Sooners against a Top 10 team in the month of January.

"It's huge," Oklahoma coach Lon Kruger said. "Anytime you can win a game like that is big from a resume standpoint, big from a confidence standpoint, momentum. It's continuing to move in the right direction. Those wins, you never take those for granted."

Alex Reese scored 15 points and Jaden Shackelford added 14 for the Crimson Tide (14-4), which saw its 10-game win streak end.

No. 1 Gonzaga 97, Pepperdine 75: Drew Timme had 19 points and the visiting Bulldogs rolled to their 21st straight victory.

Andrew Nembhard added 17 points and eight assists, Corey Kispert scored 16 points and Aaron Cook had a career-high 15 for Gonzaga (17-0, 8-0 West Coast Conference).

No. 3 Villanova 80, Seton Hall 72: Jeremiah Robinson-Earl scored 23 points in 21 minutes and the visiting Wildcats rolled to their ninth straight victory, beating the Pirates.

No. 20 Virginia Tech 65, No. 8 Virginia 51: Keve Aluma scored a career-high 29 points to help the host Hokies snap the Cavaliers' seven-game winning streak.

No. 10 Texas Tech 76, LSU 71: Mac McClung, who had not made a field goal in the second half, hit two three-pointers, and the Red Raiders scored straight 12 points in the final minute in the SEC/Big 12 Challenge.

Florida 85, No. 11 West Virginia 80: Colin Castleton scored 15 of his 21 points in the second half and the visiting Gators beat the Mountaineers in the Big 12-SEC Challenge.

No. 12 Missouri 102, TCU 98 (OT): Xavier Pinson scored a career-best 36 points, Jeremiah Tilmon had a career-high 33 and the host Tigers escaped in overtime in the SEC/Big 12 Challenge.

Penn State 81, No. 14 Wisconsin 71: Myreon Jones scored 20 points on 8-for-12

shooting and the host Nittany Lions snapped a decadelong skid against the Badgers

No. 18 Tennessee 80, No. 15 Kansas 61: Yves Pons scored 17 points and the host Volunteers won in the Big 12/SEC Challenge.

Georgia Tech 76, No. 16 Florida State 65: Moses Wright scored 23 points and the host Yellow Jackets ended the Seminoles' five-game winning streak.

Purdue 81, No. 21 Minnesota 62: Brandon Newman scored 21 of his season-high 29 points in the second half, Trevion Williams added 17 points and 14 rebounds and the host Boilermakers rallied to beat the Gophers.

No. 17 Creighton 69 DePaul 62: Marcus Zegarowski scored 19 points and the cold-shooting Bluejays (13-4, 9-3 Big East) made just enough baskets to win a game that got heated in the first half. They hit all eight of their free throws in a closing 10-2 run and beat the host Blue Demons (3-7, 1-7) for the 13th straight time.

No. 23 UCLA 57, Oregon State 52: Cody Riley had 16 points and 10 rebounds and the host Bruins outlasted the Beavers.

Navy 70, Loyola (Md) 52: Cam Davis had 20 points and Jaylen Walker had a career-high 17 points for the host Midshipmen (11-2, 8-1 Patriot League). Richard Njoku added seven rebounds. John Carter Jr. had six rebounds.

San Jose State 75, Air Force 62: Ralph Agee made nine of 11 shots for 22 points and had 14 rebounds as the host Spartans got past the Falcons.

Markstrom, Flames shut out Canadiens

Associated Press

MONTREAL — Jacob Markstrom made 37 saves for his second shutout of the season, Johnny Gaudreau and Mikael Backlund scored, and the Calgary Flames handed the Montreal Canadiens their first regulation loss of the season, 2-0 on Saturday night.

The Flames improved to 3-3-1, snapping a three-game losing streak that included a 4-2 loss to the Canadiens on Thursday night. Montreal dropped to 5-1-2.

Gaudreau opened the scoring on a power play at 3:34 of first period with his fifth of the season. Backlund scored into an empty net with 34 seconds left.

Jake Allen made 31 saves for Montreal.

Capitals 4, Bruins 3: Alex Ovechkin scored in overtime in his return, Vitek Vanecek made 40 saves in his sixth consecutive start, and host Washington beat Boston.

Ovechkin beat Tuukka Rask clean off the rush 28 seconds into OT in his first game

since Jan. 19. The Capitals captain missed the past four games because of COVID-19 protocols.

Oilers 4, Maple Leafs 3 (OT): Connor McDavid scored his second goal of the night 42 seconds into overtime to lift Edmonton past visiting Toronto.

McDavid redirected a pass from Leon Draisaitl off the rush for his seventh goal of the season. McDavid also had an assist.

Lightning 4, Predators 3: Tyler Johnson, Cal Foote, Victor Hedman and Steven Stamkos scored in the second period in Tampa Bay's victory over visiting Nashville.

Penguins 5, Rangers 4 (OT): Sidney Crosby scored at 2:27 of overtime and Pittsburgh won at New York to stop a two-game skid.

Flyers 3, Islanders 2 (OT): Scott Laughton scored in overtime and Jake Voracek and Kevin Hayes also in Philadelphia's victory over visiting New York.

Blues 6, Ducks 1: Jordan Kyrou scored two of St. Louis' three goals in the opening 2:06, and the Blues cruised at Anaheim.

Sabres 4, Devils 3 (SO): Jack Eichel scored in a shootout, Linus Ullmark made 31 saves and host Buffalo beat New Jersey in the opener of a two-game set.

Hurricanes 4, Stars 1: Vincent Trocheck scored twice in a three-minute span in the first period and host Carolina beat Dallas after Hurricanes starting goaltender Petr Mrazek left the game due to injury in the opening minutes.

Avalanche 5, Wild 1: Brandon Saad had a goal and assist to lead a balanced scoring attack in Colorado's victory at Minnesota.

Panthers 3, Red Wings 2 (OT): Aleksander Heponiemi made the most of his NHL debut, scoring with 2:15 left in overtime to lift Florida to a win at Detroit.

Canucks 4, Jets 1: Brock Boeser scored two goals, leading Vancouver to a win at Winnipeg.

Davis returns, Lakers beat Celtics

Associated Press

BOSTON — Anthony Davis had 27 points and 14 rebounds in his return to the lineup and the Los Angeles Lakers hung on to beat the Boston Celtics 96-95 on Saturday night when Daniel Theis missed a follow shot at the buzzer.

LeBron James finished with 21 points, seven rebounds and seven assists in the first meeting of the season between the longtime rivals. Montrezl Harrell added 16 points for the Lakers, who lost in Detroit on Thursday when Davis rested a bruised right quadriceps.

"For me, personally, it's getting back in attack mode," Davis said. "Being aggressive. Crashing the offensive glass. Being in the paint. All those types of things. Everything that I did tonight."

Hornets 126, Bucks 114: LaMelo Ball scored a career-high 27 points and had nine assists and host Charlotte handed Milwaukee its second loss in two nights.

Gordon Hayward added 27 points, Malik Monk had 18 and Cody Zeller chipped in with a career-best 15 rebounds.

Warriors 118, Pistons 91: Stephen Curry scored 28 points, making six three-pointers, and Golden State raced to an early lead and beat visiting Detroit.

Curry shot 11-for-17, including 6-for-8

from deep, and the Warriors found a far better offensive groove after shooting just 38% in Thursday's 114-93 loss at Phoenix — including 29% from three-point range (11-for-38).

Heat 105, Kings 104: Jimmy Butler scored a season-high 30 points after missing 10 games because of the NBA's virus-related protocols, including the go-ahead layup with 42.1 seconds left, and host Miami beat Sacramento to end a five-game losing streak.

The Kings had a last-ditch chance, but Richaun Holmes' jumper was well short.

Suns 111, Mavericks 105: Chris Paul had 27 points and 12 assists and Phoenix rallied to win at Dallas.

Deandre Ayton had 18 points and 17 rebounds for the Suns, who trailed by 15 in the second half. Mikal Bridges and Jae Crowder each scored 14 points.

Rockets 126, Pelicans 112: Christian Wood scored 27 points and Houston won at New Orleans to run its winning streak to five.

Victor Oladipo scored 20 points and John Wall added 15 for the Rockets.

Grizzlies 129, Spurs 112: Ja Morant had 19 points and 11 assists and Memphis won at San Antonio for its sixth straight victory.

De'Anthony Melton had 20 points.

Lillard's 3 lifts Blazers by Bulls

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Damian Lillard hit a fadeaway three-pointer as time expired to give the Portland Trail Blazers a 123-122 victory over the Chicago Bulls on Saturday night.

Lillard finished with 44 points on eight three-pointers.

It appeared the Bulls had the game in control after Coby White made a pair of free throws to give them a 122-117 lead with 11.5 seconds left. Lillard came down and hit a long three-pointer with 8.2 seconds to play.

Following the inbound, the Blazers trapped Zach LaVine in the corner and forced a jump ball with 6.2 seconds left. Gary Trent Jr. was able to control the jump ball over the athletic LaVine. Lillard picked up the loose ball and fired a three from near the sideline to win it.

"I think this one is special because in these situations, where we are down five with I think 11 seconds left, those are moments where the winning team thinks they have the game pretty much wrapped up and the opposing team is discouraged," Lillard said.

Enes Kanter had 22 points and 11 rebounds for the Blazers.