

Navy will revamp maintenance, training

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Projections by Navy leaders that the United States could be at war with China by 2027 is driving the sea service to revamp how it repairs and upgrades ships and train crews so more of the fleet is ready for a potential fight.

“We can’t continue to do things the way we have been,” Vice Adm. Brendan McLane, commander of Naval Surface Force Pacific Fleet, said last week during the Navy Surface Warfare’s 37th National Symposium.

In recent years, the Navy has been plagued with monthslong construction delays on new ship-building programs, as well as maintenance woes on aging ships that threaten deployment schedules. The long-standing issues have caused a backlog of ships going in and out of shipyards. The Navy was on track for

a 67% on-time maintenance completion rate across the fleet in 2024. That comes after a 36% completion rate in 2022 and a 41% completion rate in 2023.

Meanwhile, deployable ships are spending additional time at sea, and in the case of West Coast ships, have been pulled from one area of operations to another.

The backlogs coupled with an increased operational tempo have led to concerns about how many U.S. ships are ready to fight and a possible conflict with a growing Chinese navy. The U.S. Navy is structured to have a third of the fleet in maintenance, a third in training and a third on or ready for deployment. But persistent delays across all phases of a ship’s lifecycle could mean ships are not ready for a fight.

To address this, Adm. Lisa Franchetti, chief of naval operations, put forth in the fall an initiative in her 2024 Navigation

Plan for the Navy to have 80% of the fleet ready for a possible fight with China by 2027 — what she described as “a stretch goal.”

“We need a bigger fleet, every study we’ve done since 2016 shows that, but it will take years and significant resourcing to expand our traditional industrial base to produce the platforms, the munitions, and the capabilities at the scale we need. And our entire Navy team is committed to working with all of our stakeholders, industry, Congress and [the Office of the Secretary of Defense] to pull every lever to put more players on the field,” Franchetti said during the symposium.

Navy leaders gathered at the symposium to offer calls to action that they said could help propel Franchetti’s plan.

McLane showcased updates to “Surface Warfare: The Competitive Edge,” a strategic docu-

ment released in 2022 that outlined the steps the Navy should take to improve the combat capabilities of its ships. The document was updated to bring it in line with the Navy’s 2024 Navigation Plan goal of having 80% of its ships ready for combat by 2027.

The update put the Navy on notice to shorten its basic phase, tier one training certification from 15 weeks to an average of 10 weeks by June 2026. Being certified in tier one means the ship has completed the initial level of readiness and is considered combat ready. The phase is meant to take 10 weeks but has stretched to an average of 15 weeks because the Navy hasn’t stocked ships with spare parts necessary for at-sea, sailor-led maintenance. In stocking ships was “just in case” spare parts, McLane said, the ships will spend less time waiting for parts to arrive and more time on task.

Rule letting transgender troops serve gets repealed

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order to repeal a provision allowing transgender troops to serve in the military.

Former President Joe Biden ended Trump’s de facto ban on transgender service members and allowed individuals who meet military entrance qualifications to enlist, serve in their self-identified gender and access care deemed medically necessary for gender transition. Trump did not issue a new ban, but the repeal clears the way for one.

Biden’s policy reverted to the

Pentagon regulations announced in 2016 toward the end of former President Barack Obama’s administration, which halted the long-standing ban on open service for transgender men and women. That policy, which was backed by then-Vice President Biden, allowed troops to officially change their gender in their military profiles and serve in that sex, as long as they could meet minimum fitness and other standards.

In July 2017, Trump issued a series of surprise tweets announcing his intention to ban transgender men and women from serving “in any capacity.” The Pentagon’s de facto ban on transgender men and women

enlisting in the military went into effect in April 2019, following nearly two years of legal battles launched after transgender service members and military hopefuls sought to halt its implementation.

The Pentagon long insisted its policy was not a blanket ban because of its protections for those transgender service members who came out after the 2016 policy and a waiver process that could allow some transgender people to join the military.

But the policy barred nearly all people diagnosed with gender dysphoria — described by the American Psychiatric Association as “a conflict between a person’s physical or assigned gen-

der and the gender with which he/she/they identify.”

It did allow people to enlist with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria who had doctor certification that they had remained stable in their biological sex for 36 months.

It disqualified all people who had medically transitioned their sex.

In March 2021, when the Defense Department unveiled the policy change, it estimated the number of service members who identified as transgender ranged from 1,000 to 8,000.

The Human Rights Campaign in November estimated a ban on transgender troops could impact about 15,000 troops.

Trump aides urge Army, EUCOM cuts

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

President Donald Trump's team of defense advisers is taking shape, this week adding two high-level officials who have called for slashing the American armed presence in Europe and broadly restructuring the military to deal with China.

Austin Dahmer and Alexander Velez-Green, known for their hawkish views on China, will serve in senior posts focused on developing military strategy, the Defense Department said Tuesday.

Both have close ties to Elbridge Colby, the nominee for undersecretary of defense for policy. If he's confirmed, Colby and company will be the Pentagon's primary strategists with a big say on how U.S. troops are deployed around the world.

And a 2023 research report by Dahmer for the Marathon Initiative, a Washington think tank co-founded by Colby, gives granular insight into what is dubbed a "strategy of denial" in the Pacific, after the title of a 2021 book by Colby.

The approach aims to deter adversaries from acting aggressively by convincing them "that they would fail to realize their objectives if they attempted such behavior," according to

the report.

Meeting such requirements in the Pacific entails accepting more risks in other regions in lieu of major defense spending increases, wrote Dahmer, now the Pentagon's deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy.

In the report, Dahmer does not take a position on how big the DOD budget should be. But without a big boost in expenditures, he wrote, the Pentagon would need to search for savings or "bill payers" to surge capabilities required to deter potential Chinese aggression against Taiwan, Okinawa or the Philippines.

"One of the largest bill payers in resourcing the strategy of denial should be the Army," the report said.

The strategy targets both the Army's active-duty cohort and the National Guard and calls for deactivation of four Stryker brigades, six infantry brigades and two aviation brigades.

Also headed to the chopping block would be a number of Army ground vehicle and aviation modernization and procurement programs, and all the Air Force's A-10C aircraft would be retired, according to the report's recommendations.

Drastic reductions would also

be made in the DOD civilian workforce under Dahmer's prescriptions.

For the Army to avoid big cuts while still meeting Pentagon objectives in the Pacific, DOD would need a roughly 10% annual budget increase, the report said.

Overall, Dahmer's report recommends about \$70 billion less annually for the Army, which along with other cuts would give about \$40 billion more apiece to the Navy and Air Force.

The realignment he calls for in the report would also exact a heavy toll on the security structures that Europe has been relying on for over a decade.

For one thing, the U.S. European Command mission would be slashed.

The European Deterrence Initiative, a multibillion-dollar annual effort aimed at deterring Russian aggression, would be dramatically scaled back if not eliminated outright, according to the report.

That would mean the end of Army tank brigade rotations to Europe that have been a staple of the EUCOM mission since Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and that have grown since Moscow's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Dahmer's report says savings

from cuts to the Army, EUCOM mission and DOD civilian workforce would enable a faster buildup of production on a wide range of munitions needed in East Asia.

In-demand assets in the Pacific will involve most of the military's major systems, ranging from the Army artillery units and Patriot batteries to Navy warships, submarines and long-range Air Force bombers, the report said.

Velez-Green, who now serves as the senior adviser to the undersecretary of defense for policy, told Stars and Stripes last year that requirements in the Pacific mean European allies will need to shoulder a much larger share of the security burden on the Continent.

"These (EUCOM troops) are the forces that cannot be in two places at once. They'll have to be backfilled by our NATO allies," Velez-Green said in May.

He and Colby argued that the Pentagon has stretched itself too thin and that stakes in the Pacific are too high to overinvest elsewhere.

Velez-Green, formerly worked as a senior policy adviser at the Heritage Foundation, the conservative think tank behind the controversial Project 2025 set of initiatives.

China's navy commissions new-generation frigate

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — China's navy has commissioned a new-generation frigate as competition rises with the U.S. and other regional powers, saying the ship will "play a vital role in enhancing the overall combat effectiveness" of its forces.

China already has the world's largest navy in terms of number of hulls, although its

technology is sometimes seen as lagging. Its largest competitor, the U.S., has warned its Navy could be outnumbered and has called for a building program as well as reforms to put damaged ships into action sooner.

China's People's Liberation Army Navy operates mainly in waters off the Chinese east coast and in the huge and stra-

tegically crucial South China Sea, which China claims almost in its entirety.

The first Type 054B frigate, christened the Luohe, was commissioned Wednesday in Qingdao, a port city in northern China where the PLAN's northern fleet is based.

The ship has a displacement of approximately 5,000 tons and includes stealth technolo-

gy, combat command systems and firepower integration, "significantly enhancing overall performance," the navy said.

The Luohe's armaments include a variety of machine guns for close combat and anti-air and anti-ship missiles, according to defense publications, some of which say the ship could become the backbone of the Chinese navy.

Ex-sister-in-law: Hegseth abusive with 2nd wife

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senators vetting the nomination of Pete Hegseth for defense secretary received an affidavit Tuesday from a former sister-in-law alleging that the onetime Fox News host was abusive to his second wife, to the point where she feared for her safety. Hegseth denies the allegations.

The sister-in-law, Danielle Hegseth, was formerly married to the nominee's brother, and in an affidavit obtained by The Associated Press, she said she believes that Pete Hegseth is "unfit" to run the Defense Department based on what she witnessed and heard. She said she first relayed her allegations to the FBI in December but was concerned that the information was not shared with Congress as senators consider Hegseth's nomination.

The affidavit describes Heg-

seth's treatment of his second wife, Samantha, and alleges repeat drunkenness and a domestic situation where Samantha Hegseth had a safe word to indicate if she was in danger at home. Danielle Hegseth said Samantha texted that safe word to her sometime in 2015 or 2016, which prompted her to call a third party for help.

"I have chosen to come forward publicly, at significant personal sacrifice, because I am deeply concerned by what Hegseth's confirmation would mean for our military and our country," she said.

An attorney for Pete Hegseth vehemently denied the allegations. Tim Parlatore said the affidavit was filled with "belated claims" by an ex-relative with "an axe to grind against the entire Hegseth family."

"Sam has never alleged that

there was any abuse, she signed court documents acknowledging that there was no abuse and recently reaffirmed the same during her FBI interview," Parlatore said in a statement. "Belated claims by Danielle Dietrich, an anti-Trump far left Democrat who is divorced from Mr. Hegseth's brother and never got along with the Hegseth family, do nothing to change that."

The affidavit was filed in response to a request from Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, who said he was seeking her statement to gain "personal knowledge about Mr. Hegseth's fitness to occupy this important position."

In the affidavit, Danielle Hegseth says she believes Hegseth's marriage to Samantha was abusive. She said Samantha in 2014 told her she once hid in her closet

because she feared for her safety. She acknowledged she did "not personally witness physical or sexual abuse" by Pete Hegseth toward his wife.

"I believe what Samantha told me because what she told me is consistent with what I personally observed of Hegseth's erratic and aggressive behavior over many years," she said.

In a statement to NBC News, which first reported on the affidavit, Samantha Hegseth said there "was no physical abuse in my marriage. This is the only further statement I will make to you, I have let you know that I am not speaking and will not speak on my marriage to Pete. Please respect this decision."

Samantha and Pete Hegseth both signed a Minnesota court document in 2021 during their divorce saying neither claimed to be a victim of domestic abuse.

Trump directs all federal DEI staff be put on leave

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's administration moved Tuesday to end affirmative action in federal contracting and directed that all federal diversity, equity and inclusion staff be put on paid leave and eventually be laid off.

The moves follow an executive order Trump signed on his first day ordering a sweeping dismantling of the federal government's diversity and inclusion programs that could touch on everything from anti-bias training to funding for minority farmers and homeowners. Trump has called the programs "discrimination" and insisted on restoring strictly "merit-based" hiring.

The executive order on affirmative action revokes an order issued by President Lyndon Johnson, and curtails DEI programs by federal contractors and grant recipients. It's using one of the

key tools utilized by the Biden administration to promote DEI programs across the private sector — pushing their use by federal contractors — to now eradicate them.

The Office of Personnel Management in a Tuesday memo directed agencies to place DEI office staffers on paid leave by 5 p.m. Wednesday and take down all public DEI-focused webpages by the same deadline. Several federal departments had removed the webpages even before the memorandum. Agencies must also cancel any DEI-related training and end any related contracts, and federal workers are being asked to report to Trump's Office of Personnel Management if they suspect any DEI-related program has been renamed to obfuscate its purpose within 10 days or face "adverse consequences."

The memo was first reported by CBS News.

White House shuts down its Spanish-language page

Associated Press

Within hours of President Donald Trump's inauguration, the new administration took down the Spanish-language version of the official White House website.

The site — currently www.whitehouse.gov/es/ — now gives users an "Error 404" message. It also included a "Go Home" button that directed viewers to a page featuring a video montage of Trump in his first term and on the campaign trail. The button was later updated to read "Go To Home Page."

Hispanic advocacy groups and others expressed confusion at the abrupt change and frustration at what some called the administration's lack of efforts to maintain communication with the Latino community.

The Spanish profile of the White House's X, @LaCasaBlanca and the government page on reproductive freedom also were

disbanded. Spanish versions of other government agencies such as the Department of Labor, Justice and Agriculture remained available for users Tuesday.

Asked about the changes, White House principal deputy press secretary Harrison Fields responded Tuesday that the administration is "committed to bringing back online the Spanish translation section of the website."

"It's day two. We are in the process of developing, editing and tweaking the White House website. As part of this ongoing work, some of the archived content on the website went dormant. We are committed to reloading that content in a short timeline," he said without elaborating.

Trump removed the Spanish version of the page in 2017. White House officials then said they would reinstate it. President Joe Biden reinstated the page in 2021.

22 states sue to stop order ending birthright citizenship

Associated Press

Attorneys general from 22 states sued Tuesday to block President Donald Trump's move to end a century-old immigration practice known as birthright citizenship guaranteeing that U.S.-born children are citizens regardless of their parents' status.

Trump's roughly 700-word executive order amounts to a fulfillment of something he's talked about during the presidential campaign.

The Democratic attorneys general and immigrant rights advocates say birthright citizenship is settled law.

"The president cannot, with a stroke of a pen, write the 14th Amendment out of existence, period," New Jersey Attorney General Matt Platkin said.

The White House said it's ready to face the states in court

and called the lawsuits "nothing more than an extension of the Left's resistance."

At issue in these cases is the right to citizenship granted to anyone born in the U.S., regardless of their parents' immigration status.

People in the United States on a tourist or other visa or in the country illegally can become the parents of a citizen if their child is born here.

The U.S. is among about 30 countries where birthright citizenship is applied.

Most other countries confer citizenship based on whether at least one parent is a citizen or have a modified form of birthright citizenship that may restrict automatic citizenship to children of parents who are on their territory legally.

Ratified in 1868 in the aftermath of the Civil War, the 14th

Amendment says: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

Trump's order asserts that the children of noncitizens are not subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. It excludes the following people from automatic citizenship: those whose mothers were not legally in the United States and people whose mothers were in the country legally but on a temporary basis and whose fathers were not U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents.

It goes on to bar federal agencies from recognizing the citizenship of people in those categories. It takes effect 30 days from Tuesday, on Feb. 19.

It's not clear if the order would have a retroactive affect.

Fire risk, harsh winds continue in LA area

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Parched Southern California was forecast to face more dangerous winds on Wednesday but could get some needed rain this weekend, dampening prospects of another round of deadly wildfires while raising the possibility of challenges like toxic ash runoff.

Los Angeles officials were preparing for that prospect even as some residents were allowed to return to the devastated Pacific Palisades and Altadena areas and firefighters extinguished small blazes that broke out during gusty weather expected to last through Thursday.

Mayor Karen Bass issued an executive order Tuesday to expedite cleanup efforts in burn areas and mitigate the environmental impacts of fire-related pollutants. She ordered crews to remove vegetation, shore up hillsides, install barriers and reinforce roads ahead of the possible weekend rain, which could create mud and debris flows.

A 60% to 80% chance of a small amount of rain was forecast for Southern California starting Saturday, with most areas likely getting not more than a third of an inch, according to Ryan Kittell, a meteorologist for the weather service's office for Los Angeles. However up to an inch could fall in localized thunderstorms, which would be a worst-case scenario if enough flows on scorched hillsides to trigger debris.

Winds eased somewhat Tuesday afternoon after peaking at 60 mph in many areas, but gusty conditions were expected to continue.

Red flag warnings for critical fire risk were extended through 8 p.m. Thursday in LA and Ventura counties.

Winter storm spreads record-breaking snow across Gulf Coast, Deep South

Associated Press

A major storm spread heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain across parts of the Florida Panhandle, Georgia and the coastal Carolinas on Wednesday after breaking snow records in Texas and Louisiana, treating the region to unaccustomed perils and wintertime joy.

Winter weather warnings were in effect for big cities like Jacksonville, Fla., which expected to see snow, sleet and accumulating ice into Wednesday, and Atlanta, where streets remained icy in the storm's wake. The Jacksonville International Airport planned to remain closed until midday Wednesday. Schools canceled classes in many areas across at least eight

states, and government offices were closed Wednesday.

Dangerous below-freezing temperatures with even colder wind chills were settling in for much of the week across the Deep South, where at least three deaths have been attributed to the cold weather. The heavy snow and ice grounded hundreds of flights and classrooms were closed for more than a million students more accustomed to hurricane dismissals than snow days.

The airport in Charleston was closed, along with the massive 2½ Ravenel Bridge that carries about 100,000 vehicles a day between the city and areas up the coast. It could be a while before the bridge reopens — after an

ice storm in 2014, crews discovered that water freezes on the bridge's cables and then falls in windshield-shattering chunks as it thaws, so they have to wait for a full melt before traffic can return.

Snow fell in Houston and prompted the first ever blizzard warnings for several coastal counties near the Texas-Louisiana border. The snow also covered the white-sand beaches of normally sunny vacation spots, including Gulf Shores, Alabama, and Pensacola Beach, Florida. In South Carolina, snow covered the sand from Hilton Head Island all the way up to the giant Ferris wheel in Myrtle Beach, creating opportunities to turn boogie boards into sleds.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Citywide recycling could be eliminated

FL MIAMI — Recycling services could soon end in the city of Miami.

On Thursday, the City Commission is scheduled to vote on a piece of legislation that would allow the city to stop its biweekly recycling collection service. The proposal gives the Solid Waste Department director “the power to establish the type, frequency and amount, if at all, of City-serviced recycle pickup in all areas of the City.”

If the City Commission gives its approval Thursday, the legislation would need to come back for a final vote at a later date.

In explaining its reasoning for wanting to eliminate recycling services, the city has cited high contamination rates of recycled materials, as well as an “aging fleet and outdated machinery” that needs to be replaced.

Missing Ohio siblings, mother found in Iceland

OH CANTON — A pair of young siblings were found living in Iceland months after they seemingly disappeared from Ohio late last year, according to authorities.

The children, ages 8 and 9, were reported missing on Oct. 25, around the same time their mother reportedly stopped taking medicine for her mental health, according to a statement from the U.S. Marshals Service. She allegedly went on to “abandon” her apartment in Canton, and the children stopped attending school.

Authorities were initially able to track the children to Colorado, and then to London, the Is-

land of Jersey in the English Channel and a remote fishing village in Iceland before the kids were found living in hotel in Reykjavik on Friday, officials said.

“The children were placed in the care of Iceland social services until a trusted family member could get them,” according to the marshal’s statement. “The mother was placed in a hospital where she will remain until she is well enough to travel back to the U.S.”

Elections office hit by ‘orchestrated attack’

OR PORTLAND — A group of hooded and masked people broke dozens of windows and spray-painted anti-government graffiti on the Multnomah County Elections building in what Portland police called an “orchestrated attack.”

The attack happened just before 2 a.m. Monday and suspects fled as police arrived at the office, which was not occupied at the time, police said.

Police had made no arrests as of Tuesday morning, but were circulating surveillance video and urging anyone with information to contact officials.

The damaged windows were boarded up as of 9 a.m. Monday and the office was open for business as usual Tuesday, Denis Theriault, spokesperson with the Multnomah County Communications Office, said in an email.

Border patrol agent fatally shot near Canada

VT COVENTRY — A U.S. Border Patrol agent who was killed in Vermont during a traffic stop near

the Canadian border was a military veteran who worked security duty at the Pentagon during the time of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, his family said.

“He was a devoted agent who served with honor and bravery,” a family statement provided to The Associated Press late Tuesday said. “He had a tremendous respect and pride for the work he did; he truly embodied service over self.”

Agent David Maland was killed Monday afternoon following a traffic stop, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesperson said in a statement. A German national in the country on what the FBI called a current visa was killed and an injured suspect was taken into custody and is being treated at a local hospital.

The violence temporarily closed part of Interstate 91 about 20 miles from Canada in Coventry, in the Northeast Kingdom section of Vermont that straddles the international border.

Maland, whom the FBI confirmed was a U.S. Air Force veteran, was killed close to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Newport Station, part of the Swanton Sector that he was assigned to.

Fire chief fatally shot while helping couple

AL CHAMBERS COUNTY — A man fatally shot a fire battalion chief and wounded the driver of a car that hit a deer in rural Alabama, authorities said.

The Coweta County fire department is mourning the death of James Bartholomew Cauthen, 54, who worked for the department for more than 24

years, according to a Facebook post.

Cauthen was helping a couple whose car had struck a deer Sunday afternoon in Chambers County, Ala., the sheriff department wrote in a Facebook post. Cauthen, the battalion chief for the Coweta County Fire Rescue in Georgia, walked with the driver to a nearby property to ask for help because the couple couldn’t get cellular service, Chambers County Sheriff Department Chief Deputy Mike Parrish told WBLR.

Authorities said the property owner, William Randall Franklin, 33, opened fire on Cauthen and the driver, killing Cauthen and wounding the driver. The driver was armed and returned fire, wounding Franklin.

Franklin will be arrested on a murder warrant once he is released, WBLR reported.

Surfer dies despite rescue try in frigid water

NY NEW YORK — A former New York City police sergeant died from an apparent drowning while surfing in Long Island’s frigid waters on Sunday.

Jack Shapiro, 54, was found unresponsive off the coast of Gilgo Beach shortly after 2 p.m., police said. He was pulled to shore by a bystander, given CPR, and taken to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

The cause of death remains under investigation by the Suffolk County Medical Examiner’s Office.

Shapiro spent a decade with the New York Police Department, retiring as a sergeant in 2013.

— From wire reports

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Suzuki, Sabathia, Wagner elected to HOF

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Used to leading off, Ichiro Suzuki got antsy when he had to wait.

Considered a no-doubt pick for baseball's Hall of Fame and possibly the second unanimous selection, he waited by the phone for the expected call Tuesday. Fifteen minutes passed without a ring.

"I actually started getting kind of nervous," he said through a translator. "I was actually relieved when I first got the call."

Suzuki became the first Japanese player chosen for the Hall, falling one vote shy of unanimous when he was elected along with CC Sabathia and Billy Wagner.

Quite the journey for a 27-year-old who left the Pacific League's Orix BlueWave in November 2000 to sign with Seattle as the first Japanese position player in Major League Baseball.

"I don't think anybody in this whole world thought that I would be a Hall of Famer," he said. "As a baseball player, this is definitely the top of the top."

Suzuki received 393 of 394 votes (99.7%) from the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Sabathia was on 342 ballots (86.8%) and Wagner on 325 (82.5%), which was 29 votes more than the 296 needed for the required 75%.

Sabathia and Suzuki were elected in their first appearance on the ballot, while Wagner made

it on his 10th and final try. The trio will be inducted into the Hall at Cooperstown on July 27 along with Dave Parker and Dick Allen, voted in last month by the classic era committee.

Mariano Rivera remained the only player to get 100% of the vote from the BBWAA, appearing on all 425 ballots in 2019. Derek Jeter was chosen on 395 of 396 in 2020.

Seattle's Space Needle was lit blue in honor of Suzuki, who joined Fred Lynn in 1975 as the only players to win Rookie of the Year and MVP in the same season. The Mariners announced plans to retire Suzuki's No. 51 on Aug. 9.

Suzuki was a two-time AL batting champion and 10-time All-Star and Gold Glove outfielder, hitting .311 with 117 homers, 780 RBIs and 509 stolen bases with Seattle (2001-12, 2018-19), the New York Yankees (2012-14) and Miami Marlins (2015-17).

He is perhaps the best contact hitter ever, with 1,278 hits in Nippon Professional Baseball and 3,089 in MLB, including a season-record 262 in 2004. His combined total of 4,367 exceeds Pete Rose's MLB record of 4,256.

In his role as a Mariners special assistant, he still gets dressed in baseball clothes for home workouts as an example for today's players.

"I want to be able to show the players how I did it," he said. "Al-

so in the offseason, I go to a few high schools in Japan and I want to be able to show them what a professional baseball player looks like."

Sabathia, second to Suzuki in 2001 AL Rookie of the Year voting, was a six-time All-Star who won the 2007 AL Cy Young Award and a World Series title in 2009. He went 251-161 with a 3.74 ERA and 3,093 strikeouts, third among left-handers behind Randy Johnson and Steve Carlton, during 19 seasons with Cleveland (2001-08), Milwaukee (2008) and the New York Yankees (2009-19).

Sabathia prefers to have a Yankees cap on his Cooperstown plaque—the decision is made by the Hall.

"The Yankees is the place that wanted me," he said. "I found a home in the Bronx and I don't think I'll ever leave this city."

Sabathia almost retired after the Game 7 loss to Houston in the 2017 AL Championship Series but was persuaded to keep playing when MLB Network's Harold Reynolds explained how close his statistics were to Hall level.

After adopting a cutter to compensate for diminished velocity, Sabathia won 37 games in his final four seasons.

"I turned myself into my version of Jamie Moyer, is what I felt like: backdoor sliders, changeups, cutters on your hands,

two-seamers off the plate," he said. "I fought it for a long time. When you're a guy that is throwing 94, 95 (mph) your whole life, it's hard to buy in."

Wagner was five votes shy last year. He got only 10.5% support in his first appearance in 2016, and 10.2% the following year.

"It's not been an easy 10 years to sit here and swallow a lot of things that you have to swallow," Wagner said. "I didn't blow a save for 10 years, so I felt that might have had an input on being able to get in."

A natural right-hander, Wagner switched to throwing left-handed after breaking his right arm playing football as a 7-year-old, then breaking it again.

Wagner became the ninth pitcher in the Hall who was primarily a reliever after Hoyt Wilhelm, Rollie Fingers, Dennis Eckersley, Bruce Sutter, Goose Gossage, Trevor Hoffman, Lee Smith and Rivera. Wagner is the only left-hander among them.

"It means a lot," he said.

A seven-time All-Star, Wagner was 47-40 with a 2.31 ERA and 422 saves for Houston (1995-2003), Philadelphia (2004-05), the New York Mets (2006-09), Boston (2009) and Atlanta (2010). His 11.9 strikeouts per nine innings are the most among pitchers with at least 900 innings, though his 903 career innings are the fewest among Hall of Famers.

Towns scores 25 points as Knicks hold off Nets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Karl-Anthony Towns had 25 points and 16 rebounds, and Jalen Brunson scored eight down the stretch and finished with 17 as the New York Knicks beat the Brooklyn Nets 99-95 on Tuesday night.

OG Anunoby scored 20 points and Precious Achiuwa had 11 points off the bench as the Knicks won their second straight game.

D'Angelo Russell finished with 23 points and 10 assists and Cam Johnson scored 16 for the Nets, who have lost four straight games and nine of their past 10.

Trail Blazers 116, Heat 107: Anfernee Simons scored 24 points, Deandre Ayton had 22 points and 15 rebounds, and Portland won at Miami.

Rookie Kel'el Ware had 20 points and 16 rebounds and Duncan Robinson finished with 22 points for the Heat, playing without leading scorer Tyler Herro, who missed his first game of the season because of groin tightness.

Nuggets 144, 76ers 109: Nikola Jokic had 27 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists for his 19th triple-double of the season, reserve Aaron Gordon was nearly perfect from the floor

and visiting Denver extended Philadelphia's losing streak to seven games.

Tyrese Maxey had 28 points and 10 assists for a Sixers team that remains without standout big man Joel Embiid due to swelling in his left knee.

Raptors 109, Magic 93: Scottie Barnes had 17 points and 11 rebounds, RJ Barrett scored 19 points and host Toronto overcame a 21-point deficit to beat struggling Orlando.

Lakers 111, Wizards 88: LeBron James had 21 points, 13 assists and 10 rebounds and host Los Angeles sent Washington to its 11th consecutive defeat.

Dubois leads Caps past Oilers for 5th straight win

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Pierre-Luc Dubois had a goal and an assist as the league-leading Washington Capitals won their fifth game in a row, defeating the Edmonton Oilers 3-2 on Tuesday night.

Tom Wilson and Matt Roy also scored for the Capitals, who have earned at least a point in an NHL-high 11 straight games, going 8-0-3 in that span.

Dubois has 38 points in 47 games this season, after recording just 40 points in 82 games with the Kings last season.

Leon Draisaitl and Corey Perry scored for the Oilers, who have lost two in a row on the heels of earning victories in eight of nine.

The Oilers were without star forward Connor McDavid, serving the first game of a three-game suspension for cross-checking.

Logan Thompson made 30 stops in net for the Capitals, while Stuart Skinner recorded just 11 saves in the loss for the Oilers.

Canadiens 3, Lightning 2: Jake Evans scored the winning goal with 2:15 remaining to rally Montreal past visiting Tampa Bay.

Evans finished a feed from Joel Armia to break the tie with his 11th goal. Juraj Slafkovsky and Alex Newhook also scored, and Sam Montembeault made 33 saves to help Montreal win for the 13th time in 17 games.

Nikita Kucherov and Jake Guentzel scored for Tampa Bay, which opened a four-game road trip with a 5-3 loss to Toronto on Monday. Kucherov pushed his points streak to 10 games. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 19 saves.

Rangers 5, Senators 0: Igor Shesterkin made 20 saves, and Alexis Lafreniere had a goal and an assist as New York beat visiting Ottawa.

Arthur Kaliyev, Matt Rempe, Artemi Panarin and Will Cuyll also scored for the Rangers, who are 7-1-3 since Jan. 2 and have won three straight at home.

The shutout was Shesterkin's third this season and the 18th of his career.

Flyers 2, Red Wings 1 (OT): Rasmus Ristolainen scored in overtime as Philadelphia defeated visiting Detroit.

Ben Chiarot scored for the Red Wings, who lost their third straight game and fourth in the last five games.

Predators 7, Sharks 5: Nick Blankenburg scored at 8:09 of the third to lead host Nashville to a comeback victory over San Jose.

Jonathan Marchessault had a goal and three assists, Tommy Novak scored and had two assists and Fedor Svechikov, Justin Barron, Roman Josi and Filip Forsberg had goals for the Predators, who have won four straight. Juuse Saros and Justus Annunen combined to make 19 saves.

Hurricanes 2, Stars 1: Jesperi Kotkaniemi scored both goals, the second coming 24 seconds after host Dallas' tying goal midway through the third period, in Carolina's victory.

Thomas Harley scored and Jake Oettinger stopped 17 shots for the Stars, who are 2-4-0 following a season-long seven-game winning streak.

Sabres 3, Canucks 2: Jiri Kulich had a goal and two assists as visiting Buffalo rallied to beat Vancouver.

Elias Pettersson and Phillip Di Giuseppe — with his first of the season — scored for the Canucks, and Thatcher Demko made 23 saves.

Panthers 5, Ducks 2: Sam Reinhart snapped a three-game goal drought as Florida won at Anaheim.

Frank Vatrano and Mason McTavish scored for Anaheim. Lukas Dostal stopped 24 shots.

Swiatek vs. Keys, Sinner vs. Shelton in Australian semis

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Iga Swiatek is dominating her Australian Open opponents the way no one has at Melbourne Park since Maria Sharapova in 2013.

Swiatek's latest lopsided win came via a 6-1, 6-2 scoreline in the quarterfinals against No. 8 seed Emma Navarro on Wednesday.

The No. 2-seeded Swiatek has not only not dropped a set so far in the tournament, but has also lost a grand total of only 14 games as she seeks her first title at Melbourne Park and sixth Grand Slam trophy overall. Sharapova was the last woman to reach the Australian Open semifinals having dropped fewer than 15 games.

"She does everything with 100% conviction and intensity," Navarro said about Swiatek. "She has a different style of movement and play. It's tough to not be sort of affected by that and not feel like, 'OK, I have to do everything at the same speed that she's doing it.' So that was something, for sure, I felt a little bit today."

Swiatek will face No. 19 Madison Keys of the United States on Thursday night for a berth in the final. The other women's semifinal is No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, the two-time defending champion, against her good friend, No. 11 Paula Badosa.

Keys, whose best showing at a major was getting to the title match at the 2017 U.S. Open, was a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 winner against Elena Svitolina and is into her third semifinal in Australia.

"Iga is tough to beat because she has a lot of spin, kind of naturally, on both sides. She's a good server. She's a good returner. She moves incredibly well," Keys said. "The biggest thing that

makes her so difficult to beat is, because she moves so well, if you miss your spot just slightly, she has enough time to recover, and then the point goes back to neutral."

There's an American in the men's semifinals, too: No. 21 Ben Shelton got that far in Melbourne for the first time with an entertaining 6-4, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (4) win over unseeded Lorenzo Sonego of Italy. At his news conference, Shelton was critical of some of the people handling post-match TV interviewing duties.

Shelton was a semifinalist at the 2023 U.S. Open and now will meet No. 1 Jannik Sinner, the defending champion, on Friday.

Sinner was relentless against No. 8 Alex de Minaur, the last Australian male in the bracket, on Wednesday night, beating him 6-3, 6-2, 6-1.

"He is one of the best servers on tour," Sinner said about Shelton. "Lefty. Different rotation of the ball ... hopefully, I'm ready."

The other men's semifinal Friday is Novak Djokovic vs. Alexander Zverev.

Swiatek has won four of five career matchups against Keys, 29.

"Madison is a great player and experienced, so you never know," Swiatek said. "I'll be just focused on myself."

Using a new racket this season, Keys is on a 10-match winning streak, including a title at a hard-court tune-up event in Adelaide. Her run to the semifinals in Melbourne includes victories over two past runners-up at the Australian Open, Danielle Collins and Elena Rybakina.

Keys' past losses in the semifinals in Melbourne came against eventual champions Serena Williams in 2015 and Ash Barty in 2022.

Holloway, Dioubate help Alabama roll

Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Aden Holloway and Mouhamed Dioubate each scored 22 points to help No. 4 Alabama beat Vanderbilt 103-87 on Tuesday night.

Holloway made eight of his 11 shots, including four 3-pointers. Dioubate was 7-for-8 from the field and hit six free throws. He also had 10 rebounds for the Crimson Tide (16-3, 5-1 South-eastern Conference).

Mark Sears added 21 points and seven assists for Alabama.

The Commodores (15-4, 3-3) were led by 21 points from Jason Edwards and 19 from Tyler Nickel. Devin McGlockton led all players with 14 rebounds.

A streak of Vanderbilt 3-pointers brought what was a 19-point Crimson Tide lead early in the second half down to 10 with 15 minutes to go. Alabama then scored eight straight in 57 seconds, prompting a quick Commodores timeout. Vanderbilt was unable to bring the deficit back down to 10 points until the final three minutes.

The Commodores committed 24 fouls leading to 34 Crimson Tide free throw attempts. Alabama made 23 of them, ending the game with more made free throws than the Commodores had attempts (18).

No. 3 Iowa State 108, UCF 83: Joshua Jefferson scored a career-high 30 points to lead the host Cyclones to their highest point total of the season in a victory over the Knights.

Keshon Gilbert had 21 points and eight assists, and Curtis Jones added 19 points for the Cyclones (16-2, 6-1 Big 12), who bounced back from a loss at West Virginia on Saturday.

Jefferson finished 9-for-14 from the field and 3-for-4 from 3-point range, becoming the first 30-point scorer for Iowa State this season.

The Cyclones came in averaging 83.8 points per game. They reached triple digits once before, in a 100-58 win over Jack-

son State on Dec. 8.

No. 6 Tennessee 68, No. 14 Mississippi St. 56: Chaz Lanier scored 23 points to lead the host Vols to a victory over the Bulldogs.

Tennessee (17-2, 4-2 South-eastern Conference) remained perfect in 11 games at home this season. Jahmai Mashack and Jordan Gainey each scored 10 points, and Felix Okpara had 12 rebounds and nine points.

Mississippi State (15-4, 3-3) fell to 1-3 in its past four games, all against ranked teams. Josh Hubbard led the Bulldogs with 14 points.

No. 10 Marquette 76, Seton Hall 59: Kam Jones scored 19 points and the visiting Golden Eagles forced 24 turnovers in a victory over the struggling Pirates.

David Joplin added 12 points and Ben Gold had 11 as Marquette (16-3, 7-1 Big East) bounced back from a 59-57 loss to Xavier at home Saturday. Chase Ross had five of their 18 steals.

Marquette moved into a first-place conference tie with No. 20 St. John's, which hosts Xavier on Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden.

Jones moved into fifth place on Marquette's career scoring list with 1,754 points.

Ohio State 73, No. 11 Purdue 70: Micah Parrish scored 17 of his career-high 22 points in the second half, helping the visiting Buckeyes rally from a 16-point first-half deficit and fueling a 15-0 run in the closing minutes that led to a win over the Boilermakers.

Parrish was 8-for-10 from the field and made a career-best six 3-pointers, including 11 points and three 3s during the decisive run. Devin Royal added 16 points for Ohio State (11-8, 3-5 Big Ten), which snapped a three-game skid.

Purdue (15-5, 7-2) entered on a seven-game winning streak and led 59-53 with 7:25 to play.

But Ohio State stormed back by making 8 of 12 3s in the second half.

Trey Kaufman-Renn tied his career high with 26 points to lead the Boilermakers.

No. 15 Oregon 82, Washington 71: TJ Bamba scored 21 points and Brandon Angel had 15 as the host Ducks defeated the Huskies.

Supreme Cook added 13 points for Oregon (16-3, 5-3 Big Ten), which shot 51% from the field. Jackson Shelstad and Keeshawn Barthelemy each scored 11, and Nate Bittle pulled down 11 rebounds.

Great Osobor had 20 points and eight rebounds to lead Washington.

UCLA 85, No. 18 Wisconsin 83: Aday Mara scored a career-high 22 points and the host Bruins held off the Badgers, snapping their seven-game winning streak.

Sebastian Mack had 19 points and Tyler Bilodeau added 16 before fouling out with 1:40 remaining for UCLA (13-6, 4-4 Big Ten).

Mara and Mack combined to score 13 straight points down the stretch. Mara, a 7-foot-3 sophomore, was 7-for-7 from the floor and 8-for-11 at the line.

John Tonje scored 24 points, making 6 of 7 3-pointers, to lead the Badgers (15-4, 5-3). John Blackwell added 23 points.

The Badgers closed to 81-80 on Blackwell's 3-pointer with a minute remaining.

Mack got fouled, made the first and missed the second. Blackwell's potential tying jumper in the paint was blocked by UCLA reserve William Kyle III.

No. 19 UConn 79, Butler 78 (OT): Solo Ball scored a career-high 23 points and the host Huskies held off the Bulldogs in overtime.

Alex Karaban added 19 points, seven rebounds, six assists and three blocks for UConn (14-5, 6-2 Big East), who were coming off a loss at home to

Creighton last Saturday. The two-time defending national champions are 2-2 since an eight-game winning streak.

Jahmyl Telfort scored 25 for Butler (8-11, 1-7) but missed two 3-pointers in the final 3 seconds that could have given the Bulldogs their first win over UConn.

Texas 61, No. 22 Missouri 53: Arthur Kaluma scored 14 points and the Longhorns pulled away late to beat the Tigers for their first home win in the South-eastern Conference.

Kadin Shedrick scored five points in a 6-1 Texas run that gave the Longhorns (13-6, 2-4) the lead in the final four minutes, and they never trailed again. His free throw tied the game at 49, and his layup for Texas' next basket put the Longhorns ahead.

Texas locked down Missouri's perimeter shooters as the Tigers, one of the SEC's best 3-point shooting teams, were just 4-for-20 from long range.

Tamar Bates scored 10 points to lead Missouri (15-4, 4-2).

Arizona State 65, No. 23 West Virginia 57: Basheer Jihad scored 17 points, freshman Jayden Quaintance had 15 points and 12 rebounds for his sixth double-double of the season, and the visiting Sun Devils beat the Mountaineers.

BJ Freeman added 14 points and Adam Miller scored 10 for Arizona State (11-7, 2-5 Big 12), which broke a four-game losing streak.

No. 25 Louisville 98, SMU 73: Reyne Smith scored 30 points while matching his career high with a school-record 10 3-pointers and the visiting Cardinals won their first game as a ranked team in four years.

Chucky Hepburn had 13 points and a career-high 16 assists, another program record, as Louisville (15-5, 8-1 ACC) won its ninth game in a row. J'Vonne Hadley and James Scott each added 16 points.

Matt Cross had 18 points to lead the Mustangs (14-5, 5-3).