

## Some virus rules reimposed in Germany

By MARCUS KLOECKNER  
AND KARIN ZEITVOGEL

*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — German officials this week reimposed some coronavirus restrictions in Kaiserslautern as new infections rose in the area that's home to the largest U.S. military community in Europe.

Starting Sunday, the number of people allowed at indoor and outdoor events in Kaiserslautern was limited to 350 and 500, respectively, and face masks once again have to be worn in class by most students in German schools.

That rule will affect few students, as most are on summer vacation. Special needs children are exempted from the mask requirement.

The return of the restrictions was announced as the seven-day infection rate in Kaiserslautern hit 50 new

cases per 100,000 residents, giving the city the fourth-highest new case incidence in all of Germany, according to data posted Monday on the website of the country's disease prevention agency, the Robert Koch Institute.

That was slightly down from the previous week but marked several days in a row that infections were at or above 50 new cases per 100,000 residents, the level set by the German federal government last year as the threshold at which measures need to be toughened to stem the spread of the potentially deadly virus.

Only in the city of Kaiserslautern had new infections above that key level, and the sizable community of Americans living in the region was not included in the tally, Kaiserslautern district councillor Ralf Lessmeister said in a Facebook post.

Tens of thousands of U.S. service members, Defense Department personnel and their families live in the Kaiserslautern area.

Counting them lowered the new infection rate to just under 47 new cases per 100,000 residents, Lessmeister said.

Infections in Kaiserslautern district, where Ramstein Air Base is located, were at around 20 per 100,000, well below the government threshold.

But infections in the military community were also on the rise, officials said.

"COVID-19 cases on Ramstein have increased, similar to increased case numbers in the community," Ramstein officials said in a statement, without going into detail.

The number of coronavirus cases was climbing as many Germans and Americans head to other countries on vacation,

and as the more infectious delta variant of the virus continued to gain ground around the world.

But the new infections at Ramstein "are not attributable to any one specific source or group of individuals," the statement said.

Retail outlets in Kaiserslautern still require shoppers to wear face masks, but it was not immediately clear if numbers allowed into shopping centers, such as the K in Lautern mall in the center of Kaiserslautern, will be restricted due to the rising infection rate.

When the number of shoppers allowed into the mall was limited earlier this year as infections spiked, and many retailers required an appointment and negative test result to shop, long lines often formed outside the mall and other shops in the city as people waited to be allowed in.

## McKenzie: US to aid Afghanistan until Aug 31

By J.P. LAWRENCE

*Stars and Stripes*

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. will continue launching airstrikes to support Afghan troops as needed to halt Taliban attacks through at least Aug. 31, the top commander of U.S. forces in the country said Sunday.

Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, who also heads U.S. Central Command, did not say whether the airstrikes would go on past next month, when the U.S. is scheduled to complete its withdrawal after nearly 20 years of war in Afghanistan. The U.S. has already withdrawn more than 95% of its forces, CENTCOM has said.

"The United States has increased airstrikes in the support of Afghan forces over the last several days," McKenzie said. "We're prepared to continue this heightened level of support in the coming weeks if the

Taliban continue their attacks."

U.S. forces launched at least four airstrikes last week, including in Kandahar, which is where the Taliban was founded.

The Taliban has gained large swathes of territory in recent months, following the announcements that the U.S. and its coalition partners would withdraw its forces. Deadly Taliban offensives all over the country have encircled key cities and captured trading centers, such as Spin Boldak in the southern province of Kandahar.

McKenzie arrived in Kabul to meet Sunday with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his defense advisors. The visit followed a phone call from Biden to Ghani last week, in which the U.S. president said America will continue to provide billions of dollars to pay the salaries of Afghanistan's troops and to keep the country's air force flying.

After Aug. 31, the U.S. military's focus will shift to protecting the embassy in Kabul and ensuring the city's airport remains open, McKenzie said.

The Afghan air force, seen as an important advantage Kabul has over the Taliban, will continue to receive financial support and advising, the general said, adding that aircraft in need of maintenance and repair will be flown outside the country to be fixed.

"We will do everything in our power to keep that air force effective, flying and in support of their forces," McKenzie said.

The war has reached a pivotal stage for Afghan forces, McKenzie said.

"I think over the next days and weeks will determine if the government is going to be able to defend the country," he said. "We spent a lot of time training them, now is their moment."

# Towing firm set to pay for illegal sale of troops' cars

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

A Dallas towing company who federal prosecutors say illegally sold vehicles belonging to five service members has agreed to pay \$50,000 as part of a settlement, the Justice Department said.

Nearly half of the compensation from United Tows will go to Fassil Mekete, an airman whose car was towed and later sold in 2017 while he was attending Air Force basic training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, a Justice Department statement said Friday.

"United Tows violated a victim's rights while he was selflessly serving his country," Acting U.S. Attorney Prerak Shah for the Northern District of Texas said in a statement.

Prosecutors filed a lawsuit against United Tows in September on Mekete's behalf. The Justice Department subsequently found that the company had illegally sold at least four other vehicles owned by active-duty personnel between 2014 and 2019.

A federal law protects military personnel

from having their property sold without a court order while they're on active duty and for 90 days after leaving the service.

Mekete had permission from the owner of a martial arts school in Dallas to park his 1998 Toyota Corolla at the school after he ended his apartment lease and reported for basic training around Aug. 29, 2017, court documents show.

In early October, after a friend noticed Mekete's car was gone, the airman called a woman who identified herself as the owner of United Tows, according to court documents. She told him she did not believe he was a service member and that the car would be sold if he did not claim the vehicle and pay all towing and storage fees, prosecutors said.

The airman's car was auctioned in November 2017 without a court order, according to case documents.

The company agreed to compensate Mekete \$20,000; provide \$20,000 to be shared by the four additional service members; and pay a \$10,000 civil penalty. United Tows must also adopt new policies and training requirements, the Justice Department said.

# Military bases around Tokyo restrict travel as cases surge

BY JOSEPH DITZLER  
*Stars and Stripes*

TOKYO — Commanders of the largest U.S. bases in and near Japan's capital stepped up their preventive measures on Monday as new daily cases exceeded 1,000 in the city for a solid week.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government confirmed 1,429 newly infected people, according to public broadcaster NHK. That's twice as many new COVID-19 patients as a week ago, according to metro government data. The city reported 1,763 on Sunday and 1,979 on Thursday.

Because of the surge, unvaccinated individuals associated with Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo can no longer travel to the city center, including the wards of Shibuya,

Shinjuku and Roppongi, according to a public health order by base commander Col. Andrew Campbell.

Travel to and from the New Sanno Hotel, transit through the metro area and mission-essential travel are the exceptions for those individuals, according to the order, which took effect Monday. The travel ban holds until Aug. 31.

"For fully vaccinated individuals, there are no prohibitions on local area activities," Campbell's order states.

Travel to Okinawa must be approved by a squadron commander or the equivalent, according to the order.

Similar restrictions were reinforced Monday by Yokosuka Naval Base's commander, Capt. Rich Jarrett.

# Ramstein airmen wrangle multiple skills at rodeo

BY KARIN ZEITVOGEL  
*Stars and Stripes*

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Ryan Joy heaved the Turner 60K aircraft cargo loader around the final curve of a tight figure eight on the ramp at Ramstein Air Base.

Joy is used to driving the Turner, although "not as pedal-to-the-metal" as he was Friday, he said as he took part in the 721<sup>st</sup> Aerial Port Services Multi-Capable Airmen Rodeo.

The rodeo is designed to help airmen learn and master skills they don't use in their day-to-day work to help the Air Force achieve its mission statement: "To fly, fight, and win ... airpower anytime, anywhere."

"Not some time in some places; it is anytime, anywhere," Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. said during an all-hands meeting when he visited Ramstein earlier this month. "Every one of our specialties contributes to that."

Yards from where Joy had pushed the Turner close to its maximum speed of 23 mph, airmen were reconfiguring a C-130H before another of the eight teams of five taking part in the rodeo loaded a Humvee and a pallet onto the aircraft within strict time constraints.

After the C-130 exercise, Mabey and his teammates crossed the ramp and kicked off an endurance exercise behind the Jawbone Flight Kitchen, with a visual memory test followed by 75 burpees. After that, they carried coolers filled with water around 30 yards, pushed a piece of machinery, flipped tires (one of which had water inside it to add to the difficulty), carried a team member on a stretcher, moved heavy chains from one cart to another about 25 yards away, and prepared a pallet.

Every exercise was a race against the clock and a way to learn skills they might not be called on to use every day.

In the cargo grid area, Team PDL — for Port Dawgs Learning Center — took weight and length measurements to determine the center of balance of a vehicle that was to be hypothetically loaded onto an aircraft.

# Fauci: US going in 'wrong direction' on virus

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — The United States is in an “unnecessary predicament” of soaring COVID-19 cases fueled by unvaccinated Americans and the virulent delta variant, the nation’s top infectious diseases expert said Sunday.

“We’re going in the wrong direction,” said Dr. Anthony Fauci, describing himself as “very frustrated.”

He said recommending that the vaccinated wear masks is “under active consideration” by the government’s leading public health officials. Also, booster shots may be suggested for people with suppressed immune systems who have been vaccinated, Fauci said.

Fauci, who also serves as President Joe Biden’s chief medical adviser, told CNN’s “State of the Union” that he has taken part in

conversations about altering the mask guidelines.

He noted that some local jurisdictions where infection rates are surging, such as Los Angeles County, are already calling on individuals to wear masks in indoor public spaces regardless of vaccination status. Fauci said those local rules are compatible with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation that the vaccinated do not need to wear masks in public.

More than 163 million people, or 49% of the total U.S. population, are fully vaccinated, according to CDC data. Of those eligible for the vaccine, aged 12 and over, the figure rises to 57%.

“This is an issue predominantly among the unvaccinated, which is the reason why we’re out there, practically pleading with the unvaccinated people to go out and get vaccinated,”

Fauci said.

Fauci said government experts are reviewing early data as they consider whether to recommend that vaccinated individuals to get booster shots. He suggested that some of the most vulnerable, such as organ transplant and cancer patients, are “likely” to be recommended for booster shots.

He also praised Republicans, including Govs. Asa Hutchinson, of Arkansas, and Ron DeSantis, of Florida, and the second-ranking House leader, Rep. Steve Scalise, of Louisiana, for encouraging their constituents to get vaccinated. Their states have some of the lowest vaccination rates in the country.

“What I would really like to see is more and more of the leaders in those areas that are not vaccinating to get out and speak out and encourage people to get vaccinated,” Fauci said.

## Jill Biden promotes vaccine in Hawaii

Associated Press

First lady Jill Biden visited a pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinic in Waipahu, Hawaii, on Sunday to encourage unvaccinated Hawaiians to get their shots as the delta variant surges through much of the United States.

Biden, in remarks at the clinic at Waipahu High School, said the virus has become “more contagious than ever” and urged the unvaccinated to “help us move past this virus once and for all.”

“I’m here to ask everyone listening right now, to choose to get vaccinated,” Biden said.

Nearly 60% of the state’s population is fully vaccinated.

State officials are scrambling to get more Hawaiians vaccinated as the infection rate climbs.

Hawaii’s seven-day daily average for new cases climbed 192% from July 10 to Friday, according to the state health department.

Later Sunday, Biden joined military families for a barbecue at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Honolulu.

She was visiting Hawaii on her way back to Washington from leading a U.S. delegation to the Olympic Games in Tokyo.

## New York to require vaccines or testing for all city workers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York City will require all of its municipal workers — including teachers and police officers — to get coronavirus vaccines by mid-September or face weekly COVID-19 testing, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Monday.

The rule is expected to affect about 340,000 city employees, making the city one of the largest employers in the U.S. to take such action. While it isn’t a vaccine mandate, officials hope the inconvenience and discomfort of weekly tests will persuade many to overcome a reluctance to get inoculated.

The Sept. 13 deadline coincides with the start of public school, when the Democratic mayor has said he expects all pupils to be in classrooms full time. City health care workers and employees in congregate settings will face earlier deadlines.

The move comes as the city battles a rise in COVID-19 cases fueled by the delta variant. Since the end of June, the daily average of new cases has increased by more than 300%.

Last week, the city had announced it was mandating vaccinations or weekly testing for workers in the city’s hospital system.

De Blasio expanded the requirement Monday and urged private employers to adopt similar rules.

“My message to the private sector is: Go as far as you can go right now,” the mayor said. “I would strongly urge a vaccination mandate whenever possible, or as close to it as possible.”

## Vocal minority of French health care workers resent, resist vaccine edicts

Associated Press

PARIS — While most French health care workers are vaccinated against the coronavirus, a small but vocal minority is holding out. With infections exploding, a new law requiring them to get the shots is exposing the divide.

The French government, which has declared that the nation has officially entered its “fourth wave” of the pandemic, pushed the law mandating COVID-19 vaccines for health care workers, to protect hospitals and avoid a new lockdown. Government spokesman Gabriel Attal says the move isn’t meant to stigmatize reluctant health care workers but to limit

risks to the vulnerable people they care for.

The law, adopted by parliament Monday, also sets up a “health pass” for everyone in order to access public venues. The measures have prompted protests. Health care workers have been among the demonstrators.

Several health workers said they took issue with the mandate, not the vaccines.

Patrick Pelloux, president of the emergency room doctors’ union Association des Médecins Urgentistes de France, said workers in the lowest-skill health care jobs are among the most vaccine-wary, a symptom of what he called a “class struggle” in public hospitals.



# US calls on China to be responsible world power

*Associated Press*

BEIJING — A senior U.S. diplomat called on China to look beyond differences and work with the United States on difficult global issues such as climate and the COVID-19 pandemic as a responsible global power.

Wendy Sherman, the deputy secretary of state, was responding to Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Xie Feng, who told her in a meeting Monday that China wants to shelve differences while seeking common ground.

The U.S. has not backed down from criticizing China on issues from human rights to its territorial ambitions since President

Joe Biden took office in January. China has repeatedly said that the U.S. cannot expect cooperation while also suppressing China's rise, a charge that Sherman denied.

"There are some things that rise above specific differences that are the global responsibility of great powers," Sherman said in a phone interview shortly after she wrapped up successive meetings in the Chinese city of Tianjin with Xie and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

China came out swinging at the talks Monday, blaming the U.S. for a "stalemate" in bilateral relations and calling on

America to change "its highly misguided mindset and dangerous policy."

Xie accused the Biden administration of trying to contain and suppress China's development, according to an official summary of his remarks in the talks with Sherman.

Relations between the countries deteriorated sharply under Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, and the two sides remain at odds over a host of issues including technology, cybersecurity and human rights.

Xie said China wants to seek common ground while shelving differences, highlighting a di-

vide in the basic approach to their relationship. The Biden administration has said it will cooperate in areas such as climate but confront China in others such as human rights, describing the relationship as collaborative, competitive and adversarial.

Biden administration officials have said the goal of the talks is not to negotiate specific issues, but to keep high-level communications channels open. The U.S. wants to ensure that guardrails are in place to prevent competition between the countries from turning into conflict, they said.

## Vatican trial opens into wide financial scandal

*Associated Press*

VATICAN CITY — A cardinal who allegedly induced an underling to lie to prosecutors. Brokers and lawyers who pulled a fast one over the Vatican No. 2 to get him to approve a disastrous real estate deal. A self-styled intelligence analyst who bought Prada and Louis Vuitton items with the Vatican money that she was supposed to send to rebels holding a Catholic nun hostage.

Vatican prosecutors have alleged a jaw-dropping series of scandals in the biggest criminal trial in the Vatican's recent history, which opens Tuesday in a modified courtroom in the Vatican Museums. The once-powerful cardinal and nine other people are accused of bleeding the Holy See of tens of millions of dollars in donations through bad investments, deals with shady money managers and apparent favors to friends and family. They face prison sentences, fines or both if convicted.

The trial, which will likely be postponed for several months after the first hearings Tuesday and Wednesday, is the culmination of a two-year investigation into the Holy See's flawed London real es-

tate venture of over \$412 million. That operation exposed the Vatican's once-secret financial dealings and its structural dysfunction, which allowed just a few people to do so much damage to the Vatican's finances and reputation, with little expertise or oversight.

But the prosecutors' case also suggests that Pope Francis and his top lieutenants were not only aware of some of the key transactions, but in some cases explicitly authorized them, even without full documentation or understanding the details. Given the hierarchical nature of the Holy See and the obedience required of underlings to their religious superiors, questions also remain about why some people were charged and others not.

Last year, Francis presented Angelo Becciu, the lone cardinal on trial, with evidence that he had sent nearly \$118,000 in Vatican funds to a Sardinian charity run by Becciu's brother. Francis secured Becciu's resignation as head of the Vatican's saint-making office and then stripped him of his rights as cardinal. Becciu, who is charged with embezzlement and pressuring Perlasca to recant, has denied any wrongdoing.

## Tensions rise after Tunisian leader suspends parliament

*Associated Press*

TUNIS, Tunisia — Troops surrounded Tunisia's parliament and blocked its speaker from entering Monday after the president suspended the legislature and fired the prime minister and other top members of government, sparking concerns for the North African country's young democracy.

In the face of protests over Tunisia's economic troubles and the government's handling of the coronavirus crisis, President Kais Saied decided late Sunday to dismiss the officials, who also included the justice and defense ministers.

Some demonstrators cheered the firings, shouting with joy and waving Tunisian flags, but others accused the president of a power grab, and the country's overseas allies expressed concern that it might be descending again into autocracy. In a move sure to fuel those worries, police raided the offices of broadcaster Al Jazeera and ordered it to shut down.

Tunisia, which ignited the Arab Spring in 2011 when protests led to the overthrow of its longtime autocratic leader, is often regarded as the only success story of those uprisings. But democracy did not bring prosperity: Tunisia's economy was already flailing before the

pandemic hit, with 18% unemployment, and young people demanding jobs and an end to police brutality protested in large numbers earlier this year. The government recently announced cuts to food and fuel subsidies as it sought its fourth loan from the International Monetary Fund in a decade, further fueling anger in impoverished regions.

The pandemic has only compounded those problems, and the government recently reimposed lockdowns and other virus restrictions in the face of one of Africa's worst outbreaks.

Angry at the economic malaise and the poor handling of the pandemic, thousands of protesters defied virus restrictions and scorching heat in the capital, Tunis, and other cities Sunday to demand the dissolution of parliament. The crowds shouted "Get out!" and slogans calling for early elections, and also pushed for economic reforms. Clashes erupted in many places.

The president said he had to fire the prime minister and suspend parliament because of concerns over public violence. He said he acted according to the law — but parliament speaker Rached Ghannouchi, who heads the Islamist party that dominates the legislature, said the president didn't consult with him or the prime minister as required.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**Police, bystanders lift car, free baby in crash**

**NY** YONKERS — Police and bystanders lifted a car to free a trapped baby after a suspected drunken driver struck the girl and her mother and then plowed through a storefront with the pair on the hood.

The crash and rescue were recorded on video released by Yonkers Police. It shows a Hyundai Elantra striking a curb and parked car before driving into a woman as she crossed the street with a child in her arms. With the woman and child on the hood of the car, it accelerates through the storefront of a barber shop.

Police body camera footage from inside the building shows Yonkers Officers Rocco Fusco and Paul Samoyedny, who had been having breakfast nearby, frantically working with bystanders to lift the heavily damaged car and pull the crying 8-month-old girl from beneath it.

The baby sustained a skull fracture and burns to her back and foot. Her 36-year-old mother broke a leg, the news release said.

The driver, from Yonkers, was charged with driving while intoxicated, vehicular assault and aggravated unlicensed operation.

**Cops find over 3K heroin bags put into cereal box**

**MA** SHELBURNE — A state trooper in Massachusetts seized 3,100 bags of heroin stashed in a cereal box during a recent traffic stop.

Massachusetts State Police said that Trooper Scott Boutell pulled over an SUV for having improper auxiliary lights and an illegal handwritten license plate.

He determined the driver, Jus-

tin Butchino, 31, of Springfield, Vt., had a suspended license and could not provide proof of registration or ownership of the vehicle.

A vehicle search ultimately turned up a Frosted Flakes box filled with 3,100 bags of heroin, two additional bundles of heroin, a bag of fentanyl, a bag of crack cocaine and a bag of crystal methamphetamine.

**Vietnam War memorial vandalized with red paint**

**MA** BOSTON — A Vietnam War memorial in Boston was vandalized with red spray paint.

Boston police said the vandalism was discovered on the memorial in the Rose Garden in the city's Fenway neighborhood.

The red paint is scrawled across many of the names on the memorial, which are etched in white.

A city cleaning crew was working to remove the paint.

**State office gets nearly \$140K in firearms sale**

**WV** CHARLESTON — The West Virginia state treasurer's office raised nearly \$140,000 for law enforcement agencies through its unclaimed property firearms auction, the office announced.

This year's event had record inventory — more than 500 firearms lots — because the pandemic prevented the treasurer's office from hosting an auction last year, Treasurer Riley Moore's office said in a news release. The treasurer's office raised \$139,790 during the auction.

Under state law, state and local law enforcement agencies may

turn over unclaimed, seized or outdated firearms in their possession to the treasurer's office for auction, and the proceeds can be returned to the law enforcement agency.

**New maps add buildings to avalanche risk areas**

**AK** JUNEAU — Updated maps add 200 homes and other buildings to hazard zones for landslides and avalanches in Alaska's capital city, bringing the total number of structures that would be considered at moderate to severe risk of being damaged or destroyed if disaster struck to about 550.

The new maps, finished this year, used technology to chart the risks and are meant to update hazard maps made in the 1970s, KTOO Public Media reported. The area reviewed includes downtown Juneau.

Insurance costs and resale values for homes can change in known hazard areas. In such areas, local laws also restrict construction and subdivision.

The Juneau Planning Commission is expected to review the maps next month before they advance to the Assembly.

**Man attempted sex attacks on 3 women**

**NY** NEW YORK — A man was arrested on charges of attempting sexual attacks on three women and hitting two of them in the head within 40 minutes in an upper Manhattan park, police said.

Elvis Nina Pichardo, 40, also was arrested on a public lewdness charge stemming from an incident that happened nearby that same day.

The women were accosted in Inwood Hill Park, the New York Police Department said in a release.

Police said that the suspect threatened to rape one woman, to sexually assault another and attempted to rape a third, whom he allegedly beat in the head with a tree branch before allegedly slamming her head on the ground repeatedly. He also hit another of the women in the head, according to police.

**Released turtle in Tour de Turtles marathon**

**FL** MARATHON — A juvenile green sea turtle rehabilitated at the Florida Keys-based Turtle Hospital has been fitted with a satellite-tracking transmitter and released from a Keys beach to join the 14th Tour de Turtles, a marathon-like race that follows long-distance migration of sea turtles over three months.

The educational outreach program organized by the Sea Turtle Conservancy raises awareness about sea turtles and threats to their survival.

Dubbed "Lucky Pulse" by her rescuers for a pulse-like marking on her head, the Keys turtle was released to raise awareness about her own affliction. She was found off the Keys on March 17, entangled in fishing trap line and covered with fibropapilloma, debilitating tumors that develop from a herpes-like virus that affects sea turtles around the world.

After the tumors' removal, Lucky Pulse's recovery included blood transfusions, breathing treatments, a broad spectrum of antibiotics, fluids, vitamins and a diet of seafood and greens.

— From wire reports

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# English, Hancock give US a skeet sweep

Associated Press

TOKYO — Amber English erased the disappointment of barely missing the two previous Olympics by winning a gold medal.

Vincent Hancock made history about an hour later, becoming the first skeet shooter to win three golds.

Two shotgun events, two American golds, one sweet skeet sweep.

"It sets the tone of what can happen at USA Shooting," Hancock said. "Our athletes have been shooting at a really high level for quite a few years now. Because we're a small sport, we don't quite get the recognition, but looking at the number of medals we win on a yearly basis, it's impressive."

The United States' shooting showing in Tokyo got off a strong start with 20-year-old William Shaner's gold in 10-meter air rifle on Sunday.

English kept the good vibes flowing in the opening shotgun event, hitting 56 of 60 targets to set an Olympic record and beat reigning skeet champion Diana Bacosi of Italy by one. Wei Meng of China took bronze after tying a world record in qualifying.

Hancock capped the two-day tone-setting tally with his own Olympic record, hitting 59 of 60 shots to add another gold medal to the ones he won in Beijing in 2008 and London in 2012. Abdullah Al-Rashidi of Kuwait

won his second straight bronze after competing at the Rio Games as an Independent Olympic Athlete.

English and Hancock have known each other since they were 16, so reaching the top step of the same podium made it extra special.

"I love that girl like a sister and now we both have medals around our neck," Hancock said.

Each took a step back on their way to the top of the podium.

For English, it was the death of her father a few years ago and the disappointment of coming up just short of making the U.S. team at the 2012 and 2016 Games.

The 31-year-old worked her way back into position to make the 2020 team, training while working to become an Army officer in Fort Benning, Ga. English, who comes from a deep shooting family, finished third at the 2018 world championship and climbed to 24th in the ISSF world rankings with seven top-10 finishes the past three years.

English and Bacosi each hit 47 of 50 targets to reach the final and the American earned gold by hitting her final 10 attempts while the Italian missed her third shot.

"I'm very, very glad," English said. "This has been a long time coming."

Hancock has been the world's best skeet

shooter, winning two Olympic golds, four world championships and six World Cup events. He also was the first American skeet shooter to complete a perfect World Cup event, hitting every target at a 2015 competition in Mexico.

Hancock was not in the right frame of mind at the Rio Games and it cost him in a 15th-place finish.

The 32-year-old from Fort Worth, Texas, needed a shoot-off to get into the finals in Tokyo after tying with six others, but he was on the mark once in, hitting his final 34 shots to beat Jesper Hansen of Denmark by four.

Hancock pumped his fist after hitting the last target, raising his arms as the limited crowd started a chant of "U-S-A!"

After the medal ceremony, English and Hancock were joined for a photo with fellow shooter Kim Rhode, the first U.S. individual Olympic athlete to medal in five consecutive Games and an alternate on this year's team.

"All the skeet shooters are very close and we're just ready to keep it rolling," English said.

They're certainly off to a good start, thanks to two skeet-shooting friends with gold hanging from their necks.

## Dressel swims to gold; Ledecky settles for silver

Associated Press

TOKYO — Caeleb Dressel got started on his quest for six gold medals in swimming, while Katie Ledecky found herself in a very unusual position.

Second place.

Dressel led off a U.S. victory in the men's 4x100-meter freestyle relay Monday at the Tokyo Olympics, easing a bit of America's sting from Ledecky's first Olympic loss.

Australian Ariarne Titmus — nicknamed the "Terminator" — lived up to her billing when she chased down Ledecky in the 400 freestyle to win one of the most anticipated races of the Summer Games.

Titmus, who trailed by nearly a full body-length at the halfway mark of the eight-lap race, turned on the speed to touch in 3

minutes, 56.69 seconds. It was the second-fastest time in history, surpassed only by Ledecky's world record of 3:56.46 from the 2016 Rio Games.

The defending Olympic champion settled for the silver this time in 3:57.36 — the fourth-fastest time ever recorded and her best performance in three years.

Just not good enough.

"I fought tooth and nail," Ledecky said. "She definitely swam a really smart race. She was really controlled up front. I felt pretty smooth and strong going out and flipped at the 300 and it was like, 'Oh, she's right there.'"

And then she was gone.

For the first time in her brilliant Olympic career, Ledecky felt the sting of defeat, dished

out by a rival from Down Under who made it clear she was not intimidated by the American star.

"It's probably the biggest thing you could pull off in your sporting career," Titmus said, "so I'm over the moon."

No one else was even close. The bronze went to China's Li Bingjie in 4:01.08.

Then the spotlight shifted to Dressel, who has been hailed as the successor to Michael Phelps.

Dressel put the U.S. out front, and the three who followed him in the relay made sure it stood up.

"I felt good the whole way, I knew I had to get my hand in the wall first and get some clean water," Dressel said. "And everyone did their job. It's a relay

for a reason, it's four guys for a reason, it's certainly not just me. It's certainly not just one guy."

The 24-year-old, tattooed Floridian swam the first leg in a blistering 47.26. Blake Pieroni and Bowe Becker kept the Americans out front before Zach Apple turned in an anchor leg of 46.69 to leave no doubt at the end.

The U.S. won in 3:08.97, the third-fastest time in history. Italy took the silver in 3:10.11, with the bronze going to Australia in 3:10.22.

"The scariest part was my leg for myself, because I had control over that," Dressel said. "I knew they were going to get the job done, I wasn't scared at all. Especially when Zach hit the water. I saw him break out and I knew it was over."



# US among 5 unbeatens in Olympic rugby

*Associated Press*

TOKYO — Joe Webber is a good illustration of the difference between New Zealand's opening days in the Olympic rugby sevens tournaments in Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo.

By his own calculations, Webber lasted one tackle before he was sidelined in 2016, when rugby sevens made its Olympic debut and highly ranked New Zealand was upset by Japan in its opening game, eventually missing out on a medal.

On Monday, with the score locked 14-14 in the second half against Argentina, he took an inside pass and sprinted away to score a momentum-changing try that propelled New Zealand to a 35-14 win. It gave the All Blacks Sevens back-to-back wins in Pool A following an opening 50-5 win over South Korea. Argentina and Australia each have a win and a loss in the group.

"We mentioned that after the first game — it was good to win our first game of the tournament at the Olympics," Webber said. "So yeah, I hope we just improve as we go."

Defending champion Fiji and 2016 silver medalist Britain were both 2-0 in Pool B. South Africa, the bronze medalist in Rio, and the United States were 2-0 in Pool C. All five unbeaten teams are assured of a

spot in the quarterfinals.

Japan made a surprise run to the semifinals in 2016 and there were local expectations of a medal in Tokyo. Deprived of a home crowd because fans are banned amid COVID-19 restrictions, Japan had a narrow 19-14 loss to Fiji before a 34-0 loss to Britain. The hosts now need to beat Canada to have any chance of advancing as one of the two best third-place teams.

"It definitely had an impact," Japanese player Kameli Soejima said, looking around a cavernous Tokyo Stadium that was lacking the buzz of a crowd. "We're not blaming that for how we've played, though. We've just got to be better."

After five months in a traveling bio-secure bubble that has taken them from Fiji to Australia and into Japan, the Fijians showed flashes of brilliance and a little bit of rust on Day 1 and are sitting behind Britain, which has scored 58 points and conceded none.

The teams will meet in a 2016 final rematch in Tokyo on Tuesday but it's in the group stage this time.

Fiji captain Jerry Tuwai said his team always treats its next match the same way: like a final.

The Fijians kicked off the tournament and scored the first points within 30 seconds, but trailed by seven points in the second half against Japan before scoring two late tries to win. The Fijians were level with Canada in the second half of their night match before finishing off a 28-14 win.

"Right now, we are the defending champions of the Olympics, so all the pressure is on us," Tuwai said. "We're not that satisfied about the performance today, but we have another day tomorrow."

The U.S. and South Africa will meet Tuesday to determine first place in their group ahead of the nighttime quarterfinals. The semifinals and final are scheduled for Wednesday.

The Americans had two tight wins, with captain Madison Hughes finishing off a length-of-the-field winning try as the Eagles edged Kenya 19-14 at the end of the morning session. They later held off Ireland 19-17.

"You know, it's all about going into Day 2," U.S. winger Perry Baker said. "We took care of the first games, which was very important for us. So I feel good, no matter how we got the win."

The South Africans, with their coach in quarantine outside of Tokyo after a positive test for COVID-19, cast aside their disrupted preparations with wins over Ireland and Kenya.

## Oklahoma, Texas take step to leave the Big 12

*Associated Press*

Oklahoma and Texas took the first formal step Monday toward moving to the Southeastern Conference, notifying the Big 12 they would not be renewing an agreement that binds the league's members through 2025.

The schools sent out a joint statement that made no mention of the SEC and said "the universities intend to honor their existing grant of rights agreements."

"However, both universities will continue to monitor the rapidly evolving collegiate athletics landscape as they consider how best to position their athletics programs in the future," the schools said.

The "grant of rights" gives the conference control of the school's media rights and runs concurrent with the Big 12's television contracts with ESPN and Fox, which expire in 2025.

The Big 12's TV deals make up the bulk of

the conference's revenue. The conference distributed \$345 million to its 10 members this year (\$34.5 million apiece), down from the previous year because of the pandemic.

The SEC announced an average payout to each of its members of \$44.6 million in January.

Texas and Oklahoma have been in discussions with the SEC about joining the league, though neither school nor the powerhouse conference has acknowledged that publicly.

Joining another conference with the grant of rights still in effect is a nonstarter. Texas and Oklahoma would bring no value to their new conference and it would cost the schools tens of millions of dollars per year.

The Big 12 announced Sunday that its executive committee, including Commissioner Bob Bowlsby, held a video conference with the presidents of Texas and Oklahoma.

The remaining eight Big 12 schools —

Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa State, Oklahoma State, TCU, Baylor, Texas Tech and West Virginia — are still hoping to persuade the conference's flagship schools to stay put.

"The meeting was cordial, and the executive committee expressed a willingness to discuss proposals that would strengthen the conference and be mutually beneficial to OU and UT, as well as the other member institutions of the conference," Bowlsby said in a statement. "I expect that we will continue our conversations in the days ahead and we look forward to discussing thoughts, ideas and concepts that may be of shared interest and impact."

Without Texas and Oklahoma, the Big 12 is in danger of falling apart. Even if it were to stay together by adding other schools, the value of the league would likely be severely diminished when it goes looking for its next television contract.

# Lynn pitches, hits Chisox past Brewers

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Lance Lynn allowed one run over six innings and hit a two-run single to lift Chicago to a 3-1 victory over the Milwaukee Brewers on Sunday night as the White Sox avoided a sweep in this series between division leaders.

Lynn (10-3) allowed six hits, struck out six and walked none, outdueling Brandon Woodruff in a matchup of All-Star right-handers. Lynn, who lowered his ERA to 1.91, also keyed a decisive three-run second inning with his bat — his first hit since 2017.

“They both are winners, so it’s all good,” Lynn said of his pitching and hitting. “A good night. I got lucky, got a hit, drove in two runs, and we won. So that’s all it’s about.”

Michael Kopech pitched a scoreless inning for Chicago and Liam Hendricks tossed two for his 24th save in 28 chances.

Woodruff (7-5) allowed three runs on five hits in seven innings, striking out nine and walking two. His ERA climbed from an NL-best 2.04 to 2.14 — which is just behind teammate Corbin Burnes’ 2.12. Woodruff has two losses and two no-decisions in his four starts in July.

“They’re a very good club, the Milwaukee Brewers. We had our hands full. We lost two out of three, but we won one,” White Sox manager Tony La Russa said. “This is a big-time win by our club. A lot of guys stepped up. But, enjoy it for the moment, and then it’s what’s next. Accumulate more wins.”

Chicago, which leads the AL Central by nine games, mustered just enough offense after dropping the first two games against the NL Central-leading Brewers by a combined score of 13-2. The White Sox scored all three runs in the second with two outs. Brian Gooden walked and Leury Garcia singled. Seby Zavala followed with an RBI single, with both runners advancing on the throw. Lynn then lofted a single on an 0-2 count into shallow right field to score two more runs.

“Blind squirrel, I guess, or something like that,” said Lynn, who leads the majors in ERA. “It wasn’t pretty, but it worked.”

It was Lynn’s first at-bat since April 10, 2019 when he was with Texas and struck out twice against Arizona. It was his first hit since a single on Sept. 28, 2017 for St. Louis vs. the Cubs. Lynn had four hits in 54 at-bats that season.

# Red Sox score 5 runs in 8th to rally way past Yankees

Associated Press

BOSTON — Held hitless into the eighth inning by Domingo Germán and looking feeble, Alex Verdugo and the Boston Red Sox suddenly erupted for five runs and stormed past the New York Yankees 5-4 Sunday.

Verdugo opened the eighth with a long double for Boston’s first hit. Later, Kiké Hernández slid home headfirst on Xander Bogaerts’ sacrifice fly with the go-ahead run to cap the rally.

The Red Sox won for the 10th time in 13 games against New York and reclaimed first place in the AL East, a game ahead of Tampa Bay. The Yankees fell nine games behind Boston.

The Red Sox trailed 4-0 when Verdugo doubled to deep right, and Germán was lifted after the hit. Jonathan Loaisiga (7-4) relieved, and Boston broke loose with four straight hits. Hunter Renfroe had an RBI double, Christian Vázquez singled home a run and Hernández followed with an RBI double, cutting it to 4-3.

Zack Britton relieved and pinch-hitter Kevin Plawewski’s groundout plated the tying run. Hernández hustled hard and beat right fielder Greg Allen’s throw home on Bogaerts’ sacrifice fly.

Brandon Workman (1-2) earned the win and Matt Barnes got the final three outs for his 21st save.

Rougned Odor had a solo homer and RBI single for New York.

**Phillies 2, Braves 1:** Aaron Nola came within one out of a shutout, and host Philadelphia splits its four-game series against Atlanta.

Nola allowed four hits and struck out nine in 8½ innings. Ranger Suarez got the final out for his fourth save of the season.

**Orioles 5, Nationals 4:** Ryan McKenna scored on a sharp grounder by Ramon Urías for the winning run as host Baltimore completed a three-game sweep of Washington.

Trey Mancini, Maikel Franco and McKenna hit solo homers for the Orioles, who improved to 1-51 when trailing after eight innings.

**Cardinals 10, Reds 6:** Harrison Bader and Dylan Carlson homered during a seven-run burst in the fourth inning and St. Louis won at Cincinnati.

Nolan Arenado hit his 20th home run and tripled, and Tyler O’Neill also connected for the Cardinals.

**Indians 3, Rays 2:** Bobby Bradley’s sacrifice fly in the eighth inning capped Cleveland’s comeback and ended the host Indians’

11-game losing streak to Tampa Bay.

Cleveland managed just one run in seven innings against Tampa Bay starter Ryan Yarbrough and rallied in the eighth off reliever Matt Wisler (3-4).

**Mets 5, Blue Jays 4:** Pete Alonso homered, pinch-hitter Jeff McNeil broke a tie with a two-run double and host New York beat Toronto in a successful debut for new starter Rich Hill.

The 41-year-old Hill threw only 49 pitches over the first five innings and worked around three leadoff doubles, carrying a four-hit shutout into the sixth. Five relievers followed Hill and held the Blue Jays to one run over four innings. Edwin Díaz struck out three in a hitless ninth for his 21st save in 26 chances.

**Marlins 9, Padres 3:** Deven Marrero and Brian Anderson homered off Yu Darvish, who allowed four runs in five innings, and host Miami earned a split of its four-game series against San Diego.

Darvish (7-5) needed 23 pitches to get through the first inning. Manny Machado hit his 17th homer for the Padres.

Marrero had three hits, including his first home run since 2017, and Anderson hit his fourth homer of the year. Lewis Brinson added a three-run homer off Nabil Crismatt.

**Royals 6, Tigers 1:** Jorge Soler hit two home runs, Salvador Perez added a three-run blast and Daniel Lynch pitched eight scoreless innings for his first major league win as Kansas City beat visiting Detroit for its fifth straight win.

**Astros 3, Rangers 1:** Zack Greinke threw six solid innings, Abraham Toro homered and host Houston sent Texas to its 12th straight loss.

**Angels 6, Twins 2:** Shohei Ohtani hit his major league-leading 35th home run and Los Angeles won at Minnesota.

**Cubs 5, Diamondbacks 1:** Kris Bryant, Anthony Rizzo and David Bote homered, Trevor Williams pitched effectively into the seventh inning, and host Chicago beat Arizona.

**Giants 6, Pirates 1:** LaMonte Wade Jr. homered twice and host San Francisco beat Pittsburgh to avoid a three-game sweep.

**Dodgers 3, Rockies 2:** Will Smith hit a go-ahead home run in the eighth inning and host Los Angeles beat Colorado.

**Mariners 4, Athletics 3:** Kyle Seager hit a two-out, two-run single as part of Seattle’s four-run third inning and Marco Gonzales won his second straight decision in a victory over visiting Oakland.