

DOD to again require masks in high-risk areas

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon announced Wednesday that it would once again require all individuals to wear face coverings when indoors at Defense Department facilities in locations deemed high risk by federal health officials for the spread of coronavirus.

The directive from Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks on Wednesday walks back guidance issued in May that allowed service members and others who had been fully vaccinated against the virus to forgo mask-wearing at DOD facilities worldwide. It comes one day after the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued new guidance encouraging vaccinated Americans to don masks indoors in certain locations where the coronavirus is spreading rapidly.

“Deputy Secretary Hicks has directed that all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks in indoor settings at Department of Defense installa-

tions and facilities in areas of substantial or high transmission, as defined by the CDC, to protect against rising [coronavirus] cases,” said Jamal Brown, a Pentagon spokesman. “[Wednesday’s] announcement applies to all service members, federal personnel, contractors, and visitors when indoors at all properties owned by the department in those areas, in accordance with updated CDC guidelines.”

The Defense Department change on mask requirements came just one day before President Joe Biden was expected to issue new rules for federal employees, potentially including military troops, related to the virus as infection rates increase and the White House pushes for more eligible Americans to get vaccinated.

The president has placed blame on unvaccinated adults for increasing transmission rates primarily with the highly infectious delta variant of the coronavirus.

Biden was expected to announce Thursday afternoon that most federal employees show proof that they had been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus or agree to regular testing, stringent social distancing requirements, masking up and restrictions on their travel, The Associated Press reported, citing an unnamed administration official. The official said those who chose not to get vaccinated would not be at risk of losing their jobs.

AP reported it was not clear ahead of Biden’s announcement if he would lump active-duty military troops and federal contract workers into the new requirements.

Pentagon data updated on Wednesday showed about 48% of the military’s total active-duty, National Guard and Reserve force — or 1,027,730 service members — had been fully vaccinated. Another 233,565 troops were partially vaccinated, according to the data. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced

July 16 that more than 70% of the active-duty force had been at least partially vaccinated, but the Pentagon has not provided updated data on active-duty troops since then.

The U.S. military has reported 208,603 troops have tested positive for the virus since the pandemic began. Pentagon data released Wednesday showed more than 5,000 active cases. Twenty-eight service members have died from complications of the virus.

Federal officials want unvaccinated and vaccinated individuals to return to mask-wearing indoors in those locations deemed by the CDC to have substantial or high coronavirus transmission rates. The CDC has defined those areas of the country, broken down by county, as displaying substantial coronavirus transmission rates if more than 50 cases per 100,000 persons were reported in the previous seven days. Those reporting more than 100 cases per 100,000 persons are deemed to have high transmission rates.

Active-duty doctor among 2 sailors to die from COVID-19

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Two sailors — including an active-duty doctor — have died within the last week of complications from the coronavirus, the Navy announced in a statement Wednesday.

Capt. Corby Ropp, 48, died Friday due to coronavirus-related complications at Duke University Hospital in Durham, N.C., according to the Navy.

Ropp served as the department leader of ophthalmology and refractive surgery at the Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command at Marine Corps Base

Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C.

“We are deeply saddened by the loss of our shipmate and ophthalmologist, Capt. Ropp,” said Capt. Reginald Ewing III, commander of NMRTC Camp Lejeune. “Our thoughts and prayers are with Capt. Ropp’s family, coworkers and friends during this extremely difficult time.”

On Monday, Petty Officer 1st Class Allen Hillman, a master-at-arms assigned to Navy Reserve Volunteer Training Unit in Boise, Idaho, died while hospitalized with the coronavirus.

Cmdr. Megan Fine, commander of the Navy Operational Sup-

port Center in Boise, said in the statement that Hillman “was a big part of our community.”

“We are deeply saddened by the loss of our friend and shipmate MA1 Hillman,” Fine said. “We will continue to support his family and shipmates during this difficult time.”

The Navy did not say whether the sailors had been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

As of July 21, 26 service members had died from the coronavirus and 1,832 were hospitalized, according to the Pentagon. The sailors’ deaths bring the total to at least 28.

In total, about 205,910 troops

have tested positive for the coronavirus since the beginning of the pandemic, according to the Pentagon. More than 1.2 million active-duty, Reserve, and National Guard troops have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin for months has been considering whether to mandate the vaccines once they receive full approval from the Food and Drug Administration, acting Navy Secretary Thomas Harker said in June. Federal law prevents vaccines under emergency-use authorization from becoming mandatory unless the president finds it necessary.

House lawmakers back 2nd destroyer plan

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — House lawmakers on Wednesday proposed maintaining the plan to build a second guided-missile destroyer next year after the Navy cut the ship from its 2022 budget request.

The House Armed Services Committee's subpanel on seapower and projection forces recommended adding an additional destroyer to the Navy's proposed shipbuilding plans in a budget markup Wednesday of the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, the law that sets the Pentagon's spending and priorities for the year.

The proposed budget called for just one new destroyer alongside a guided-missile frigate, two attack submarines, a fleet-replenishment oiler, two towing, salvage and

rescue ships and an ocean-surveillance ship.

"[President Joe Biden's] budget arrived with an unexpected cut in the program of record for one of our core battle force platforms, the DDG 51 destroyer," said Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., the subcommittee chairman. "In spite of these challenges, we once again have developed a mark that makes an independent assessment of our shipbuilding needs."

The Navy had previously committed to building two new destroyers in 2022 as part of multiyear contracts with Ingalls Shipbuilding and General Dynamics Bath Iron Works. However, the service proposed canceling one of the scheduled destroyers to save money in its 2022 budget.

The Navy relies on destroyers for some of

its key missions such as freedom-of-navigation operations. As House lawmakers worked on the markup Wednesday, the guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold steamed through the Taiwan Strait to challenge China's claims to the waterway.

Navy officials have said the service would need an additional \$1.66 billion on top of its proposed \$211.7 billion budget to fund the second destroyer.

Canceling one of the contracts would cost the service a \$33 million breached-contract penalty for doing so, Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said June 22 during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

The second destroyer topped the Navy's unfunded priorities list for the upcoming year.

US Navy sends another warship through Taiwan Strait

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Another U.S. Navy destroyer steamed through the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday amid increasing attention on the contentious waterway.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold passed through the strait in a "routine" transit that "demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the U.S. Navy said in a news release Wednesday.

The Benfold's passage marks the seventh Taiwan Strait transit this year by a Navy

vessel, 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Mark Langford told Stars and Stripes in an email Wednesday.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur made the Navy's past two trips through the strait on June 22 and May 18.

The Navy routinely steams through the approximately 110-mile waterway that separates China and Taiwan. Its warships made 13 transits throughout 2020, Langford said.

The Chinese government routinely condemns as provocative the presence of Navy destroyers in the strait.

Wednesday's trip was the first through the strait by the Benfold since July 2018.

Its passage comes just after U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman's visit to China this week. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian, during a press conference Monday, said Beijing had "expressed strong dissatisfaction" with the U.S. over issues such as Taiwan and the South China Sea.

Beijing considers Taiwan a breakaway province and has consistently maintained that the island should be reunited with the mainland, possibly by force.

Sailors can defer up to 120 leave days for three years

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Sailors who missed vacation opportunities during the coronavirus pandemic may carry up to 120 days of unused leave for another three years, the Navy announced Wednesday.

The leave time — twice the carryover amount allowed in normal times — must have been accrued during the current fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30, according to a Navy memo.

The pandemic has made it difficult for many sailors to take time off and necessitat-

ed the Special Leave Accrual policy, the service said.

Sailors are allowed to retain the special leave they have accrued during the current fiscal year until Sept. 30, 2024, the Navy said. Leave accrued after Sept. 30 is not protected by the policy.

The memo made no mention of leave policy for the Marine Corps.

Enlisted sailors who have more than 120 days of leave can "sell back leave," the Navy said. "This is limited to once in a career and counts towards the 60 day career limit."

Officers are not authorized to sell back

leave.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense approved leave carry-over for all the services during the previous fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2020, due to the pandemic.

The Pentagon has left each service to set its own accrual carryover policy for the current fiscal year.

The Navy's policy was approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

The Air Force last week announced a very similar leave accrual policy for the current fiscal year.

Coast Guard on Guam rebrands sector outpost

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Coast Guard renamed its Guam outpost the Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam during a rare, triple commissioning of fast-response cutters there Thursday.

The service's commandant, Adm. Karl Schultz, announced the rebranding of Sector Guam during the commissioning of the cutters Frederick Hatch, Myrtle Hazard and Oliver Henry.

"This change signifies a different operational construct than how we've operated beforehand. Today, these [cutters] are so capable that we bring expeditionary capability to the region that we haven't had before," he said during the live-streamed event.

Schultz in October 2019 said that placing the three cutters in Guam is a response to "coercive and antagonistic behavior from China."

During the ceremony, the admiral echoed former national security adviser Robert O'Brien, who said in October that the Guam-based cutters are expected to help police China's illegal fishing in the region through fisheries patrols, enhanced surveillance and enforcement efforts with U.S. partners in the Western Pacific whose own capacities are limited.

"Coastal nations worldwide seek to strengthen their coastal forces and to whom do they look? They look to our Coast Guard as a key strategic partner," Schultz said during Thursday's ceremony. "Many small nations lack the capacity to protect their vast waters, to protect and thwart those threats from sea and to protect their rich maritime and natural resources."

Rear Adm. Matthew Sibley, commander of Coast Guard District 14, explained the roles the cutters are expected to fill.

"Coast Guard Sector Guam has already started routinely deploying these fast-response cutters over 1,400 nautical miles from Guam to counter foreign intelligence collection, combat illegal unregulated and unreported fishing, execute search-and-rescue cases and deliver vital support to remote island nations," he said during the ceremony.

SIGAR: Afghanistan faces grim future after accord

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan faces an "existential crisis" after a continuing rise in Taliban attacks that began well ahead of the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country, a government watchdog agency said Thursday.

Each quarter since the U.S. and Taliban signed a peace deal in February 2020 has shown a marked increase in enemy attacks compared to the same periods in previous years, a report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction said. NATO data on the increases had been kept from the public since December 2019, the report said.

Between March and May, enemy forces conducted nearly 10,400 attacks, over 1,000 more than were recorded during that time last year, and 3,000 more than the same time in 2019, the report said.

Each of the last four quarters saw more than 10,000 enemy attacks, according to the data, which NATO said was based on reporting by Afghan forces and could be higher.

Last year, the U.S. said the Taliban verbally agreed to curb violence, and warned the insurgents would face consequences if

they didn't. But the relentless attacks did nothing to stop the drawdown of international forces, which is nearly complete.

On Sunday, U.S. Central Command leader Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie told reporters in Kabul that the military had stepped up airstrikes against the Taliban and could continue doing so, at least until the U.S. combat mission in Afghanistan ends Aug. 31. The announcement came just days before chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army Gen. Mark Milley, said the Taliban had taken control of about half of Afghanistan's roughly 400 districts.

"The overall trend is clearly unfavorable to the Afghan government, which could face an existential crisis if it isn't addressed and reversed," SIGAR inspector general John Sopko said in a letter accompanying Thursday's report.

Since the Taliban launched their most recent offensive in May, the Afghan army has "appeared surprised and unready, and is now on its back foot," Sopko said.

The report came after the United Nations said earlier this week that May and June saw the highest number of civilian war deaths and injuries in Afghanistan for those two months since systematic documentation began in 2009.

Admiral: Virus has little impact on Talisman Sabre drills in Australia

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

The coronavirus pandemic has proved little hindrance to Talisman Sabre, the biennial military exercise in Australia involving the United States and its allies, one U.S. admiral said during a conference call with reporters Tuesday.

Rear Adm. Chris Engdahl, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 7, said certain components of Talisman Sabre, which began in late June and runs through mid-August, have been adjusted in light of COVID-19, but the pandemic also provided unplanned training opportunities.

"U.S. forces have maintained the commitment and the capability to operate through the COVID-19 environment for a long time now," he said. "There's a very

large land component in Australia, which is part of this exercise — as well as a large maritime component — so the government of Australia and the Australia Defense Force ensured that vaccines and all the precautions necessary [were taken]."

Several person-to-person events and planning sessions among U.S. and allied military commanders were reconfigured to prevent spreading the coronavirus respiratory disease.

"The fantastic thing is the flexibility of both of these militaries and our partners that we can move to virtual environment and connect in that fashion," Engdahl said. "Based on what we're doing here, [there has been] almost minimal impact to the value of the binational and bilateral engagement between the U.S. and Australia."

GOP group removes census records request

Associated Press

A Republican advocacy group on Wednesday withdrew its request for a court order seeking the immediate release of Census Bureau records after the agency's chief scientist warned their disclosure could push back the already delayed release of redistricting data used for drawing congressional and legislative districts.

Fair Lines America Foundation withdrew its request for a preliminary injunction in a public records lawsuit against the statistical agency. Earlier this week, Census Bureau Chief Scientist

John Abowd had said in a court declaration that the records' disclosure could cause an additional delay of up to six months in the redistricting data's release.

The redistricting data is set to be made public by Aug. 16 following a five-month delay from its original deadline due to the pandemic. The delay sent states scrambling to revise redistricting deadlines, and two states, Ohio and Alabama, sued the Census Bureau in an unsuccessful effort to get it to release the data before August.

Fair Lines sued the Census Bureau in a public records lawsuit

for information about how the census count was conducted on people living in dormitories, prisons, nursing homes and group homes. Those facilities are called "group quarters" by the bureau. Fair Lines says it's concerned about the accuracy of the group quarters count and wants to make sure anomalies didn't affect the state population figures used for divvying up congressional seats among the states.

The withdrawal is only being made on the preliminary injunction motion, not the public records lawsuit.

Group facilities were among

the most difficult places to count people during the 2020 census because the pandemic forced colleges to shutter dorms and send students home. Also, nursing homes and other facilities restricted access in an effort to protect vulnerable residents from the virus.

Abowd said that if the Census Bureau is required to release additional records as part of the Fair Lines lawsuit, it will need as much as six months to recalibrate a new statistical tool meant to protect people's privacy so that they can't be identified through the data.

Senate to begin work on infrastructure bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate has voted to begin work on a nearly \$1 trillion national infrastructure plan, acting with sudden speed after weeks of fits and starts once the White House and a bipartisan group of senators agreed on major provisions of the package that's key to President Joe Biden's agenda.

Biden welcomed the accord as one that would show America can "do big things." It includes the most significant long-term investments in nearly a century, he said, on par with building the transcontinental railroad or the Interstate highway system.

"This deal signals to the world that our democracy can function," Biden said ahead of the vote Wednesday night. "We will once again transform America and propel us into the future."

After weeks of stop-and-go negotiations, the rare bipartisan showing on a 67-32 vote to start formal Senate consideration showed the high interest among senators in the infrastructure package. But it's unclear if enough Republicans will eventually join Democrats to support the

final passage.

Senate rules require 60 votes in the evenly split 50-50 chamber to proceed for consideration and ultimately pass this bill, meaning support from both parties is necessary.

The outcome will set the stage for the next debate over Biden's much more ambitious \$3.5 trillion spending package, a strictly partisan pursuit of far-reaching programs and services including child care, tax breaks and health care that touch almost every corner of American life. Republicans strongly oppose that bill, which would require a simple majority, and may try to stop both.

Lead GOP negotiator Sen. Rob Portman, of Ohio, announced the bipartisan group's agreement on the \$1 trillion package earlier Wednesday at the Capitol, flanked by four other Republican senators who had been in talks with Democrats and the White House.

After voting, Portman said the outcome showed that bipartisanship in Washington can work and he believed GOP support would only grow. "That's pretty darn good for a start," he said.

Pfizer data shows vaccine still strong 6 months later

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Executives of the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer predicted Wednesday that vaccine boosters would soon be needed, a declaration that came on the same day the company published data showing that its coronavirus shots remained robustly protective six months after vaccination, providing nearly complete protection against severe disease. Hours later, Israeli health officials moved toward making boosters available for older residents.

Pfizer's paper, which has not yet undergone peer review, showed a slight drop in efficacy against any symptomatic cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, from 96% protection in the first two months after vaccination to 84% after four months.

Company officials also presented data showing that a third shot could boost disease-fighting antibodies many times higher than the level achieved by the standard two-dose regimen. They said on a quarterly earnings call that they planned to seek authorization for a booster by mid-August, reiterating the compa-

ny's belief that a third dose would be needed to enhance immunity within a year of vaccination.

"There is very good protection in the beginning, and then there's waning. And when you come closer to six months, [waning] which is even more profound with delta [variant]," Pfizer chief executive Albert Bourla said. "The waning is ... more profound for mild cases, but there is a clear waning also for hospitalizations and severe disease."

In Israel, Health Ministry officials late Wednesday recommended administering booster shots to older adults. The director general of the Health Ministry is expected to accept that recommendation in coming days and will decide whether the target group will include people older than 65 or older than 75.

Despite a lack of regulatory approval for boosters in the United States or Europe and the absence of definitive data, the Israeli experts concluded that the peril posed by the apparent waning of vaccine efficacy over time, alongside a spike in infections, outweighs the risk of pursuing a booster shot policy for the elderly.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

In emergency, small-plane pilot lands on interstate

FL MILTON — A pilot brought his small plane down on the shoulder of Interstate 10 after running out of fuel, officials said.

No one was injured when the plane made an emergency landing around 7:30 p.m. Sunday near Milton in Florida's Panhandle, the Florida Highway Patrol said in a news release.

Witnesses told troopers that the plane was circling just before landing on the interstate. He is making his own arrangements to remove the plane, the agency said.

The Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board were notified.

3 people rescued after surviving 3 hours in water

NY BAYPORT — Three people were rescued after spending hours in the waters off Long Island.

Suffolk County police said they received a distress call from a boater at about 2 a.m. Sunday reporting three people missing from the boat.

County police marine bureau officers located the boat about one mile offshore in Bayport and searched the area along with other officers in a police helicopter.

The three missing people were located about a mile from the boat, where they had drifted while swimming. They had been in the water about three hours, and only one wore a flotation device, according to police.

The three — identified as Michael Fusco, 33, of Patchogue; Toni Arango, 28, of North Massapequa; and Leo Lopez-Garcia, 28, of Huntington Station — were

taken ashore and evaluated by the Sayville rescue squad.

80 dogs, 2 monkeys and a bird seized from home

SC LAKE WYLIE — At least 80 dogs were taken out of a South Carolina home because they were living in very poor conditions, deputies said.

Two monkeys and a bird were also removed Monday from property in Lake Wylie, the York County Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

"The smell about knocked me over. There were feces everywhere," sheriff's spokesman Trent Faris told reporters outside the home.

The dogs are mostly smaller animals and were living inside and outside the home, deputies said.

The animals have been taken to the county animal shelter to determine how healthy they are and if they can be adopted, authorities said.

A man in the home was charged with ill treatment of and hoarding of animals and deputies said more charges are possible after a veterinarian examines the animals.

Museum puts bust of Confederate on display

TN NASHVILLE — The Tennessee State Museum is allowing the public to view the busts of three military leaders, including a former Confederate general and early Ku Klux Klan leader.

This month, officials removed a Nathan Bedford Forrest bust that had been displayed inside the Tennessee Capitol since 1978. The busts of Union Navy Adm. David Farragut and U.S.

Navy Adm. Albert Gleaves also were moved.

According to Gov. Bill Lee's office, the busts are on display and available to be viewed at the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville.

Forrest was a Confederate cavalry general who amassed a fortune before the Civil War as a Memphis slave trader and plantation owner. Later, he was a leader of the Klan as it terrorized Black people, reversing Reconstruction efforts and restoring white power in the South.

Deputy fatally shoots man after police dog stabbed

MI GOBLES — A man who stabbed a police dog was shot to death by a sheriff's deputy in southwestern Michigan.

Deputies were called to a home in Gobles about 7:30 p.m. Monday for a reported assault, the Van Buren County sheriff's office said.

The police dog was sent inside about 9:30 p.m. to force the 39-year-old man out, but was stabbed several times. The man later was shot as he charged and tried to stab a deputy, MLive.com reported.

The man's name was not immediately released.

MLive.com reported that the dog's name is Kuno. It was being treated by a veterinarian for its wounds.

Several dolphins stranded on beaches survive

MA PROVINCETOWN — Nine dolphins were stranded on beaches on Cape Cod on Monday but most survived and either swam away or were released back into the water by a local wildlife group.

A mother and her calf were

stranded in Brewster and seven dolphins became stranded in Wellfleet. The calf died. Two of the dolphins in Wellfleet managed to swim away and one died, the Cape Cod Times reported.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare released the five surviving, stranded dolphins back into the ocean. The group gave the animals a full health assessment and tagged them with tracking devices before releasing them.

Cape Cod is a hot spot for dolphins becoming stranded and Wellfleet is a hot spot within a hot spot, said Stacey Hedman, global marketing strategy manager for the group, in a livestreamed video of the release.

Deputy: Woman took 7-month-old to break-in

NC MARION — A North Carolina woman is accused of taking her 7-month-old son to a break-in, where she was found with a number of items and pills, a sheriff's deputy said.

Deputy Robert Watson of the McDowell County Sheriff's Office said multiple charges were filed against Jenny Annette Skidmore Reel, 28, of Marion, including breaking and entering and child abuse, news outlets reported.

According to the sheriff's office, deputies responded to a home in Marion on June 21 after a report of a break-in. The sheriff's office said deputies found Reel at the scene and found she had stolen medication, a power saw, coins, knives, socks and jewelry. Deputies say she had her son with her, and she had pills in her possession, the sheriff's office said.

— From wire reports

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US gymnast Lee wins all-around title

Associated Press

TOKYO — Sunisa Lee wanted to quit during quarantine.

It all had become too much. The lingering pain from a broken foot. The deaths of two family members from COVID-19. Her father's slow recovery from an accident that left him paralyzed.

The urge eventually passed. It always does. Still, less than two months ago the 18-year-old gymnast hobbled around the podium at the U.S. championships, getting by more on grit than anything else.

Tokyo seemed far away. The top of the Olympic podium, even further.

Then suddenly, there she was on Thursday night as a tinny version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" echoed across Ariake Gymnastics Centre. Gold medal around her neck. A watch party back home among the Hmong-American community in her native Minnesota raging. A victory she never envisioned not yet sinking in.

"It's crazy," Lee said after winning the Olympic all-around title following a tight duel with

Brazil's Rebeca Andrade. "It doesn't seem like real life."

Even though the pain in Lee's foot eased — funny how it seemed to get better the more she trained — she arrived in Japan figuring her best shot was at a silver medal. Sure, she'd beaten good friend and reigning Olympic champion Simone Biles during the final day of the U.S. Olympic Trials last month, but that was an anomaly, right?

Then Biles opted out of the all-around competition to focus on her mental health following an eight-year run atop the sport.

Everything was on the table. Gold included. Lee took it with a brilliant set on uneven bars, a nervy performance on beam and a floor exercise that made up for in execution what it might have lacked in aggression.

Her total of 57.433 points was just enough to top Andrade, who earned the first gymnastics all-around medal by a Latin American athlete but missed out on gold when she stepped out of bounds twice during her floor routine.

Russian gymnast Angelina

Melnikova added bronze to the gold she won in the team final. American Jade Carey, who joined the competition after Biles pulled out, finished eighth.

Biles' decision to sit out led to the jarring sight of the gymnast considered the greatest of all time cheering on Lee and the rest of the 24-woman field from the stands with the gold that's been hers for so long now in play for everyone else.

Still, Lee did her best to not think about the stakes. She FaceTimed with her father John — who was paralyzed from the chest down during a freak accident in Minnesota just days before the 2019 national championships — before the meet, just like always. He told her to relax. So she did. Or at least, she tried.

Lee admitted she was getting "in her head" a little bit while prepping for her bar routine, the one that's currently the hardest in the world. She didn't exactly look nervous. The 15.300 the judges rewarded her for a series of intricate connections and releases tied Andrade's near-perfect Cheng vault for

the highest score of the night.

Yet it wasn't Lee's brilliance that made the difference but her guts. She nearly came off the balance beam while executing a wolf turn — basically a seated spin — needing to suction cup her toes to the 4-inch slab of wood to stay on. Her score of 13.833 moved her in front of Andrade heading into the floor exercise.

Going first, Lee opted for a routine with three tumbling passes instead of four, hoping better execution would override any potential tenths she surrendered by not doing a fourth pass. Her 13.700 was steady, but it left an opening for Andrade.

The 21-year-old Brazilian, two years removed from a third surgery to repair a torn ACL in her knee, had the best floor score of the contenders during qualifying. Yet she bounded out of bounds with both feet at the end of her first tumbling pass. And her right foot stepped off the white mat and onto the surrounding blue carpet.

Needing a 13.802 to win, Andrade received a 13.666 instead.

Dressel swims to first individual gold medal

Associated Press

TOKYO — Caeleb Dressel climbed atop the lane rope, a look of wonder in his eyes. He gazed all around the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, eager to soak up every last moment of something he's never done before.

Win an individual gold medal at the Olympics.

The most dominant swimmer of the post-Michael Phelps era filled in the last hole on his resume, winning a gold all by himself with two furious laps of the pool Thursday.

Dressel, whose three previous golds were all on relays, lived up to the hype at an Olympics where several U.S. stars have faltered.

"I knew that weight was on my shoulders," he said after a nail-biting victory in the 100-meter freestyle over defending

champion Kyle Chalmers of Australia.

Katie Ledecky got another shot at Ariarne Titmus, but this time neither won gold. China knocked off the Americans and the Australians with a world-record performance in the 4x200-meter freestyle relay.

All three teams went faster than the previous mark, but it was China that earned the second world record of the Tokyo Games despite a blistering anchor leg from Ledecky.

"I wasn't as nervous maybe and knew I was going to let it go and go for it each lap of that race," said Ledecky, who went faster than anyone but couldn't quite catch the Chinese, winding up with her second silver of the Games.

Dressel was golden. As is his style, the 24-year-old Floridian dived into the pool

and popped out of the water with the lead. He was still ahead at the lone flip, and grittily turned away Chalmers' bid for a second straight gold.

Dressel's winning time was an Olympic record of 47.02 seconds — a mere six-hundredths ahead of Chalmers, who had to settle for a silver this time.

"I wasn't worried about anything," Dressel said. "During the race there's only so much you can do. Whatever's going to happen is going to happen. I stuck to my race plan so if it got me first, OK, if it got me second, OK."

The two have developed quite a rivalry. Chalmers won at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, where Dressel was sixth, but the American won the last two world championships, with Chalmers finishing second in 2019.

US, Netherlands meet in quarterfinals

Associated Press

On to the rematch.

The United States plays the Netherlands on Friday in the quarterfinals of the Olympic women's soccer tournament — bringing together the two teams that played in the World Cup final two years ago in France.

The U.S. women won that one 2-0 and afterward the crowd chanted "Equal Pay!" in support of the team's legal fight for equity with the men's national team.

This time, there won't be any crowds and the case is before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals back home in the United States, with no ruling expected in the near future. And obviously there's greater weight on a World Cup final than an Olympic quarterfinal.

But the game in Yokohama has taken on significance because the normally indomitable Americans showed vulnerabilities in the group stage: Notably a 3-0 loss to Sweden in

the Olympic opener.

After a 6-1 rebound win over New Zealand, the U.S. played to a scoreless draw against Australia, which, while uncharacteristic for the offensively dominant Americans, got the team through to the knockout stage.

The United States hadn't been shut out since 2017 before this Olympics, and now the team has been blanked twice in less than two weeks.

"I think a lot of people understand that we're here to compete and win a gold medal and however we get there, winning is the most important thing. So, yes, fans and outsiders looking in are probably like, 'Oh, this is so different.' You've never seen the U.S. do this," defender Crystal Dunn said.

"But at the same time, it's about executing a game plan, moving on from one round to another. And whatever tactics, plans that we have that we're given, it's our job as players to trust and believe in ourselves

and each other and live to fight another day."

Instead, it's the Netherlands that has become a high-scoring juggernaut. The Dutch scored 21 goals in the group stage — smashing the previous record of 16 set by the United States in 2012.

In the other quarterfinal matches on Friday:

Canada vs. Brazil, Rifu: Another rematch, but this time of the third-place game at the Rio de Janeiro Games. Canada was triumphant in that one for the team's second straight Olympic bronze medal, spoiling Brazil's shot to medal on home soil.

There are many of the same faces in Japan. On Canada's side, there's Christine Sinclair, soccer's all-time international scorer among men and women. Brazil has Marta, the six-time FIFA Player of the Year.

Britain vs. Australia, Kashi: The Australians advanced to the knockout round as one of the top third-place teams after

the group stage. This is the Matildas' fifth trip to the Olympics and third time they've made it through to the quarterfinals.

Britain finished atop Group E. In a quirky rule, Britain's Olympic teams must include Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland, and all four teams must be in agreement to participate. For that reason, the only other Olympics that has included a Team GB is London 2012.

Sweden vs. Japan, Saitama: The Swedes won all three of their games in Group G to advance, including that 3-0 victory over the Americans in their opener. Sweden famously knocked the United States out of the 2016 Games in the quarterfinals. The team went on to the final, but lost the gold medal to Germany.

Japan, as host, made the quarterfinals as one of the top third-place finishers. The Nadeshiko won the silver medal at the London Games, but did not make the field in 2016.

NHL teams sign free agents

Associated Press

NHL teams combined for a series of splashes in free agency, managing to make major moves despite the salary cap staying flat for a third straight year.

Over the first 12 hours of the signing period Wednesday, teams in the league signed 160-plus players to contracts worth more than \$783 million.

Five players were given contracts for six or seven years and another dozen unrestricted free agents landed deals that were four or five years long.

Here's a look at some of the biggest deals on Day 1:

Philipp Grubauer: The expansion Seattle Kraken pulled off the biggest surprise, signing Grubauer to \$35.4 million, six-year deal. The 29-year-old Grubauer had an NHL-high seven shutouts last season for the Presidents' Trophy-winning Colorado Avalanche.

Dougie Hamilton: Desperate to make the playoffs for the second time in a decade, the New

Jersey Devils made a big investment to shoot for a turnaround. Hamilton made the most of his opportunity as one of the best players available by signing a \$63 million, seven-year deal.

Brayden Point: The salary cap prevented Tampa Bay from keeping its team together this summer, but the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions secured a key player for the rest of the decade.

Phillip Danault: The Los Angeles Kings signed Danault to a \$33 million, six-year deal. The two-way forward should help a franchise that has made the playoffs just twice since winning the Stanley Cup in 2014, failing to advance both times.

Jaden Schwartz: Seattle spent a chunk of its cap space by signing Grubauer, but had money left to improve up front and on the back end with a pair of five-year contracts. Schwartz signed for \$27.5 million and the Kraken are banking on him scoring 20-plus goals as he has four times in his career.

Alexander Wennberg: With an average value of \$4.5 million, Seattle seems to believe his career-high 17 goals last season with Florida was more indicative of his potential.

US pole vaulter isolates Aussies

Associated Press

TOKYO — The fragile nature of an Olympics during the pandemic came into sharp focus Thursday when the entire Australian track team spent time in a brief quarantine after American pole vaulter Sam Kendricks pulled out of the Tokyo Games because of a positive COVID-19 test.

The news about Kendricks — a two-time world champion and the American record holder — deprived the meet of one of its high-profile athletes, then rippled across the sport, which was scheduled to open less than 24 hours after the announcement.

He was one of dozens of athletes on the training track this week, and Australia announced it had put its entire 54-person team (41 athletes and 13 officials) in isolation and subjected it to testing after three athletes reported having casual contact with Kendricks.

Judge hits go-ahead single for Yanks

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Aaron Judge went from being a late scratch to hitting a tie-breaking single in a two-run 10th inning to help the New York Yankees beat the Tampa Bay Rays for the second straight day, 3-1 on Wednesday night.

Judge was taken out of the lineup about 30 minutes before the scheduled first pitch. Although no announcement was made about why, the All-Star right fielder struck out in the fifth pinch-hitting for Estevan Florial.

Judge returned to the team Tuesday after going on the COVID-19 injured list July 16.

New York also had a big night off the field. The Yankees reached a deal to get All-Star slugger Joey Gallo from the Texas Rangers, a person familiar with the trade told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the move had not yet been announced and was subject to approval of medical records of the players involved.

Dodgers 8, Giants 0: Walker Buehler pitched three-hit ball over seven dominant innings for visiting Los Angeles to extend his mastery of San Francisco.

The Dodgers had lost three straight against their division rivals and were three games behind the first-place Giants in the NL West before Buehler's gem on his 27th birthday.

Angels 8, Rockies 7: Shohei Ohtani hit his major league-high 37th home run, a

three-run shot that helped Los Angeles beat visiting Colorado.

Phil Gosselin had a tiebreaking single in the eighth inning for the Angels, who trailed early but scored five in the fourth and another in the fifth for a 7-3 advantage. The Rockies rallied with three runs in the seventh and one in the eighth.

Indians 7, Cardinals 2: Franmil Reyes homered twice, the first a second-inning blast that bounced out of Progressive Field and almost dinged a bicyclist pedaling on a street, and host Cleveland beat St. Louis.

Reyes' leadoff homer in the second glanced off the pedestrian bridge in left field and landed on the plaza area between the ballpark and Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse. The ball traveled an estimated 446 feet.

Reds 8, Cubs 2: Joey Votto homered twice for the second consecutive day, going deep in his fifth straight game to match a Cincinnati record in a victory at Chicago.

Tyler Mahle (8-3) tossed six scoreless innings for the Reds, who beefed up their bullpen again by acquiring right-hander Mychal Givens from Colorado before the game.

Blue Jays 4-1, Red Sox 1-4: Rookie starter Tanner Houck struck out seven over four innings and host Boston beat Toronto to split a doubleheader.

Mets 2, Braves 1: Pinch-hitter Brandon Drury had a tiebreaking homer in the seventh inning and right fielder Michael Conforto threw out a runner at the plate in the

ninth in New York's victory over visiting Atlanta.

Tigers 17, Twins 14: Jeimer Candelario and Eric Haase each drove in three runs and visiting Detroit outscored Minnesota despite giving up seven homers and not hitting any.

Orioles 8, Marlins 7: Ryan McKenna drew a bases-loaded walk from Steven Okert to force in the winning run in the ninth inning, and host Baltimore got home runs from Trey Mancini and Pedro Severino in the comeback victory over depleted Miami.

Athletics 10, Padres 4: Sean Manaea took a perfect game into the sixth inning and Matt Chapman hit a three-run homer to help Oakland win at San Diego.

Astros 11, Mariners 4: Yuli Gurriel singled, doubled and homered to drive in three runs in Houston's victory at Seattle.

Brewers 7, Pirates 3: Lorenzo Cain and Luis Urias hit two-run doubles, Adrian Houser pitched five scoreless innings and Milwaukee won at Pittsburgh.

Diamondbacks 3, Rangers 2: Madison Bumgarner pitched four-hit ball over seven innings to win for the first time in 2½ months and Arizona won at Texas after both teams scratched their top hitters from the starting lineups.

Royals 3, White Sox 2 (10): Michael A. Taylor's two-out single in the 10th inning drove home Hunter Dozier from second base to lift host Kansas City past Chicago.

Escobar, Gallo lead big names getting traded

Associated Press

The trade deadline is Friday and several teams are making last-minute moves.

All-Star slugger Joey Gallo is headed to the Bronx to give the New York Yankees some much-needed punch from the left side. Third baseman Eduardo Escobar, a first-time All-Star this year, was obtained by the Milwaukee Brewers, who lead the National League Central.

Miami is buried in last place in the NL East, but after trading two of its top players, will make an impact on the AL West.

The Yankees reached a deal to get Gallo from the Texas Rangers, a person familiar with

the trade told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity Wednesday night because the move had not yet been announced and was subject to approval of medical records of the players involved.

"Wow, a guy that can hit it out of any ballpark. I don't think he gets enough credit for the type of defense that he plays," Aaron Judge said after the Yankees won 3-1 in 10 innings at Tampa Bay.

Gallo, 27, should provide a powerful boost for the heavily right-handed Yankees. With switch-hitting center fielder Aaron Hicks hurt, second baseman Rougned Odor and outfielder

Brett Gardner have been the only left-handed hitters to see substantial playing time.

Gallo is hitting .223 with 25 homers, 55 RBIs and a major league-leading 74 walks. The 6-foot-5 slugger has also been a Gold Glove right fielder for Texas, but presumably would play left for the Yankees, who have Judge as their regular right fielder.

The Brewers acquired Escobar from the Arizona Diamondbacks on Wednesday for two prospects.

The 32-year-old Escobar is batting .246 with 22 homers. The switch-hitter should be a valuable and versatile piece for

the first-place Brewers, who are trying to lock down the NL Central.

The Marlins sent right-handed reliever Yimi García to the Houston Astros, and traded outfielder Starling Marte to the Oakland Athletics.

The Astros sent outfielder Bryan De La Cruz and right-hander Austin Pruitt to Miami. First-place Houston began Thursday with a six-game lead over Oakland in the AL West.

Oakland gave up left-hander Jesús Luzardo for Marte. The Marlins will cover nearly all of Marte's remaining contract for 2021, and he can become a free agent after this season.