

## US set to delay Afghanistan pullout

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The United States appears poised to extend its troop presence in Afghanistan beyond a May 1 deadline agreed last year with the Taliban, as it races to secure an interim peace deal that could end America's longest war and allow President Joe Biden to move toward an elusive foreign policy goal.

Deliberations about the fate of the 2,500 U.S. troops remaining in Afghanistan grow increasingly urgent as the administration approaches the deadline. The Trump administration in February 2020 agreed to the May withdrawal following negotiations with the Taliban.

While the administration cautions that no decision has been made on extending the troop presence, officials and experts point to several signs that the administration is likely to postpone a full withdrawal — potentially with Taliban acquiescence — to buy more time to advance a power-sharing proposal they hope can break an impasse in talks between the militants and the Afghan government.

Laurel Miller, who served as a senior of-

ficial for Afghanistan in the Obama and Trump administrations, said it would be “unfathomable” to pull out American forces — let alone thousands of other NATO troops — in the next 60 days without stoking insecurity and jeopardizing chances for an eventual deal that could allow the United States to withdraw without fearing that Afghanistan would again become a terrorist haven.

As the days tick by, Miller suggested, the increasing likelihood of a U.S. extension is apparent to the Taliban, who, along with its backers in Pakistan, may be inclined to support a revised timeline.

Like Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump before him, Biden has staked out a goal of ending the war, which has cost trillions of dollars and more than 2,000 U.S. military lives as well as those of at least 100,000 Afghan civilians since 2001. Even as Obama considered a troop surge in 2009 and 2010, then-Vice President Joe Biden argued unsuccessfully for a narrower approach in Afghanistan, with a small force focused on terrorist threats.

Now in the Oval Office, Biden must navi-

gate top military advisers' warnings about the risks of an abrupt exit against his own impulse and growing withdrawal demands from some lawmakers of both parties.

The deliberations come as the Taliban has capitalized on foreign troop reductions to expand its influence in contested provinces and surrounding cities and towns.

Some in the Afghan government, aware of their own vulnerability to military defeat by the Taliban, are eager for the United States to remain and pressure the militants to comply with the Doha deal.

Taliban leaders, at least publicly, have called on Washington to withdraw forces as it agreed, regardless of the change in administration. Mohammad Naeem, spokesman for the Taliban's office in Doha, said the United States has not officially communicated any change in the exit timeline.

“We have an agreement which is signed by the United States, a superpower,” and backed by the United Nations and the international community, he said. “They have to follow it.”

## Panels unite against Guard deployments, fencing

**BY SARAH CAMMARATA**

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Leaders from the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have united in opposition to security measures at the Capitol that include deployed National Guard troops and fencing around the building due to concerns over cost, the strain on readiness and a lack of clear threat.

A group of Senate leaders Friday, led by Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, demanded answers from acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman about what justifies the need for fencing

around the complex and the continued deployment of National Guard troops.

“Since the events of Jan. 6, Capitol Police has repeatedly failed to provide specific, credible threat intelligence to adequately justify the current Capitol security posture, which remains disproportionate to the available intelligence,” Inhofe wrote, along with four other Senate leaders.

The letter to Pittman came a day after the House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith, D-Wash., and ranking Republican Mike Rogers of Alabama issued a joint statement that called for a “measured drawdown” of the

Guard deployment.

The backlash from Congress mounted after Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin approved a request this week from the Capitol Police to keep about 2,300 National Guard troops deployed to the Capitol until late May.

The deployment was initially set to end Friday before it was extended.

A 7-foot, chain-link fence topped with razor wire was also erected around the Capitol after a mob of Trump supporters stormed the building.

“It’s entirely unclear to us why the fencing around the complex remains” without a specific threat to the Capitol

and with the ability to rapidly re-deploy fencing should a threat arise, Inhofe wrote in the letter to Pittman.

The letter was also signed by Richard Shelby of Alabama, Marco Rubio of Florida, Roy Blunt of Missouri, and Rob Portman of Ohio, the ranking Republicans of the Senate Appropriations, Intelligence, Rules and Administration, and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committees respectively.

The senators also bashed Austin for approving the request to extend the troop deployment without “specific underlying threat intelligence and no mission task analysis.”

# Poll: Wounded female vets feel isolated

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

Most wounded female veterans feel isolated, lonely and believe they are not respected for their military service, according to a Wounded Warrior Project poll released Friday.

The survey of women registered with the nonprofit revealed some 80% of respondents showed indications of loneliness and often struggled to connect with their peers, including female and male veterans. That compared to about 63% of male wounded veterans who reported feelings of loneliness and isolation in separate WWP polling, said Tracy Farrell, the organization's vice president of engagement and physical health and wellness.

Calling the statistics "voluminous and staggering," Farrell said the survey pro-

vided data to back up anecdotal evidence that women struggled more than men to transition from military to civilian life. She said women who spoke with Wounded Warrior Project craved mentorship and networking opportunities with other women who served.

"Specifically, with people who knew their backgrounds, knew what they found in the service and who knew how those aspects and training that they received ... could be translated into the civilian environment," Farrell said. "Having some sisters-in-arms to share those resources, to point you in the right direction and to just acknowledge the stories from your past and understand where you're coming from is really important."

The new data is the product of nearly 5,000 respondents to the survey administered in early 2020 before the coronavirus

pandemic. It is not meant to represent all female veterans, as it was sent only to those registered with Wounded Warrior Project, including those who suffered physical and mental injuries and other disabilities during their time in uniform.

The survey found wounded female veterans were more educated than their male counterparts, but also less likely to hold a full-time job, with only 34% of respondents reporting full-time employment. It also found those wounded female veterans with jobs earned about \$8,000 less per year than wounded male veterans.

Some 53% of the women polled for the survey reported they did not believe their service was generally respected. Women gave differing reasons for that feeling, but some said in places such as Department of Veterans Affairs clinics, they often felt like second-class citizens to men.

## COVID-19 virus deaths falling but Americans 'must remain vigilant'

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — U.S. deaths from COVID-19 are falling again as the nation continues to recover from the devastating winter surge, a trend that experts are cautiously hopeful will accelerate as more vulnerable people are vaccinated.

While new coronavirus infections and hospitalizations have plummeted, the decline in deaths from a January peak of about 4,500 hasn't been quite as steep. But, now, after weeks of hovering around 2,000 daily deaths, that figure has dropped to about 1,400 U.S. lives lost each day to coronavirus.

"I am encouraged by these data but we must remain vigilant," Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said at Friday's White House briefing.

Public health experts say it's too soon to say, definitively, what's driving declines since the surge — but they suspect a post-holiday drop in traveling and indoor gatherings, widespread mask wearing and the vaccine rollout have all contributed.

"We're moving in the right direction," said Harvard Medical School researcher Jagpreet Chhatwal. "I think a message of

optimism is fair."

Walensky and others worry that a pandemic-weary public will let down its guard too soon. And they're monitoring the spread of worrisome new versions of the virus.

"We're all desperate to get done with this," said Jeff Shaman, who studies infectious disease at Columbia University. "We're not in a place where it's safe as of yet."

Health care workers say they've seen it happen before — a crushing wave of illness and death, momentary relief from a drop in COVID-19 cases, and then, another deadly surge. About 531,000 Americans have died since the pandemic began a year ago.

"Every time you thought you had an end, the number of cases went up," said Dr. Mark Rosenberg, head of emergency medicine at St. Joseph's Health in Paterson, N.J.

For now, most forecasts show coronavirus deaths falling further in coming weeks as more people get vaccines. More than 100 million doses have been given out since December, and the pace is picking up.

"We expect it to continue to drive those deaths down even more," said Johns Hopkins infectious disease expert Justin Lessler.

## IRS says stimulus money on the way

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Along with daylight saving time, this weekend could bring some Americans fatter bank balances.

Officials at the Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service said Friday that processing of the new round of stimulus payments has already begun, with the aim of having the first payments start showing up in bank accounts this weekend.

President Joe Biden signed the new \$1.9 trillion rescue package on Thursday, the day after it won final passage in the House. The measure provides for payments to qualifying individuals of up to \$1,400, with payments to a qualifying family of four of \$5,600.

"The payments will be delivered automatically to taxpayers even as the IRS continues delivering regular tax refunds," IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig said in a statement.

It is estimated that 85% of Americans will be eligible for the payments and the goal is to have millions of the payments disbursed in the next few weeks.

# Top Dems call on Cuomo to resign

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo confronted a stunning series of defections Friday amid allegations of sexual harassment that left the high-profile Democrat fighting for his political survival, angry and alone.

By day's end, the three-term governor had lost the support of almost the entire 29-member New York congressional delegation and a majority of Democrats in the state legislature. None of the desertions hurt more than those of New York's two U.S. senators, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand.

"Due to the multiple, credible sexual harassment and misconduct allegations, it is clear that Governor Cuomo has lost the confidence of his governing partners and the people of New York," the Democratic senators

wrote in a joint statement. "Governor Cuomo should resign."

The escalating political crisis has spawned an impeachment inquiry in an overwhelmingly Democratic state, and threatens to cast a cloud over President Joe Biden's early days in office. Republicans have seized on the scandal to try to distract from Biden's success tackling the coronavirus pandemic and challenge his party's well-established advantage with female voters.

Biden, a longtime ally of Cuomo and his father, former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, has avoided directly addressing the controversy, although it's becoming increasingly difficult.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Friday declined to say whether Biden believes Cuomo should resign. She said every woman

who has come forth "deserves to have her voice heard, should be treated with respect and should be able to tell her story."

The senators' statement, which cited the pandemic as a reason for needing "sure and steady leadership," came shortly after Schumer stood alongside Biden at a Rose Garden ceremony celebrating the passage of the Democrat-backed \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

A defiant Cuomo earlier in the day insisted he would not step down and condemned his Democratic detractors as "reckless and dangerous."

"I did not do what has been alleged. Period," he said, before evoking a favorite grievance of former President Donald Trump. "People know the difference between playing politics, bowing to cancel culture and the truth."

## Floyd family agrees to \$27M settlement

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The city of Minneapolis on Friday agreed to pay \$27 million to settle a civil lawsuit from George Floyd's family over the Black man's death in police custody, as jury selection continued in a former officer's murder trial.

Council members met privately to discuss the settlement, then returned to public session for a unanimous vote in support of the massive payout. It easily surpassed the \$20 million the city approved two years ago to the family of a white woman killed by a police officer.

Floyd family attorney Ben Crump called it the largest pretrial settlement ever for a civil rights claim, and thanked city leaders for

"showing you care about George Floyd."

"It's going to be a long journey to justice. This is just one step on the journey to justice," Crump said. "This makes a statement that George Floyd deserved better than what we witnessed on May 25, 2020, that George Floyd's life mattered, and that by extension, Black lives matter."

"Even though my brother is not here, he's here with me in my heart," Philonise Floyd said. "If I could get him back, I would give all this back."

L. Chris Stewart, another attorney who worked with the family, said the size of the settlement "changes evaluations and civil rights for a Black person when they die."

"And what happens is that trickles down to decisions in the communities across this country. When there is a city council or a mayor deciding, 'Oh, should we get rid of no-knock warrants, should we get rid of chokeholds, do we want to change these policies?' They have 27 million reasons now why they should. And that will make decisions happen. That will make accountability happen."

The settlement includes \$500,000 for the south Minneapolis neighborhood that includes the 38th and Chicago intersection that has been blocked by barricades since his death, with a massive metal sculpture and murals in his honor. The city didn't immediately say how that money would be spent.

## Democratic push to revive earmarks divides GOP

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Can lawmakers bring home the bacon without it being pork?

It's a question that's vexing Republicans as they consider whether to join a Democratic push to revive earmarks, the much-maligned practice where lawmakers direct federal spending to a specific project or institution back home. Examples include a new bridge, community library or university research program.

Earmarking was linked to corruption in the 2000s, leading to an outcry and their banishment in both the House and Senate. But many in Congress say the ban has gone too

far, ceding the "power of the purse" to party leaders and the executive branch and giving lawmakers less incentive to work with members of the other party on major legislation.

Democratic appropriators in the House see a solution and are proposing a revamped process allowing lawmakers to submit public requests for "community project funding" in federal spending bills. To guard against graft, the process includes safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest.

"This is a matter of allowing members to serve their own constituents," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla. "Somebody is going to be

making these decisions — and I don't want to bash federal bureaucrats — but somebody who has never been to my district probably doesn't know the needs as well as I do."

With Congress having allocated nearly \$6 trillion responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, some conservatives are aghast at the prospect of Republicans participating in a Democratic spending spree. They say their party should resist earmarking, not revive it.

"This is not the time to fall into the swamp, or into the dark hole of earmarks," said Rep. Ted Budd, R-N.C. "We've got to draw a bright line between Republicans and Democrats right now."



# Most of Calif. reopening as cases drop

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Most of California's 40 million residents will be able to enjoy limited indoor activities such as dining inside or watching a movie at a theater by mid-week as coronavirus case rates continue to stay low, state officials said Friday.

Officials said that 13 counties, including Los Angeles, were expected to open restaurants, gyms and museums at limited capacity on Sunday, the result of the state hitting a 2 million equity metric aimed at getting more vaccines into low-income communities. Another 13 counties are expected to reopen Wednesday under a different metric.

Also this week, the state expands eligibility for the still-scarce vaccine.

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced earlier this month that he would set aside 40% of vaccine for residents of about 400 ZIP codes the state deems most vulnerable based on metrics such as household income, access to health care and education levels.

The point is to tie reopening standards to ensuring that the people most affected by the pandemic are protected against the virus, he said. Once the state reaches 2 million doses administered in those ZIP codes, which it did Friday, the threshold for moving out of the most restrictive tier in a color-coded, four-tier system the state adopted in August relaxes.

## Virginia

RICHMOND — Virginia officials said Friday that the state expects to meet or possibly exceed President Joe Biden's commitment to make all adults eligible for COVID-19 vaccines by May 1.

"As we look at the supply and the pace and the demand here in Virginia we really think we will easily meet that May 1 marker and potentially even outpace it by a couple of weeks," state vac-

cine coordinator Dr. Danny Avula said in a briefing with reporters.

Avula also said the May 1 goal won't require the state to rethink its distribution strategy.

"It hasn't changed anything for us," he said.

The state has administered over 2.5 million doses of vaccine, with 19.5% of the population having received at least one dose, according to health department data.

## West Virginia

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice's near-daily ritual of reading the ages and hometowns of people who died from the coronavirus stretched to nearly 19 minutes Friday.

Justice takes the first minute or two of his thrice-a-week coronavirus briefings to honor the dead. This time, the Republican governor had to make up for 165 deaths that went unreported, news he first revealed Wednesday.

State officials said a list of more than 60 health centers and nursing homes did not report the deaths — revised down from 168 on Friday — to state health authorities, which Justice apologized for and again called "totally unacceptable."

Justice said 84% of the previously unreported deaths occurred in December 2020 and January. Officials blamed the issue on facilities not filling out death reports online to the state's health department in a timely matter.

## Michigan

LANSING — Visitors will be allowed at Michigan prisons for the first time in a year, the Corrections Department said Friday.

Visitors will be given a fast COVID-19 test and have their temperature checked. Physical contact between prisoners and visitors will be prohibited.

Visits will resume March 26.

Visits must be scheduled in

advance. Information will be posted at [michigan.gov/corrections](https://michigan.gov/corrections).

More than 25,000 prisoners have tested positive for the virus since the start of the pandemic; 139 have died.

## Washington

OLYMPIA — All public schools in Washington will be required to offer students an in-person learning option starting next month — with school districts having to meet an average of at least 30% weekly in-class instruction by April 19 — under an emergency proclamation Gov. Jay Inslee said he will sign this week.

The proclamation, announced by Inslee on Friday, allows for a staggered start, with all kindergarten to sixth grade students being provided an opportunity for hybrid remote and in-person learning by April 5, followed by all other K-12 students by April 19.

Inslee and state schools Superintendent Chris Reykdal cited mental health and academic concerns for students over the past year of school closures.

"Many, many of our children have not been able to thrive as we wish them to do so without on-site education," Inslee said. "For them, we're taking action today."

Students must be offered no fewer than two days of on-campus, in-person instruction per week, but students can remain fully remote if their families choose.

## Kansas

MISSION — A Kansas hospital had to throw away 570 doses of a coronavirus vaccine because of a refrigeration mistake, officials say.

Lawrence Memorial Hospital said in a news release that city and county health officials transferred the doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to the hospital on Wednesday. The hospital then put them in a freezer, not realizing they were

thawed. Confusion arose because most doses are shipped frozen, but the health department had received this batch in a refrigerated state.

The hospital reached out to Johnson & Johnson for guidance and was instructed that the doses would have to be discarded.

LMH Health President & CEO Russ Johnson described what happened as a "heart wrenching situation for our hospital." He said the hospital is reviewing processes aimed at preventing vaccine waste to prevent future errors. Health officials also have requested replacement doses and are working to reschedule appointments.

Meanwhile, it isn't clear whether the statewide state of emergency for the coronavirus pandemic will remain in effect past March 31, when it is due to expire. The Republican-controlled Legislature would have to extend it, and some GOP leaders want to let it and any remaining restrictions expire with new cases down.

## Vermont

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott on Friday announced some small changes to restrictions on social gatherings and restaurant rules amid the pandemic.

As of Friday, two non-vaccinated households may gather together, and that pairing doesn't have to be the same each time, as earlier restrictions required, he said at his twice weekly virus briefing.

An example is that children can again have playdates, "which we know have been sorely missed and will be good for the mental health and emotional well-being of the kids as well as parents," he said.

Also starting Friday, restaurants are allowed to seat six people at a table from different families, rather than from just one household as was previously required, he said.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Driver who swerved to avoid sofa won't be fined

**FL** FORT LAUDERDALE — A driver who crashed her car while swerving to avoid a couch falling from a truck on Interstate 95 may get a reprieve from the Florida Highway Patrol.

Lt. Yanko Reyes told the South Florida SunSentinel that the agency will recommend dismissing the \$166 traffic citation that a trooper issued to the driver on Feb. 20.

The couple was driving north on I-95 when the couch fell from the truck, Jake Singer told the newspaper. His girlfriend, who didn't want to be identified, lost control of the car when she swerved to avoid the tumbling sofa. Their 2006 Toyota Corolla hit the median and rolled over.

The car was totaled and the couple was sent to the hospital. Trooper Eric Flint issued the ticket to Singer's girlfriend at the hospital.

## Man gets 16 years after kid eats drug-laced candy

**IN** TERRE HAUTE — A western Indiana man received a 16-year sentence in a case where a student at a local school became ill after eating drug-laced candy.

A Vigo County judge ordered Levi Dowden, 22, of Terre Haute to serve 10 years of his sentence in prison followed by one year of work release and five years on formal probation.

Dowden pleaded guilty last fall to felony charges of aiding in dealing methamphetamine, aiding in dealing cocaine, aiding in dealing a look-a-like substance and dealing in marijuana,

the Tribune-Star reported.

He was originally charged with 18 criminal counts involving drugs and firearms following an investigation that began in February 2019 when a Vigo County schools student became ill after eating a gummy candy that had reportedly been laced with Xanax.

## 2 men indicted over roles in 'grandparent scam'

**RI** PROVIDENCE — Two Rhode Island men were indicted on charges of defrauding or trying to defraud older people out of thousands of dollars by pretending to be children or grandchildren in legal trouble who needed money, federal prosecutors said.

Vidal Roquez, 35, and Schmitt Prado, 26, both of Providence, ran what authorities called the "grandparent scam" that targeted at least nine residents of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Providence.

They are charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and aggravated identity theft, prosecutors said.

## Reality stars ordered to pay \$1M in pollution case

**UT** OGDEN — The stars of the "Diesel Brothers" reality TV show were ordered to pay nearly \$1 million in legal fees on top of \$848,000 in previous penalties over pollution law violations.

U.S. District Judge Robert Shelby of Utah ruled Jan. 26 that David "Heavy D" Sparks and Joshua "Redbeard" Stuart must pay \$928,602 in legal fees to Utah Physicians for a Healthy

Environment, the Standard-Examiner in Ogden reported.

The environmental group started the legal battle in 2016 after seeing smoke-spewing trucks on the Discovery Channel show. The group later sued under the Clean Air Act, which allows people to seek civil damages against violators.

Shelby ruled in 2020 that the men committed about 400 Clean Air Act violations, including installing and selling devices to defeat emission controls.

## Oldest pier on city's waterfront up for sale

**ME** PORTLAND — The oldest pier on the Portland waterfront is for sale.

Built in 1793, Union Wharf dates to the golden era of sail when it hosted clipper ships and other sailing vessels from around the world.

"The wharf is and will continue to be an important part of the marine industry in Portland and the current owners, city and community want to keep it that way," Chris Craig, from The Dunham Group, which is handling the sale, told the Portland Press Herald. The deadline for bids is March 31.

## 100 charged in state's largest drug ring

**SC** COLUMBIA — State prosecutors charged 100 people in what they said was the largest number of defendants ever indicted in one drug operation in South Carolina courts.

Ten of those charged are currently state prison inmates who used contraband cellphones to continue to run drug rings and

other criminal enterprises behind bars, state Attorney General Alan Wilson told a news conference.

Investigators said they have seized 44 pounds of methamphetamine, 11 pounds of heroin and 3 pounds of cocaine, as well as 82 firearms.

## Dozens of dead cattle found floating in river

**ND** BISMARCK — Dead cattle found floating in the Missouri River in central North Dakota came from a herd owned by a rancher near Hensler, the North Dakota Stockmen's Association said.

Clark Price told the association that about 25 of his cattle walked onto the river ice and fell through. The number of lost cattle will be updated in the next few days as the herd is brought in and counted, the rancher group said in a release.

## Man sentenced for films of woman pumping milk

**IA** IOWA CITY — An Iowa City man who admitted to using a recording device inside a pen to film an employee while she pumped breast milk at work was given a suspended sentence and ordered to register as a sex offender.

Robert Charles Carlson, 68, pleaded guilty in November to nine counts of invasion of privacy. He admitted recording Jessica Clark 22 times while she pumped breast milk in a conference room in 2018, The Iowa City Press-Citizen reported.

Carlson was owner of the architecture firm Carlson Design Team at the time.

— From The Associated Press

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# Kansas, Virginia drop out of tourneys

Associated Press

A year to the day after COVID-19 brought the college basketball postseason to a halt, the pandemic continues to disrupt the sport, with three premier programs forced to abandon their conference tournaments because of positive coronavirus tests.

No. 16 Virginia — the most recent national champion — and No. 11 Kansas were forced out of the semifinals of their tournaments on Friday, a day after Duke also dropped out, ending a

disappointing season for coach Mike Krzyzewski's storied program.

There's no guarantee that Kansas or Virginia will be back for the NCAA Tournament, potentially depriving the sport's annual showcase of two title contenders as well as the five-time national champion Blue Devils, who were unlikely to make this year's field.

Although the Atlantic Coast Conference and Big 12 tournaments continued without the virus-affected schools, Friday's

developments were an eerie reminder of March 12, 2020, when both leagues ended their tournaments as teams were warming up for the first of a full day's worth of games. That day turned out to be the end of the college basketball season.

The ACC announced the positive test and subsequent contact tracing and quarantining in Virginia's program less than 12 hours before the Cavaliers were set to play Georgia Tech in the first of two semifinal games. The Yellow Jackets advanced to

the final, where they were scheduled to face Florida State.

Hours later, Kansas announced its withdrawal from the Big 12 Tournament, leading to the cancellation of its semifinal matchup with No. 13 Texas. The Longhorns advanced to play No. 12 Oklahoma State for the title. The Jayhawks said in a statement they would continue preparing for the NCAA Tournament, which starts Thursday.

Cavaliers coach Tony Bennett described the outcome of the tests as a "gut punch."

## Oklahoma State surprises Baylor in Big 12 tournament

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Cade Cunningham scored 25 points, Avery Anderson III added 20 and No. 12 Oklahoma State was nearly perfect from the foul line down the stretch in beating second-ranked Baylor 83-74 on Friday night in the Big 12 Tournament semifinals.

Rondel Walker also had 11 points for the No. 5 seed Cowboys (20-7), who played No. 13 Texas for the title Saturday night.

The third-seeded Longhorns advanced earlier Friday when their semifinal against No. 11 Kansas was canceled because of a positive COVID-19 test that forced the Jayhawks to withdraw from the tournament. While the Cowboys have two Big 12 tourney titles to their credit, Texas has never won the event in six appearances in the final.

MaCio Teague scored 17 points and Jared Butler had 16 for the top-seeded Bears (22-2), who had won 10 of their last 11 against the Cowboys after sweeping them in the regular season.

**No. 3 Illinois 90, Rutgers 68:** At Indianapolis, Ayo Dosunmu scored 23 points and the Illini easily beat the Scarlet

Knights in the quarterfinals of the Big Ten Tournament.

Dosunmu shot 8-for-11 from the field, 7-for-9 from the line and added six assists and five rebounds.

**No. 4 Michigan 79, Maryland 66:** At Indianapolis, Wolverines coach Juwan Howard was ejected midway through the second half after getting into a shouting match with the opposing bench, and his team beat the Terrapins to reach the Big Ten semifinals.

Mike Smith scored 18 points and set a Big Ten Tournament record with 15 assists for top-seeded Michigan (20-3). The Wolverines rallied from a 12-point first-half deficit and faced No. 9 Ohio State in Saturday's semifinals.

**No. 5 Iowa 62, Wisconsin 57:** At Indianapolis, Luka Garza scored 24 points, Joe Wieskamp made two key baskets late and the Hawkeyes fended off the Badgers in the Big Ten Tournament quarterfinals.

Third-seeded Iowa (21-7) rallied from a six-point halftime deficit behind Garza. The Hawkeyes' all-time leading scorer dominated inside, making 10 of 15 field goals and 4 of 5 free throws.

**No. 6 Alabama 85, Missis-**

**issippi State 48:** At Nashville, Tenn., Jahvon Quinerly scored 14 points off the bench, Jaden Shackelford had 13 points and the Crimson Tide blew out the Bulldogs in a Southeastern Conference Tournament quarterfinal.

Alabama (22-6) faced Tennessee in Saturday's semifinals.

**No. 7 Houston 77, Tulane 52:** At Fort Worth, Texas, DeJon Jarreau had his first career triple-double with 15 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists, helping the Cougars beat the Green Wave in the quarterfinals of the American Athletic Conference Tournament.

Quentin Grimes scored 15 points and Marcus Sasser added 14 as each connected on four three-pointers to help Houston (22-3) recover from a cold-shooting first half from long range. The Cougars played Memphis in the semifinals Saturday night.

**No. 8 Arkansas 70, Missouri 64:** At Nashville, Tenn., reserve JD Notae scored a season-high 27 points, and the Razorbacks overcame a 10-point deficit to beat the Tigers and advance to the Southeastern Conference Tournament semifinals.

**No. 9 Ohio State 87, No. 21**

**Purdue 78 (OT):** At Indianapolis, Seth Towns scored six of his season-high 12 points in overtime, and the Buckeyes beat the Boilermakers in the Big Ten Tournament quarterfinals.

**No. 15 Florida State 69, North Carolina 66:** At Greensboro, N.C., Anthony Polite hit the go-ahead three-pointer with 2:06 left, and the Seminoles held off the Tar Heels in the semifinals of the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament.

**No. 17 Creighton 59, UConn 56:** At New York, Marcus Zegarowski made two key baskets in a decisive nine-point run late in the second half and the Bluejays held the Huskies without a field goal over the final six minutes to win their Big East Tournament semifinal.

**No. 19 San Diego State 77, Nevada 70:** At Las Vegas, Matt Mitchell had 24 points and eight rebounds to lead the Aztecs past the Wolf Pack in the Mountain West Tournament semifinals.

**No. 23 Colorado 72, No. 24 USC:** At Las Vegas, D'Shawn Schwartz scored on a rebound slam with 3.3 seconds left, McKinley Wright IV shook off an elbow to the head to score 24 points and the Buffaloes held off the Trojans in the Pac-12 Tournament semifinals.



# Brady signs extension, frees cap space

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Tom Brady has agreed to a contract extension with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers that provides the Super Bowl champions with much-needed salary cap relief and will help the seven-time NFL champion reach a goal of playing until he's at least 45.

Brady posted a picture of himself on Twitter, signing the extension Friday with the message: "In pursuit of 8 ... LFG@ Buccaneers we're keeping the band together."

The extension confirmed by the team frees about \$19 million in salary cap space, a move that improves Tampa Bay's chances of returning as much of its championship roster as possible for 2021.

Seven starters from the Super Bowl were among two doz-

en Buccaneers eligible to become free agents next week.

"When we acquired Tom a year ago, we were extremely excited about the leadership, poise and winning track record that he would bring to our locker room. Since that time, he has proven himself to be the ultimate competitor and delivered in every way we had imagined, helping us capture the Lombardi Trophy," general manager Jason Licht said.

"Year after year," the GM added, "Tom proves that he remains one of the elite quarterbacks in this game and we couldn't be happier to keep him in Tampa Bay as we continue to pursue our goals together."

Brady's extension adds an extra season on the two-year, \$50 million contract he signed in free agency last March fol-

lowing a 20-year run with the New England Patriots.

The five-time Super Bowl MVP capped his first season with the Bucs by leading Tampa Bay to its first championship in 18 years.

In preparation for the start of free agency next week, Licht placed the franchise tag on receiver Chris Godwin and signed linebacker Lavonte David to a two-year, \$25 million contract that was announced Friday.

David's contract, of which \$20 million is guaranteed, includes voidable years that make it salary cap friendly.

Brady's extension also includes voidable years to provide cap relief this winter.

"Tom is one of those great guys who understands that it takes a whole village to win. It

takes a team, a group of guys, to win football games," David said.

"Me, the same thing. I'm all about team," the linebacker, who's played his entire nine-year career with the Bucs, added. "I'm doing what I can and doing what it takes to hopefully get everybody back and go do this thing again."

Tampa Bay was estimated to be more than \$7 million over the salary cap before the 43-year-old Brady, who has said he wants to play until he's at least 45, extended his contract.

With the quarterback's help, the Bucs can now turn their attention to trying to reach a long-term deal with linebacker Shaquil Barrett, the 2019 NFL sack leader who earned \$15.8 million last season while playing under the franchise tag.

## Kuzma keys Lakers' fourth-quarter rally over Pacers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Kyle Kuzma scored 15 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter, LeBron James added 18 points and 10 assists, and the Los Angeles Lakers rallied late for a 105-100 victory over Indiana.

Montrezl Harrell had 17 points and Kuzma added 13 rebounds as the defending NBA champions returned from the All-Star break with just their fourth win in 11 games.

Los Angeles trailed by 12 points early in the fourth quarter before Kuzma led a ferocious rally to keep the Pacers winless against the Lakers at Staples Center since November 2015.

Malcolm Brogdon scored 23 of his 29 points in the first half for the Pacers, who opened a three-game road trip with their 11th loss in 16 games. Domantas Sabonis added 20 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists, but Indiana wilted down the stretch.

**Jazz 114, Rockets 99:** Dono-

van Mitchell had 28 points, eight assists and seven rebounds and Utah opened the second half of the season by handing visiting Houston its 15th straight loss.

Mike Conley added 20 points and Rudy Gobert had 14 points and 13 rebounds to help the Jazz get back on track after dropping their final two games of the first half.

**Nuggets 103, Grizzlies 102:** Nikola Jokic had 28 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists and scored his team's final five points to help Denver hold off host Memphis.

Memphis had a chance to take the lead with about three seconds remaining when guard Ja Morant went to the rim against Jokic but came up short against the Denver center. The Nuggets then ran out the clock for their fifth straight victory.

**Heat 101, Bulls 90:** Jimmy Butler scored 28 points against his former team, Goran Dragic added 20 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter and visiting Mia-

mi beat Chicago for its ninth win in 10 games.

The Heat improved to 20-18 after moving above .500 for the first time this season by beating Orlando on Thursday.

**Pelicans 116, Cavaliers 82:** Brandon Ingram scored 28 points, Zion Williamson added 23 and host New Orleans routed Cleveland.

Ingram played just 25 minutes and Williamson 18 because of how lopsided the game became. Steven Adams had 10 points and 17 rebounds in his 21 minutes on the court.

**Spurs 104, Magic 77:** Rudy Gay had 19 points, Dejeunte Murray and Derrick White each added 17 and host San Antonio beat short-handed Orlando.

The Spurs opened the AT&T Center to the public for the first time since beating Dallas on March 10, 2020, the day before the league shutdown operations due to COVID-19. Seating was limited to 3,200.

San Antonio held an opponent

under 80 points for the first time since beating Golden State 89-75 on March 19, 2018.

**76ers 127, Wizards 101:** Joel Embiid scored 23 points but sustained an apparent leg injury and left midway through the third quarter of visiting Philadelphia's victory over Washington.

Embiid, an MVP contender for the Eastern Conference-leading 76ers, was in his first game back following a week-long absence for contract tracing. He entered Friday averaging 30.2 points and 11.6 rebounds.

He had also had seven rebounds before his departure with 6:20 left in the third.

Following a dunk for his last points, Embiid landed awkwardly on his left leg, his knee joint appearing to bend slightly forward. He laid on the floor for several minutes, and a stretcher was briefly brought onto the court, but the center eventually limped off under his own power.

# Kaprizov's three goals propel Wild

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Russian rookie Kirill Kaprizov had his first NHL hat trick and Cam Talbot made 25 saves for his first shutout of the season in the Minnesota Wild's 4-0 victory over the Arizona Coyotes on Friday night.

Kaprizov opened the scoring 5:47 into the third period and added his second just over two minutes later for his first multi-goal game. He scored his third in the final seconds after Jonas Brodin added an empty-netter.

Kaprizov has four goals in the last two games and 10 overall. The 23-year-old leads NHL rookies in scoring.

Minnesota is 10-2-1 since Feb. 18, leading the NHL in wins, points and goals in that span.

Adin Hill made 28 saves in his second start of the season for Arizona.

The teams will meet again in St. Paul on Sunday and Tuesday night.

**Oilers 6, Senators 2:** Connor McDavid had a goal and two assists and host Edmon-

ton improved to 7-0 this season against Ottawa.

McDavid needed just 10 seconds after the opening faceoff to score his 17th of the season, beating Joey Daccord on the game's first shot. McDavid pushed his NHL-leading points total to 51 in 29 games.

Leon Draisaitl and Tyler Ennis had a goal and an assist, Tyson Barrie, Darnell Nurse and Gaetan Haas also scored and Mike Smith made 23 saves.

Edmonton improved to 18-11-0 to take sole possession of second in the North Division, four points behind Toronto.

Thomas Chabot and Brady Tkachuk scored for Ottawa.

**Golden Knights 5, Blues 4 (OT):** Reilly Smith scored on a power play at 2:38 of overtime to lift visiting Vegas past St. Louis.

Smith connected on a one-timer off Jonathan Marchessault's pass.

Mark Stone, Tomas Nosek, Alec Martinez and Marchessault also scored for Vegas. Marc-Andre Fleury, playing after being removed from COVID-19 protocol due to a

false positive, made 19 saves.

Vladimir Tarasenko, Zach Sanford and Ryan O'Reilly scored for the Blues, and Jordan Binnington made 35 saves. The Blues have played four straight overtime games, losing the last three.

**Sharks 6, Ducks 0:** Devan Dubnyk made 34 saves for his 33rd career shutout, Tomas Hertl had a goal and an assist in his return to the lineup and visiting San Jose dominated Anaheim.

Kevin Labanc had a goal and two assists, Timo Meier and Evander Kane also had a goal and an assist, and Erik Karlsson and Fredrik Handemark added goals.

Hertl missed six games after being placed on NHL's COVID-19 list on Feb. 24.

**Avalanche 2, Kings 0:** Mikko Rantanen had a goal and an assist, Philipp Grubauer stopped 18 shots for his fourth shutout of the season and host Colorado beat Los Angeles.

Nathan MacKinnon also scored for the Avalanche.

Calvin Petersen made a career high 44 saves for the Kings.

# Lakers without Davis at least 2 more weeks

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis will be out for at least two more weeks with the leg injuries that have kept him sidelined since Feb. 14.

The defending NBA champions announced Friday night that Davis is making progress and has been cleared to enter the next phase of his rehabilitation after an examination by team doctors. He will be re-evaluated in late March.

The All-NBA big man has Achilles tendinitis and a calf strain, and the eight-time All-Star selection was forced to drop out of last weekend's game in Atlanta.

Davis missed five games earlier this season due to various injuries before aggravating his leg woes in a game in Denver on Valentine's Day. He is averaging 22.5 points, 8.4 rebounds, 3.0 assists and 1.8 blocked shots in his 23 appearances this season.

In other NBA news:

■ Philadelphia 76ers star center Joel Embiid has a bone bruise on his left knee and could miss at least two weeks, according to a person with knowledge of the injury.

Embiid did not suffer structural damage to his knee and will be evaluated again in two weeks. The person spoke on condition of anonymity Saturday because the severity of the injury had not been announced.

## Sabres' Eichel out for 'foreseeable future'

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Buffalo Sabres will be without captain Jack Eichel for what coach Ralph Krueger called "the foreseeable future" in delivering yet another blow to a team in the midst of a nine-game skid.

The injury is not considered season-ending, though Krueger on Saturday was unable to provide a fixed timetable on how much time Eichel will miss.

## 3 Vols football players suspended after arrests

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Three University of Tennessee football players are facing an indefinite suspension from the team after they were arrested on misdemeanor charges related to drug possession and paraphernalia in a dorm.

Martavius French, Isaac Washington and Aaron Willis were among five people arrested for a March 9 incident at Stokely Hall on the Knoxville campus, the campus police log says. Another student and a juvenile were also arrested.

## Westwood in charge at Players Championship

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. — There's something for everyone on the second-round leaderboard of The Players Championship.

Golf royalty, European style? There's venerable Lee West-

wood of England, coming off a near-miss in winning the Arnold Palmer Invitational last week in Orlando. The 47-year-old winner of 44 worldwide events shot a classy, bogey-free 66 at the Players Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass on Friday to take the 36-hole lead at 9-under-par 135.

Then there's 18-hole leader and 2008 Players champion Sergio Garcia of Spain, who sparkled with a 65 in Thursday's first round. He resisted several urges to implode and battled back with his third eagle of the tournament, at No. 11, and birdies on two of his last three holes for a 72 and a tie for third at 7-under.

In between those two is one of the next generation of British stars, Matthew Fitzpatrick, who played his last 10 holes at 4-under with no bogeys for a 68. He will join Westwood, 21 years his senior, in the final twosome in Saturday's third round.