

Forces begin final Afghanistan pullout

By PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. and NATO forces officially began their final drawdown from Afghanistan on Saturday after nearly two decades of war and as violence continued to rage across the country.

Tensions remained high throughout the day after the Taliban suggested they would launch attacks on coalition troops who remained in the country past the May 1 exit date outlined in a U.S.-Taliban deal signed last year.

Militants fired at Kandahar Airfield in the afternoon, but the assault caused no injuries or damage to equipment, Col. Sonny Leggett, a spokesman for the U.S. military in Afghanistan said on Twitter.

U.S. forces conducted a precision strike later in the evening, destroying additional rockets aimed at the airfield, Leggett said.

It was the only reported attack that may have been directed at foreign forces during the day.

On Friday night, a bombing at an Afghan military base next to Bagram Airfield, the largest American installation in the coun-

try, killed one Afghan soldier and injured over two dozen others, said Abdul Wasi Rahimi, head of security at the provincial police chief's office.

A separate bombing Friday at a guesthouse in eastern Logar province killed over 20 people and wounded dozens more, Afghanistan's Interior Ministry said, highlighting the precarious security situation the U.S. and its allies are leaving behind.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for any of the attacks.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted Saturday that the continued presence of foreign forces violated the U.S.-Taliban deal and said Taliban fighters were waiting for their leadership to decide what actions would be taken next.

The final months of America's longest war — which began in late 2001 in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and has claimed the lives of more than 2,300 American service members — have largely been shrouded in secrecy. Many details of the withdrawal, including when specific bases will close and when individual partner countries will leave, have been restricted due to security

concerns, NATO and American military officials said.

"At this point, we will not go into operational details, including troop numbers or timelines for individual nations," NATO's press office said in an emailed statement.

On Saturday, Afghanistan's acting Defense Minister Yasin Zia said at a news conference in Kabul that the drawdown had begun and that some bases would probably be handed over to Afghan forces within a week.

"Maybe tomorrow, in Shorabak, a small team of foreign forces will leave the area and like this, they will step-by-step leave other areas," Zia said, referring to a base in southern Helmand province.

The final drawdown follows a series of troop reductions that began shortly after the Trump administration signed a deal with the Taliban in Qatar on Feb. 29, 2020, which called for all coalition forces to leave Afghanistan by May 1, if the Taliban met vague counterterrorism pledges.

Two weeks ago, President Joe Biden said the U.S. and its allies would continue with the withdrawal plans, regardless of the con-

DOD chief calls for 'new vision' of defense

Associated Press

NAVAL STATION PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii — In his first major speech as Pentagon chief, Lloyd Austin on Friday called for developing a "new vision" for American defense in the face of emerging cyber and space threats and the prospect of fighting bigger wars.

Reflecting President Joe Biden's promise to put diplomacy first in dealing with foreign policy problems, Austin said the military should provide leverage that diplomats can use to prevent conflict. His comments suggested a contrast with what critics call the militarization of U.S. foreign policy in recent decades.

"U.S. military isn't meant to stand apart, but to buttress U.S. diplomacy and advance a foreign policy that employs all of our instruments of national power," Austin said.

He chose to spell out his ideas at Pearl

Harbor, at the center of U.S. military power in the Indo-Pacific region, reflecting U.S. concerns that China's rapid modernization and growing assertiveness make it a powerful adversary. Notably, Austin in his speech did not explicitly mention China or North Korea.

Speaking with the USS Arizona Memorial and the Battleship Missouri Memorial in the background, Austin cautioned that the U.S. military cannot be satisfied with believing it is the strongest and most capable military in the world today — "not at a time when our potential adversaries are very deliberately working to blunt our edge." He appeared to be referring to China, which other officials say has accelerated its military modernization and sped up its construction of a wide range of sophisticated weaponry while the U.S. was focused for two decades on combatting extremist groups like al-Qaida in Af-

ghanistan and, more recently, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Austin, who spent more than 40 years in the Army, including as the top American commander in Iraq during the last years of U.S. combat there, noted that he had spent most of the past two decades in "the last of the old wars."

"The way that we fight the next major war is going to look very different from the way that we fought the last ones," he said. "We all need to drive toward a new vision of what it means to defend our nation."

He spoke at a ceremony marking the arrival of Adm. John Aquilino as the new commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, succeeding Adm. Philip Davidson, who has been outspoken in his concerns that China is proceeding with urgency to be in position to potentially take Taiwan by force within several years.

More are fired, disciplined at Fort Hood

BY ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — More than a dozen additional disciplinary actions and firings were announced Friday as new information was released about the response to the disappearance and death of Spc. Vanessa Guillen at Fort Hood.

Gen. Michael X. Garrett, commander of U.S. Army Forces Command, announced 13 officers and noncommissioned officers will be disciplined as a result of an internal Army investigation report.

“I directed this investigation to identify what happened and to find areas where we needed to improve across our command,” Garrett said in a statement. “We can and must hold ourselves accountable, learn and improve across all our Army units. To do any less breaks trust with our people and the American public.”

Guillen, a small arms repairer in the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, disappeared during the workday on April 22, 2020. After more than two months, investigators found her body buried along a river miles from the central Texas Army base. Spc. Aaron Robinson, a fellow soldier in the regiment, is believed to have killed her with a hammer in an arms room that he supervised. When confronted by local law enforcement July 1 in nearby Killeen, Robinson shot himself dead.

The 264-page report released Friday contains the findings of an internal administrative investigation, commonly known as a 15-6, directed by Army Forces Command.

The investigation, announced in September and under the direction of Gen. John Murray, the commander of Army Futures Command, looked into every echelon of Guillen’s leadership between April 22 and July 1 to learn what her leaders knew and when.

In December, following the release of an outside investigation into Fort Hood, the Army fired or suspended 14 leaders, including some personnel in Army Criminal Investigation Command. Those suspensions included every leader responsible for Guillen from the squad to battalion level. They were not named by the Army.

Six of the soldiers disciplined Friday were part of the initial round of actions in December, bringing the number reprimanded in relation to Guillen’s death to 21.

Three leaders from the brigade to corps level were fired in December. Maj. Gen. Scott Efflandt, then the deputy commander of III Corps, who was the acting base commander at the time of Guillen’s disappearance and death, Col. Ralph Overland, and Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley Knapp, the commander and top enlisted soldier of Guillen’s unit, the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, were fired.

Garrett on Friday fired five soldiers from

leadership positions who are current or former leaders within the 3rd Cavalry Regiment. Of the five, three will also receive General Officer Memorandums of Reprimand, a written reprimand that goes into a soldier’s permanent file.

Garrett also referred further action against seven additional officers and NCOs to Lt. Gen. Pat White, commander of III Corps and Fort Hood, and further action against one NCO to a separate command. One of those eight leaders will be fired and all will receive reprimand letters. Many of these actions allow for the soldier to respond and include a review period, said Army officials said Friday.

Army policy prohibits the release of the names of the battalion level and below commanders and leaders who received reprimand.

One of the leaders included in Friday’s round of discipline included a senior NCO that the investigation found to have sexually harassed Guillen on two occasions.

However, the Army would not say exactly what that discipline included.

“This supervisor created an intimidating, hostile environment. The unit leadership was informed of the harassment as well as the supervisor’s counterproductive leadership, and failed to take appropriate action,” according to the report’s executive summary.

Biden nixes border projects paid for with diverted funds

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration said Friday it has canceled border wall projects paid for with funds diverted from Department of Defense accounts, a widely-expected move that follows Biden’s decision to suspend construction activity on former president Donald Trump’s signature project.

Trump diverted about \$10 billion from military construction accounts and counternarcotics programs to pay for hundreds of miles of steel barriers along the Mexico border, an effort that Biden has denounced as wasteful and ineffective.

“The Department of Defense is proceeding with canceling all border barrier construction projects paid for with funds originally intended for other military

missions and functions such as schools for military children, overseas military construction projects in partner nations, and the National Guard and Reserve equipment account,” said Jamal Brown, deputy Pentagon spokesman, in a statement. “Today’s action reflects this Administration’s continued commitment to defending our nation and supporting our service members and their families.”

Trump built 450 miles of new barriers during his term, much of it across the deserts and mountains of southern Arizona where his administration built along national forest land, wildlife preserves and other federal property already under government control. It built far less in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, the busiest area for border crossings and

the epicenter to a major migration influx.

Friday’s joint announcement from the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security did not indicate how much money the cancellation will save, nor whether leftover funds would be used to pay demobilization costs to contractors whose bulldozers and excavators were brought to a halt on Jan. 20.

An estimate prepared by the Army Corps of Engineers last fall determined there would be about \$3.3 billion in leftover funds if Biden chose not to proceed with Trump’s constructions plans for about 285 additional miles of border barriers. The government would save about \$2.6 billion after paying demobilization costs to contractors, the estimate found.

Number of Americans fully vaccinated tops 100 million

Associated Press

DALLAS — Disneyland reopened on Friday and cruise lines welcomed the news that they could be sailing again in the U.S. by midsummer, as the number of Americans fully vaccinated against COVID-19 reached another milestone: 100 million.

Visitors cheered and screamed with delight as the Southern California theme park swung open its gates for the first time in 13 months in a powerful symbol of the U.S. rebound, even though the self-proclaimed Happiest Place on Earth is allowing only in-state guests for now and operating at just 25% capacity.

The reopening and similar steps elsewhere around the country reflect increasing optimism as COVID-19 deaths tumble and the ranks of the vaccinated grow — a stark contrast to the worsening disaster in India and Brazil and the scant availability of vaccines in many poor parts of the world.

While the overall number of lives lost to COVID-19 in the U.S. has eclipsed 575,000, deaths have plummeted to an average of about 670 per day from a peak of around 3,400 in mid-January.

Thirty-nine percent of the nation's adult population has been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Over 55% of adults have received at least one dose, up from 30% a month ago.

However, about 8% of those who have gotten one dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine have not returned for their second shot, officials said. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said it is important to complete the course to gain maximum protection against the virus.

"Make sure you get that second dose," he said at a White House briefing.

Dr. Leana Wen, former Baltimore health commissioner and a visiting professor of health policy at George Washington University, said fully vaccinating about 40% of American adults is a great achievement but not enough.

The immunization drive has slowed in recent weeks, even as shots have been thrown open to all adults. Wen said better weather and falling case counts will make it harder to reach people who have not been vaccinated yet.

US sees jump in wages, benefits

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Wages and benefits grew quickly for U.S. workers in the first three months of the year, a sign that businesses are starting to offer higher pay to fill newly-opened jobs.

U.S. workers' total compensation rose 0.9% in the January-March quarter, the largest gain in more than 13 years, the Labor Department said Friday. That's up from 0.7% in the final three months of last year. Still, the increase is just barely above 0.8% gains in two quarters in 2018.

The solid rise comes after weaker increases during the pandemic, when the unemployment rate initially shot to nearly 15% before declining steadily to 6% in March. As a result, workers' pay and benefits rose just 2.6% in the year ending in March, down from 2.8% a year earlier.

The data comes from the Labor Department's Employment Cost Index, which measures pay changes for workers that keep their jobs. Unlike some other measures of Americans' paychecks, it isn't directly affected by mass layoffs such as the pandemic job losses that occurred last spring.

The figures suggest that as the economy is reopening and more Americans are willing to venture out to restaurants, bars, and shops, businesses are having to provide higher pay and benefits to pull workers back into the job market. Many businesses have struggled to find people to take jobs, despite still-high unemployment.

Some Americans are reluctant to take jobs in industries like restaurants, hotels and bars for fear of contracting the coronavirus. Others, particularly women, are constrained by child care obligations. And a generous federal supplement to unemployment benefits of \$300 a week may also be keeping some unemployed on the sidelines.

That benefit ends Sept. 6.

Overall incomes grew by a record amount in March, according to a separate report Friday, bolstered by \$1,400 government stimulus checks and unemployment aid to roughly 18 million Americans. Incomes soared 21.1%, while spending rose 4.2%, a sign that much of the income was saved and may be spent in coming months.

Wages and salaries rose 1% in the first three months of the year, the Employment Cost Index showed, while benefits such as health insurance increased 0.6% in value.

Hotels and restaurants boosted pay and benefits by 1.5% in the first quarter.

Hospital fire kills 18 virus patients as India steps up vaccine efforts

Associated Press

NEW DELHI — A fire in a COVID-19 hospital ward in western India killed 18 patients early Saturday, as the country grappling with the worst outbreak yet steps up a vaccination drive for all its adults even though some states say don't have enough jabs.

India on Saturday set yet another daily global record with 401,993 new cases, taking its tally to more than 19.1 million. Another 3,523 people died in the past 24 hours, raising the overall fatalities to 211,853, according to the Health Ministry. Experts believe both figures are an undercount.

The fire broke out in a COVID-19 ward on the ground floor and was extinguished within an hour, police said. The cause is being investigated.

Thirty-one other patients at the Welfare Hospital in Bharuch, a town in Gujarat state, were rescued by hospital workers and

firefighters and their condition was stable, said police officer B.M Parmar. Eighteen others died in the blaze and smoke before rescuers could reach them, Parmar said.

Hospitals in the Indian capital have been complaining of disruption in oxygen supplies by manufacturers due to sudden rise in demand caused by the massive spike in coronavirus infections.

The government on Saturday shifted its faltering vaccination campaign into high gear by saying all adults 18 and over were getting their shots.

Since January, nearly 10% of Indians have received one dose, but only around 1.5% have received both, although India is one of the world's biggest producers of vaccines.

Some states already said they don't have enough doses for everyone. Even the ongoing effort to inoculate people above 45 is stuttering.

States' #MeToo claims show problems persist

Associated Press

An Idaho lawmaker was accused of raping an intern; a Missouri lawmaker of abusing his children. In North Dakota and Oregon, a pair of lawmakers faced claims of a pattern of sexual harassment.

All are now out of office — either resigning under pressure or getting expelled by colleagues within the past two months. Three other lawmakers accused this year remain in their jobs.

The flurry of sexual misconduct claims in state capitols comes three-and-a-half years after the #MeToo movement sparked a public reckoning for people in power accused of sexual wrongdoing and an overhaul of many state policies. The continued incidents highlight both that problems persist and that some legislatures are responding more assertively.

"These institutions don't change overnight," said Kelly Dittmar, research director at the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "Part of what the #MeToo movement did was shed a spotlight on the problem, but fixing that problem that has been so deep-seeded is going to take longer."

Since 2017, at least 109 state lawmakers in 40 states have faced public allegations of sexual misconduct or harassment, according to an Associated Press tally. Of those, 43 have resigned or been expelled and 42 have faced other repercussions such as the loss of committee chair or party leadership positions.

Idaho Rep. Aaron von Ehlinger was the most recent to resign. The 38-year-old Republican stepped down Thursday after a legislative ethics committee recommended he be

suspended without pay over allegations that he raped a 19-year-old intern in his apartment after the two had dinner at a Boise restaurant.

Von Ehlinger denied wrongdoing, insisted the sexual contact was consensual and wrote in his resignation letter that he was quitting because he could not effectively represent his constituents.

In January 2020, an AP review found that states had enacted more than 75 laws and resolutions targeting sexual harassment, abuse and assault within government or the private sector over the previous two years.

The Idaho House and Senate required lawmakers to attend a "respectful workplace training" that started in 2018 and which von Ehlinger attended this year. But the House never formally adopted the respectful workplace policy.

Von Ehlinger's resignation came just a week after the Missouri House expelled Republican Rep. Rick Roebber after a bipartisan ethics committee investigation concluded there were credible allegations he had physically and sexually abused his children years ago.

In March, the North Dakota House expelled Republican Rep. Luke Simons for allegedly threatening and sexually harassing women at the Capitol in a pattern of behavior that lawmakers said stretched back to soon after Simons took office in 2017.

Oregon state Rep. Diego Hernandez, a Democrat, resigned in March after a judge rejected his attempt to stop a planned expulsion vote following an investigation into claims that he had sexually harassed or created a hostile workplace for several women.

Manchin breaks with Democrats on DC statehood

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A long-shot bid to pass legislation that would make the District of Columbia the nation's 51st state got a little longer on Friday.

Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia said that he opposes unilateral action by Congress to make the nation's capital a state and that he believes it needs to be done through a constitutional amendment. He said prior Republican and Democratic administrations thought the same thing.

"They all came to the same conclusion. If Congress wants to make D.C. a state, it should propose a constitutional amendment," Manchin said in an interview with the West Virginia MetroNews radio network. "It should propose a constitutional amendment and let the people of America vote."

Last month, the House approved a bill strictly along party lines to make the District of Columbia a state with one representative and two senators, while a tiny sliver of land including the White House, the U.S. Capitol and the National Mall would remain a federal district.

A statehood bill passed the House in 2020, but it died in the then-Republican-controlled Senate. Now, with the 2020 elections having given Democrats control of both chambers of Congress and the White House, some have been pushing to eliminate the filibuster so that only a simple majority in the Senate would be needed to get legislation passed.

Still, such a tactic would require total Democratic unity, and Friday's radio interview with Manchin demonstrated anew that they don't have it.

Mars helicopter aces 4th flight, gets extra month to fly

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA's little Mars helicopter has gotten a reprieve.

Instead of wrapping up flight tests at the beginning of May, NASA is giving its Ingenuity helicopter at least an extra month to tackle tough new terrain and serve as a scout for its companion rover, Perseverance.

Officials announced the flight extension Friday, following three short flights in

under two weeks for the \$85 million tech demo. Soon afterward, there was more good news: Ingenuity — the first powered aircraft to soar at another planet — had aced its fourth flight at Mars.

For Friday's trip, Ingenuity traveled 872 feet at a height of 16 feet for two minutes — considerably farther and longer than before. An attempt Thursday had failed because of a known software error.

On its fifth flight in another week or so, the 4-pound chopper will move to a new

airfield on Mars, allowing the rover to finally start focusing on its own rock-sampling mission. The rover is seeking signs of ancient life at Jezero Crater, home to a lush lakebed and river delta billions of years ago.

The helicopter team at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., expects to chalk up a sixth and seventh flight in May. The previous limit had been five. If all goes well, the helicopter mission could go even longer.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man leaves peanuts to hurt man with allergy

MO ST. JOSEPH — A St. Joseph man reportedly used peanuts to try and hurt his mother's boyfriend, who has a severe peanut allergy, prosecutors said.

Jacob Andes, 27, was charged with assault, the Camden County prosecuting attorney said in a news release.

The victim told police Andes put peanuts in his coffee, laundry soap and underwear drawer in his Camdenton home. Andes knew the man had a severe allergy, according to court documents.

Andes was arrested and charged with burglary and property damage in an unrelated incident. When he was questioned at the jail, Andes told investigators he placed the peanuts in the man's house because he thought the man was trying to poison him, the prosecutor said.

Firefighters warn public after bee kills family dog

NV LAS VEGAS — Las Vegas fire officials are warning the public after a dog died and several people were stung in a bee attack.

Firefighters say warmer weather in the Las Vegas metro area also brings out bee swarms.

They were called after a bee stung a pet dog multiple times in a neighborhood on the northwest side. Several area residents also reported getting stung.

Las Vegas Fire & Rescue spokesman Tim Szymanski

urged people to stay inside when possible. He says there were three bee-related calls last month.

Police investigate racist stickers in several towns

RI BRISTOL — Police in Bristol said they are investigating the discovery of several Nazi-themed stickers in town and have asked the civil rights unit of the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office to review the case as a possible hate crime.

The investigation started when someone reported finding a sticker with an image of Adolf Hitler and the words "white boy summer" on a window at the town library, police said.

Police in neighboring Warren are also investigating the posting of racist stickers and the two departments are working together to determine whether the incidents are connected.

High school will do away with mascot, nickname

ME FALMOUTH — Time for Yachtie to walk the plank.

A Maine school system has decided to ditch the nickname and mascot "Yachtsmen" for its high school sports teams. The Falmouth mascot had been portrayed via a costume character named Yachtie, a bearded sailor, who has not appeared at games for a couple years.

The "Yachtsmen" nickname drew criticism of gender-based bias and elitism in recent years. Recent student surveys also found that many students disliked it or were indifferent to it.

Deputies: Teen steals, crashes school bus

TN BRISTOL — A teen crashed a school bus in northeastern Tennessee that deputies said was stolen from Virginia.

The bus was taken from Virginia's Wise County Public Schools Transportation Department, news outlets reported. Deputies said the driver, 17, was seriously injured when he crashed in Bristol.

A passenger in the bus, identified as Cullon Henderson, 18, of Wise, Va., was charged with theft. Authorities said juvenile court will determine any charges against the driver, who was not identified.

News crew spots murder suspect, films arrest

GA COLLEGE PARK — A local television news crew spotted an Arizona murder suspect near the Atlanta airport and flagged police, resulting in the man being taken back into custody after a day-long search.

The reporter and photojournalist with WSB-TV said they saw Jsaan Carlos Strover, 20, as they were driving down a road near Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

Strover was wanted for murder, attempted murder and aggravated assault in Arizona. He was arrested by U.S. Marshals in the Atlanta area April 12 on other charges, but was already wanted in Arizona.

He had gotten away from two Maricopa County, Ariz., deputies while they were dropping off a rental car at the airport.

Man stabs parents, sister with samurai sword

FL SANFORD — A Florida man stabbed his parents and sister with a samurai sword, police said.

Gary Dwain St. Aubyn Campbell, 59, was arrested and charged with two counts of attempted first-degree homicide and one count of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, news outlets reported.

When 911 dispatchers received a request for medical assistance at a Sanford home, the caller — later identified as Campbell — didn't provide details about what happened, according to an affidavit obtained by the Orlando Sentinel.

Investigators said Campbell admitted to stabbing his family members, telling detectives that "physical abuse as a child and constant questioning and nagging as an adult" prompted "rage."

Woman, son die on day of husband's funeral

MI BELLEVUE TOWNSHIP — A woman and her son died in a car crash just before a funeral was scheduled to take place for her husband, authorities said.

The victims were identified as Loralee Hunter, 71, of Bellevue and Troy Bass, 53, of Vermontville, the Eaton County sheriff's office said.

Their vehicle was hit by a pickup truck about 15 miles from Battle Creek. A third person in the vehicle was injured.

Hunter's husband, Ross Hunter, died April 10.

— From The Associated Press



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Column: Drafting franchise QB a risk

Associated Press

One quarterback. Then another. And yet another.

For the first time since 1999, the top three names in the NFL Draft were all QBs.

Before the opening round reached its midway point, two more signal-callers had come off the board.

By all indications, this could be one of the greatest quarterback classes in the annals of the draft.

“The best is yet to come,” Trevor Lawrence confidently predicted after his name was called first by the Jacksonville Jaguars on Thursday night.

But if history has taught us anything, it’s that at least two or three of these guys will turn out to be major disappointments.

Selecting a franchise quarterback, you see, has always been a risky endeavor.

For every Patrick Mahomes, a team is just as likely to land a Mitch Trubisky. For every Baker Mayfield, there is sure to be a

Josh Rosen in the batch.

Lawrence and his fellow first-rounders — Zach Wilson, Trey Lance, Justin Fields and Mac Jones — certainly have a lot going for them as they prepare to embark on their NFL careers.

But there are also enough red flags to comfortably project some big-time busts will emerge from this group.

They always do.

Lawrence and Wilson will be facing intense pressure to turn around dismal franchises. Lance has an extremely thin college resume at a second-division school. Fields is heading to a team that has long been a black hole for promising young quarterbacks.

For perspective, let’s go back to 1999, which closely mirrored this draft. The top three picks were used on quarterbacks. A total of five QBs were selected in the first round.

Kentucky’s Tim Couch, Syracuse’s Donovan McNabb and Oregon’s Akili Smith went 1-2-3.

UCF’s Daunte Culpepper was picked at No. 11, followed by UCLA’s Cade McNown with the very next choice.

As we now know, Couch, Smith and McNown were huge busts.

Couch lasted only five seasons with the Cleveland Browns, going 22-37 as a starter. Smith made just 17 starts, posting a 3-14 record over four seasons in Cincinnati before his career fizzled out. McNown lasted just two seasons, going 3-12 over 15 starts with the Chicago Bears.

Culpepper had success early on, earning three Pro Bowl appearances with the Minnesota Vikings, but a serious knee injury essentially snuffed out his career at age 28. McNabb is the only member of the Class of ’99 to fulfill expectations, lasting 13 seasons, going to six Pro Bowls and leading the Philadelphia Eagles to the Super Bowl.

So, who has the best chance of success from the Class of 2021?

Lawrence, for sure, even though he’s now the face of the Jacksonville Jaguars — a team that went 1-15 a season ago and has been horribly managed for far longer than that. The Jags are poised for a major turnaround, hiring Urban Meyer as coach and possessing plenty of cap room and draft picks to begin assembling a respectable team around their rookie quarterback. It may take a few seasons for the results to show, but Lawrence seems destined for a long, successful career in the league.

Then there’s Jones, the No. 15 pick of the Patriots. He was largely overlooked out of high school and had only full season as the starter at Alabama, but he couldn’t have landed in a better spot than New England, where he’ll be groomed as the long-term replacement for Tom Brady.

As for the other first-round QBs, the outlook is a bit murkier.

SEC still most coveted conference on second day

Associated Press

Not much changed on the second night of the NFL Draft. Do the letters SEC and QB seem familiar?

The SEC remained the conference of choice with 29 players selected overall, including 17 on Friday night.

Quarterbacks went in clusters, too. Not like 1-2-3 as happened in the opening round with Clemson’s Trevor Lawrence to Jacksonville, BYU’s Zach Wilson to the New York Jets, and North Dakota State’s Trey Lance to San Francisco.

Still, the second round concluded with Florida’s Kyle Trask going to Tampa Bay perhaps as the heir to Tom Brady in a decade or so. Then Texas A&M’s Kellen Mond was chosen in the second spot of the

third round by Minnesota and Stanford’s Davis Mills went in the next slot to Houston.

“I’m definitely looking forward to it,” Trask said of Brady. “He’s definitely one of my favorite quarterbacks growing up. So to have that opportunity to learn from one of the greats is a great opportunity for me. I can’t wait to get this ball rolling for sure.”

Naturally, Alabama was a major destination within the Southeastern Conference. The national champions had a record-equaling six players taken in the opening round. Two more went among the first six picks of Round 2: offensive lineman Landon Dickerson and defensive tackle Christian Barmore, the MVP of the national title game in January on that side of

the ball.

Georgia cornerback Tyson Campbell to Jacksonville and Mississippi wide receiver Elijah Moore to the Jets were the top two selections Friday night. Guess what conference they played in.

Campbell, a three-year starter, saw Bulldogs teammate Eric Stokes chosen in the first round by Green Bay. Campbell led Georgia with five pass breakups in 10 starts last season. He also had 29 tackles, including 2½ for loss, and an interception.

He has no qualms about switching to safety if asked.

“I’m versatile and I could learn a new position,” Campbell said. “I trust my feet, trust my hips. I feel like I can run with anybody.”

Moore’s breakout season lift-

ed him to All-America status — and now to a potential regular target for Wilson. The explosive Moore set a school record with 86 catches for 1,193 yards in 2020.

Not everyone went to SEC schools at the outset of the second round. North Carolina running back Javonte Williams is headed to Denver after the Broncos traded up to the third spot with Atlanta.

Miami went for safety Jevon Holland of Oregon. Then it was back to the SEC — and the Tide.

Dickerson can go at guard or center for Philadelphia, which desperately needs to revamp its O-line. He was injured for the national championship game, yet went onto the field for the final snap of Alabama’s romp over Ohio State.

Celtics storm back, beat Spurs in OT

Associated Press

BOSTON — Jaylen Brown hit a three-pointer with 16.7 seconds remaining in overtime, Jayson Tatum scored a career-high 60 points and the Boston Celtics rallied from a 32-point deficit to beat the San Antonio Spurs 143-140 on Friday night.

Tatum, whose previous career best was 53 points scored against Minnesota on April 9, scored 21 in the fourth quarter, then added 10 in the overtime to cap the improbable comeback with a pair of free throws that sealed it with four seconds remaining.

Brown finished with 17 points, Marcus Smart had 10 points and 12 assists, and Aaron Nesmith had 16 points and six rebounds for Boston.

DeMar DeRozan had 30 points and 14 assists for the Spurs. Dejounte Murray and Lonnie Walker IV finished with 24 points each, and Jakob Poeltl finished with 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Suns 121, Jazz 100: Devin Booker scored 31 points, Mikal Bridges added 18 and Phoenix pulled into a tie for the top spot in the Western Conference by beating visiting Utah.

Phoenix is actually atop the NBA because

it holds the tiebreaker over Utah.

Kings 110, Lakers 106: LeBron James scored 16 points in his return to the Lakers' lineup, but it wasn't enough as Sacramento rallied for the victory.

James suffered a high right ankle sprain on March 20 against the Atlanta Hawks and missed the next 20 games, which was the longest absence of his career. He played 32 minutes and was 6-for-12 from the field. He missed what would have been a go-ahead three-pointer with 2.7 seconds remaining as Los Angeles lost for the fifth time in six games.

Trail Blazers 128, Nets 109: Damian Lillard had 32 points, nine assists and seven rebounds, and Portland beat Brooklyn to remain unbeaten halfway through an important road trip.

Lillard scored 22 points in the second half as the Blazers broke away late in the third quarter to snap the Nets' four-game winning streak.

76ers 126, Hawks 104: Ben Simmons, Joel Embiid and Tobias Harris each scored 18 points to lead host Philadelphia over Atlanta.

Dwight Howard had a team-high 19

points and 11 rebounds for the 76ers, who routed the Hawks for the second straight game.

Trae Young scored 32 points in his return after a four-game absence due to an ankle injury, and Clint Capela had 11 points and 15 rebounds for Atlanta. The Hawks stayed in fifth place in the East.

Wizards 122, Cavaliers 93: Russell Westbrook posted his 31st triple-double of the season with 15 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists, and visiting Washington continued its postseason push with a rout of Cleveland.

It was Westbrook's 177th career triple-double, moving him within four of Oscar Robertson's NBA record. He also tied Wilt Chamberlain (1967-1968) for the fourth-most triple-doubles in a season, a list that Westbrook leads with 42 in 2016-2017.

Grizzlies 92, Magic 75: Dillon Brooks scored 20 points, Jonas Valanciunas added 14 points and 15 rebounds, and host Memphis beat Orlando.

Bucks 108, Bulls 98: Brook Lopez and Kris Middleton each scored 22 points, and visiting Milwaukee was good enough without Giannis Antetokounmpo to beat Chicago.

Yanks' Judge hits grand slam in rout of Tigers

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Aaron Judge homered twice, including a grand slam, Gerrit Cole struck out 12 and the New York Yankees routed the Detroit Tigers 10-0.

The frequently injured Judge was held out of New York's starting lineup in its previous two games with what the Yankees described as lower body soreness.

Cole (4-1) allowed four hits and no walks during six innings, and New York pitchers had 18 strikeouts to tie a franchise record for a nine-inning game.

Padres 3, Giants 2: Yu Darvish struck out 12 and host San Diego, helped when a replay review turned a Giants grand slam into a foul ball, beat San Francisco 3-2.

Nationals 2, Marlins 1: At Miami, Kyle Schwarber led off the bottom of the 10th inning with a two-run homer off Yimi García (2-2), his second walk-off homer this season.

Phillies 2, Mets 1: Benches cleared in the eighth inning when Philadelphia reliever José Alvarado jawed at Dominic Smith after he struck him out to end a rally. Alvarado — who riled up his opponents with gestures earlier this month — mixed it up with visiting New York but nothing came of the heat-

ed words.

Mariners 7, Angels 4: Mitch Haniger, Dylan Moore and Tom Murphy homered while host Seattle's bullpen earned its ninth win this season.

Cardinals 7, Pirates 3: Matt Carpenter hit his second pinch-hit, three-run home run in as many days, a drive off Duane Underwood Jr. in the sixth inning to put host St. Louis ahead 6-1 while batting for John Gant (2-2).

Astros 9, Rays 2: At St. Petersburg, Fla., Lance McCullers Jr. (2-1) struck out nine over seven shutout innings in the teams since the Tampa Bay won Game 7 of last year's AL Championship Series.

Blue Jays 13, Braves 5: At Dunedin, Fla., Teoscar Hernández was 2-for-5 with a three-run homer after missing three weeks following a positive test for the coronavirus.

Lourdes Gurriel Jr. hit Toronto's sixth homer, a solo shot in the eighth.

Reds 8, Cubs 6: Joey Votto hit his 300th home run and doubled twice to help visiting Cincinnati beat Chicago.

Red Sox 6, Rangers 1: J.D. Martinez homered twice, raising his major league-leading total to nine, and Boston picked up a

win on the road over Texas.

Brewers 3, Dodgers 1: Freddy Peralta (3-0) allowed one run and one hit in six innings with seven strikeouts, and host Milwaukee improved to 2-0 in the four-game series.

Twins 9, Royals 1: At Minneapolis, Alex Kirilloff hit the first two home runs of his major league career, including a three-run drive in the third inning off Tyler Zuber that boosted the lead to 4-0.

Indians 5, White Sox 3: Visiting Cleveland's Shane Bieber (3-2) struck out 11 and fanned at least eight in his 18th straight game, setting a major league record. The previous mark was set by Hall of Famer Randy Johnson in 1999-2000.

Diamondbacks 7, Rockies 2: At Phoenix, Madison Bumgarner (3-2) followed his seven-inning no-hitter last Sunday against Atlanta by allowing one run over five innings and sparked a four-run, third-inning rally with a single.

Orioles 3, Athletics 2: John Means (3-0) struck out nine and allowed one run and three hits over seven innings as Baltimore won at the Coliseum for the first time since 2017 after seven straight losses.

Coyotes end Knights' winning streak

Associated Press

GLENDAL, Ariz. — Adin Hill stopped 25 shots and the Arizona Coyotes ended the Vegas Golden Knights' 10-game winning streak while keeping their playoff hopes alive with a 3-0 win Friday night.

Arizona failed on a chance to solidify its playoff chances over the past two weeks, losing four of five games to drop behind St. Louis for the West Division's final playoff spot.

John Hayden and Michael Bunting scored, and Arizona shut down a Vegas team that had outscored teams 45-17 during its franchise-long winning streak. Hill finished off his second shutout this season — third career— and Christian Fischer capped it with an empty-net goal, allowing the Coyotes to pull within three points of the Blues for fourth in the West.

Robin Lehner had 29 saves for the Golden Knights, who saw their lead in the West Division tighten. Vegas leads Colorado by four points after the Avalanche beat San Jose.

Kings 2, Ducks 1: Anze Kopitar scored with 55.1 seconds remaining and visiting

Los Angeles rallied past Anaheim.

Kopitar got John Gibson to overcommit and scored on a backhand before barreling into the empty net. It was his 997th career point.

Lias Andersson also had a goal and Jonathan Quick made 33 saves for the Kings, who trail St. Louis by eight points for the final playoff spot in the West Division with eight games remaining.

Haydn Fleury scored, John Gibson made 23 saves and the Ducks have gone 23 straight home games without winning in regulation.

Canadiens 5, Jets 3: Nick Suzuki's second goal of the game broke a tie late in the third period and host Montreal beat Winnipeg.

Tyler Toffoli had a goal and an assist, and Joel Armia and Artturi Lehkonen also scored for the Canadiens. Jake Allen stopped 19 shots. Suzuki also had an assist to give him four goals and two assists in his last four games.

Trevor Lewis had two goals and Paul Stastny also scored for the Jets, who lost their sixth straight in regulation. Connor

Helleybuyck finished with 30 saves.

The Jets rank third in the North Division, four points up on the fourth-place Canadiens, who hold the final playoff spot. Calgary is six points behind Montreal.

Suzuki got the tiebreaking goal on the power play with 4:50 left in the third, getting his 12th of the season on a rising wrist shot.

Avalanche 3, Sharks 0: Gabriel Landeskog and Cale Makar scored power-play goals 2 minutes apart in the first period, Philipp Grubauer stopped 21 shots in his return from the league's COVID-19 protocols and host Colorado beat San Jose.

Grubauer showed no signs of rust in his first game since April 12. It was his sixth shutout of the season.

Mikko Rantanen added two assists and an empty-net goal for the Avalanche, who ended a three-game slide. Rantanen and Joonas Donskoi, who also had an assist, both were returning from the virus protocol list.

Sharks goaltender Martin Jones made 33 saves.

Ravens exercise quarterback Jackson's 5th-year option

Associated Press

The Baltimore Ravens have exercised the fifth-year option for quarterback Lamar Jackson.

The team announced the decision Friday, a few hours before the second and third rounds of the NFL Draft. Jackson will make \$23 million as part of a tiered system under the new collective bargaining agreement.

Jackson, the NFL MVP for the 2019 season, threw for 2,757 yards with 26 touchdowns and nine interceptions (99.3 rating) last year. He also became the first quarterback in league history to have two 1,000-yard rushing seasons. But he has struggled in the playoffs.

The Ravens are interested in signing Jackson to a long-term extension, which will come at a high cost, of course.

Last year, Deshaun Watson

became the most recent quarterback to land a mega-deal, inking a four-year, \$156 million extension with the Houston Texans. Watson has since demanded a trade from the struggling franchise.

Patrick Mahomes signed a 10-year extension worth up to \$503 million with the Kansas City Chiefs in 2020. The deal is the most lucrative in North American sports history, surpassing the previous mark set by Los Angeles Angels outfielder Mike Trout, who signed a 12-year, \$426.5 million contract in 2019.

In March, Dak Prescott reached a four-year, \$160 million deal with the Dallas Cowboys.

Malathaat rallies to win Kentucky Oaks

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — After Malathaat outdueled Search Results down the stretch to win the 147th Kentucky Oaks by a

neck, runner-up jockey Irad Ortiz Jr. patted Malathaat's jockey, John Velazquez, on the shoulder to congratulate him.

"We just got beat today," Ortiz said. "She ran a really solid effort and fought hard down the stretch."

Malathaat, the 5-2 favorite, edged Search Results by a neck after overtaking Travel Column entering the stretch in the \$1.25 million race for 3-year-old fillies on Friday. The Oaks was back in its traditional spring spot at Churchill Downs the day before the Kentucky Derby; both races were delayed to Labor Day weekend last year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Alomar fired by MLB over sexual misconduct

NEW YORK — Hall of Fame second baseman Roberto Alomar has been fired as a consult-

ant by Major League Baseball and placed on the league's ineligible list after an investigation into an allegation of sexual misconduct.

Commissioner Rob Manfred announced the firing Friday, saying in a statement that a baseball industry employee reported an incident earlier this year involving Alomar from 2014. The league hired an external legal firm to investigate the matter.

"Having reviewed all of the available evidence from the now completed investigation, I have concluded that Mr. Alomar violated MLB's policies, and that termination of his consultant contract and placement on MLB's ineligible list are warranted," Manfred said.

MLB said it would not provide further details on the investigation to protect the individual who came forward.