

Military clinics prepare to vaccinate kids

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Some U.S. military health clinics in Europe are preparing to give the coronavirus vaccine to children as young as 12, Army and Air Force officials said.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is expected to arrive in Europe early this week, medical officials said Friday.

“We will receive enough doses for all eligible 12-17 year olds to receive first and second doses,” Air Force Lt. Col. Elizabeth Erickson, acting command surgeon for U.S. European Command, said in a statement.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on May 10 expanded the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer vaccine to include those aged 12 to 15. The vaccine was already approved for ages 16 and up.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advisory

committee also signed off on the two-dose jab, citing the low risk the vaccine has posed so far among the age group in clinical trials.

This will be the first time the Pfizer vaccine will be available at U.S. bases in Europe.

Moderna has been the primary vaccine shipped overseas because of the ultra-cold storage requirements for Pfizer. Some bases have also received the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Both vaccines are authorized for ages 18 and up.

Once it arrives, the Pfizer vaccine will be available at all Army military treatment facilities in Europe, said Gino Mattorano, a spokesman for Regional Health Command Europe. Each clinic will announce when the vaccine will be available at their location, he said.

Air Force bases in Europe

are expected to begin distributing the Pfizer vaccine this week, said 2nd Lt. Charis Bryan, a spokeswoman for U.S. Forces in Europe — Air Forces Africa.

“DOD affiliated personnel ages 12-17 will be the primary recipients, but additional categories may also receive this vaccination if they choose,” Bryan said in a statement Friday.

Distribution may vary by location, she said.

The Wiesbaden Army Health Clinic has set aside May 27 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Hainerberg Bookmart in the base strip mall in Wiesbaden. Appointments will open once the vaccine arrives, the clinic’s Facebook page said.

In Belgium, SHAPE Healthcare Facility has penciled in May 24, pending vaccine arrival, a Facebook announcement said. One Saturday vaccination clinic is also planned.

At Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, first-dose immunizations are tentatively planned for May 24-27 and June 2.

Ramstein Air Base said due to freezer storage limitations, the base will continue to offer only the Moderna vaccine to eligible beneficiaries 18 and older. Ramstein beneficiaries are eligible to receive the Pfizer immunization at LRMC.

U.S. Naval Hospital Naples, the largest Navy hospital in Europe, did not immediately say Friday whether it would be offering the Pfizer vaccine.

Mattorano said the Pfizer vaccine will be shipped to facilities that have ultra-cold storage capability. From there, it will be redistributed to clinics to support vaccination events for those ages 12 to 17. The vaccine can be stored for up to 14 days at facilities that do not have ultra-cold storage, he said.

Japan, US, France hold joint drills with eye on China

Associated Press

KIRISHIMA TRAINING AREA, Japan — Dozens of Japanese, American and French troops landed amid pouring rain from a CH-47 transport helicopter onto a grassy field at a training area in southern Japan, part of Saturday’s joint scenario of defending a remote island from an enemy invasion.

The three nations’ first joint drills on Japanese soil — dubbed “ARC21” and which began Tuesday — come as they seek to step up military ties amid growing Chinese assertiveness in the region.

Japanese soldiers and their counterparts from the French army and the U.S. Marine Corps also conducted an urban warfare drill using a concrete building elsewhere at the Japanese Self-Defense Force’s Kirishima Training Area in the southern Miyazaki prefecture. Around 200 troops took part in Satur-

day’s exercises.

On Saturday, the three countries were also joined by Australia in an expanded naval exercise involving 11 warships in the East China Sea, where tensions with China are rising around the island of Taiwan.

The drills come as Japan looks to bolster its military capabilities amid a deepening territorial row with China in regional seas. Japan is increasingly concerned about Chinese activity in and around Japanese-claimed waters surrounding the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands, which Beijing also claims and calls Diaoyu.

France, which has territories in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific, has strategic interests in the region.

“It is obviously very important for us because we need to be side by side with people who are sharing this part of the world,” Lt. Col.

Henri Marcaillou from the French army told reporters after Saturday’s exercise.

U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Jeremy Nelson said the three countries showed they can work together “for a common goal or common cause.”

Britain is sending the aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth and its strike group, due to arrive in the region later this year. Germany is also set to deploy a frigate to the region.

Japan and the U.S. have been promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific vision of defense and economic framework based on democratic principles in the area in a group known as the Quad, which also includes Australia and India, seen as a move to counter China’s escalating influence in the region.

China has criticized the U.S.-Japanese framework as an exclusionist bloc based on a Cold War-era mindset.

US, Greece look to grow military alliance

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTT GART, Germany — The United States and Greece will likely update a bilateral security pact this summer in a move that could pave the way for more American military missions in the region, Greece's defense chief has said.

Greek Defense Minister Nikos Panagiotopoulos, describing military ties with the U.S. as being at an "all-time high," said that the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement between the countries is being amended.

The deal could "bring in more locations" where U.S. troops can operate in Greece, Panagiotopoulos said Tuesday during an online discussion at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The plan could also "enhance what is happening at the selected locations in operation right now," he said.

The agreement could be finalized within two months.

Panagiotopoulos' comments are the latest signal that Washington is looking to bolster its position in the eastern Mediterranean, where Russia has stepped up military activities and where China is gaining influence as a financial stakeholder at various European ports.

Beijing is "very methodically, very patiently, very systematically — like everything China does — expanding its strategic posture in the region," Panagiotopoulos said.

During the past three years, the U.S. has gradually boosted operations in Greece at multiple bases.

Most recently, the U.S. Navy in October muscled up in the eastern Mediterranean when it decided to homeport the USS Hershel "Woody" Williams at its Souda Bay base in Crete, a first for a U.S. ship in at least 40 years.

Since 1969, Souda Bay has mainly served

as a logistics hub, serving ships transiting the region, including aircraft carriers.

Beyond Souda Bay, the U.S. operates MQ-9 Reaper drones in Larissa as well as at facilities in Alexandroupoli, where a port plays a key role for rotating U.S. forces in Europe.

The U.S. activity in Greece comes at a time of strained relations with ally Turkey, which has also been at odds with Athens in connection with an energy rights dispute in the eastern Mediterranean.

Some security analysts have suggested that if relations further deteriorate between Ankara and Washington, bases in Greece could eventually be an operational alternative to Turkey's Incirlik Air Base.

Washington, however, has given no indication that it intends to move forces out of Turkey, where the U.S. Army also operates a missile defense radar at a remote base in Kuerecik.

Guam Tritons to join Global Hawks in Japan

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Navy MQ-4C Tritons will join Air Force RQ-4 Global Hawk surveillance drones on a temporary deployment to Japan for the first time this summer, according to Japan's Defense Ministry.

The Guam-based drones will arrive in Japan after mid-May in "the midst of an increasingly severe security environment surrounding the country," the ministry said in an undated message on its website.

The deployment is "critical to enhance [intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance] activities by both countries," the message said.

U.S. forces have temporarily deployed Guam-based Global Hawks to Japan since 2014. The Tritons, which arrived on Guam in January 2020, are similar to Global Hawks but specialized for maritime surveillance.

"This deployment is intended to demonstrate U.S. commitment to Japan's Defense and will be beneficial to security of Japan by strengthening the ability of maritime surveillance around Japan, given the increasingly active maritime activities by surrounding countries," the ministry's message said.

The Global Hawks' deployment was confirmed by 5th Air Force spokeswoman Capt. Andrea Valencia in an email Tuesday.

"Pacific Air Forces will rotate RQ-4 Global Hawks to Yokota AB, Japan, from Andersen AFB, Guam, due to the more favorable weather in the Kanto Region during typhoon season and to maximize their ability to support theater-wide operations," she said. "This move ensures persistent reconnaissance in a region where challenges to a free and open Indo-Pacific continue to increase."

Commute to school is a daily adventure for Navy officer's son

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — As the son of a career Navy officer, 18-year-old Jonah Lee has traveled extensively, having lived in Italy, California, Washington, Florida, Maryland and Japan.

But one of the most intriguing journeys in his young life is the daily commute to high school via kayak that he makes across a quarter-mile-wide channel in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

"I always joke with my friends that when I have grandkids I'll be like, 'Back in my day we had to kayak to school — upstream both ways,'" Lee told Stars and Stripes during a recent interview at the pier at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. He stores his kayak there during the school day.

"It's always awesome," said Lee, who is also a voracious surfer. "If you're sleepy, your

feet get wet and you're like, 'Whoa!'"

Lee's physician father, Capt. Benjamin Lee, was transferred to the base in 2018, and the family settled into military housing on nearby Ford Island.

Just before Lee's junior year was to begin, his parents bought a home in Ewa, a suburban community on the far side of Pearl Harbor from the base. It was in a different school district and meant he would attend Campbell High School, a few minutes away from his new home.

But Lee said he decided to finish high school at Radford, a choice his parents supported. But it would mean a long round-trip commute on a congested freeway each day.

His father, who had been considering a kayak commute for himself to the base, broached the idea of kayaking to school.

Events with differing flag rules coincide

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden initially ordered flags on Saturday to be flown at half-staff. Then he ordered them back up at full staff.

It's because of a quirk that comes up every half dozen years or so, when a day that honors two groups collides — with two different protocols for the American flag. For Peace Officers Memorial Day, which falls on May 15, flags are supposed to be at half-staff. But the third Saturday in May is marked to honor Armed Forces Day — and on that day, flags are supposed to be full staff.

On Saturday, those two days were one and the same.

Biden's initial proclamation last week said that flags should be flown at half-staff. But he reissued a proclamation on

Friday making clear that flags were to remain at full-staff.

The White House declined to comment on the record about the change, but suggested that it was done to remain in compliance with U.S. codes honoring Armed Forces Day.

"The flag shall be flown at half-staff on Peace Officers Memorial Day, unless that day is also Armed Forces Day," reads the U.S. code pertaining to the flag.

"This weekend is a once-in-a-decade scenario based on the flag code," said a White House official, who was not authorized to speak publicly. "As a result, flag code dictates that the flags should not be lowered today. The president stands by the message of his proclamation and his longtime commitment to

working with law enforcement to build safer communities."

Still, a number of Republicans have criticized Biden, saying that his decision was done to offend police officers.

"In his opinion they aren't worthy of lowering the flags," Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla., wrote on Twitter. "Unacceptable!"

Several other members of Congress and prominent Republicans amplified his message.

"In case you had any question as to where President Biden stands on police, now you know," said Kayleigh McEnany, who was White House press secretary during the Trump administration.

New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, a Republican, called Biden's decision "outrageous" and said his state would continue flying flags at half-staff.

Some will keep masks despite new guidelines

Associated Press

Like more than 120 million other Americans, Jan Massie is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and can pretty much give up wearing a mask under the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But she's still covering her face, even as the temperature rises in her native Alabama, because of benefits she says are too great to give up.

The retired educator didn't catch the illness caused by the new coronavirus, and she also didn't get the flu or her twice-yearly colds while masked during the pandemic. Unlike some, she's not gotten any hostile blowback in public for wearing a mask. So why quit now?

"I've worn a mask where it really wasn't

required," Massie, who lives in suburban Birmingham, said Saturday. "Many people, more than I expected, still are, too."

With COVID-19 cases on the decline after more than 580,000 deaths and with more than a third of the U.S. population fully vaccinated, millions are deciding whether to continue wearing face masks, which were both a shield against infection and a point of heated political debate over the last year. People have myriad reasons for deciding to stop, or continuing to wear, a mask.

Many are ready to put aside the sadness, isolation and wariness of the pandemic. Ditching face masks — even ones bedazzled with sequins or sports team logos — is a visible, liberating way to move ahead. Yet others are still worried about new virus varia-

nts and the off-chance they might contract the virus and pass it along to others, though the risks of both are greatly reduced for those who are fully vaccinated.

The CDC last week said fully vaccinated people — those who are two weeks past their final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine — can quit wearing masks outdoors in crowds and in most indoor settings and give up social distancing. Partially vaccinated or unvaccinated people should continue wearing masks, the agency said.

The guidance still calls for masks in crowded indoor settings including buses, airplanes, hospitals, prisons and homeless shelters. But it clears a path toward reopening workplaces, schools and other venues that went dark during the pandemic.

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill dozens, topple buildings

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 42 people Sunday, Palestinian medics said. Despite the heavy death toll and international efforts to broker a cease-fire, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signaled the fourth war with Gaza's Hamas rulers would rage on.

In a televised address, Netanyahu said Sunday evening the attacks were continuing at "full-force" and will "take time." Is-

rael "wants to levy a heavy price" from the Hamas militant group, he said, flanked by his defense minister and political rival, Benny Gantz, in a show of unity.

The Israeli air assault early Sunday was the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and Hamas nearly a week ago, marking the worst fighting here since their devastating 2014 war in Gaza.

The airstrikes hit a major downtown street of residential buildings and store-

fronts over the course of five minutes after midnight, destroying two adjacent buildings and one about 50 yards down the road.

At one point, a rescuer shouted, "Can you hear me?" into a hole in the rubble. "Are you OK?" Minutes later, first responders pulled a survivor out and carried him off on an orange stretcher. The Gaza Health Ministry said 16 women and 10 children were among those killed, with more than 50 people wounded, and rescue efforts are still underway.

Fla. theme parks loosen mask rules

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Florida's major theme parks are adjusting their face mask policies after the federal government loosened its recommendations as more people get vaccinated for the coronavirus.

Visitors to Walt Disney World and Universal Studios-Orlando were allowed Saturday to remove their masks when they are outdoors except when they are on attractions, in line or riding a tram or other transportation.

Masks remain mandatory indoors except in restaurants when seated. Disney requires they be worn except when actively eating and drinking.

SeaWorld Orlando and its sister park, Tampa's Busch Gardens, are going even further, allowing guests who say they are fully vaccinated to remove their masks throughout the parks. The two parks will not require proof of vaccination, but are asking guests to "respectfully comply."

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday said people could stop wearing masks outdoors in crowds and most indoor settings. The CDC guidance still calls for wearing masks in crowded indoor settings such as buses, planes, hospitals, prisons and homeless shelters.

Washington

VANCOUVER — Public health authorities say a broadband call center in Vancouver, Wash., has been temporarily closed because of a COVID-19 outbreak that has resulted in 29 confirmed and two possible cases.

Public Health spokeswoman Marissa Armstrong said in an email late Friday that the first case at the Spectrum Communications office was reported in mid-April, with the most recent case reported Friday, The Columbian reported.

Armstrong said the business

closed Wednesday, will undergo a deep cleaning, and will also consult with Labor & Industries before reopening.

She said those who tested positive cannot return to work until they've completed their isolation period and are no longer considered infectious. Employees identified as close contacts must quarantine for 10 days, according to Armstrong.

Connecticut

Yale University is requiring its faculty and staff to get coronavirus vaccinations before the fall term, extending a requirement already imposed for students.

The private university announced the new requirement Friday. It said faculty members, staffers and academic trainees must be fully inoculated by Aug. 1, though there are provisions for exemptions for reasons based on medical conditions or religious or "strongly held" personal beliefs.

Many Yale staffers are in unions. The university said it was discussing the implementation of the policy with them.

Maine

A state senator in Maine wants to create a grant program to help theaters in the state stay in operation after struggling through the coronavirus pandemic.

Sen. Mattie Daughtry of Brunswick has introduced a bill that would provide the grants to performing and cinematic arts venues.

The program would be part of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and it would provide money to the venues "to bridge the gap between now and when they can operate in a normal fashion." The grants would help businesses "in the arts that have suffered due to closure from the COVID-19 crisis and help keep businesses afloat," Daughtry

said in a statement.

Daughtry said the proposal would help make sure venues for theater, film and music can stay viable in Maine. The proposal has been subject to a public hearing and would face more consideration in legislative committee.

Massachusetts

Six Flags New England has reopened, with safety precautions in place because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The state on Monday allowed amusement parks, outdoor water parks and theme parks to reopen at half capacity. Six Flags, in Agawam, opened Friday night.

"Rides are now open! See you at the park!" Six Flags said Saturday on Facebook.

Reservations are required, and visitors must wear masks, have their temperatures checked and attest to having been healthy for the prior two weeks.

New Hampshire

Fans of the New Hampshire Fisher Cats no longer have to wear masks at the Manchester stadium if they have been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Fisher Cats President Mike Ramshaw says fans who are not fully vaccinated will be asked to wear masks, and some sections at Delta Dental Stadium will be reserved for socially-distanced seating.

Seating is currently at half-capacity, but officials plan to expand to full capacity next month.

Vermont

The state of Vermont has moved to phase three of its reopening plan two weeks earlier than had been planned.

The state moved to phase three Friday rather than June 1 because it has already exceeded the goal of having more than 60% of the population with at

least one dose of a vaccine against COVID-19.

The new guidance removes the testing requirement for travel and decreases event and gathering restrictions.

The new gathering sizes will allow for one unvaccinated person per 50-square feet, up to 300 people, plus any number of vaccinated people for indoor events; and 900 people, plus any number of vaccinated people, outdoors.

On Friday the state also lifted its mask mandate in line with guidance issued by federal officials.

Masks are still required in schools, on public transportation, in health care settings, long term care facilities and prisons. The mandate remains in place for those who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated, including children who are not yet eligible for a vaccine.

Arkansas

NORTH LITTLE ROCK — The Arkansas National Guard has ended its work at a warehouse in North Little Rock where it helped distribute personal protective equipment during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Arkansas Division of Emergency Management requested closure of the warehouse operations mission as PPE has become more commercially available and the workload more manageable for warehouse staff, according to a Friday news release from the Guard.

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported that state officials said emergency management staff will send PPE to health care providers as needed.

Four to six National Guard members have assisted in PPE distribution at the warehouse since April 2020 the four that were on site returned to their unit on Friday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Teen steals car with 2-year-old inside

NJ ROSELLE — A teenage boy who stole a car with a toddler inside was charged with kidnapping and numerous other counts, authorities said.

The 16-year-old took the car at a Roselle home, shortly after the vehicle's owner had arrived there, according to the Union County Prosecutor's Office. The owner was bringing items from the vehicle into the home when the theft occurred, and it's not clear if the teen knew the 2-year-old boy was in the car.

Roselle police soon located the vehicle and began a pursuit that went into neighboring Elizabeth. The teen was soon captured there following a brief foot pursuit, and the child was found unharmed on a sidewalk in Roselle and was reunited with his family a short time later.

Veterans' monuments defaced in park

GA GAINESVILLE — Police in northeast Georgia are investigating after someone spray-painted graffiti on two veterans' monuments.

The Times of Gainesville reported that Gainesville parks employees discovered the orange paint on concrete at the base of one monument honoring veterans from 20th century wars.

Vandals also painted over the "All gave some, some gave all" inscription on a separate Vietnam veterans monument.

Gainesville Parks and Recre-

ation spokesperson Julie Butler Colombini said all the graffiti was cleaned up.

TV crew attacked while filming fight on beach

FL MIAMI BEACH — A television news crew was attacked while filming a fight that broke out in Miami Beach, police said.

CBS4 reporter Bobeth Yates and photojournalist Ebenezer Mends were reporting a story about recent unruly behavior in South Beach when a group of people turned on them, Yates said during an 11 p.m. news broadcast.

"Just really shaken up. Been reporting for a very long time, don't want to date myself, but about 20 years, and I've never been attacked like this on a story," Yates said. "The ironic part was, we were actually covering crime on South Beach."

Plane makes emergency landing on interstate

IL NEW LENOX — A stalled engine forced the pilot of a small aircraft to make an emergency landing on Interstate 355 near Interstate 80 south of Chicago, according to authorities.

Illinois State Police Master Sgt. Brian McKinney said the pilot and three passengers were aboard the single-engine Beechcraft B24R when it landed on the southbound lanes of I-355 near New Lenox.

The 39-year-old pilot, a 15-year-old girl and two women, 20 and 21, were taken to Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox

for evaluation of minor neck pain, state police said. The names of the four weren't immediately released.

"Investigators will be gathering that information," said Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman Elizabeth Isham Cory.

Streetcars are back, but no cable cars yet

CA SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco's iconic cable cars remain sidelined by the coronavirus pandemic but officials said the city's historic streetcars will start rolling again.

As tourists start trickling back into San Francisco and the city reopens more of its economy, it plans to restore service of the vintage streetcars that run along Market Street and the Embarcadero, the mayor's office said in a statement.

Mayor London Breed and other city officials planned to mark the return of the streetcars and other public transportation with a celebratory ride to Fisherman's Wharf.

Governor signs limited wine delivery bill

AL MONTGOMERY — Alabamians will soon be able to have a bottle of pinot noir or chardonnay delivered in the mail after Gov. Kay Ivey on Thursday signed wine shipment legislation into law.

State lawmakers approved the bill this session after years of debate. The new law sponsored by Rep. Terri Collins, R-Decatur, will allow wineries to

obtain a direct wine shipper license from the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to ship limited quantities of wine directly to Alabama residents 21 and older.

The bill will take effect in three months which Collins said will give the state ABC Board time to work out rules.

Several headstones vandalized at cemetery

KS MCPHERSON — McPherson officials are investigating after seven headstones, some dating back to the 1800s, were damaged at a cemetery.

The headstones were knocked over and broken. One was moved onto nearby railroad tracks, KAKE-TV reported.

The damages range from \$200 to \$500. The McPherson Public Lands Department paid to fix the headstones. Four have been replaced but it could be weeks before the other three are repaired.

Firm to pay \$15K for unwanted telemarketing

KS WICHITA — Genesis Health Clubs in Wichita has agreed to pay \$15,000 in civil penalties and fees for making unsolicited telemarketing calls to consumers on the Kansas do-not-call registry.

The consent agreement with Genesis Health Clubs Management, Inc. also enjoins the company from further violations of state and federal consumer protection laws, the Kansas Attorney General's Office said in a news release.

-From The Associated Press



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Rookie Kaprizov big boost to Wild

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Wary of all kinds of pressure on Kirill Kaprizov and resolute in their team-first culture, the Minnesota Wild tried to keep a lid on the fanfare enveloping his arrival in the NHL.

"I was nervous about the incredible expectations, because our fan base has waited five years for this kid, and he's had such success," said general manager Bill Guerin, nodding to Kaprizov's game-winner that gave Russia the 2018 Olympic gold medal and back-to-back seasons leading the Kontinental Hockey League in goals.

One game in, all bets were off.

Kaprizov intercepted a pass on Jan. 14 in Los Angeles, bolted toward the net on a breakaway, used a slick right-left move to try to deke goalie Jonathan Quick and managed to knock in the puck off his left skate for the overtime winner in the opener.

"I said to myself, 'OK, I'm done here,'" Guerin said, chuckling.

The 24-year-old Kaprizov is about to show his skills on a bigger stage when the Wild open the playoffs against Vegas, with Game 1 on Sunday. He finished the regular season with 27 goals, the eighth-most in the league. He led all NHL rookies with 51 points and in several other categories.

Though he has competition from Dallas' Jason Robertson, Kaprizov has been the consensus Calder Trophy favorite since that auspicious debut against the Kings. He'd be one of the oldest winners since a 1990 rule change required candidates to be under 26 on Sept. 15 of their rookie season.

"We've definitely seen areas of improvement away from the puck, but his skill set, his awareness offensively, is as good as it gets," coach Dean Evason said.

Kaprizov set numerous single-season Wild rookie records in just 55 games. His scoring pace for a normal 82-game schedule would have threatened the all-time franchise record,

shared by Marian Gaborik (2007-08) and Eric Staal (2017-18) with 42 goals each, but these milestones aren't exactly front of mind for him.

Asked on a recent video conference call about his preference of his two nicknames making the rounds — Kirill The Thrill or Dollar Bill Kirill, which teammates solidified with custom T-shirts — Kaprizov naturally demurred.

"I don't like to give myself compliments. I don't like to think of myself as an outlier," Kaprizov said, through a translator. "It was a team effort, and at the end of the day that's really all it's about and all I focus on."

Kaprizov has given the Wild their first player with true take-over-a-game potential since Gaborik's departure 12 years ago. He'll be a big help on their quest to win a playoff series for the first time since 2015, the same year their floppy-haired, easy-smiling left wing was drafted.

"Every time he gets the puck, you can feel it in the arena," said center Joel Eriksson Ek, the Wild's third-leading scorer. "It's amazing the things he does. He's just creating all the time."

He's not overly deferential, ranking second on the team in shots behind Kevin Fiala. The 5-foot-9, 200-pound Kaprizov is also not so defined by the finesse of skating and stickhandling that he won't pursue and protect the puck with muscle and grit.

"You should see him with his shirt off. He's pretty chiseled," linemate Ryan Hartman said. "He's strong and he can definitely stand up for himself, but ideally we'd like to be doing that for him."

The Golden Knights went after Kaprizov on May 5, their most recent matchup, when Nicolas Hague hit him from behind in the first period.

While the rest of the Wild stormed to Kaprizov's defense in the ensuing shoving match, Zach Whitecloud charged him and wound up with a bloody nose after being wrestled to the

ice. Kaprizov clearly didn't need the help. He scored two goals in the third period of that overtime loss.

"That's one of the things that I love about him," Guerin said. "Can you play your best game when you're taking a lot of abuse? He can."

The Wild, then led by general manager Chuck Fletcher, were able to nab Kaprizov in the fifth round in 2015 because of the common uncertainty of Russian prospects coming to the NHL in light of the KHL's prominence there.

Hailing from a small village outside of the industrial city of Novokuznetsk, more than 2,000 miles from Moscow, Kaprizov didn't expect to be drafted, finding out via text message as he readied for bed that night. He honored his commitment to the KHL but promised the Wild he'd come when he was finished, and Guerin made a trip to Russia a few months after getting the job in 2019 to further the relationship. He left with no doubt Kaprizov could handle the transition.

The pandemic created a soft launch, with mostly empty arenas and a trimmed-down schedule. League protocols also left him frequently confined to his downtown Minneapolis apartment — "This season is very much rink, home, sleep, travel, eat, repeat," he said — and whenever he ventured out for food he wore a mask. The Wild have only arranged four formal interview sessions with the media, including last summer when he signed his contract.

He has steadily improved his English since his arrival thanks mostly to conversation with teammates. Though missing his friends and mother's cooking from the homeland, Kaprizov has hardly been intimidated by being the only Russian on the team and clearly grown into one of the most popular players in the room.

"He's really sparked our team," Guerin said. "He's an electrifying player."

Dowd, Capitals knock off Bruins in OT of Game 1

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — T.J. Oshie's goal song, John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads," echoed through Capital One Arena and its 25% capacity crowd. It turned out the credit technically belonged elsewhere, but Capitals fans were in no mood to nitpick.

Nic Dowd's deflection of Oshie'

shot from the blue line found the back of the net 4:41 into overtime, giving his team a 3-2 victory over the Boston Bruins on Saturday night in Game 1 of the first-round playoff series.

Washington weathered the loss of starting goaltender Vitek Vanecek to a lower-body injury early on, with backup Craig An-

derson making 21 saves and allowing only a power-play goal.

As four Capitals players entered the offensive zone, Tom Wilson shuttled a pass back to Oshie, who blasted a one-timer on net. Dowd extended his stick for the deflection, and soon the puck trickled through Tuukka Rask's leg pads and over the line.

"I think you just got to read the play," Dowd said. "You have the opportunity to join the rush, you join the rush and, you know, you make a play and we were fortunate enough to do that."

The Capitals host Game 2 on Monday before the teams head to Boston for Games 3 and 4 on Wednesday and Friday.

LeBron returns, Lakers beat Pacers

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — LeBron James returned from a six-game absence to score 24 points, Anthony Davis had 28 and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Indiana Pacers 122-115 on Saturday.

The Lakers can take the No. 6 seed if they win at New Orleans on Sunday and Portland loses to Denver that day. If the Lakers finish No. 7, they will be in the play-in tournament against the No. 8 seed.

James played 28 minutes, hitting 11 of 22 shots, after sitting out trying to recover from a high ankle sprain. He had eight assists and seven rebounds.

Davis, who missed the previous game because of a tight left thigh, also had 10 rebounds.

Suns 140, Spurs 103: Devin Booker had 27 points and Phoenix won at San Antonio to maintain its hope of earning the top spot in the NBA and Western Conference.

The Suns moved within a game of Utah for first in the West. The Jazz conclude their season Sunday in Sacramento while Phoenix closes a two-game series in San Antonio.

The Suns swept the season series against Utah.

Keldon Johnson had 18 points to lead the Spurs, who previously clinched 10th in the West and will face either Memphis or Golden State on the road Wednesday.

Nets 105, Bulls 91: Kyrie Irving scored 22 points while playing with Kevin Durant and James Harden for the first time in three months, leading host Brooklyn past Chicago.

The eighth appearance of the season for the Nets' Big Three wasn't particularly pretty, as they fell quickly into a 12-0 hole. But they had some sharp stretches and won their fourth straight, improving to 6-2 with their three All-Stars in the same game.

Durant shot just 4-for-17, but finished with 12 points, nine rebounds and six assists. Harden had seven assists, five points and five rebounds while playing 25 minutes in his second game back from a hamstring injury.

Bucks 122, Heat 108: Khris Middleton and Bryn Forbes each scored 21 points to help host Milwaukee beat Miami in a potential first-round playoff series preview.

Jrue Holiday added 20 points and 10 assists for the Bucks. Kendrick Nunn had a season-high 31 points for the Heat, who were without leading scorer Jimmy Butler because of lower back tightness.

Milwaukee is third and Miami sixth in the Eastern Conference standings, which would have them meeting in the first round of the playoffs. But neither team is locked into that position heading into the final day of the regular season.

Knicks 118, Hornets 109 (OT): Julius Randle had 33 points, 13 assists and 10 rebounds and led an overtime surge that sent host New York past Charlotte.

The Knicks improved to 40-31 and moved into a tie with the idle Atlanta Hawks for the fourth spot in the Eastern Conference playoff race.

Celtics 124, Timberwolves 108: Jayson Tatum had 26 points and 11 rebounds to help Boston roll at Minnesota.

Evan Fournier added 18 points and was 5-for-8 from three-point range.

Karl-Anthony Towns led the Timberwolves with 24 points and 14 rebounds.

Rombauer pulls upset, Baffert's Medina Spirit is 3rd

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Rombauer left Medina Spirit behind — and put horse racing's latest controversy on the back burner.

Little-known Rombauer sprung an 11-1 upset to win the Preakness on Saturday, passing Bob Baffert's Kentucky Derby winner to end a potential Triple Crown bid that would have carried a giant asterisk.

Medina Spirit finished third and will not go on to the Belmont with a Triple Crown on the line and a potential Derby disqualification hanging over the sport.

"A little disappointed, but we'll go on from here," said assistant trainer Jimmy Barnes, who saddled the horses in Baffert's absence.

Baffert was not present at Pimlico Race Course, opting to stay away because of the controversy surrounding Medina Spirit, who tested positive for the steroid betamethasone in post-Derby testing. He said in a spotlight-stealing statement hours before the race: "Today is not about Bob Baffert. Instead it is about Medina Spirit and all of the other equine athletes in our tremendous sport."

All the focus nonetheless was on 2-1 fa-

vorite Medina Spirit, Baffert and his other Preakness runner, Concert Tour, who went off at 4-1. Medina Spirit was passed for the first time in his career by Rombauer, who won by 3½ lengths over second-place Midnight Bourbon.

"I had to come out running to get my position," said Medina Spirit jockey John Velazquez, who fell to 0 for 11 in the Preakness. "I knew that he was going to be pressed today. I was hoping that he wouldn't overdo it, and we did."

Concert Tour was a disappointing ninth in a 10-horse field.

"I am at a loss for words," said Concert Tour jockey Mike Smith, who left Midnight Bourbon after the Derby to ride Baffert's other Preakness horse. "He just wasn't going anywhere."

Maryland racing officials required Concert Tour and Medina Spirit to undergo additional testing and monitoring as conditions to run in the Preakness. Those three rounds of tests came back Friday, clearing them to race. None of the other horses were subject to that level of scrutiny, which came out of the situation at Churchill Downs and Baffert's four other medication violations

over the past 13 months with other horses.

That was set aside for at least the 1:53.62 it took for Rombauer to complete the 1 3/16-mile race, paying \$26.50 to win, \$10 to place and \$5.20 to show.

"He broke as expected and I thought he put enough pressure on Medina Spirit to make it a horse race and then he ended up second," Midnight Bourbon trainer Steve Asmussen said. "He showed up. He's improving. And he's not there yet, all at the same time."

Midnight Bourbon was sixth in the Kentucky Derby behind Medina Spirit, whose victory still hangs in the balance with a second test yet to be analyzed. It's unclear how long that will take.

Trainer Michael McCarthy won a Triple Crown race for the first time and captured the Preakness before Hall of Famer Todd Pletcher, for whom he worked as an assistant before opening his own barn. Pletcher gave McCarthy a bear hug after the race.

Rombauer is owned by John and Diane Fradkin, a far cry from Medina Spirit's Zedan Racing Stables and other horse racing conglomerates. He won for the third time in seven starts.

Judge homers again, Yankees rout O's

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Aaron Judge homered for the third time in two games, Domingo Germán had another stellar outing at Camden Yards and the New York Yankees beat the Baltimore Orioles 8-2 on Saturday night.

After hitting two home runs Friday, Judge provided New York a 5-0 lead with a two-run shot in the second. Six of Judge's 11 homers this season have come against the Orioles.

"We had some good at-bats there to kind of get us going," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "We were able to throw a couple of crooked numbers up there and then able to add later was definitely nice."

Germán (3-2) allowed one run and four hits with six strikeouts and two walks in six innings. He has won all four of his career starts in Baltimore.

Blue Jays 4, Phillies 0: Vladimir Guerrero Jr. homered and five Toronto pitchers combined on a six-hitter to beat visiting Philadelphia in a game where Phillies star Bryce Harper exited early with right shoulder soreness.

Harper was replaced defensively in right field by Scott Kingery to start the bottom of the fourth. Harper struck out in both of his at-bats. The team said Harper is day to day. Guerrero hit his 10th homer, a first-inning solo shot off Aaron Nola (3-3). The drive to right was Guerrero's sixth to the opposite field.

Dodgers 7, Marlins 0: Trevor Bauer threw seven shutout innings and struck out 10, Max Muncy had three hits and host Los Angeles beat Miami for its fourth straight victory.

The reigning NL Cy Young Award winner improved to 4-2, allowing only two hits and

three baserunners. He retired the last 11 hitters he faced.

Tigers 9, Cubs 8 (10): Harold Castro hit an RBI single in the 10th inning off Craig Kimbrel to lift Detroit past visiting Chicago.

The Tigers rallied from deficits of 2-0, 4-3, 7-6 and 8-7 to win a back-and-forth game in which neither starting pitcher made it past the third.

Braves 6, Brewers 1: Ian Anderson took a no-hit try into the seventh inning, Freddie Freeman hit a two-run homer and Atlanta won at Milwaukee.

Anderson (3-1) cruised through the first six innings, mixing a 96 mph fastball, an effective changeup and an even slower curveball that kept the Brewers guessing.

Royals 5, White Sox 1: Salvador Perez hit a three-run homer for the second straight day and Kansas City handed Carlos Rodón his first loss of the season with a victory at Chicago. Whit Merrifield had two hits and scored twice as the Royals got to Rodón (5-1) for four runs in the first three innings.

The left-hander allowed two earned runs in 31 innings while winning his first five starts of the year, including a 3-0 victory at Kansas City in his previous start on May 7.

Red Sox 9, Angels 0: Alex Verdugo hit a solo homer in his first at-bat on his 25th birthday, Xander Bogaerts had a three-run shot and Boston won at Los Angeles.

Rafael Devers added a solo shot, Bobby Dalbec hit a two-run double and Franchy Cordero drove in two runs with two doubles for the Red Sox. They won their third straight and matched their season high by climbing nine games over .500.

Padres 13, Cardinals 3: Austin Nola homered, doubled and drove in a career-

high six runs, and Tommy Pham and rookie Kim Ha-seong also connected off Adam Wainwright to lead San Diego over visiting St. Louis.

The Padres beat the Cardinals for the second straight night in their first matchup since San Diego eliminated St. Louis from the playoffs last season.

Astros 6, Rangers 5: Carlos Correa and Kyle Tucker each homered to help Luis Garcia earn his first career win as host Houston held on to beat Texas for its fifth straight victory.

Correa capped a four-run first with a two-run homer to right as the Astros got to Rangers starter Dane Dunning (2-3). Alex Bregman also had a two-run single in the inning.

Mariners 7, Indians 3: Mitch Haniger hit his 12th home run, Justus Sheffield picked up a win against the team that drafted him and host Seattle beat Cleveland.

Twins 5, Athletics 4: Miguel Sanó snapped a 19-game homerless drought with a three-run homer in the eighth inning and host Minnesota came back to beat Oakland.

Rays 12, Mets 5: Joey Wendle had three doubles and a single, keying two big innings that sent host Tampa Bay past New York.

Reds 6, Rockies 5 (12): Nick Castellanos hit a tiebreaking double in the 12th and Cincinnati kept up its success in extra innings, winning at Colorado.

Pirates 8, Giants 6: Jacob Stallings hit a two-out, two-run homer in the ninth inning and host Pittsburgh rallied past San Francisco.

Diamondbacks 11, Nationals 4: Eduardo Escobar hit a three-run homer, a two-run homer and tied a career high with seven RBIs to lead host Arizona past Washington.

Oliveira stops Chandler, claims UFC lightweight title

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Charles Oliveira claimed the UFC lightweight title Saturday night, stopping Michael Chandler with a barrage of punches early in the second round at UFC 262.

Oliveira (31-8) earned his ninth consecutive victory in dramatic fashion, finishing Chandler (22-6) with a series of precise strikes to claim the belt vacated by Khabib Nurmagomedov's retirement.

After both fighters traded big shots in a back-and-forth opening round, Oliveira abruptly dropped Chandler with a left hook in the opening seconds of the second round. The Brazilian veteran pursued Chandler around the perimeter of the cage before dropping Chandler again with a left hook and finishing with punches on the ground just 19 seconds into the round.

"I told you I was going to knock him out, and I came and knocked

him out," Oliveira said through a translator. "I'm proving to everybody I'm the lion of lions."

Oliveira appeared to be in serious trouble in the first round from Chandler's relentless attacks, but he recovered and then finished in spectacular fashion. Oliveira, who has stopped eight of his nine opponents during his winning streak, ran across the mat and hurdled the cage to celebrate his first title belt after 11 years in the UFC and his record 17th UFC finish.

"Michael, you're a great champion," said Oliveira, who already held the UFC record with 14 victories by submission. "But today is my day."

Oliveira is the UFC's first new undisputed lightweight champion in more than three years. Nurmagomedov held the belt from April 2018 until this year, when UFC President Dana White accepted the unbeaten Russian star's decision to retire in the prime of his career late last year.