

VA acknowledges resort members' access

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs acknowledged in a letter Thursday that three members of former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort had "unusually pervasive access" to VA officials during his administration.

The three men, Marvel Entertainment Chairman Ike Perlmutter, lawyer Marc Sherman and Bruce Moskowitz, a Palm Beach doctor, "sought to exert influence" over government initiatives, the VA conceded. None of the men have experience in the U.S. military or government.

The letter was signed by VA Deputy General Counsel Michael Hogan. It was sent as part of a legal case between the VA and VoteVets, a liberal-leaning advocacy group. VoteVets filed a lawsuit in 2018 that claimed the "Mar-a-Lago Three" broke the law by not adhering to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, an open government law that requires transparency of outside advisory groups.

The VA's letter was part of an agreement between the department and VoteVets to settle the case. Following the letter Thurs-

day, both parties agreed to dismiss it. VoteVets and Democracy Forward, which filed the lawsuit with VoteVets, declared it a victory.

"The Mar-a-Lago council was a poster child for the kind of pervasive corruption throughout the Trump administration, and had we not stepped in, the undue influence of Donald Trump's clubhouse friends could have hurt our veterans in a lot of ways," Jon Soltz, VoteVets chairman, said in a statement Friday. "We also have sent the message that no future administration should try this again. Let qualified people, who understand the needs of our veterans, run the VA."

The department didn't admit any wrongdoing and maintained in its letter that the three men didn't constitute an advisory committee and they weren't subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

The VA did acknowledge "even the appearance of these individuals' access to the VA during the previous administration may have been concerning to VoteVets and to the public." The department thanked VoteVets for bringing attention to the matter.

"The issues of appropriate engagement and influence are important to the department," according to the letter. "The depart-

ment thus appreciates VoteVets raising its concern, as well as its continued work on behalf of veterans and their families."

The letter and dismissal of the case follows the results of a congressional investigation that determined the three Mar-a-Lago members pursued personal interests, exerted dominance over White House staff and violated federal law while acting as advisers for the VA.

The House Oversight and Veterans' Affairs committees released the results of their 19-month investigation in September.

According to the committee's findings, Moskowitz discussed the possibility of monetizing the VA patient database, suggesting Johnson & Johnson, Apple and CVS could profit from access to the VA's electronic medical records. Moskowitz worked with then-VA Secretary David Shulkin to award a consulting contract to the former president of Moskowitz's nonprofit foundation to explore the idea.

The committees also found the Mar-a-Lago members exerted dominance over the White House staff members who were tasked with implementing policies for veterans.

USO opens pair of new centers in England, Poland

By KYLE ALVAREZ
Stars and Stripes

RAF LAKENHEATH, England — Overseas U.S. personnel had reason to do the equivalent of an end zone dance Thursday, as the USO parlayed its long partnership with the National Football League into another new location.

The opening of the USO at Lakenheath follows, by just a couple of days, another grand opening ceremony to inaugurate the organization's first presence in Poland.

"We've been playing NFL games in London and other locations internationally for around 10 years, and we're excited to continue that," said Melissa Pardi, the NFL's senior director of social responsibility. "So next year when we come back to play here, we're hoping to bring some of our teams here and interact with this USO center."

Lakenheath hosted the NFL Experience

on Thursday as part of the grand opening. Attendees could throw a football, simulate kicking a field goal and run through a bounce house with common football obstacles. Free NFL swag was handed out, too.

Service members and their families are eligible to use the center, which boasts a stage with guitars, Nintendo Switch and PlayStation 5 video game systems and plenty of other diversions.

The collaboration between the USO and the NFL goes back to the Vietnam War, according to the USO website. Pete Rozelle, the NFL commissioner during the war, wanted the league to show support for the troops in Vietnam.

The idea for "goodwill tours" was born, and the NFL was the first sports organization to send players overseas to visit American troops, according to the USO website. The league also donates money to nonprof-

its like the USO through its Salute to Service program.

The new locations in England and Poland are intended to help the USO reach more service members stationed in Europe and help them stay connected to the homeland, the organization said in a statement.

J.D. Crouch, the organization's CEO, told attendees at the Lakenheath grand opening that the USO is "a projection of the desire of the American people to support the military especially those overseas."

Service members at the Lakenheath festivities were generally enthusiastic about having a place where they can hang out and enjoy free snacks.

"The USO is a wonderful place for brand new airmen to connect with others, especially if they're new to the area," said Staff Sgt. Kevin Huynh Tram, a budget analyst for the 48th Civil Engineering Squadron.

Biden hails passage of infrastructure bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Saturday hailed Congress' passage of his \$1 trillion infrastructure package as a "monumental step forward for the nation" after fractious fellow Democrats resolved a months-long standoff in their ranks to finally seal the deal.

"Finally, infrastructure week," a beaming Biden told reporters. "I'm so happy to say that: infrastructure week."

The House passed the measure 228-206 late Friday, prompting prolonged cheers from the relieved Democratic side of the chamber. Thirteen Republicans, mostly moderates, supported the legislation while six of Democrats' farthest left members — including Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Cori Bush of Missouri — opposed it.

Approval of the bill, which promises to create legions of jobs and improve broadband, water supplies and other public works, sends it to the desk of a president whose approval ratings have dropped and whose nervous party got a cold shoulder from voters in this past week's off-year elections.

Democratic candidates for governor were defeated in Virginia and squeaked through in New Jersey, two blue-leaning states. Those setbacks made party leaders — and moderates and liberals alike — impatient to produce impactful legislation and demonstrate they know how to govern. Democrats can ill afford to seem in disarray a year before midterm elections that could result in Republicans regaining congressional control.

The infrastructure package is a historic investment by any measure, one that Biden compares in its breadth to the building of the interstate highway system in the last century or the transcontinental railroad the century before.

"This is a blue-collar blueprint to rebuilding America," he said in his White House remarks.

His reference to infrastructure week was a jab at his predecessor, Donald Trump, whose White House declared several times that "infrastructure week" had arrived, only for nothing to happen.

Simply freeing up the infrastructure measure for final congressional approval was like a burst of adrenaline for Demo-

crats. Despite the win, Democrats also endured a setback, postponing a vote on a second, even larger bill until later this month.

That 10-year, \$1.85 trillion measure bolstering health, family and climate change programs was sidetracked after moderates demanded a cost estimate on the sprawling measure from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. The postponement dashed hopes that the day would produce a double-barreled win for Biden with passage of both bills.

But in an evening breakthrough brokered by Biden and House leaders, five moderates later agreed to back that bill if the budget office's estimates are consistent with preliminary numbers that White House and congressional tax analysts have provided. The agreement, in which lawmakers promised to vote on the social and environment bill by the week of Nov. 15, stood as a significant step toward a House vote that could ultimately ship it to the Senate.

"Generations from now, people will look back and know this is when America won the economic competition for the 21st Century," Biden said in a written statement early Saturday.

States challenge Biden's new vaccine requirements

Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — More than two dozen Republican-led states filed lawsuits Friday challenging President Joe Biden's vaccine requirement for private companies, setting up a high-stakes legal showdown pitting federal authority against states' rights.

The requirement issued Thursday by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration applies to businesses with more than 100 employees. Their workers must be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Jan. 4 or face mask requirements and weekly tests. The lawsuits ask courts to decide whether the administration's effort to curtail the pandemic represents a federal power grab and usurps the authority of states to set health policy.

At least 27 states filed lawsuits challenging the rule.

"This mandate is unconstitutional, unlawful, and unwise," Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt said in a court filing in the St. Louis-based 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on behalf of 11 states.

The Biden administration has been encouraging widespread vaccinations as the quickest way out of the pandemic. A White House spokeswoman said Thursday that the mandate was intended to halt the spread of a disease that has claimed more than 750,000 lives in the U.S.

The administration says it is confident that its requirement, which includes penalties of nearly \$14,000 per violation, will withstand legal challenges in part because its safety rules pre-empt state laws.

Seema Nanda, solicitor for the U.S. Department of Labor, said in a statement Friday that the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act gives OSHA the authority to act quickly during an emergency if it finds workers are subject to a grave danger. The agency contends its temporary rule also preempts any state or local bans on employers' ability to require vaccines.

"We are fully prepared to defend this standard in court," Nanda said.

Lawrence Gostin, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center and director of the World Health Organization's center on

health law, said the half-century-old law that created OSHA gives it the power to set minimum workplace safety measures.

"I think that Biden is on rock-solid legal ground," he said.

Missouri's lawsuit was joined by the Republican attorneys general of Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. Also joining the lawsuit was the office of Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller, the only Democratic attorney general to take part in the legal challenges to the mandate.

In a statement, Miller said he was filing at the behest of Gov. Kim Reynolds, a Republican.

Other coalitions of states also filed lawsuits Friday: Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Utah in the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; Kansas, Kentucky, Idaho, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee and West Virginia in the Cincinnati-based 6th Circuit; and Alabama, Florida and Georgia in the Atlanta-based 11th Circuit. Later Friday, Indiana filed in the Chicago-based 7th Circuit.

Fatal crowd surge prompts early end to Texas festival

Associated Press

HOUSTON — At least eight people died and numerous others were injured in what officials described as a surge of the crowd at the Astroworld music festival in Houston while rapper Travis Scott was performing.

Officials declared a “mass casualty incident” just after 9 p.m. Friday during the festival where an estimated 50,000 people were in attendance, Houston Fire Chief Samuel Pena told reporters at a news conference.

“The crowd began to compress towards the front of the stage, and that caused some panic, and it started causing some injuries,” the fire chief said. “People began to fall out, become unconscious, and it created additional panic.”

The show was called off shortly thereafter. The fire chief said “scores of individuals” were injured.

Officials transported 17 people to hospitals, including 11 who were in cardiac arrest, Pena said. It wasn’t clear whether all eight who died were among the 17 that had been transported to hospitals. Many people were also treated at the scene at NRG Park, where

a field hospital had been set up. About 300 people were examined at that site throughout the day, he said.

Astroworld is a two-day music festival that was scheduled to take place Friday and Saturday in Houston. The event was sold out, according to the Astroworld website. Saturday’s performances were canceled.

The deaths called to mind a 1979 concert for The Who where 11 people died and about two dozen were injured as thousands of fans tried to get into Cincinnati’s riverfront coliseum.

Event promoters had arranged for medical units to be on scene at the festival, however once the crowd surge began, those units were “quickly overwhelmed,” Pena said.

Houston Police Executive Assistant Chief Larry Satterwhite was near the front of the crowd and said it seemed the surge “happened all at once.”

Pena said officials did not immediately know the causes of death for the eight people who died. A medical examiner would investigate. The deceased had not been identified as of early Saturday.

Prosecutor in Andrew Cuomo’s groping case seeks more time to review evidence

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — A prosecutor investigating accusations that former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo groped a woman asked a judge for more time to evaluate the evidence, saying the criminal complaint filed last month by the local sheriff was “potentially defective,” according to a letter released Friday.

The request from Albany County District Attorney David Soares throws the high-profile case into further turmoil a week after Cuomo was charged with committing a misdemeanor sex crime. The one-page complaint filed in Albany City Court by a sheriff’s office investigator accuses Cuomo of forcible touching by putting his hand under a woman’s shirt on Dec. 7.

Soares, who has said he was caught off guard by the filing, said in a letter to Judge Holly Trexler on Thursday that his office had been investigating the matter for several months.

“We were in the middle of that investiga-

tion when the Sheriff unilaterally and inexplicably filed a complaint in this court,” Soares wrote in the letter. Unfortunately, the filings in this matter are potentially defective in that the police-officer-complainant failed to include a sworn statement by the victim such that the People could proceed with a prosecution on these papers.”

The district attorney said the sheriff’s complaint, as filed, only included part of the woman’s testimony, but left other parts out, including sections that could possibly be “exculpatory,” meaning potentially helpful to Cuomo’s defense.

Soares said that his office still had hundreds of hours of videotaped testimony to review and that it anticipates receiving more material with deadlines for a speedy trial approaching. Cuomo had been summoned to appear for an arraignment Nov. 17. Soares asked for that to be put off for 60 days. Cuomo’s attorneys joined in the request. The court granted a delay until Jan. 7, 2022, a spokesperson for Soares said in an email.

Ex-DOJ lawyer cuts Jan. 6 riot disposition short

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A former assistant attorney general who aligned himself with former President Donald Trump after he lost the 2020 election has declined to be fully interviewed by a House committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, ending a deposition after around 90 minutes Friday.

Jeffrey Clark, who championed Trump’s efforts to overturn the election, presented the committee with a letter saying he would not answer questions based on Trump’s assertions of executive privilege, including in an ongoing court case, according to a person familiar with the closed-door meeting who was granted anonymity to discuss it. Clark left the interview with his lawyer, who told reporters that they were heading “home.”

Clark, who was subpoenaed by the committee to appear, would not answer any questions from reporters as he departed.

In a statement Friday evening, Rep. Bennie Thompson, the committee’s chairman, confirmed that Clark refused to answer questions and said it was unacceptable. He said he had rejected the claims of privilege and said Clark “has a very short time” to reconsider and cooperate.

“It’s astounding that someone who so recently held a position of public trust to uphold the Constitution would now hide behind vague claims of privilege by a former President, refuse to answer questions about an attack on our democracy, and continue an assault on the rule of law,” Thompson said.

Clark’s refusal is just the latest fallout from Trump’s attempt to assert executive privilege in a lawsuit he filed against the committee and the National Archives. The suit aims to block the government from releasing a tranche of internal White House documents, including call logs, drafts of remarks, speeches and handwritten staff notes from before and during the insurrection. President Joe Biden has so far waived executive privilege on nearly all the documents that the committee has asked for, citing the panel’s need to investigate the violent attack.

It is unclear whether the panel will move to hold Clark in contempt of Congress, as they did with longtime Trump associate Steve Bannon. Thompson said the committee needs the information Clark is withholding and is willing “to take strong measures” to hold him accountable.

Election protest in Iraq turns deadly

Associated Press

BAGHDAD — One protester was killed and scores of people, mostly members of Iraqi security forces, were injured Friday when scuffles between supporters of pro-Iran Shiite militias, who had camped outside Baghdad's Green Zone, and anti-riot police turned deadly, officials said.

The protesters reject the results of last month's parliamentary elections that saw the pro-Iran militias as the biggest losers.

The health ministry said the injuries in early Friday's scuffles were mostly from smoke inhalation and rock throwing. Most of the injured were members of the riot police.

It was not clear what sparked the clashes later Friday.

There were reports an exchange of fire erupted after dark Friday following a day of tense rallies and scuffles between the Iraqi forces and the protesters who have been camped out outside the Green Zone for over three weeks.

Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi ordered an investigation into Friday's violence to determine what sparked the clashes and who violated orders not to open fire, a statement from the joint security operations room said.

About 300 protesters marched, apparently trying to storm the heavily protected Green Zone, and used rocks to pelt the security forces. The anti-riot police responded with batons, tear gas and water cannons to push them back.

At least 27 civilians and 98 members of the security forces were injured, the health ministry said. Then clashes erupted, killing at least one protester, two security officials said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters.

Following the vote, militia supporters had pitched tents near the Green Zone in an ongoing sit-in, rejecting election results and threatening violence unless their demands were met.

The protests appear to be aimed at pressuring influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who won the largest number of parliament seats, to ensure that Iran-aligned factions are part of the next Cabinet. As the winner, al-Sadr's bloc will seek coalition partners and name the prime minister.

Suspects arrested in deaths of 3 in Afghanistan

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Two suspects have been arrested in connection with the killings of a civil society activist and three other women whose bodies were found in a house in northern Afghanistan last month, a senior Taliban security official and a co-worker of the slain activist said Saturday.

The suspects confessed to luring the women to the house in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, Sayed Khosti, the spokesman of the Taliban-run Interior Ministry, said in a video statement posted on Twitter.

He did not say whether the suspects also

confessed to the killings. He did not offer a motive for the killings or identify the victims. The case is being referred to a court, he said.

One of the victims was Frozan Safi, 29, according to a local cultural center where she worked. Safi had been desperate to leave Afghanistan because she feared for her future under restrictive Taliban rule and because she wanted to join her fiancé, also an activist, who fled the country previously, said Sayed Azim Sadat, director of the Zainuddin Mohammad Babar Cultural Center.

Safi left her home close to three weeks ago to meet someone who claimed he could help her get out of Afghanistan, Sadat told The Associated Press. Khosti said the suspects confessed during interrogation that they had invited the women to the house.

Some activists have reported receiving phone calls and emails from suspicious people who claimed they could help those wanting to leave Afghanistan. The activists were asked to share their personal details and were invited to come to certain locations, according to posts in reporters' WhatsApp groups.

Fatal explosion in Sierra Leone after bus hits oil tanker

Associated Press

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone — An oil tanker exploded near Sierra Leone's capital, killing at least 92 people and severely injuring dozens of others after large crowds gathered to collect leaking fuel, officials and witnesses said Saturday.

The explosion took place late Friday after a bus struck the tanker in Wellington, a suburb just to the east of Freetown.

The mortuary at Connaught Hospital reported 92 bodies had been brought in by Saturday morning. About 30 severely burned victims were not expected to survive, according to Foday Musa, a staff member in the intensive care unit.

Injured people whose clothes had burned

off in the fire that followed the explosion lay naked on stretchers as nurses attended to them Saturday. Hundreds of people milled outside the main gates of the mortuary and near the hospital's main entrance, waiting for word of their loved ones.

It was not immediately known how many people were undergoing treatment for burns because patients were taken to hospitals and clinics across the metropolitan area.

Video obtained by The Associated Press of the explosion's aftermath showed a giant fireball burning in the night sky as some survivors with severe burns cried out in pain. Charred remains of the victims lay strewn at the scene awaiting transport to

mortuaries.

President Julius Maada Bio, who was in Scotland attending the United Nations climate talks Saturday, deplored the "horrendous loss of life."

"My profound sympathies with families who have lost loved ones and those who have been maimed as a result," he tweeted.

Vice President Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh visited two hospitals overnight and said Sierra Leone's National Disaster Management Agency and others would "work tirelessly" in the wake of the emergency.

"We are all deeply saddened by this national tragedy, and it is indeed a difficult time for our country," he said on his Facebook page.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ex-jail employees sued for playing ‘Baby Shark’

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — Three people are suing Oklahoma County jail employees who investigators found forced them to stand handcuffed for hours and listen to the children’s song “Baby Shark” on repeat.

Attorneys for three former inmates filed the civil rights lawsuit in Oklahoma City federal court, according to The Oklahoman.

Daniel Hedrick, Joseph “Joey” Mitchell and John Basco are suing Oklahoma County commissioners, Sheriff Tommie Johnson III, the jail trust and two former jailers, describing the discipline tactics as “torture events.”

A criminal investigation last year determined at least four inmates were secured to a wall with their hands cuffed behind them while the song played on a loop at a loud volume for hours in two separate incidents in November and December 2019.

Man behind ice bucket challenge’s items sold

MA BOSTON — Jerseys, baseball bats and other items that belonged to Pete Frates, the former college baseball player whose inspiring fight with Lou Gehrig’s disease helped popularize the ALS ice bucket challenge, are being auctioned.

Proceeds from the online auction will benefit the Peter Frates Family Foundation, which assists ALS patients and their families with the cost of home health care, according to a spokesperson for auctioneer

KBK Sports. The goal is to raise about \$10,000.

Frates, a former Boston College baseball player who lived in Beverly north of Boston, died in December 2019 after a seven-year battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. He and his family inspired the spread of the ice bucket challenge and helped raise millions of dollars for research into the motor neuron disease, which has no cure.

Giant ‘corpse plant’ draws crowds to garden

CA ENCINITAS — The bloom of a giant and stinky Sumatran flower nicknamed the “corpse plant,” because it smells like a dead body, is drawing huge crowds to a Southern California botanical garden.

The bloom of the *Amorphophallus titanum* plant began last Sunday at the San Diego Botanic Gardens in Encinitas. By the next morning, timed-entry tickets had sold out, The San Diego Union-Tribune reported.

More than 5,000 people were expected to visit the garden.

The bloom of the “corpse plant” lasts just 48 hours and during its peak it emits a putrid odor of rotting flesh to attract carrion beetles and flesh flies that help its pollination process.

State records 1st human rabies death since 1978

ID BOISE — A human has died in Idaho due to rabies for the first time since 1978, health officials said.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and Central District Health in a news release said the west-central man

from Boise County died in October after a bat became entangled in his clothing in August.

Officials said the man didn’t think he had been bitten or scratched. Officials said he became ill in October and died in a Boise hospital.

The bat exposure didn’t surface until after an investigation into his illness. Officials didn’t release the man’s name or age.

Man sentenced for viewing porn mid-flight

FL TAMPA — An Illinois man has been sentenced to five years in prison for looking at child pornography during a commercial flight to Florida.

Donald Max Ingram, 70, was sentenced in Tampa federal court, according to court records. He pleaded guilty in May to possessing and viewing images of children being sexually abused.

According to court documents, Ingram was traveling on a plane headed to St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport in September 2020 when another passenger observed Ingram viewing child sex abuse material on his cellphone. The passenger alerted law enforcement when the plane landed, and deputies assigned to the airport detained Ingram and contacted the FBI.

Lots of winners in state’s lottery Pick 4

SC COLUMBIA — For the first time ever, South Carolina’s Pick 4 lottery game turned up all sevens and plenty of people turned up winners.

A midday drawing for Pick 4 was 7-7-7-7 and a record 1,400 people won with those numbers, the South Carolina Education Lottery said in a statement.

The lucky sevens meant about six times as many winners as the draw at the same time a day earlier, the lottery said.

Players won wither \$2,500 or \$5,000, depending on how much they paid for their ticket, officials said.

Death Science: Public dissection educational

LA NEW ORLEANS — An organization that bought a human body and organized its public dissection said it had a contract saying it could be used for education, and its “Cadaver Lab Class” was appropriately educational, despite criticism from the man’s widow.

Seattle station KING-TV identified the man from a typed ID bracelet as David Saunders, 98, of Baker, La.

Such use of the World War II and Korean War veteran’s body was horrible and unethical, his wife, Elsie Saunders, told The Advocate of Baton Rouge: “I have all this paperwork that says his body would be used for science — nothing about this commercialization of his death.”

“My goal was to create an educational experience for individuals who have an interest in learning more about human anatomy. We understand that this event has caused undue stress for the family and we apologize for that,” wrote Jeremy Ciliberto, who described himself as a “communications consultant” for Death Science.

From The Associated Press



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Packers' Love finally gets his opportunity

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — For the first eight weeks of the season, Jordan Love showed up to Lambeau Field on Wednesday mornings preparing to back up Aaron Rodgers.

It was the same this Wednesday, too. Then, at the team meeting that morning, coach Matt LaFleur revealed that Rodgers had tested positive for COVID-19 and would be out for this week's game at Kansas City.

"I was a little shocked, but not crazy shocked just because with Kurt (Benkert, the practice-squad quarterback) testing positive earlier in the week, I kind of figured something might happen in the quarterback room," Love said Friday. "My initial thought was wondering what would shake out with all the close contacts and how things would affect all of us in the room. That was my first thoughts. Then just trying to get my mind right starting this week. But I've prepared for this, so I'm confident in my-

self."

The preparation, of course, has been different this week. As the No. 2 quarterback all season, Love's job was to prepare as if he would start. During a typical week, that would include film study and mental reps on the practice field as Rodgers led the offense and Love guided the scout team. This week, it was Love running the show and coaches building the game plan around him.

The Packers' first-round pick in 2020, Love spent his entire rookie season as the team's No. 3 quarterback. This offseason, with Rodgers not reporting for offseason workouts, Love took the vast majority of reps during the four weeks of practices. That gave him a comfort level with the offense and the coaches a better understanding of which plays suit his skill set.

"Ever since there was (a) back and forth on whether or not 12 (Rodgers) would be here, I noticed that he took a step of just leadership," All-Pro receiver Davante Adams said. "You

can tell he was starting to gear to not just being a young guy learning, but trying to be more hands-on and learn from experience and start getting into the meat and potatoes of this offense. When you have an opportunity to be on the field, you definitely see a different look in his eye. So, I've been seeing that. He's been communicating well this week and I'm looking forward to seeing what he does."

Love enters this game having thrown seven passes in his career — all at the end of a blow-out loss to the New Orleans Saints in Week 1.

"Physically, timing and rhythm are so hard for young quarterbacks," quarterbacks coach Luke Getsy said. "He played in a pretty simplified system in college, where everything's spread out and the plays aren't very (complex); there's only a few plays. So, then you come into this with the challenge of learning this big playbook, and now you have to match all this footwork to each route, to each pattern, to each

concept. So, that takes time. And just these last six or seven weeks, I've been really proud of how far he's come and to see the way that his feet are matching the timing of the throw and all that stuff. So, that part, the physical part of it, he's come a long way."

Love will be helped by the return of some key players. Adams, who missed last week's win at Arizona while on the COVID-19 list, practiced Friday and will play Sunday. All-Pro left tackle David Bakhtiari, who spent the first eight games on the physically unable to perform list recovering from a torn ACL, could make his season debut. And big-play receiver Marquez Valdes-Scantling, who missed the past five games with an injured hamstring, was back at practice.

That means, other than tight end Robert Tonyan and rookie center Josh Myers, both of whom are out with knee injuries, Love could be surrounded by most of the team's top players.

Peterson savoring chance to play with Tennessee

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Adrian Peterson had been working out regularly to stay in football shape, even dipping around corners to test his eyes as he mimicked cutting back toward a sliver of daylight.

He kept swiping away the thought that no NFL team might call again. That his career might be over after 14 seasons, 14,820 yards rushing, seven Pro Bowl berths and the MVP award in 2012.

Then the Tennessee Titans called. Not only an NFL team, but a franchise currently sitting atop the AFC with a big lead in its division. A big change from his last two teams.

"It's wonderful," Peterson

said Friday.

Starting the clock on a likely Pro Football Hall of Fame nod will have to wait.

The Titans (6-2) need help replacing NFL rushing leader Derrick Henry after the two-time rushing champ had foot surgery Tuesday. They signed Peterson on Tuesday to the practice squad and promoted him to the 53-man roster Friday. His 15th season will start Sunday night in Los Angeles against the Rams (7-1).

"Yes, it's been a while huh?" Peterson said. "About 10 months. But I feel good, so they call my number I'll go out there and contribute any way that I can. I do a great job of keeping my body in shape physically and mentally and

just keeping myself prepared for a moment like this."

Peterson may not have been with a team since his lone season in Detroit ended. But he's been working out in Texas, especially on a track to keep his legs and lungs ready to run.

He joined a team that's banged-up and in need of slower practices. Peterson hit the field going fast with his fresh legs. Another reason Peterson is so excited? The Titans' offense runs the kind of inside and outside zone plays that fit him perfectly.

"You think of the ideal situation for a running back like me and my style, it would be this right here," Peterson said. "So I'm just going to live in the moment and enjoy it and do

whatever they asked me to do."

The Titans are Peterson's sixth NFL team. Minnesota drafted him seventh out of Oklahoma in 2007, and he played 10 seasons for the Vikings. He split the 2017 season between New Orleans and Arizona. Peterson played for Washington in 2018 and 2019 before spending last season with Detroit.

Peterson won't be wearing the No. 28 that he wore with Minnesota, New Orleans and Detroit. That number currently belongs to Titans running back Jeremy McNichols.

When Peterson has debuted with a new NFL team, he has made quite an impression. He has run for at least 100 yards twice and topped 100 yards from scrimmage four times.

Ducks keep Coyotes winless through 11 games

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Adam Henrique had a goal and an assist, Troy Terry extended his points streak to 10 games and the Anaheim Ducks sent the Arizona Coyotes to their 11th straight loss to start the season with a 3-1 win Friday night.

Sonny Milano and Sam Carrick also scored in the third straight victory for the Ducks, who have earned a point in six of their last seven games.

Anthony Stolarz made 28 saves for Anaheim before missing out on his fourth career shutout on Shayne Gostisbehere's goal with 7.8 seconds to play. He still earned his first win of the season for Anaheim, which had a six-game winless skid before outscoring its last three opponents by a combined 11-3 at home.

Rookie Karel Vejmelka stopped 28 shots while Arizona fell to 0-10-1. The Coyotes are the league's remaining winless team, and have tied the 2017-18 Coyotes for the franchise's longest losing streak to start the season.

The Coyotes' streak also matches three other teams for the

second-longest winless skid to start a season in NHL history, according to the league's record books. Only the 1943-44 New York Rangers have been worse — opening 0-11-0 and eventually going 0-14-1 before their first win.

Oilers 6, Rangers 5: Edmonton set a franchise record when Leon Draisaitl scored the overtime winner to push the team past visiting New York.

The Oilers have won nine of their first 10 games for the first time in team history. Jesse Puljujarvi scored twice for Edmonton, which also got goals from Zach Hyman, Tyson Barrie and Connor McDavid.

Edmonton goalie Mikko Koskinen stopped 20 of 25 shots in the victory.

It was the Rangers' second straight loss. Mika Zibanejad scored twice for them, and Filip Chytil, Kevin Rooney and Chris Kreider also had goals. Alexander Georgiev got the nod ahead of usual starter Igor Shesterkin, and had 33 saves.

Kings 3, Devils 2: Alex Iafallo quickly scored in overtime against New Jersey to give host

Los Angeles its fourth straight win.

The Kings' Arthur Kaliyev scored a power-play goal, Adrian Kempe also had a goal and Calvin Petersen made 21 saves.

Pavel Zacha tied it up with 24 seconds remaining in the third period to salvage a point for the Devils, who have lost three straight. Jesper Bratt had a goal, and Mackenzie Blackwood made 26 saves in his season debut after undergoing surgery on his heel in June.

After Zacha beat Petersen over his left shoulder with a wrist shot from the right circle, the Kings recovered to win it on a one-timer in the slot by Iafallo, who has four goals and three assists during a five-game point streak.

Predators 3, Canucks 2: A pair of power-play goals pushed visiting Nashville over Vancouver.

Roman Josi and Philip Tomasino both scored for the Preds on the man advantage, and Matt Duchene added an even-strength tally. Mikael Granlund contributed a pair of assists.

Brock Boeser and Nils Hoglan-

der replied for the Canucks. Vancouver got another strong performance from netminder Thatcher Demko, who stopped 25 shots.

Juuse Saros registered 26 saves for Nashville and collected his fifth win of the year.

Vancouver's special teams floundered Friday, going scoreless on five power-play chances and giving up goals on 2 of 3 penalties.

Jets 5, Blackhawks 1: Kyle Connor and Nikolaj Ehlers each had a goal and had an assist in host Winnipeg's win over Chicago.

Paul Stastny, Neal Pionk and Dominic Toninato also scored in Winnipeg's fourth straight home win. Andrew Copp assisted on three goals for the Jets, who have posted their best start to a regular season (6-2-2) in the team's modern era. Eric Comrie stopped 16 shots.

MacKenzie Entwistle scored short-handed in the third period for Chicago, and Marc-Andre Fleury made 28 saves. The Blackhawks have lost 11 of their first 12 games.

Cost-cutting move by Reds allows Cubs to claim Miley

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pitcher Wade Miley was claimed off waivers by the Chicago Cubs from Cincinnati on Friday, a surprising cost-cutting move by the Reds.

A left-hander who turns 35 on Nov. 13, Miley was 12-7 with a 3.37 ERA in 28 starts, and he threw his first career no-hitter in a 3-0 win at Cleveland on May 7.

His \$15 million, two-year contract includes a \$10 million option for next season with a \$1 million buyout.

Chicago is looking for pitching after going 71-91. The Cubs' 4.87 ERA ranked 27th among the 30 teams.

Miley is 97-92 with a 4.15 ERA in 11 years in the majors.

He also has pitched for Arizona, Boston, Seattle, Baltimore, Milwaukee and Houston.

A slew of waiver claims saw San Francisco get right-hander Hunter Harvey from Baltimore.

Outfielder Tim Lincecum went to Boston from the Yankees, infielder Andrew Velazquez to the Los Angeles Angels from the Yankees, outfielder Greg Allen to Pittsburgh from the Yankees, right-hander Jharrel Cotton to Minnesota from Texas, left-hander Ryan Sherriff to Philadelphia from Tampa Bay, outfielder Austin Dean to San Francisco from St. Louis and left-hander Francisco Perez to Washington from Cleveland.

Among potential free agents, All-Star third baseman José Ramírez's \$12 million option was exercised by Cleveland. The Indians declined a \$7 million option on catcher Roberto Pérez, who gets a \$450,000 buyout.

Right-hander Alex Colomé's \$6.25 million option was declined by Minnesota, triggering a \$1.25 million buyout.

San Francisco declined right-hander Johnny Cueto's \$22 million option and must pay a \$5 million buyout to complete a \$130 million, six-year contract. The Giants exercised options on left-hander José Álvarez (\$1.5 million) and infielder Wilmer Flores (\$3.5 million).

Right-hander Joe Kelly's \$12

million option was declined by the Los Angeles Dodgers, triggering a \$4 million buyout and completing a \$25 million, three-year contract.

San Diego exercised options on right-handers Craig Stammen (\$4 million) and Pierce Johnson (\$3 million), and the Padres declined options on right-hander Keone Kela (\$800,000) and outfielder Jake Marisnick, who gets a \$500,000 buyout rather than a \$4 million salary.

Outfielder Adam Duvall became eligible for salary arbitration. The Braves, who acquired him in July from Miami, exercised his \$7 million mutual option, but he declined it and triggered a \$3 million buyout.

NASCAR star Elliott races for 2nd title

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Chase Elliott was supposed to be the star during his season as both NASCAR's reigning champion and its most popular driver.

He wasn't even the top guy at his own organization.

Beat all season by Hendrick Motorsports newcomer Kyle Larson, Elliott gets a final shot Sunday to defend his run as NASCAR's champ. The star teammates are trying this weekend to emerge as the best in NASCAR — and earn bragging rights at Hendrick — as they race for the championship at Phoenix Raceway in a winner-take-all finale.

Yes, Joe Gibbs Racing teammates Denny Hamlin and Mar-

tin Truex Jr. also are in the final four. But who comes out as the top dog at Hendrick, winner of 16 races this year and NASCAR's winningest team, is one of the more intriguing layers of the first sold-out finale since the race moved to Phoenix last year.

Elliott last season not only advanced to his first championship race, but he then won the whole thing to earn Hendrick its first championship since Jimmie Johnson's record-tying seventh in 2016. But the No. 9 team got hot late in the playoff stretch and won three of the last five races, including the Phoenix finale under a format that rewards late-season success.

This year, Hendrick Motor-

sports has won 16 of 35 races, nine from Larson in his NASCAR comeback. Elliott has won two races, and it was team boss Rick Hendrick who just this week used victory totals (Hendrick driver Alex Bowman four wins; Hamlin two for Gibbs) when asked for a response to Hamlin calling Bowman "a hack."

That would put Larson up 9-2 over Elliott in Hendrick's eyes, no? Surely that must gnaw at Elliott, who now could lose his Cup reign a day short of a full year as champion.

"There's definitely been a few races this year where it's like, 'Wow, my cheers were louder than Chase.' That's really cool," Larson told The Associated

Press. He also joked "maybe I could beat him in the most popular driver award."

But he said because Elliott lives in Georgia, and NASCAR has held mostly one-day shows this season with little to no mingling between teams, Larson said he's yet to build a real off-track relationship with his new teammate. Larson said their paths probably only cross once a month, in hourlong competition meetings where racing is the sole conversation.

"I feel like with Chase, what you see is what you get. He's just quiet and keeps to himself, and I appreciate that side of him," Larson told AP.

Holmes, 22 three-pointers lift Kings over Hornets

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif.— Ri-chaun Holmes had 23 points and a career-best 20 rebounds and the Sacramento Kings made a franchise-record 22 three-pointers in a 140-110 victory over the Charlotte Hornets on Friday night.

Two nights after getting ejected early in the third quarter after picking up a foul and two technicals, Holmes shot 9-for-12 from the floor and had two assists.

It's the first 20-20 game of Holmes' career.

"It was a great moment to have," Holmes said. "I had my family in the audience. It's exciting. It's a testament to the work I've put in. It was a team effort, honestly. We were able to get it done."

Buddy Hield made eight threes and had 26 points, and De'Aaron Fox added 21 points and nine assists for the Kings.

Sacramento shot 50% beyond the arc.

"We shot 44 threes tonight but most of them came from us attacking and collapsing the defense," coach Luke Walton said.

"That's what we want. We were sharing the ball, making the extra pass. It was fun."

Gordon Heyward scored 25 points for Charlotte. LaMelo Ball had 24 points and 13 assists.

Nets 96, Pistons 90: Kevin Durant had 29 points and 10 rebounds, James Harden added a triple-double and visiting Brooklyn beat Detroit for its fourth straight victory.

Durant shook off a poor shooting night by hitting three straight Brooklyn baskets down the stretch.

LaMarcus Aldridge added 16 points for Brooklyn, while Harden had 15 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists.

Cade Cunningham had 17 points for Detroit. The Pistons are 1-8.

Warriors 126, Pelicans 85: Jordan Poole scored 26 points, Stephen Curry had 19 and host Golden State routed New Orleans to improve to 7-1.

Gary Payton II added 17 points, and the Warriors broke it open with a 34-point third quarter. They're off to their best start since opening 10-1 in 2018-19.

Jonas Valanciunas scored 20 points for the Pelicans.

Wizards 115, Grizzlies 87: Bradley Beal scored 17 points in host Washington's victory over Memphis.

Montrezl Harrell had 18 points and eight rebounds for Washington, which improved to 6-3. A 23-6 run during the third quarter broke it open.

Clippers 104, Timberwolves 84: Paul George had 21 points and 11 rebounds, Reggie Jackson scored 14 of his 20 points in the second half and visiting Los Angeles overcame a 20-point deficit to beat Minnesota.

Ivica Zubac had 14 points and 14 rebounds for Los Angeles.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 20 points for Minnesota.

Spurs 102, Magic 89: Dejounte Murray had 20 points and 11 rebounds to help visiting San Antonio beat Orlando.

Cole Anthony had 21 points, nine rebounds and six assists for Orlando. The Magic are 0-4 against teams with losing records.

Trail Blazers 110, Pacers 106: CJ McCollum scored 27 points, making five three-point-

ers, and host Portland beat Indiana to snap a three-game losing streak.

Damian Lillard had four points on 2-for-13 shooting. He also had 11 assists.

T.J. McConnell had 19 points for Indiana.

Cavaliers 102, Raptors 101: Darius Garland made a pair of free throws with 4.8 seconds remaining, and visiting Cleveland rallied to end Toronto's winning streak at five games.

Garland scored 21 points, Evan Mobley added 18, and Jarrett Allen had 16 points and 15 rebounds. OG Anunoby scored 23 points for Toronto.

Knicks 113, Bucks 98: Julius Randle had 32 points and 12 rebounds and visiting New York overcame an early 21-point deficit and beat Milwaukee.

Derrick Rose had 23 points off the bench, and RJ Barrett added 20 to help the Knicks stun the defending NBA champions on their home court.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 25 points for Milwaukee, and Grayson Allen had a season-high 22.