

US, Japan complete anti-sub exercise

By ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

Japanese and American warships met in the South China Sea on Tuesday for an anti-submarine warfare exercise, the first of its kind by the allies in the contested waters.

The Navy's guided-missile destroyer USS Milius and a P-8A Poseidon aircraft rendezvoused with helicopter carrier JS Kaga and guided-missile destroyer JS Murasame of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force for the training, according to a news release Tuesday from Japan's Ministry of Defense.

An unidentified Japanese submarine also participated in the exercise, according to photographs included in the release.

The training was yet another chance for the two navies to work together and improve their knowledge of one another's equipment and training methods,

Task Force 71 spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Keiley told Stars and Stripes in a Wednesday email.

"The focus of the exercise was to test each unit's capabilities in tracking submarines and working together to do so," he said. "Our alliance is strong because of the close engagement that happens through events like this, where we work through shared challenges enabling security and stability and demonstrate our common vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific."

While the United States and Japan routinely train together in the waters surrounding Japan, this was the first anti-submarine exercise to be held by the two countries in the South China Sea.

The training occurred as President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in a virtual summit Tuesday aimed at improving relations between the

two global competitors and reducing tensions between them in the region.

It also took place just a month after a U.S. nuclear-powered submarine collided with an undersea mountain in an unnamed portion of the Indo-Pacific region. While the exact location of the incident was never publicly disclosed, an unnamed defense official said it occurred in the South China Sea, according to an Oct. 8 report from U.S. Naval Institute News.

The collision prompted outrage from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to accusing the U.S. of concealing details of the incident, spokesperson Zhao Lijian called it another example of the U.S. "making trouble in the South China Sea in the name of 'freedom of navigation.'"

Beijing's claims over much of the South China Sea are mostly

unrecognized by the U.S. and its allies. The region has been the stage for rising tensions between the U.S. and China in recent years.

Keiley said Tuesday's training was not in response to any specific event.

The exercise foreshadows further activity between Japan and the U.S. over the next several weeks.

Minesweeping drills between the U.S. and Japan are scheduled for Nov. 18-28, according to the Ministry of Defense.

An exercise between naval forces of Japan, the U.S. and France is scheduled for Dec. 15-17 around Okinotorishima, a Japanese-claimed atoll in the Philippine Sea. The training will include the helicopter carrier JS Hyuga, the French navy's attack submarine FS Émeraude, the destroyer USS John S. McCain and a Navy P-8A Poseidon aircraft.

Japan complains after Marine with virus takes flight

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The Japanese government lodged a complaint with the U.S. military earlier this month after a Marine infected with the coronavirus broke quarantine protocols and traveled from Tokyo to Okinawa on a commercial flight.

"We have requested that U.S. Forces Japan follow the border measures and prevent a recurrence," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said at a press conference Tuesday.

The Marine, in his 20s and assigned to Camp Foster, arrived Oct. 30 at Narita International Airport east of Tokyo, a spokesman for Okinawa prefecture's Department of Public Health and Medical Care told Stars and Stripes by phone Wednesday. He tested positive for COVID-19 at the airport screening station.

The Marine was supposed to quarantine at Yokota Air Base, the U.S. airlift hub in western Tokyo, but instead traveled to Okinawa on a commercial flight the next day, according to the spokesman. As of Wednesday, no passenger from the flight has come down with the virus.

"He should not have been on public transportation," the spokesman said on a customary condition of anonymity. "This should not happen again."

The Marine Corps notified prefectural authorities Nov. 1 that a Marine had traveled to Okinawa the previous day and tested positive upon arrival, the spokesman said. He said the Marine was reportedly vaccinated and asymptomatic.

Japanese officials were surprised because they thought the Marine was in quarantine at Yokota, also the headquarters of

USFJ, the spokesman said. He said the Marine incorrectly declared at Narita that he was assigned to Yokota.

"We really don't know if that was just a mistake or not," the public health spokesman said. "That is why we requested the Japanese government to find out how it happened."

USFJ did not respond to an email seeking comment on Wednesday. III Marine Expeditionary Force referred Stars and Stripes to Marine Corps Installations Pacific, which also did not reply to an email.

Yokota is the designated quarantine site for personnel entering Japan under the status of forces agreement who test positive at Narita, the spokesman said. Staff at Narita "assumed" the Marine would be picked up by someone from Yokota and taken to be isolated.

USAF probing B-52 tow damage at Barksdale

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The Air Force is investigating wing damage to a B-52 sustained Friday while the bomber was being towed at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

Photos of the aircraft's damaged right wing were first published Friday on the Facebook page Air Force amn/ncn/sncn under the banner "Barksdale B-52 AC 0059 accident."

The unofficial site often publishes Air Force-related photos and redacted documents sub-

mitted by readers.

A spokeswoman for the 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale offered Stars and Stripes a brief statement Tuesday, declining to provide any further details.

"A B-52 ground incident happened at Barksdale Air Force Base," 2nd Lt. Aileen Lauer said in a phone interview. "The matter is under review by safety officials."

The Stratofortress apparently collided with a chain-link fence as it was being towed, according to a redacted maintenance noti-

fication worksheet that was also published on the Facebook page.

"While positioning the aircraft for static display on the site, the aircraft collided with the fence directly in front of the [maintenance] building," states the worksheet by the 2nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

"No personnel were reported injured," the worksheet states. "All pieces were recovered from the fence and the aircraft, and there is significant damage to the right wing tip and the leading edge wing outboard of the right

external tank."

A photo on the Facebook page shows a large gash to the skin on the underside of the Superfortress' wing. Another photo shows a fence with several steel posts bent over.

The Air Force had 76 B-52 bombers as of June 2019, according to an online factsheet by the service. They are assigned to the 2nd Bomb Wing and the Air Force Reserve Command's 307th Bomb Wing at Barksdale and to the 5th Bomb Wing at Minot Air Force Base, N.D.

Elite USAF team rescues stricken British mariner

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Five U.S. Air Force pararescuemen rappelled aboard a cargo ship in the Indian Ocean and rescued a merchant mariner who was having a health emergency, U.S. Africa Command said this week.

On Saturday, the pararescue team received an urgent request for help when Kevin Nixon, a British citizen aboard the U.S.-flagged Liberty Grace, experienced symptoms of a heart attack, AFRICOM said in a statement Tuesday.

The multiday operation took place some 500 nautical miles off the coast of Kenya. The pararescuemen stabilized the mariner as the vessel maneuvered within 150 nautical miles of Manda Bay Airfield in Kenya, AFRICOM said.

A pararescueman with the 82nd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron, Master Sgt. Trevor Clark, said Nixon was taken to a medical facility in Nairobi and is recovering.

The United States maintains a small troop presence at Manda Bay, which plays a role in sup-

porting AFRICOM missions in Somalia and extending the overall reach of the command.

For AFRICOM, the rescue showcased the medevac improvements in Africa over the past two years.

Given the size of the continent and the highly dispersed nature of the small U.S. force that conducts African missions, there have long been concerns about the ability to conduct evacuations.

AFRICOM said its Warfighter Recovery Network has made strides, including increased air capacity and additional medical capabilities that enable the recovery and treatment of personnel across vast distances.

The operation involved tiltrotor Osprey aircraft and a Marine Corps KC-130 tanker for aerial refueling support, as well as the PJs, the Air Force's elite rescue specialists.

"This mission is exactly why we always train," Clark said. "It demonstrated how the Warfighter Recovery Network can come together and save a life in the most remote places when needed most."

Military aircraft grounded for exam for S. Korean students

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea—All aircraft operated by the U.S. and South Korean militaries will be grounded Thursday on the Korean Peninsula as high school seniors take a highly competitive college entrance exam.

The College Scholastic Ability Test, or suneung, is administered to high school students in South Korea every third Thursday in November.

The test was pushed back last year to December due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aircraft from the South Korean air force, navy and army will be grounded to reduce noise levels during the exam, a Ministry of Defense official speaking on the customary condition of anonymity told Stars and Stripes by phone on Tuesday.

U.S. military aviation will also be silenced, public affairs officers told Stars and Stripes.

Army helicopters will be grounded throughout the day and firing ranges on military bases will be temporarily shut down, Eighth Army spokesman Lt. Col. Neil Penttila said by

phone Wednesday. Medevac aircraft will be standing by in the event of an emergency.

The 8th Fighter Wing out of Kunsan Air Base will pause training during the exam and the 51st Fighter Wing has no scheduled flights on exam day, 7th Air Force spokeswoman Lt. Col. Kelley Jeter said in an email Tuesday.

Commercial aircraft will also be grounded between 1:05 p.m. and 1:40 p.m., an Incheon International Airport customer service representative speaking on the customary condition of anonymity said by phone Wednesday.

South Korean society places a heavy emphasis on preparing for the exam, which is widely viewed as the deciding factor for college admission and job prospects. Students who fail to achieve their desired score may retake the exam after they graduate from high school.

Exam participants are required to be at testing sites by 8:10 a.m. and are expected to finish at around 5 p.m.

Several 20- to 50-minute breaks are allowed between sessions.

US to buy Pfizer COVID pills for 10M people

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration is planning to purchase 10 million courses of Pfizer's COVID-19 pill, a \$5 billion investment in a treatment that officials think will help change the trajectory of the coronavirus pandemic by reducing severe illness and deaths, according to two people with knowledge of the transaction.

As the administration and Pfizer on Tuesday hammered out the final details, the company asked federal regulators to authorize the five-day antiviral pill regimen called Paxlovid. The medication is the second easy-to-take treatment aimed at keeping newly infected people

out of the hospital to go before the Food and Drug Administration. The other is by Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics.

Biden aides see both treatments as potential game changers to help restore a sense of normalcy heading toward the pandemic's second anniversary, and are eager to add them to a still-small collection of treatments for Americans who contract the coronavirus, according to officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the deal. With breakthrough cases rising and 30% of adults not fully vaccinated, health officials have said that the pills will help tame the pandemic by thwarting the virus'

most pernicious effects.

In another important development, Pfizer has agreed to a license-sharing deal that would allow the pill to be manufactured around the globe and sold at lower prices in poor countries. It's an agreement the company said could give more than half of the world's population access to the treatment, even as Pfizer rebuffs calls to grant poorer countries access to its coronavirus vaccine formula.

"This license is so important because, if authorized or approved, this oral drug is particularly well suited for low- and middle-income countries and could play a critical role in saving lives, contributing to global efforts to fight the current pan-

demic," said Charles Gore, executive director of Medicines Patent Pool, the nonprofit group backed by the United Nations to facilitate global access to life-saving medicines.

Merck and Ridgeback have also agreed to share the license for their antiviral pill, molnupiravir.

Pfizer announced this month that Paxlovid, when given to people at high risk of severe illness within three days of symptom onset, reduced the rate of death and hospitalization by 89%. The clinical trial for the treatment was halted early because of overwhelming evidence that the medication worked.

S. Korea pushes boosters as COVID spread worsens

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea on Wednesday reported 3,187 new cases of the coronavirus, nearly matching a one-day record set in September, a worrisome development in a country that eased social distancing rules in recent weeks to lessen the pandemic's economic impact.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said more than 2,550 of the new cases came from the greater capital area, including a record 1,436 in Seoul. The country's death toll is now 3,137 after 21 deaths were reported on Wednesday, the 16th consecutive day of double-digit fatalities, including a record 32 on Saturday.

The delta-driven spread has raised questions about whether the country was too quick to ease pandemic restrictions at the start of November in what officials described as a first step toward restoring some pre-pandemic normalcy.

In allowing larger social gath-

erings and expanding indoor dining hours at restaurants, officials had hoped that the country's improving vaccination rates would keep hospitalizations and deaths down even if the virus continues to spread.

But there has been a rise in serious cases and fatalities among seniors who rejected vaccines or people in long-term care settings whose immunities have waned after being inoculated early in the vaccine rollout, which began in late February.

Officials are now pushing to speed up the administration of booster shots for people who were fully vaccinated more than six months ago. Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum, the No. 2 government official behind President Moon Jae-in, said during a virus meeting Wednesday that the interval will be reduced to four months for people who are in their 60s or older, and for patients in nursing homes or long-term care hospitals. People in their 50s will be eligible for booster shots after five months, Kim said.

WHO: Europe is only region with growing COVID deaths

Associated Press

LONDON — The World Health Organization said coronavirus deaths in Europe rose 5% in the last week, making it the only region in the world where COVID-19 deaths increased. The U.N. health agency said confirmed cases jumped 6% globally, driven by increases in the Americas, Europe and Asia.

In its weekly report on the pandemic issued late Tuesday, WHO said COVID-19 deaths in all regions other than Europe remained stable or declined, and totaled 50,000 worldwide last week. Of the 3.3 million new infections reported, 2.1 million came from Europe.

It was the seventh consecutive week that COVID-19 cases continued to mount across the 61 countries that WHO counts in its European region, which stretches through Russia to Central Asia.

While about 60% of people in Western Europe are fully immunized against COVID-19, only about half as many are

vaccinated in the eastern part of the continent, where officials are struggling to overcome widespread vaccine hesitancy.

WHO said infections have been falling in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia since July.

Within Europe, WHO said the highest numbers of new cases were in Russia, Germany and Britain. It noted that deaths jumped by 67% in Norway and by 38% in Slovakia.

The health agency previously described Europe as the epicenter of the ongoing pandemic and warned that there could be 500,000 more deaths by February if urgent actions aren't taken on the continent.

In the last week, the Netherlands and some other European countries have reintroduced lockdown measures to try to slow infections, Austria put tight restrictions on the movement of unvaccinated people and the United Kingdom decided to roll out booster doses to everyone over 40.

Democrats pressing ahead on Biden's bill

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Regaining momentum, Democratic leaders are pressing ahead on President Joe Biden's big domestic policy bill, with the House expected to vote later this week and the Senate vowing to follow by Christmas in hopes of boosting the party's standing and delivering on a main campaign promise.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer on Tuesday outlined a potential voting schedule on Biden's \$1.85 trillion social services and climate change package, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said his chamber would vote next.

The president himself, speaking on the road in New Hampshire, predicted quick action after what has been sputtering weeks of delays and sagging poll numbers.

"I'm confident the House is gonna pass this bill. And when it passes, it'll go to the Senate. I think we'll get it passed within a week," Biden said at an event in Woodstock touting the related infrastructure bill he just signed into law.

Shaking off party differences, the Democrats appear to be ready to spring into action, buoyed by the seeming popularity of the smaller \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package but also the flashing warning signs of a potentially dismal election year ahead.

House Democrats huddled privately at the campaign headquarters Tuesday and emerged determined to hold as many as 1,000 public events by the end of the year, joining the White House in taking their agenda on the road to show voters what they hope to accomplish by passing Biden's bigger package of

health care, child care and climate change programs. The Democratic leaders downplayed what has been weeks of party squabbling between progressive and centrist lawmakers that spilled over into start-and-stop progress over the shape of the bill.

"The process can be messy," said Rep. Ha-keem Jeffries, D-N.Y., the caucus chairman. "But the outcome in passing the 'Build Back Better Act' is going to be so transformational to the American people."

Finishing up work on Biden's big package would be a tall order in Congress. Differences still run strong in the Senate, where one key conservative Democrat, Joe Manchin, of West Virginia, remains his party's main obstacle — almost single-handedly preventing the president from delivering on his main campaign promise.

Biden plan to break cargo ship traffic jam falls short

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — President Joe Biden announced a deal last month to establish around-the-clock operations at the Port of Los Angeles, the nation's largest, to break an unprecedented container ship traffic jam blamed for driving up consumer prices.

But that hasn't happened yet.

Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka said in an online briefing Tuesday that the sprawling complex has "24/7 capability," but a shortage of truck drivers and nighttime warehouse workers pose problems in establishing a nonstop schedule, along with getting importers to embrace expanded hours.

"It's an effort to try to get this entire orchestra of supply chain players to get on the same calendar," he said. Among thousands of importers, "we've had very few takers to date."

U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said that going to a 24-hour-a-day schedule at the busiest port in the Western Hemisphere "is, of course, not flipping the switch. There are so many players, even just on the grounds of port."

As for moving cargo, Seroka said there was encouraging news: Since Oct. 24, the port witnessed a 25% drop in the number of import containers on the docks — from 95,000 to 71,000. During the same time, cargo sitting nine days or longer dropped by 29%, he said.

"There's much more work to be done on this front but great progress by our dock workers, shipping lines, truckers, marine terminal operators and railroad partners," he said.

With container ships stranded at ports and unloaded goods waiting for trucks, the White House hoped the longer work day would help cut into shipping delays for everything from cars to toasters to sneakers. As of Tuesday, there were 84 container ships waiting offshore to get into the Port of Los Angeles or its neighboring sister port in Long Beach, an improvement from some recent days when the number topped 100. In normal busy times, only a handful of ships have to wait to dock.

US Northwest and Canada hit with devastating flood

Associated Press

BELLINGHAM, Wash. — As many parts of western Washington began drying out Tuesday after a storm that dumped rain for days, waters in some areas continued rising, more people were urged to evacuate and crews worked to restore power and reopen roads.

Officials in the small city of Sumas, Wash., near the Canada border called the flood damage there devastating. Officials said on Facebook on Tuesday that hundreds of people had been evacuated and estimated that 75% of homes had water damage.

The soaking reminded people of western Washington's record, severe flooding in No-

vember 1990 when two people died and there were more than 2,000 evacuations, officials said.

"These families and businesses need our prayers and support as we start the process of cleanup and rebuilding over the next few days," the Facebook post said.

Across the border, the body of a woman was recovered from a landslide northeast of Vancouver, British Columbia, near Lillooet that was triggered by record rainfall. Royal Canadian Mounted Police said at least two other people were reported missing.

Fast-rising water levels from the Sumas River in Washington state overwhelmed rescuers in Abbotsford, British Columbia,

on Tuesday, where 1,100 homes were evacuated. Those residents joined thousands of others in the province who were forced from their homes by floods or landslides starting Sunday night.

Abbotsford Mayor Henry Braun said Tuesday that impassable highways were creating havoc as authorities tried to get people to evacuation sites.

"It breaks my heart to see what's going on in our city," he said.

Southwest of Sumas, a 59-year-old man from Everson identified by police Tuesday as Jose Garcia remained missing after his truck was swept into a flooded field and he had been clinging to a tree.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman bites off part of officer's ear in bar fight

LA HOUMA — Authorities in southern Louisiana are searching for a woman who bit off part of an officer's ear.

Houma police were trying to break up a fight between several women in a bar's parking lot when one of them started biting the ear of one of the responding officers, the police department said in a news release.

She "bit a large portion of the right ear completely off" during the struggle and fled the area, police said. Authorities know the identity of the 36-year-old suspect and have obtained an arrest warrant for second-degree battery.

The injured officer is recovering after being treated at a local medical facility.

Report: Online driver's test rife with cheating

NY ALBANY — A program to help people obtain driver's permits during the COVID-19 pandemic by taking tests online may be rife with cheating, according to a published report.

State motor vehicle workers told the Albany Times-Union that thousands of people may have taken advantage of the program instituted more than a year ago by former Gov. Andrew Cuomo as in-person testing was curtailed or became backlogged.

Officials at seven state-run motor vehicle offices found that over a four-day period, 464 out of more than 1,500 people who had passed the online test and came to a motor vehicle office to

get their permit had verification issues. Of those, more than 50 people left rather than retake the test, and roughly half of the 410 who retook the test failed, according to the Times-Union.

Ex-coach investigated for nude 'body fat' tests

RI NORTH KINGSTOWN — A former high school basketball coach is being investigated by the Rhode Island attorney general's office after former players came forward to say he asked male student-athletes to disrobe while alone with him so he could perform what he called body fat tests for years.

Aaron Thomas, 54, had been a teacher and coach at North Kingstown High School since the 1990s before he resigned in June, when the reports came to light.

He is not facing any criminal charges. A spokesperson for state Attorney General Peter Neronha confirmed the investigation but could not provide details.

Judge finds guns tied to homicide decades later

IN CROWN POINT — Lake County Judge Marissa McDermott said she discovered two handguns linked to a 1967 homicide while cleaning a courthouse closet.

In 1967, Sharon Potts, a 19-year-old hospital aide, was found dead behind a church in East Chicago. It became known as the "Madonna murder."

Luis Montes, who was 16 at the time of the homicide, died in prison in 1980. Luciano Monserate was sentenced to death, but

the Indiana Supreme Court ordered a new trial.

After more appeals, he pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and was released from prison in 1983.

McDermott said she would like to see the two guns made inoperable but then kept as "part of Lake County history." They are a .45-caliber Colt pistol and a Harrington & Richardson revolver.

Surgical tags helping to monitor sea turtles

MA BOSTON — Marine researchers in New England said they have collected data from tags that were surgically implanted in sea turtles for the first time.

Scientists with the New England Aquarium who performed the work said it could lead to improvements in the way researchers monitor threatened species of turtles.

The loggerheads were rehabilitated at the Boston-based aquarium's turtle hospital and released earlier this year with the acoustic tags implanted in their bodies.

Acoustic receivers in Nantucket Sound off Massachusetts showed multiple detections earlier this month, the researchers said.

Officials make progress with restoring doughboy

WV MARTINSBURG — Officials are making progress with restoring and relocation a World War I doughboy statue to War Memorial Park in Martinsburg.

The doughboy's long-awaited placement at War Memorial

Park began earlier this month when the restored statue was placed near the memorial garden, Superintendent of Parks Steve Catlett said Thursday during a Veterans Day event at the park, The Journal reported.

Concrete was poured Thursday in the area of the project and crews still need to install lighting, ornamental shrubbery and fencing. The entire project is expected to be completed by next spring.

The doughboy statue was at the community's old courthouse until the building was sold. It was removed last spring and officials have been working since then to restore and relocate it.

Police: Food pantry destroyed by arson

KY LANCASTER — A central Kentucky food pantry that helps feed hundreds of people each month was destroyed by arson less than two weeks before Thanksgiving, officials said.

After the blaze Sunday, the Garrard County Food Pantry was deemed a total loss, Gregory Cash, who helps run the pantry, told news outlets. Among the items destroyed were 200 Thanksgiving turkeys that were brought in the day before.

Hours after the blaze, police arrested a woman who was seen on surveillance tape at the scene and charged here with second-degree arson and first-degree criminal mischief, Lancaster Police Chief Rodney Kidd said.

Officials said no one was inside the food pantry when the fire occurred and that no injuries were reported.

— From wire reports

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and Military News

NFL coaches more willing to gamble

Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Chargers offensive coordinator Joe Lombardi learned early on in his time working with first-year head coach Brandon Staley to be ready with a fourth-down call in nearly any situation.

Back in Week 3 with the Chargers facing fourth-and-9 in the final minute of a tie game against Kansas City, Staley opted to go for it instead of trying a long field goal.

"When he said, 'We're going for it,' I was a little surprised there," Lombardi said. "After that, no, I don't think that I'll be surprised anymore."

Teams going on fourth down is much less of a surprise these days than ever, even if it's in the first half in their own territory, in a tie game when a field goal will provide a late lead, or when protecting a lead at the end of the game.

Staley has been among the most aggressive, with that decision against the Chiefs leading to a go-ahead touchdown that left Patrick Mahomes little time to respond. Or last week when Staley went on fourth-and-1 from the Philadelphia 39 in the final three minutes of a tie game.

"If I feel like it's an advantage situation, from a data standpoint, modeling standpoint, timing, rhythm of the game, if I feel like that's what's best for us, then we're going," Staley said. "What we've done a good job of is making sound decisions, not reckless decisions. If you study the actual data of the decision making that we've had, I don't think anyone would say that we're gambling."

Staley ranks first in EdjSports' rankings of coaches on fourth-down calls, edging usual leaders like Indianapolis' Frank Reich and Baltimore's John

Harbaugh.

Bill Belichick, whose memorable decision to go on fourth-and-2 late in a 2009 game against Peyton Manning and the Colts sparked a debate about fourth-down decisions, ranks last on the list.

The analytics company has one of the best models for determining when NFL teams should go and when they should kick on fourth downs, using its win probability model that relies on historical play-by-play data adjusted for variables such as the strength and weaknesses of both teams, injuries and other factors.

Coaches across the league are more willing than ever to keep the offense on the field instead of kicking on fourth down, even in their own territory or in situations their predecessors never would have contemplated.

The shift began in the 2017 season when then-Eagles coach

Doug Pederson's aggressive fourth-down strategy helped Philadelphia win the Super Bowl.

Harbaugh and the analytically sound Ravens took it a step further in 2019 when the skills of Lamar Jackson helped deliver 17 successful fourth-down tries. Now, teams are going for it more than ever.

Fourth-down tries jumped more than 10% from 2019 to 2020 and are up an additional 16% through nine weeks this season. Attempts are up more than 73% over 2017 when Pederson first got attention for his success in Philadelphia.

"I think there's a bit of a herd mentality with coaches," said EdjSports co-founder Frank Frigo. "There's definitely coaches out there that have gotten this for a while and been paying attention. Once others start doing it, it kind of snowballs a little bit."

Bears view longer completions by Fields as a trend

Associated Press

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — After establishing their passing game in a failed comeback against the Pittsburgh Steelers, the Chicago Bears and quarterback Justin Fields anticipate setting a trend Sunday against the Baltimore Ravens.

Following the coaching staff's work over the bye week at self-scouting, Bears coach Matt Nagy called improvement obvious. They have even escaped last place in the NFL in total offense, a position they held for seven straight weeks.

The Bears see their offense operating more efficiently, and not only because of Fields' play but because numerous offensive changes throughout the early season have slowed down to a trickle.

"You had a couple games of Andy Dalton and then you

have Justin coming in," Nagy said. "We had the tough game against Cleveland where numbers-wise was a big-time outlier, whether it's sacks or not getting enough yards or points, etc., you can go across the board. So you look at that."

"And then you also look too at the play calling. You have a different play caller, you have a different quarterback. So we have to balance that with a rookie quarterback, not just a quarterback change but a rookie quarterback that's playing the start of his career."

Fields' improvement has been the big change, though. He had been throwing shorter and targeting fewer receivers, but against Pittsburgh the ball went downfield more to five players and to a full complement of targets.

"I think it just gives not only

me but the offense confidence," Fields said.

Wide receiver Darnell Mooney finds the receivers feeding off Fields' feeling.

"I mean it all boils down to confidence and, you know, the more confidence he brings to himself and to the team the more confidence I have, and the more I'm motivated to go out there and do as much as I can to be there for him," Mooney said.

Fields completed six passes of 20 yards or longer against Pittsburgh, a season high for longer completions. In the second half of the game, Fields completed 12 of 18 for 228 yards and a touchdown, after he'd been 5 of 11 for 63 yards in the first half with an interception.

"We definitely want the explosive passes and it opens up

a lot of things," Mooney said. "Just being able to do those help the defense respect us, even deep-threat wise, knowing that we can make those plays. It gets them on their toes a little bit and that's all we need, just a little slight edge over them."

Seeing momentum on the side of the passing game, Nagy hopes to add in what the Bears saw on film during the bye week to complement Fields.

"And now, as we start to see and do our self-scout, we see that he is getting better in a lot of different areas because of the games that he's getting and the experience that he's getting," Nagy said. "So we understand that."

"But that said, we as a team, for instance on offense, we know areas that we need to improve on."

Curry, Warriors blow out Durant, Nets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Stephen Curry exited the court to one last chorus of “MVP! MVP!” chants, a sound that even he thought was weird.

It is, after all, Kevin Durant’s home arena. It was Curry’s night, though.

Curry had 37 points, easily winning a matchup of the NBA’s top two scorers when Durant had his worst night of the season, and the Golden State Warriors beat the Brooklyn Nets 117-99 on Tuesday.

A matchup with his former teammate had Curry revved up, as did the chance to bounce back from a loss in Charlotte on Sunday.

“So it’s not the playoffs, but there’s an intensity that you have to show up to beat a team like that,” Curry said. “You thrive off that competitive atmosphere, knowing that there’s a lot of talent on the floor.”

Durant came in leading the league with 29.6 points per game, but he managed only 19, the first time all season he didn’t hit 20.

He shot 0-for-8 in the decisive third quarter and finished 6-for-19 after sitting the fourth.

“They got long defenders, guys that can help, so seeing bodies all the time when I had the ball, that’s what great defenses do. And then some shots I wish I could’ve had back,” Durant said. “I rushed a few once we got down 15, 20. I’m trying to get it back so fast you end up taking bad shots and rushed shots.”

Curry almost caught his former teammate for the NBA scoring lead, making nine three-pointers and raising his average to 28.7 per game. Durant dropped to 28.9.

Much of his struggles were due to the defense of Draymond Green, the former Defensive Player of the Year.

“I wanted that challenge,” Green said, saying he was “pretty decent” with it.

He was way better than that.

“You can’t do a better job defensively than what Draymond did tonight,” Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

Curry was 12-for-19 overall, with fans

loudly cheering his long shots and giving him “MVP! MVP!” chants while Durant and the home team misfired.

Clippers 106, Spurs 92: Paul George scored 34 points, hitting 12 of 13 free throws, and host Los Angeles bounced back after its seven-game winning streak ended on Sunday by beating San Antonio.

Dejounte Murray led the Spurs with 26 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists.

Jazz 120, 76ers 85: Bojan Bogdanovic scored a season-high 27, including five three-pointers, to power host Utah to a rout of depleted Philadelphia.

The Jazz had lost four of five games and needed their traditionally tough defense to return. Against this version of the 76ers, it wasn’t clear how much of it had to do with Utah’s guarding prowess or Philadelphia’s ineptitude.

The 76ers shot 37% and only grabbed six offensive rebounds off all those misses. That allowed the Jazz to get into their sets early and produce easy looks.

Seton Hall rallies late in defeat of No. 4 Michigan

Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Jared Rhoden scored 16 points, helping Seton Hall rally to beat No. 4 Michigan 67-65 on Tuesday night.

The Wolverines (2-1) had a chance to extend the game with 0.8 seconds left, but Terrance Williams missed the first of two free throws.

The Pirates (3-0) trailed by 11 points early in the second half and took the lead with 1:15 left for the first time since late in the first half.

Bryce Aiken and Tray Jackson each had 13 points for the Pirates.

Michigan’s Hunter Dickinson had 18 points and nine rebounds, Eli Brooks scored 17 and DeVante Jones added 11 points and 12 rebounds.

No. 7 Duke 92, Gardner-Webb 52: Paolo Banchemo started for Duke two days after he was cited for aiding and abetting impaired driving, finishing with 10 points and eight rebounds as

the Blue Devils beat the visiting Runnin’ Bulldogs.

Banchemo was stopped by police early Sunday morning along with teammate Michael Savarino — coach Mike Krzyzewski’s grandson.

Savarino was driving Banchemo’s white Jeep, according to court records, and was arrested for driving while impaired. Banchemo, who was in the back seat, was cited at the scene and released.

Savarino did not play against Gardner-Webb (0-3), while Banchemo was on the court for 26 minutes.

Trevor Keels led Duke (4-0) with 18 points, seven rebounds and four assists.

No. 5 Villanova 100, Howard 81: Brandon Slater hit all four three-pointers and scored 23 points, Collin Gillespie scored 21, Justin Moore had 16 and the host Wildcats knocked off the Bison.

Villanova (2-1) was pushed for 30 minutes by hot-shooting Ho-

ward. The Wildcats made 14 threes and all 26 free throws.

No. 6 Purdue 96, Wright State 52: Trevion Williams had 20 points and 13 rebounds and Zach Edey added 18 points and 12 rebounds to help the host Boilermakers rout the Raiders.

Purdue is off to its first 3-0 start in three years. It topped the 90-point mark in a third consecutive game, its longest streak since December 2000.

No. 11 Memphis 90, Saint Louis 74: Tyler Harris had 18 points and Emoni Bates scored 16 as the host Tigers topped the Billikens.

BYU 81, No. 12 Oregon 49: Alex Barcello had a season-high 25 points, including four three-pointers, and the visiting Cougars thumped the Ducks in the Phil Knight Invitational.

No. 13 Kentucky 80, Mount St. Mary’s 55: Oscar Tshiebwe had a career-high 24 points with 16 rebounds, TyTy Washington scored 16 points and the host Wildcats ran away from the

Mountaineers.

No. 14 Alabama 73, South Alabama 68: Keon Ellis scored 18 points, Jahvon Quinerly made a go-ahead layup with under three minutes to go and the host Crimson Tide got past the Jaguars.

No. 15 Houston 67, Virginia 47: Marcus Sasser scored 19 points, Kyler Edwards added 18 and the host Cougars used a suffocating defense to beat the Cavaliers.

No. 18 North Carolina 94, Charleston 83: Armando Bacot scored a career-high 24 points, tied his career best with six blocks and added 12 rebounds as the visiting Tar Heels rallied in the second half.

No. 25 Southern California 78, Florida Gulf Coast 61: Chevez Goodwin scored 20 points, Boogie Ellis added 18 and the visiting Trojans defeated the Eagles in the return of USC coach Andy Enfield to the school he led to the “Dunk City” moniker in the 2013 NCAA tournament.

Panthers remain unbeaten at home

Associated Press

SUNRISE, Fla. — Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 27 shots and the Florida Panthers overcame the loss of center Aleksander Barkov to remain unbeaten at home by routing the New York Islanders 6-1 on Tuesday.

Jonathan Huberdeau, Carter Verhaeghe, Aaron Ekblad and Frank Vatrano all scored goals. Ryan Lomberg recorded his first goal of the season and Patric Hornqvist had a goal and an assist.

Ilya Sorokin allowed four goals on 17 shots in the first period for the Islanders and was replaced before the second by Semyon Varlamov, who finished with 17 saves. Kyle Palmieri scored the goal for the Islanders, who ended a 13-game trip.

Barkov collided knee-on-knee with Islanders defenseman Scott Mayfield with 18:13 left in the second period. Barkov remained on the ice for several minutes before leaving and not putting weight on his left knee. He did not return to the game with what was officially called a lower-body injury.

Ducks 3, Capitals 2: Trevor Zegras scored his second goal

in overtime to extend Anaheim's winning streak to eight — and notch the 1,000th franchise win — with a win over visiting Washington.

Ryan Getzlaf reached 1,000 career points and Troy Terry extended his point streak to 15 games for the Ducks, who remain unbeaten in November and have won six straight at home dating back to Oct. 31. John Gibson stopped 28 shots for the Ducks.

Hurricanes 4, Golden Knights 2: Sebastian Aho had a goal and an assist and Carolina won at Las Vegas.

Tony DeAngelo, Seth Jarvis and Vincent Trocheck also scored for the Hurricanes, while Antti Raanta stopped 21 shots.

Flyers 2, Flames 1: Cam Atkinson scored just 45 seconds into overtime and Carter Hart made 33 saves to lift host Philadelphia over Calgary.

Kevin Hayes also scored for the Flyers.

Jets 5, Oilers 2: Nikolaj Ehlers, Pierre-Luc Dubois and Mark Scheifele scored in the second period of Winnipeg's win over visiting Edmonton.

Adam Lowry and Kyle Connor also scored for the Jets, and Josh Morrissey had two assists. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 32 shots as Winnipeg finished 5-1-1 on a seven-game homestand.

Sharks 4, Wild 1: Timo Meier had a goal and an assist to keep up his strong start to the season in San Jose's win at Minnesota.

Mario Ferraro, Erik Karlsson and Tomas Hertl also scored for the Sharks. Logan Couture and Rudolfs Balcers had two assists, and James Reimer made 26 saves as San Jose won for the second time in six games.

Coyotes 3, Blues 2: Barrett Hayton scored twice, Scott Wedgewood made 33 saves and Arizona got a rare road win by beating St. Louis.

Kyle Capobianco scored his first goal of the season for the Coyotes, who snapped a three-game losing streak and won in regulation for only the second time in 16 games this season.

Sabres 2, Penguins 1: Dustin Tokarski stopped a career-high 45 shots as Buffalo won at Pittsburgh.

His previous high was 44 saves on April 1. He turned

aside 19 shots in the third period alone, when the Penguins outshot the Sabres 20-3. Tokarski has stopped 78 of the last 81 shots he's faced.

Maple Leafs 3, Predators 0: Jack Campbell made 24 saves to register his third shutout of the season and host Toronto defeated Nashville.

Auston Matthews, David Kampf and Mitch Marner scored for the Maple Leafs, who have won nine of their last 10 games. Matthews and Kampf both added assists.

Rangers 3, Canadiens 2: Chris Kreider had another goal, Kaapo Kakko scored for the second straight game and host New York beat Montreal for its fourth straight win.

Julien Gauthier also scored and Igor Shesterkin made 31 saves for the Rangers.

Stars 4, Red Wings 2: Jason Robertson scored twice and Jake Oettinger made 28 saves in his season debut as host Dallas beat Detroit.

Ryan Suter, Jamie Benn and Roope Hintz also scored for the Stars, who have won two straight games for only the second time this season.

Rays' Cash, Giants' Kapler win Manager of Year

Associated Press

For Kevin Cash, being mentioned in the same sentence with Bobby Cox is an honor.

"That's wrong. I shouldn't be," Cash said. "But saying that, it's incredibly humbling. When you think about greats in our game, Bobby Cox is right there."

Cash has now accomplished something only Cox achieved previously — back-to-back Manager of the Year awards. Cash won the American League honor Tuesday night. The Tampa Bay skipper was joined by San Francisco's Gabe Kapler, who won the National League

award.

Cox took the NL honor two years in a row with Atlanta in 2004-05 during his Hall of Fame career.

That's the feat Cash has now matched. He led the low-payroll Rays to a second consecutive AL East crown this season. Tampa Bay (100-62) finished with the AL's best record before losing to Boston in the Division Series.

Seattle's Scott Servais finished second behind Cash in the voting by members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. Houston's Dusty Baker was third.

Cash received 19 of the 30

first-place votes.

Kapler won the NL award after guiding San Francisco to a franchise-best 107 victories in his second season with the Giants. He beat out Craig Counsell of the Milwaukee Brewers and Mike Shildt of the St. Louis Cardinals.

Kapler managed two seasons in Philadelphia before being fired. The Giants hired him after Bruce Bochy's retirement. Kapler had both big shoes to fill — Bochy won three championships with San Francisco — and a struggling team to take over. When the Giants went 29-31 in the pandemic-shortened 2020

season, it was their fourth straight losing record.

Then, in a year when the star-laden Dodgers and Padres were supposed to compete for NL West supremacy, San Francisco surged to the best record in baseball. The Giants beat out the Dodgers by a game for the division crown, although they lost to Los Angeles in the Division Series.

Counsell finished second behind Kapler after leading the Brewers to the NL Central title. Shildt was third.

Kapler received 28 of the 30 first-place votes, which were cast before the playoffs began.