

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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## Navy reinstates its Torpedoman rating

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN

*Stars and Stripes*

MANAMA, Bahrain — The Navy has reinstated its Torpedoman's Mate rating nearly a quarter of a century after it was consigned to Davy Jones' locker, the service said in a message Tuesday.

The change is a direct response to fleet feedback and supports "rating modernization initiatives to continue to empower sailors and expand professional development opportunities," said the message from Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. John Nowell.

The Torpedoman moniker was first used in 1921 and changed to Torpedoman's Mate in 1942. It retained that name until 1995, when the Navy merged the job with machinist submariners.

**'I think the Navy bringing back the TM rating is going to pay incredible dividends.'**

Senior Chief Heath Mangrum

Torpedo mates are responsible for weapons loading, unloading, storage and systems maintenance on all classes of submarines, according to a Navy statement.

"Although there are similarities between a Machinist's Mate and a Torpedoman's Mate, the TM's main focus at sea is weapons handling, force protection and maintaining an incredible level of proficiency in ordnance,

small arms and the upkeep of those systems," Senior Chief Heath Mangrum, a Machinist's Mate (Weapons) who will transition to a Torpedoman, said in the Navy statement.

Mangrum, who serves as the lead torpedoman at the Navy's Atlantic Submarine Force command, added that excitement among his sailors about the reinstatement of the rating was "through the roof."

Their glee was also evident on the CNP Facebook page.

"I'm so glad we continued fighting to bring back our identity," one commenter, who signed his name as retired TM Master Chief Eddie Smith, posted. "Great job N1 staff!!!!"

"Glad to have our Torpedo brothers and sisters back," another commenter said.

The decision to bring back the Torpedoman rating stemmed

from an April "All Hands Call" at Naval Base Kitsap, Wash., where then-Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson proposed the idea to the crowd, the Navy message said.

The change is strictly administrative and will only require affected sailors to change the rating badge on their uniforms, going back to the same one that was used prior to the 1995 name change. Current Machinist's Mates (Weapons) will not see any changes to advancement exams, selection boards or sea/shore rotations, Tuesday's message said.

"I think the Navy bringing back the TM rating is going to pay incredible dividends," said Mangrum. "It's the right time for a change like this to light the fire under our sailors and embrace the heritage in the rating."

## Navy to drop its instructor-led college at sea program

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN

*Stars and Stripes*

MANAMA, Bahrain — A Navy program that allowed sailors to take college courses while at sea is being shuttered, and the funds saved by the move are being transferred to a tuition assistance program that will benefit more sailors, Navy officials said Monday.

The decision to ax the Navy College Program for Afloat College Education-Instructor Led program, or NCPACE IL, was made because of the high cost of running the program and the steady decline in enrollment over the years, officials said.

"NCPACE IL was resource-intensive with administrative costs exceeding one-third of the overall program expenses

**'This change ensures funding remains available to the greatest number of sailors.'**

Ernest D'Antonio

director of Navy Voluntary Education

(\$1.3 million annually), regardless of enrollment numbers," Lt. Cmdr. James Stockman, spokesman for Naval Education and Training Command, said in an email.

In addition to the instructor-led program requiring "intensive administrative oversight," having high program costs and attracting only a relatively small number of sailors, it had generated "no interest from higher education institutions

when the supporting contract came up for renewal this year," Ernest D'Antonio, director of Navy Voluntary Education, said in a statement.

The roughly \$2 million that will be saved annually by closing instructor-led NCPACE will be redirected to tuition assistance, where the funds will benefit more sailors, both men said.

Enrollment has declined from 5,587 sailors in 2010 to 1,491 in

2018, Stockman said. In just the past year, 80% of sailors chose online and distance education programs over the traditional classroom courses provided by NCPACE IL.

"We recognize that sailors are interested in pursuing advanced degrees, and we support their ability to further their personal educational goals," D'Antonio said. "This change ensures funding remains available to the greatest number of sailors."

The NCPACE program is not going away completely, Stockman said. The program will be transitioned to a virtual model to accommodate demand among sailors for online and distance-learning courses, he said.

## Milley faces challenges as Joint Chiefs chairman

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Army Gen. Mark Milley is taking over as the nation's top military officer against a backdrop of controversy over defense aid to Ukraine that has triggered a presidential impeachment inquiry at a time of persistent threats from China, Russia and Iran.

Milley, who was sworn in during a rain-soaked ceremony Monday at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, officially became chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and President Donald Trump's top military adviser at midnight.

He will face what has been an increasingly difficult task: maintaining the nonpolitical nature of the U.S. military and providing blunt advice to a president who is prone to making sudden Pentagon announcements via Twitter and abruptly turning on Cabinet members who cross him.

In a brief speech Monday, Milley told Trump, "You can rest assured that I will always provide informed, candid, impartial military advice to you."

He vowed to maintain the high quality of the world's preeminent fighting force.

"With the complex challenges of the international environment, the United States Armed Forces stand ready. We stand ready to keep the peace or, if necessary, win the war," he said.

Trump, who attended the ceremony, praised Milley, saying, "Mark is living proof that the American warfighter is the toughest, smartest and bravest, best and brightest by far anywhere in the world."

Pentagon leaders have largely tried to avoid the impeachment matter. But the issue casts broad questions over whether allies must worry that any U.S. military aid could come with political strings attached. Milley, 61, will be at the forefront of military deliberations with U.S. allies and partners around the world.

The matter did not come up during the ceremony. Addressing the visiting chiefs of defense from other nations who attended the event, Milley said in his speech that their presence "demonstrates the importance of our shared security interest and common values. As chairman, I look forward to working with all of you to ensure our collective security."

## N. Korea: Talks with US to resume soon

BY KIM GAMEL  
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea and the U.S. agreed to resume nuclear negotiations this weekend, Pyongyang said Tuesday, a move that would break a seven-month-long diplomatic deadlock.

The sides have been teasing plans to restart working-level talks since President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met at the Korean border on June 30.

Efforts remained stalled after the leaders failed to reach an agreement during their February summit in Vietnam, which exposed sharp disagreements over the pace of sanctions relief in exchange for steps toward denuclearization.

North Korea's first vice minister of foreign affairs, Choe Son Hui, said the countries agreed to have preliminary contact Friday and to hold working-level talks Saturday.

North Korean delegates "are ready to enter into the [North Korean]-U.S. working-level negotiations," Choe announced

via the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

"It is my expectation that the working-level negotiations would accelerate the positive development of DPRK-U.S. relations," she added, using the initials for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. She did not say where the meeting would take place or give more details.

The State Department confirmed that "U.S. and DPRK officials plan to meet within the next week."

"I do not have further details to share," spokeswoman Morgan Ortogus said.

Choe's statement came a day after Trump's former national security adviser, John Bolton, warned that the North was not willing to give up nuclear weapons and was trying to buy time with diplomacy. North Korea has long despised Bolton, who has called for regime change and advocated a so-called "Libya model" of denuclearization, an unattractive prospect for the North since Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi was killed years after he disarmed.

## Special ops task force earns 48 medals in 1 deployment

BY CHAD GARLAND  
Stars and Stripes

Members of a special operations task force distinguished themselves with "exceptional heroism, valor and dedication" on a recent six-month deployment to Afghanistan, officials said last week.

For their efforts, the soldiers of Special Operations Task Force 102 earned five Silver Star medals, seven Bronze Star medals with Valor devices, 15 Army Commendation medals with Valor devices and 21 Purple Hearts. The medals were presented last week at a ceremony attended by soldiers, family and friends at Fort Car-

son, Colo.

"We come together as family and unit to honor the heroism and sacrifice of our soldiers and their families," Lt. Col. Justin Hufnagel, 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) commander, said in a statement. "For 170 days of a blistering series of operations, we focused on disrupting the enemy in their strongholds."

The task force was made up of soldiers assigned to 10th Group, 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 9th Psychological Operations Battalion and 71st Ordnance Group (Explosive Ordnance Disposal). U.S. Army Special Operations

Command's Lt. Gen. Francis M. Beaudette, who presented the 48 awards, said he was "incredibly humbled" to be in their presence.

"These Green Beret heroes ... embody all the values and attributes we hold dear in the ARSOF community," Beaudette was quoted as saying at the event.

The families of Sgt. 1st Class Will Lindsay and Sgt. Joseph Collette, two soldiers killed in combat in northern Afghanistan in March, received medals awarded posthumously to their loved ones.

Lindsay, 33, a Green Beret with 10th Group, was awarded

a Silver Star, the third-highest military combat decoration. Collette, 29, an EOD tech with the 71st Ordnance Group's 242nd Ordnance Battalion, received a Bronze Star with Valor.

Two other 10th Group members — Master Sgt. Micheal Riley and Sgt. 1st Class Elliott Robbins — were posthumously awarded Army Commendation medals with Valor. Riley was killed by small-arms fire during combat operations in southern Uruzgan province in June. Robbins, a medic and new father, reportedly died in a noncombat incident that same month in Helmand province.



## Japan's off-base sales tax raised

BY SETH ROBSON  
AND HANA KUSUMOTO  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — U.S. servicemembers in Japan will have to fork over a little more yen for off-base goods and services after the host nation raised its sales tax from 8% to 10% on Tuesday.

The last time Japan increased the tax was in 2014, when it went from 5% to 8%. The latest tax increase was postponed twice by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, but officials say it's needed to fund social services. The cost of caring for the elderly and keeping the national debt under control is rising as Japan's population ages.

The tax increase doesn't apply to items such as food and drinks, except for alcohol and restaurant meals, to reduce the impact on low-income people, according to information posted online by Japan's Ministry of Finance.

U.S. military personnel are already feeling the impact with train and taxi companies charging more. Staff Sgt. Steven Campbell, 29, of Detroit, who has worked at Yokota in western Tokyo since 2017, said he had to pay a higher road toll than usual during a trip Tuesday.

Companies operating expressways in Japan said they'd raised prices in line with the tax increase. For example, the Kyushu Expressway toll has increased from 510 yen, or about \$4.70, to 520 yen for passenger cars.

Campbell said he shops off-base and uses public transportation and toll roads regularly.

"I will probably just keep doing the same things ... maybe cut one or two trips here and there to save," he said. "Two percent doesn't look like much, but it does add up over time."

The U.S. government should increase troops' cost-of-living allowance — a payment designed to make up for higher costs at certain locations — to compensate them, he said.

Steve Deland, 68, a retired Air Force command and control technician living in Tachikawa, near Yokota, said higher costs might hit young airmen who want to explore off base rather than save their money to spend when they return to the U.S.

The Japanese government has published some examples of the sort of increases people can expect to see.

For example, a train fare from Yokosuka Chuo Station — near Yokosuka Naval Base — to Yokohama has increased from 360 yen, or \$3.32, to 370 yen, or \$3.41, according to train operation Keikyu.

The initial cost to hire a taxi in downtown Tokyo, Mitaka and Musashino cities has increased from 410 yen (\$3.78) to 420 yen (\$3.87).

# Violence erupts in Hong Kong as officer shoots protester

*Associated Press*

HONG KONG — In a fearsome escalation of violence, Hong Kong police shot a protester in the chest at close range Tuesday, leaving the teenager bleeding and howling on the ground. Tens of thousands joined anti-government demonstrations that spread across the semi-autonomous Chinese territory as Communist leaders in Beijing celebrated 70 years in power.

The pistol shot fired by the officer as protesters swarmed toward him hit the 18-year-old on the left side of his chest, police spokeswoman Yolanda Yu said. She described the protesters as "rioters" and said the officer feared for his life.

The wounded youth was taken to a hospital for treatment, Yu added, without giving details about his condition.

While officers have previously fired warning shots in the air on multiple occasions during months of protests in Hong Kong, this was the first time a protester is known to have been shot. There were other instances Tuesday when officers also drew their weapons, including two with bloodied faces who pointed pistols as protesters and riot police fought fierce battles at multiple locations in the city on edge, with many determined to spoil the Tuesday anniversary of Communist rule.

Video that spread quickly on social media appeared to show the officer opening fire as the protester came at him with a metal rod, striking the officer's shooting arm.

Taken by the City University Student Union, it showed a dozen black-clad protesters hurling objects at a group of riot police and closing in on the lone officer, who pointed his pistol and opened fire. The protester toppled backward onto the street, bleeding from below his left shoulder.

As another protester rushed in to try to drag away the wounded youth and was tackled by an officer, a gasoline bomb landed in the middle of the group of officers in an explosion of flames.

The shooting marked a dramatic escalation in violence that spread chaos to multiple areas of China's freest and most international city.

Riot police fired tear gas in at least six locations and used water cannons in the business district as protesters turned streets into battlefields. A security clampdown to thwart violence that would embarrass Chinese President Xi Jinping failed to deter the protests, including a massive march in the city center.

Organizers said at least 100,000 people marched along a broad thoroughfare in de-

## China parades latest missiles on anniversary

*Associated Press*

BEIJING — Military planners in Washington and elsewhere will be taking note of new missile technology displayed by China, particularly a hypersonic ballistic nuclear missile believed capable of breaching all existing anti-missile shields deployed by the U.S. and its allies.

The vehicle-mounted Dong Feng 17, or DF-17, was the standout among weapons showed off at a military parade Tuesday marking the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese state. Those also include the Dong Feng 41, or DF-41, an intercontinental ballistic missile with a range of 9,300 miles — China's longest-range weapon — that could reach the United States in 30 minutes.

Also featured at the event were the JL-2 submarine-launched strategic missile believed to be standard weaponry for China's nuclear-powered subs, as well as the CJ-100 cruise missile.

Beijing insists all are homegrown, and though China is believed to have benefited from industrial spying and imported technologies, its massive military research and development program and the size of its economy have put its weapons technology at the forefront along with Russia and the U.S.

fiance of a police ban, chanting anti-China slogans and some carrying Chinese flags defaced with a black cross. Police didn't provide an estimate of the turnout.

"Today we are out to tell the Communist Party that Hong Kong people have nothing to celebrate," said activist Lee Cheuk-yan as he led the downtown march. "We are mourning that in 70 years of Communist Party rule, the democratic rights of people in Hong Kong and China are being denied. We will continue to fight."

# House Dems subpoena Giuliani in probe

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — At one end of Pennsylvania Avenue, the president raged about treason. At the other, the methodical march toward impeachment proceeded apace.

Democrats on Monday subpoenaed Rudy Giuliani, the president's personal lawyer who was at the heart of Trump's efforts to get Ukraine to investigate political rival Joe Biden's family. That was after one of Trump's staunchest defenders, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, said he would have "no choice" but to consider articles of impeachment if the

House approved them.

With Congress out of session for observance of the Jewish holidays, Democrats moved aggressively against Giuliani, requesting by Oct. 15 "text messages, phone records and other communications" that they referred to as possible evidence. They also requested documents and depositions from three of his business associates.

Meanwhile, the circle of officials with knowledge of Trump's phone call to Ukraine's president widened with the revelation that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo listened in on the July 25 conversation.

Pompeo's presence on the

Ukraine call, confirmed by two officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an internal matter, provided the first confirmation that a Cabinet official heard Trump press President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to investigate Hunter Biden's membership on the board of a Ukrainian gas company.

It is that call, and the circumstances surrounding it, that are fueling the new Democratic drive for impeachment.

McConnell, a steadfast Trump defender, nonetheless swatted down talk that the GOP-controlled Senate could dodge the matter of impeachment if the House approved

charges against Trump.

"It's a Senate rule related to impeachment. It would take 67 votes to change, so I would have no choice but to take it up," McConnell said on CNBC. "How long you're on it is a whole different matter."

Trump took to Twitter to defend anew his phone call with Zelenskyy as "perfect" and to unleash a series of attacks, most strikingly against House intelligence committee Chairman Adam Schiff. The Democrat, he suggested, ought to be tried for a capital offense for launching into a paraphrase of Trump during a congressional hearing last week.

## Trump sought Australia's help on Russia probe origins

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump recently asked the Australian prime minister and other foreign leaders to help Attorney General William Barr with an investigation into the origins of the Russia probe that shadowed his administration for more than two years, the Justice Department said Monday.

The revelation underscores the extent to which Trump remains consumed by special counsel Robert Mueller's inves-

tigation, and the ways in which he has used the apparatus of the United States government to investigate what he believes are its politically motivated origins.

It also highlights Barr's hands-on role in leading that investigation, including traveling overseas for personal meetings with foreign law enforcement officials.

Trump's interactions with foreign leaders — and Barr's role in those discussions — are under heightened scrutiny now

that the House has launched an impeachment inquiry into the president. The probe centers on Trump's summertime call with Ukraine's president, revealed by a whistleblower CIA intelligence officer, in which Trump presses for help investigating Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump has heaped praise on Barr since he took the helm of the Justice Department earlier this year, viewing him as a key ally for his political agenda, including his push to "investigate the investigators" in the Russia

probe. But the Justice Department has denied Barr had any knowledge that Trump encouraged Ukraine to work with him on a separate investigation into Biden.

The president has sought, without evidence, to implicate the Bidens in the kind of corruption that has long plagued Ukraine. Hunter Biden served on the board of a Ukrainian gas company at the same time his father was leading the Obama administration's diplomatic dealings with Kyiv.

## Ex-cop who fatally shot neighbor found guilty of murder

Associated Press

DALLAS — A white former Dallas police officer who said she fatally shot her unarmed black neighbor after mistaking his apartment for her own was found guilty of murder on Tuesday.

A jury reached the verdict in Amber Guyger's trial for the killing of Botham Jean after six days of witness testimony but just a handful of hours of deliberation.

Cheers erupted in the courthouse as the verdict was announced, and someone yelled,

"Thank you, Jesus!" In the hallway outside the courtroom where Guyger was tried, a crowd celebrated and said "black lives matter" in raised voices. When the prosecutors walked into the hall, the crowd broke into cheers.

Guyger sat alone, weeping, at the defense table.

In Texas, the sentence for murder is from five to 99 years in prison. The jury was expected to return Tuesday afternoon for the punishment phase of the trial.

The basic facts of the unusu-

al shooting were not in dispute throughout the trial. In September 2018, Guyger walked up to Jean's apartment — which was on the fourth floor, directly above hers on the third — and found the door unlocked. She was off duty but still dressed in her police uniform after a long shift when she shot Jean, 26, with her service weapon.

The accountant had been eating a bowl of ice cream before Guyger entered his home.

Guyger, 31, was arrested three days after the killing. She was later fired and charged

with murder, but spoke publicly about the shooting only upon taking the witness stand Friday.

She tearfully apologized for killing Jean and told the jurors she feared for her life upon finding the door to what she thought was her apartment unlocked.

Guyger said Jean came toward her at a fast walk when she entered with her gun out, but prosecutors have suggested he was just rising from a couch toward the back of the room when the officer shot him.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Motorists see porn on electronic billboard

**MI** AUBURN HILLS — Police are investigating after motorists traveling through a Detroit suburb were stunned to see a pornographic video playing on an electronic billboard.

Auburn Hills police said the video played on the billboard along Interstate 75 near Michigan highway 59 for about a half-hour Saturday night before police contacted the company that owns the billboard and the images were removed. Police said multiple people called 911 after seeing the explicit video.

Police are investigating how the images ended up on a billboard, including whether someone hacked into the electronic sign's system.

## Battleship park gets grant to fight flooding

**NC** WILMINGTON — A North Carolina park containing a piece of history has received a grant to help protect it from an increase in flooding.

News outlets reported the N.C. Clean Water Management Fund awarded \$400,000 to Battleship North Carolina near the Cape Fear River last week.

The Battleship is working on a \$2 million effort to protect the park and ship from high water. Capt. Terry Bragg told StarNews of Wilmington the goal is to design and engineer a plan, create a living shoreline and construct a wetland near the parking lot.

## Police seek witnesses to knife attack at mall

**MD** COCKEYSVILLE — Authorities in Maryland said they are hoping

to hear from witnesses who saw a knife-wielding man shot dead by police officers after attacking five people at an outdoor shopping mall.

Baltimore County police on Sunday identified Jamaal Ramone Taylor, 31, of Baltimore in the stabbing spree at the Hunt Valley Towne Centre on Saturday afternoon.

Police said Taylor stabbed four people with a folding knife and beat a fifth person before officers shot and killed him. Police said officers fired after Taylor refused repeated commands to drop the knife.

All five victims suffered injuries that weren't life-threatening.

## Work on track for WWII vessel's move

**IN** EVANSVILLE — Officials said work could be completed in November on a project allowing the move of a restored World War II naval vessel to a more prominent location along the Ohio River in downtown Evansville.

Crews are building a visitors center and barges so the LST 325 troop landing ship can move to the former site of the Tropicana Evansville casino boat. Evansville Port Authority chairman Pat Wathen told the Evansville Courier & Press that the \$3.6 million project is on track and within budget after high initial construction bids delayed work.

The ship took part in the 1944 D-Day landing in France and has been based in Evansville since 2005.

## KKK symbols found in woods near home

**WA** SNOHOMISH — A multiracial Washington state family raised concerns after Ku Klux Klan symbols

were spray-painted on multiple trees near their home.

KOMO-TV reported that the Anderson family has had tough conversations about race with their four adopted children, but the racially offensive graffiti crossed a line. The family said the teenage son discovered the KKK symbols on six to eight trees as he walked through the woods next to their house heading to a lake.

Snohomish County deputies said an investigation is underway.

## Police: Man killed for looking at driver

**AZ** PHOENIX — Phoenix police have made an arrest in a March homicide in which the victim reportedly was shot for merely looking at another man stopped at a red light.

Police arrested Nicolas Elliott, 30, Thursday on suspicion of murder and other crimes in the killing of Alex Mixon, 26.

Police said Mixon was shot after leaving the intersection and then crashed his pickup.

Sgt. Tommy Thompson said there's no indication the men argued or exchanged words before the shooting, but witnesses said Elliott bragged about what he'd done. Elliott was jailed in lieu of \$1 million bond.

## Man charged with catching small fish

**FL** ISLAMORADA — A Canadian man was charged with possessing nearly three dozen undersized fish in the Florida Keys.

The Monroe County Sheriff's Office said in a news release Saturday that George Singh, 73, of Ontario, was charged with 31 counts of possession of undersized mangrove snapper. Singh was also charged with 27

counts of possession of fish that were over the bag limit.

Authorities said they found Singh with the fish in a bucket at the Whale Harbor Bridge in Islamorada. All but one of the mangrove snapper were under the legal size limit of 10 inches.

## Veterans' memorial's bronze shoes stolen

**NM** ALBUQUERQUE — Authorities said bronze shoes at an Albuquerque veterans' memorial meant to honor those who served in the U.S. war on terrorism have been stolen.

New Mexico Veterans Memorial Foundation vice president James Lehner said the bronze shoes were stolen Friday night.

Michael Burd, with the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Board of Directors, said the five pairs of bronze shoes are worth thousands of dollars.

Lehner said thieves also took the M-16 and helmet at the Vietnam memorial.

## Black bear knocks down, injures hiker

**CT** SOUTHBURY — Connecticut officials said a hiker who was knocked to the ground by a black bear was treated for non-life-threatening injuries.

Connecticut Environmental Conservation Police said a Newtown man was knocked down by a black bear while hiking near Lake Zoar on Saturday. The man, who is 38, was able to get away, and the bear took off into the woods. The man was taken to Danbury Hospital and has since been released.

Environmental police have not been able to find the bear. Wildlife biologists set up a trap in the area.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Aided by adversity

Blues' run from last place to Stanley Cup shows value of NHL regular season

Associated Press

When the Tampa Bay Lightning woke up on Jan. 3 atop the NHL standings, the St. Louis Blues were dead last.

Tampa had won 31 of its first 39 games; St. Louis had won only 15 of its first 37. The Lightning staked themselves to 30-point lead on the Blues before the season's halfway mark.

The rest is league history: The Lightning got swept out of the playoffs in the first round, and the Blues went from the basement to lifting the Stanley Cup in triumph. That the Blues struggled for so long and didn't hit their stride until January could make much of the six-month regular season seem pointless, although players suggest it actually shows the importance of ups, downs and adversity during the 82-game grind as a way to prepare to win playoff games.

"You've got to understand in the bigger picture if you're going to have a four, five, six-game losing streak at some point, it's no reason to hit the panic button," said Jonathan Toews, who won the Cup as the Chicago Blackhawks' captain in 2010, 2013 and 2015. "You almost have to go through that so when playoffs do come around, you're ready to turn that switch and you've got that energy and you've got that confidence that if you work, you're going to get the results for it."

Players who watched all four division champions bow out in the first round and the Blues grind to the first title in franchise history came away with some important lessons on how to approach the regular season. St. Louis showed a midseason coaching change can work, a goalie can come out of nowhere and have success, and momentum can snowball in a positive direction.

"It was good understanding that it's a roller coaster, and the more you can stay even keel

and keep staying with things and keep pushing each other to think that sometimes things will change, you'll get a bounce and things will start to go your way," said Blues center Ryan O'Reilly, the playoff MVP. "It was very awful at the start. We couldn't seem to string wins together. But guys kept working. Guys didn't shut down. They kept working for each other and the next thing you know, things started to change. Once that belief happened, it kind of steamrolled."

Tampa Bay wound up on the flip side, having not lost more than two games in a row all season and lacking the struggles to draw from when things went poorly in the playoffs. They went four and out against

All of which supports the believe that standings and seeding matters little in the playoffs, where matchups take precedence. It also apparently doesn't matter where a team is at by Thanksgiving or New Year's Day, which used to be important markers about who will make the postseason.

"We started well and we ended bad," said Jack Eichel, whose Sabres went on a 10-game winning streak, were first in the league at Thanksgiving and missed the playoffs. "You look at St. Louis and they did the complete opposite. It's a long season, and a lot goes into it. Consistency is one of the most important things in this league."

Is it, though? The Blues

**It was very awful at the start. We couldn't seem to string wins together. But guys kept working. Guys didn't shut down. They kept working for each other and the next thing you know, things started to change. Once that belief happened, it kind of steamrolled.**

**Ryan O'Reilly**

Blues center, playoff MVP

the Columbus Blue Jackets.

"We were good in the regular season and probably thought we'll be all right in the playoffs because we were good in the regular season," said the Lightning's Andrei Vasilevskiy, voted the Vezina Trophy winner as the league's best goaltender last season. "The regular season was great. We were on a good run. In the playoffs, I think our tank was empty because of that and we just went straight down because of that."

The Lightning tied the NHL record with 62 victories and finished 21 points ahead of the next closest team. They also became the 10th Presidents' Trophy winners in 11 tries to fall short of winning the Stanley Cup.

didn't put together a winning streak longer than two until mid-January. They got a boost from rookie goalie Jordan Binnington, tied a franchise record with 11 consecutive victories and became the poster boys for coming together at the right time.

"It's just something to rally behind," Dallas Stars goaltender Ben Bishop said. "Usually that's kind of what it comes down to. Something happens, and usually a team rallies behind it."

For Vegas in 2017-18, it was the hometown shooting that killed 58 people and bonded an expansion hockey team with its community. The Golden Knights shocked the league by winning eight of their first

nine games of existence and reached the Stanley Cup Final before losing to the Washington Capitals. For St. Louis, Laura Branigan's "Gloria" became a popular rallying cry and young fan Laila Anderson battling a rare auto-immune disease was a heartwarming touchstone for the players as they made their run under Craig Berube, who was an interim coach until the celebrations had begun.

Rallying points are impossible to predict, and there's no way to control when and how a group comes together. Still, general managers, coaches and players are always searching for that recipe of how to peak at the right time.

"You want to keep climbing," said goaltender Tuukka Rask, whose Boston Bruins pushed St. Louis to Game 7 of the Cup Final. "I don't think you want to peak early and then slowly decline from there. That's what everybody's looking for. But you're just trying to make the playoffs, always. You're just trying to make the playoffs on a good note and not feeling like, 'Oh, we dodged a bullet here. We barely made it.' And then you're kind of starting the playoffs not knowing what your game's going to look like. You want to be feeling great as a team entering the playoffs."

Toews pointed out a hot start never hurts. Points banked in October, November and December count just the same.

The Blues' title run is perfect evidence that games lost early don't spell the end. That's how Jaccob Slavin sees the regular season now that he and the Carolina Hurricanes are trying to back up a surprise trip to the Eastern Conference final and every other team is looking to find the Blues' rhythm and win it all.

"Until you're out of it, don't give up," Slavin said. "If you get on a roll at the right time, anything can happen."



# Steelers find spark, rout Bengals

Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Steelers insisted they might have been winless through three weeks, but they were far from hopeless. They stressed the process of finding an identity with franchise quarterback Ben Roethlisberger out for the season with an elbow injury would take time and a collective effort.

An effort that looked an awful lot like what they put together during a 27-3 pounding of the Cincinnati Bengals on Monday night.

Mason Rudolph threw for 229 yards and two scores. Running back, part-time wide receiver and occasional wildcat quarterback Jaylen Samuels accounted for 134 yards of total offense and a 2-yard touchdown run. James Conner emerged from an early funk to run for 42 yards and catch eight passes for 83 yards and a score. The defense sacked Andy Dalton eight times and held the Bengals scoreless over the final 51 minutes.

It wasn't perfect, but it was a start. One that helped the Steelers (1-3) avoid their second 0-4 start in 51 years and reaffirmed their belief that they can find a way forward without Roethlisberger.

"It's huge," Samuels said. "Coming in 0-3 and coming back, getting a divisional game, that's huge. We've just got to build

off this game."

With Pittsburgh's running game going nowhere through three weeks, running backs coach Eddie Faulkner suggested to offensive coordinator Randy Fichtner that it might be time to dust off the wildcat. Samuels ran it frequently during his college career at N.C. State, and the Bengals (0-4) certainly looked caught off guard when Samuels lined up in the shotgun and started distributing the ball like a point guard. Sometimes he'd hand it off to Conner. Others he'd "throw" a "pop" pass to a teammate running in motion in front of him. Still others he opted to keep it himself, including on his third-quarter touchdown in which he strolled into the end zone after the Bengals bit on a fake handoff.

"We knew if we could get a lot of guys going sideways, it was going to mess them up a little bit so that's what we did," Samuels said. "It was working. ... We were picking up five, six yards every play. They couldn't stop it."

Samuels ran for 26 yards on 10 carries, caught eight passes for 57 more and was credited with three completions for 31 yards. Conner had 14 touches for 125 yards, including a 21-yard sprint through the Cincinnati defense in the second quarter that gave the Steelers a lead they never came close to squandering while beating the Bengals for the ninth consecutive time.

## Woe and 4

Cincinnati coach Zac Taylor became the second first-year coach to drop his first four games with the Bengals. Sam Wyche started 0-5 in 1984 but helped his team rebound to an 8-8 finish. Taylor's task of getting Cincinnati back to respectability will be far harder if he can't figure out a way to protect Dalton.

"To be quite honest, it starts with me," Taylor said. "I've got to make sure the standard is higher than what it is right now, because I haven't done a good enough job."

## Rudolph rolls

Rudolph was uneven at best in his first career start last week in San Francisco after being thrust into the gig for the rest of the season while Roethlisberger rehabs from elbow surgery. Rudolph was considerably sharper against Cincinnati, although he wasn't asked to do much other than find the closest open man — usually Conner or Samuels — and keep the sticks moving. He completed 24 of 28 passes, the only deep shot a 43-yard strike to Diontae Johnson in the third quarter that broke it open.

# Raiders LB Burfict suspended for rest of season

Associated Press

Oakland Raiders linebacker Vontaze Burfict was suspended Monday for the rest of the season for a helmet-to-helmet hit on Indianapolis Colts tight end Jack Doyle, the most severe punishment in NFL history for an on-field infraction.

Burfict will miss the final 12 games of the season and any playoff games for "repeated violations of unnecessary roughness rules." He has been suspended three times in his career for hits violating the league's player safety rules.

Burfict has the right under the collective bargaining agreement to appeal the punishment in the next three days. He had one of his previous suspensions reduced from five games to three games on an appeal in 2017.

It's that history that led to the most severe punishment the NFL has handed out when it comes to player safety, topping the five games Tennessee's Albert Haynesworth got in 2006 for kicking and stomping on Cowboys center Andre Gurode's face,

leading to 30 stitches.

Burfict had served two three-game suspensions already in his career and had been warned about severe punishment for future infractions.

"There were no mitigating circumstances on this play," NFL Vice President of football operations Jon Runyan said in a letter to Burfict announcing the suspension. "Your contact was unnecessary, flagrant and should have been avoided. For your actions, you were penalized and disqualified from the game."

"Following each of your previous rule violations, you were warned by me and each of the jointly-appointed appeal officers that future violations would result in escalated accountability measures. However, you have continued to flagrantly abuse rules designated to protect yourself and your opponents from unnecessary risk."

"Your extensive history of rules violations is factored into this decision regarding accountability measures."

The suspension is without pay, costing Burfict more than \$1.1 million in salary

and per game active roster bonuses.

Burfict was flagged for unnecessary roughness and ejected from the Raiders' game against the Colts on Sunday after the blow to Doyle's head early in the second quarter.

The Colts have had two players enter the concussion protocol following games this season — All-Pro linebacker Darius Leonard two weeks ago and starting safety Clayton Geathers following Sunday's game. Doyle, Colts coach Frank Reich said Monday, showed no symptoms of a head injury.

Reich backed the league's decision.

"I was just thankful the league took the action that it did, and (I) support the league and the decision," he said on a conference call Monday. "I did have a reaction yesterday. When someone does something like that and attacks one of your players — that's just not supposed to be in the game. Then when it's against one of your players, you naturally have a reaction. I'm just glad they did what they did at the game and the follow-up action seems very appropriate."



# Bullpens will need to get big outs in playoffs

Associated Press

It's been three years since Andrew Miller led the Cleveland Indians to the brink of a World Series championship by coming out of the bullpen early and often, and bulk work from relievers has been an October staple since. Whether it's Brewers All-Star Josh Hader stretching out for three innings or Astros ace Justin Verlander moonlighting in middle relief, aggressive bullpen management has become standard postseason practice.

As the calendar flips, a look at the best relief options — for the biggest outs, and for a bunch of them — for each of the 10 playoff clubs.

## New York Yankees

**For The Big Out:** In baseball's deepest bullpen, the difference maker is Aroldis Chapman. The 31-year-old left-hander has lost some steam — he averaged about 98 mph on his fastball this year, down from 101 at his peak in 2016 — but he's made up for it with an improved slider that he's throwing more than ever. Although he famously blew a lead for the Cubs in Game 7 of the 2016 World Series, Chapman has been fantastic in October, posting a 2.30 ERA with seven saves in 27 appearances.

**Man In The Middle:** CC Sabathia impressed last week in the first regular season relief appearance of his career, and he and J.A. Happ will both be in the bullpen. The left-handed starters could be used in tandem with right-hander Luis Severino, or after a righty opener like Chad Green.

## Minnesota Twins

**For The Big Out:** Taylor Rogers built on a breakout 2018 and emerged as one of baseball's steadiest closers this year. The 28-year-old is perhaps the most reliable strike thrower in the American League.

**Man In The Middle:** Two years after he went undrafted, rookie right-hander Randy Dobnak has pitched himself into a key postseason role. The 24-year-old certainly didn't ex-

pect to be here — he scheduled his wedding for Sept. 28, figuring he'd be free when the minor league season ended.

## Houston Astros

**For The Big Out:** Roberto Osuna is Houston's closer, but Ryan Pressly is the guy manager AJ Hinch will call in the most critical spots. The right-hander has dominated since being acquired from Minnesota last season thanks to a curveball with the highest average spin rate in the majors. The 30-year-old had knee surgery in August but returned Sept. 20 and has looked sharp.

**Man In The Middle:** With Justin Verlander, Gerrit Cole and Zack Greinke, Houston shouldn't need much length from its relievers. Wade Miley got accustomed to unusual October usage last year with Milwaukee, and he or rookie Jose Urquidy will likely go to the bullpen. Don't count out a relief look from Verlander, either.

## Tampa Rays

**For The Big Out:** Even with one of baseball's best and most versatile pitching staffs, the Rays went shopping at the deadline to get right-hander Nick Anderson from the Marlins. The 29-year-old rookie has struck out 41 and walked two in 21  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings since the deal.

**Man In The Middle:** Ryan Yarbrough has thrived following Tampa Bay's openers the past two seasons, although he's been used effectively as a standard starter down the stretch and might be Tampa Bay's No. 4 man instead. Yonny Chirinos and Trevor Richards both have long relief experience, too. With Charlie Morton, Blake Snell, Tyler Glasnow and Yarbrough all healthy, manager Kevin Cash might use his pitchers in surprisingly traditional roles.

## Oakland Athletics

**For The Big Out:** Australian righty Liam Hendriks completed a remarkable turnaround after being cut last year by locking himself into Oakland's closer role this season. He

credits the comeback to tarot cards and an energy healer named Rubi — “she's phenomenal” Hendriks told The Associated Press — but it also helps that he's throwing his fastball harder than ever.

**Man In The Middle:** Just like David Price with Tampa Bay in 2008, rookie left-hander Jesus Luzardo could have an outsized impact for Oakland despite limited big league experience. Ranked among baseball's top starting pitching prospects, Luzardo has a 1.50 ERA in six relief appearances as a September call-up.

## Atlanta Braves

**For The Big Out:** After a few uneven seasons in San Francisco, Mark Melancon has returned to All-Star form in Atlanta. He's improved his control and begun throwing harder since being acquired from the Giants at the trade deadline, supplanting struggling Luke Jackson in the closer's role.

**Man In The Middle:** Max Fried made 30 starts during the regular season but likely won't crack the postseason rotation. The left-hander is an enticing piggyback option after right-handed starter Mike Foltynewicz.

## St. Louis Cardinals

**For The Big Out:** Last year's deal sending slugger Luke Voit to the Yankees looked like a steal for New York, but Giovanny Gallegos has evened things out by becoming a bullpen anchor. The rookie right-hander has been excellent in middle relief, walking hardly anyone and holding opponents to a .168 average. His emergence has also lessened the loss of injured closer Jordan Hicks.

**Man In The Middle:** Andrew Miller was once the poster boy for October relief pitching, but the 34-year-old left-hander hasn't been nearly the same pitcher in his first season with St. Louis. Manager Mike Shildt leans traditional, and extraneous starter Michael Wacha is probably the club's best bet for multiple innings.

## Los Angeles Dodgers

**For The Big Out:** Kenley Jansen has a 2.08 ERA in the past six postseasons, but a season-long slump has made the 31-year-old a potential weak link for the two-time defending NL champs. Despite winning 106 games, Los Angeles lacks a reliable, shut-down reliever, and converted starters like Kenta Maeda or Julio Urias could be asked for key outs in short bursts.

**Man In The Middle:** Los Angeles has options for length, and it will likely need someone to follow 39-year-old Rich Hill in a potential Game 4. Rookie righties Dustin May and Tony Gonsolin appear to be battling for the final bullpen spot. Either would slot well behind the left-handed Hill.

## Washington Nationals

**For The Big Out:** Washington hoped to lean on two-time All-Star Sean Doolittle, but he's been responsible for six of the Nats' NL-leading 29 blown saves. The club's best chance in the late innings may be complete games from Max Scherzer, Stephen Strasburg and Patrick Corbin.

**Man In The Middle:** If the starters aren't working deep, the Nationals are probably in trouble. Expect Scherzer to be a bullpen option late should Washington advance.

## Milwaukee Brewers

**For The Big Out:** Josh Hader was the most-feared pitcher in last year's postseason, with every managerial decision factoring in if and when he might pitch. The left-hander is practically automatic for 6 to 9 outs, although he blew a critical save Saturday and allowed a career-high 15 home runs this season.

**Man In The Middle:** Only two pitchers topped 130 innings for Milwaukee this year — Zach Davies and Chase Anderson — and both may be left off the playoff roster. Nearly everybody is going to be asked to cover multiple innings. Veteran left-hander Gio Gonzalez in particular has taken well to recent long relief work.