

Archbishop: Catholics can refuse vaccine

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Roman Catholic service members may refuse the coronavirus vaccine if they have a conscientious objection to the inoculation, which in certain cases was developed with cell lines derived from abortions, the archbishop for the military services said Tuesday in a statement.

Timothy P. Broglio, who heads the Military Services archdiocese in the United States, reiterated the Catholic Church's position that it is "morally permissible" to receive the COVID-19 vaccinations available in the U.S., the statement said. But that doesn't preclude a person from forming a sincerely held religious belief to the contrary, Broglio said.

"Accordingly, no one should be forced to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if it would violate the sanctity of his or her conscience," he said.

Broglio's statement, first reported by Defense One, comes as the Pentagon moves ahead with a mandate for all troops to be fully vaccinated by late November, barring

medical or religious exemptions.

Broglio singled out the Johnson & Johnson vaccine as "more problematic" than its counterparts from Pfizer and Moderna. That's because the former was developed, tested and produced with abortion-derived cell lines, he said.

"If it were the only vaccine available, it would be morally permissible," Broglio said. "But the faithful Catholic is to make known his or her preference for a more morally acceptable treatment."

Broglio added that although the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines had been tested using a cell line derived from abortions, that type of linkage is considered "remote material cooperation with evil" and therefore "is never sinful."

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said in December that taking a vaccine derived from a fetal cell line did not constitute "formal cooperation with abortion."

COVID-19 vaccines do not contain fetal cells. The cell line used for certain vaccine development came from two abortions in

the 1970s and 1980s, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services website.

The cells from those decades continue to divide and "grow in a lab as a cell line," the website says.

Broglio said that those who refuse vaccines must take steps to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus for the sake of the "common good" by wearing face coverings, practicing social distancing, undergoing routine testing and quarantining.

In addition, those troops should remain open "to receiving a treatment should one become available that is not derived from, or tested with abortion-derived cell lines," Broglio said.

So far, about 96.7% of active-duty personnel have received at least one vaccine dose, while 83.7% are fully vaccinated, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Tuesday.

Medical exemptions from COVID-19 vaccination for service members must be approved by a health care professional. Religious exemptions are granted or denied by the military services.

Lawyer: Marine officer in viral videos to plead guilty

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A Marine officer whose viral videos criticizing senior officials for how they withdrew from Afghanistan created a political uproar will plead guilty to several charges and seek a discharge that allows him to keep some military benefits, one of his lawyers said on Tuesday.

Lt. Col. Stuart Scheller is scheduled for court-martial at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina on Thursday, and faces charges that include disrespect toward superior commissioned officers, willfully disobeying a superior commissioned officer and dereliction in the performance of duties. He burst into public view in August when, in the immediate aftermath of a suicide bombing that killed 13 U.S. troops and about 170 Afghans, he posted a video while in uniform questioning why no senior leader had admitted making mistakes in how the withdrawal was carried out.

One of Scheller's attorneys, Tim Parla-

tore, said in a phone interview that he could not yet get into the specifics of a pretrial agreement because some of the details are "still up in the air." But he said the case began with Scheller demanding accountability from others, and it would "make him a hypocrite" if the Marine did not accept responsibility for his own actions.

The Marine hopes to avoid jail time and secure either an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions.

"Our hope is for him to get a letter of reprimand, and no more," Parlatore said.

The possibility of a plea deal was first reported by *Coffee or Die Magazine*.

The case has been injected with partisan politics, with Scheller becoming a cause celebre among conservatives angry with the Biden administration and senior military officials.

Several dozen Republicans called for his release from pretrial confinement in a letter

late last month, and the case has received significant attention in conservative media. It also has been spotlighted by retired Special Operations chief Edward Gallagher, a former client of Parlatore's who was acquitted in 2019 of an alleged murder in Iraq and now advocates for other service members facing criminal charges.

Scheller has also criticized Republicans, including former President Donald Trump. In a Facebook post on Sept. 25, he wrote that "everyone" had told Scheller to "kiss the ring" and seek Trump's help, but he said that he didn't want to and that "I hate" how Trump "divided the country."

Scheller, a 17-year infantry officer who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, posted his first video on Aug. 26, shortly after a suicide bombing by Islamic State militants targeted U.S. troops and Afghans at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul as the United States carried out a chaotic evacuation effort.

China: Drills, flights helped defend Taiwan

Associated Press

BEIJING—China's recent increase in military exercises and warplane missions near Taiwan — which have raised concerns around the region — were necessary to defend the nation's sovereignty and territory, a Chinese official said Wednesday.

China's military flew 56 planes off the southwest coast of Taiwan one day earlier this month, a single-day record that capped four days of a sustained pressure campaign involving 149 flights. All were in international airspace, but the display raised fears that any misstep could provoke an unintended escalation in the region.

Taiwan views China's moves as advertising its threat to bring

the island it claims as its own territory under its control by military means as necessary. The sides split amid civil war in 1949 and have no official contacts.

The purpose of the maneuvers was to "fundamentally safeguard the overall interests of the Chinese nation and the vital interests of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," said Ma Xiaoguang, spokesperson for the Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office.

"The People's Liberation Army exercises are necessary actions to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity," Ma told reporters at a biweekly news conference in Beijing.

Ma blamed actions by Taiwan's independence-leaning

democratically elected government and its relations with "external forces" for heightening tensions.

Outside observers have said the military maneuvers are intended to degrade Taiwan's physical defense capabilities through wear and tear, while turning the citizenry against their leaders through a form of psychological warfare.

Taiwan, a close U.S. ally, scrambled jets to intercept the Chinese aircraft and activated its missile air defense systems. It is also working to boost its defenses by buying new technology from the United States and developing domestic systems, including submarines.

Public opinion surveys show

the vast majority of Taiwanese wanting to keep their de facto independent status without giving in to China's demands for political unification.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen on Sunday vowed to defend the island from China's rising pressure after a week of unprecedented tensions with Beijing. She spoke a day after Chinese leader Xi Jinping said annexing Taiwan "must be realized," while saying that was best brought about by peaceful means.

Xi also added, however, that, "No one should underestimate the Chinese people's strong determination, will and capability to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Navy spouse's 'Runway' debut is must-see TV on Japan base

BY ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A Navy spouse is set to compete on Bravo's "Project Runway," and this base south of Tokyo will be hosting a watch party to support and celebrate her debut.

Yokosuka resident Katie Kortman, 40, of West Palm Beach, Fla., is taking on 15 other designers in Season 19 of the Emmy-winning fashion competition series. They'll compete in a variety of challenges for a grand prize of \$250,000 and a chance to show a collection at New York Fashion Week.

American Forces Network and the naval base are hosting the watch party on the second floor of the Yokosuka Officer's Club at 7 p.m. Saturday, when the first show is aired in Japan.

A self-taught designer, Kortman recently told *Stars and Stripes* that the chance to appear on the show is a "life-changing sit-

uation" — one that she didn't even seek out.

Starting in 2018, Kortman began posting pictures on Instagram of designs she had made for herself and soon developed a following. In February 2020, a "Project Runway" casting agent reached out to ask if she'd consider auditioning for the show.

"I was like 'Oh my gosh, are you kidding? It's a joke, this has to be a prank call,'" Kortman said. "But they were for real. It's a show that I've watched since it started. It's like a dream."

Initially set to film in May 2020, the coronavirus pandemic delayed that schedule by a year. By the time the show was ready to shoot, Kortman and her husband, Lt. Cmdr. Francisco Kortman, and their four children had moved to Japan. Kortman flew to New York for filming in May.

Season 19 of "Project Runway" premieres on Bravo at 9 p.m. EST on Thursday in the U.S., and at 7 p.m. Saturday on AFN in Japan.

Navy recovers bodies of sailors who died in Aug. 31 helo crash

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The Navy has recovered the bodies of five sailors who died Aug. 31 when their MH-60S Seahawk helicopter flipped off the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln off the coast of San Diego, Naval Air Forces announced Tuesday.

The bodies of Petty Officer 2nd Class James P. Buriak, Petty Officer 2nd Class Sarah F. Burns, Lt. Bradley A. Foster, Lt. Paul R. Fridley and Petty Officer 3rd Class Bailey J. Tucker were recovered Friday with the wreckage of the helicopter about 5,300 feet below the surface, according to a Naval Air Forces statement.

Divers for the Naval Sea Systems Command recovered the bodies, bringing them aboard the multipurpose service vessel HOS Bayou, according to the statement. The ship arrived at Naval Air Station North Island, Calif., on Sunday. The remains were then taken to Dover Air Force Base,

Del. for identification, Naval Air Forces said.

The crash was the first fatal Navy aviation crash of 2021, according to a Naval Safety Center report. The Seahawk had just touched down aboard the Lincoln when it "experienced side-to-side vibrations causing the main rotor to strike [the] flight deck," according to a Naval Safety Center report.

The helicopter then fell over the side of the carrier and into the ocean off the coast of San Diego, according to the report. One sailor was rescued.

Five additional Abraham Lincoln sailors were injured in the incident, but the Navy has not released further details about how they were hurt. Two were taken to San Diego for treatment while the others were treated on board for minor injuries, the service said Sept. 1.

The incident remains under investigation, according to the statement.

House approves increase to debt limit

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House has approved a short-term increase to the nation's debt limit, ensuring the federal government can continue fully paying its bills into December and temporarily averting an unprecedented default that would have decimated the economy.

The \$480 billion increase in the country's borrowing ceiling cleared the Senate last week on a party-line vote. The House approved it Tuesday so President Joe Biden can sign it into law this week. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen had warned that steps to stave off a default on the coun-

try's debts would be exhausted by Monday, and from that point, the department would soon be unable to fully meet the government's financial obligations.

A default would have immense fallout on global financial markets built upon the bedrock safety of U.S. government debt. Routine government payments to Social Security beneficiaries, disabled veterans and active-duty military personnel would also be called into question.

The relief provided by passage of the legislation will only be temporary, though, forcing Congress to revisit the issue in December — a time when lawmakers will

also be laboring to complete federal spending bills and avoid a damaging government shutdown.

The year-end backlog raises risks for both parties and threatens a tumultuous close to Biden's first year in office.

"I'm glad that this at least allows us to prevent a totally self-made and utterly preventable economic catastrophe as we work on a longer-term plan," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass.

Republicans signaled the next debt limit debate won't be any easier and warned Democrats not to expect their help.

"Unless and until Democrats

give up on their dream of a big-government, socialist America, Republicans cannot and will not support raising the debt limit and help them pave the superhighway to a great entitlement society," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla.

Procedurally, the House took a single vote Tuesday that had the effect of passing the Senate bill. The measure passed by a party-line vote of 219-206.

The present standoff over the debt ceiling eased when Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., agreed to help pass the short-term increase. But he insisted he won't do so again.

US to reopen land borders for fully vaccinated

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States will reopen its land borders to nonessential travel next month, ending a 19-month freeze due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the country moves to require all international visitors to be vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Vehicle, rail and ferry travel between the U.S. and Canada and Mexico has been largely restricted to essential travel, such as trade, since the earliest days of the pandemic. The new rules, announced Wednesday, will allow fully vaccinated foreign nationals to enter the U.S. regardless of the reason for travel starting in early November, when a similar easing of restrictions is

set to kick in for air travel into the country. By mid-January, even essential travelers seeking to enter the U.S., like truck drivers, will need to be fully vaccinated.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said he was "pleased to be taking steps to resume regular travel in a safe and sustainable manner" and lauded the economic benefits of it.

Both Mexico and Canada have pressed the U.S. for months to ease restrictions on travel that have separated families and curtailed leisure trips since the onset of the pandemic. The latest move follows last month's announcement that the U.S. will end country-based travel bans for air travel and instead require vaccination for foreign

nationals seeking to enter by plane.

Senior administration officials had previewed the new land border policy late Tuesday. Both policies will take effect in early November, the officials said.

The new rules only apply to legal entry to the U.S. Officials cautioned that those seeking to enter illegally will still be subject to expulsion under so-called Title 42 authority, first invoked by former President Donald Trump, that has drawn criticism from immigration advocates for swiftly removing migrants before they can seek asylum. One of the officials said the U.S. was continuing the policy because cramped conditions in border patrol facilities pose a COVID-19 threat.

Federal immigration agents to cease workplace raids

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Federal immigration agents will end mass workplace arrests of immigrant employees suspected of living in the U.S. without legal permission, according to a memo issued Tuesday by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

Instead, the focus will shift to pursuing "unscrupulous employers who exploit the vulnerability of undocumented workers" and

emphasize fighting worker abuse including paying substandard wages, unsafe working conditions and human trafficking.

The three-page memo directs the heads of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection and Citizenship and Immigration Services to draw up a plan within two months to increase employer penalties, encourage workers to report unscrupulous practices

without fear and coordinate with other agencies, such as the Department of Labor.

Mass worksite raids were common under former President Donald Trump, including a 2019 operation targeting Mississippi chicken plants, the largest such operation in over a decade. Trump and other Republican presidents defended raids as strong deterrents against illegal immigration, while workers

groups called them unfair and discriminatory. For instance, most of the 680 workers arrested at chicken plants run by companies including Illinois-based Koch Foods were Latino.

Tuesday's move away from raids more closely resembles the approach by former President Barack Obama, who largely avoided such operations, limiting workplace immigration efforts to low-profile audits.

Shatner becomes oldest person in space

Associated Press

VAN HORN, Texas — Hollywood's Captain Kirk, 90-year-old William Shatner, blasted into space Wednesday in a convergence of science fiction and science reality, reaching the final frontier aboard a ship built by Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin company.

The "Star Trek" hero and three fellow passengers soared an estimated 66 miles over the West Texas desert in the fully automated capsule, then safely parachuted back to Earth in a flight of just over 10 minutes.

Shatner became the oldest person in space, eclipsing the previous record — set by a passenger on a similar jaunt on a Bezos spaceship in July — by eight years.

"How about that, guys? That was unlike anything they described," the actor said as the

capsule descended under its brilliant blue and red chutes.

Sci-fi fans reveled in the opportunity to see the man best known as the stalwart Capt. James T. Kirk of the starship Enterprise boldly go where no star of American TV has gone before.

"This is a pinch-me moment for all of us to see Capt. James Tiberius Kirk go to space," Blue Origin launch commentator Jacki Cortese said before liftoff. She said she, like so many others, was drawn to the space business by shows like "Star Trek."

Shatner said ahead of the countdown that he planned to spend his approximately three minutes of weightlessness gazing down at Earth, his nose pressed against the capsule's windows.

"The only thing I don't want

to see is a little gremlin looking back at me," he joked, referring to the plot of his 1963 "Twilight Zone" episode titled "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet."

Bezos is a huge "Star Trek" fan — the Amazon founder had a cameo as an alien in one of the later "Star Trek" movies — and Shatner rode for free as his invited guest.

The blastoff brought price-less star power to Bezos' spaceship company, given its built-in appeal to baby boomers, celebrity watchers and space enthusiasts. Shatner starred in TV's original "Star Trek" from 1966 to 1969, back when the United States was racing for the moon, and went on to appear in a string of "Star Trek" movies.

Bezos himself drove the four to the pad, accompanied them to the platform high

above the ground and cranked the hatch shut after they climbed aboard the 60-foot rocket. A jubilant Bezos was there to greet them when the capsule returned, shouting, "WHOOOO!"

"Hello, astronauts. Welcome to Earth!" Bezos said as he opened the hatch and was embraced by Shatner.

The capsule, New Shepard, was named for the first American in space, Alan Shepard.

Shatner strapped in alongside Audrey Powers, a Blue Origin vice president and former space station flight controller for NASA, and two paying customers: Chris Boshuizen, a former NASA engineer who co-founded a satellite company, and Glen de Vries of a 3D software company. Blue Origin would not divulge the cost of their tickets.

US talks global cybersecurity without a key player: Russia

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Amid an epidemic of ransomware attacks, the United States is discussing cybersecurity strategy this week with 30 countries while leaving out one key player: Russia.

The country that, unwittingly or not, hosts many of the criminal syndicates behind ransomware attacks was not invited to a two-day meeting starting Wednesday to develop new strategies to counter the threat.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan called it a gathering of "like-minded" governments in agreement on the urgent need to protect citizens and businesses from ransomware.

"No one country, no one group can solve this problem," he said in opening remarks.

The virtual discussions will focus in part on efforts to disrupt and prosecute ransomware networks like the one that attacked a major U.S. pipeline company in

May, a senior administration official said. The attack on Colonial Pipeline, which led to gas shortages along the East Coast, was attributed to a Russia-based gang of cybercriminals.

Despite that, the U.S. has used a "dedicated channel" to address cybersecurity with Russia, said the official, who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity to preview this week's meeting with around 30 countries and the European Union.

Since President Joe Biden raised the issue directly with President Vladimir Putin this summer in a summit and later phone call, there have been "candid discussions" about cybercriminals operating within Russia's borders, the official said.

"We've had several, and they continue, and we share information regarding specific criminal actors within Russia, and Russia has taken initial steps," the official said.

FDA authorizes 1st e-cigarette

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For the first time, the Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday authorized an electronic cigarette, saying the vaping device from R.J. Reynolds can help smokers cut back on conventional cigarettes.

E-cigarettes have been sold in the United States for more than a decade with minimal government oversight or research. Facing a court deadline, the FDA has been conducting a sweeping review of vaping products to determine which ones should be allowed to remain on the market.

The agency said in September that it had rejected applications for more than a million e-cigarettes and related products, mainly due to their potential appeal to underage teens. But regulators delayed making decisions on most of the major vaping companies, including market leader Juul, which is still pending.

Tuesday's decision only applies to Vuse's Solo e-cigarette and its tobacco-flavored nicotine cartridges. The agency said data from the company showed the e-cigarette helped smokers significantly reduce their exposure to the harmful chemicals in traditional cigarettes.

While the products can now be legally sold in the U.S., the FDA stressed they are neither safe nor "FDA approved," and that people who don't smoke shouldn't use them.

Launched in 2013, Vuse Solo is a rechargeable metallic device that's shaped like a traditional cigarette.

"The manufacturer's data demonstrates its tobacco-flavored products could benefit addicted adult smokers who switch to these products — either completely or with a significant reduction in cigarette consumption," said Mitch Zeller, director of the FDA's tobacco center, in a statement.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Elk that had tire around neck for 2 years is free

CO PINE — Wildlife officials in Colorado said an elusive elk that has been wandering the hills with a car tire around its neck for at least two years has finally been freed of the obstruction.

The 4½-year-old, 600-pound bull elk was spotted near Pine Junction, southwest of Denver, on Saturday evening and tranquilized, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Officers with the agency had to cut off the elk’s five-point antlers to remove the encumbrance because they couldn’t slice through the steel in the bead of the tire.

Officer Scott Murdoch and fellow officer Dawson Swanson estimated the elk shed about 35 pounds with the removal of the tire, the antlers and debris inside the tire.

Wildlife officers first spotted the elk with the tire around its neck in July 2019 while conducting a population survey.

Saturation is part of street racing crackdown

OR PORTLAND — Police officers saturated an area of Portland on Sunday night known for street racing and stopped dozens of would-be racers, authorities said.

The Portland Police Bureau said in a news release that with Oregon State Police, police made 47 traffic stops, issued 21 citations and arrested two people.

Police said they explained the new unlawful street takeover law during their encounters.

A man in a Subaru WRX STI with license plates from Olympia, Wash., tried to elude police and the bureau said the vehicle

was going over 100 mph when the driver apparently saw spike strips in the road and backed up quickly into a police car. Police said the 24-year-old driver was arrested on several charges including felony eluding.

State told to get dues from prison workers

MO ST. LOUIS — A judge has ordered Missouri to begin collecting union dues from prison workers, finding that an attempt by Gov. Mike Parson’s administration to break the union is illegal.

In a scathing, 43-page decision, Circuit Judge Jon Beetem said it was “unconstitutional, arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable” that the state had stopped collecting the dues from members of the Missouri Corrections Officer Association, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported Wednesday.

It happened in 2019 as the state’s Office of Administration and the labor union were negotiating a new contract. The state argued at the time that the workers were no longer in a union since the contract had expired.

The move left the association with a massive funding shortfall, resulting in the closure of its headquarters, the loss of two staff and an end to the payout of hardship benefits to members.

7th annual run to honor slain journalist Foley

NH PORTSMOUTH — The seventh annual Freedom Run to honor the memory of journalist James Foley is scheduled for Oct. 23 in Rochester, N.H., and virtually around the world.

The run raises money for the work of the James W. Foley Leg-

acy Foundation, which advocates for the freedom of all Americans held hostage and wrongfully detained abroad and promotes the protection of journalists working in dangerous areas through preventive safety education.

Foley was publicly executed by Islamic State members in 2014 while reporting on the conflict in Syria.

The Freedom Run consists of a traditional 5K Run/Walk held in Rochester, Foley’s former home, and a virtual Run/Walk, held globally. It seeks to raise \$100,000.

University lab lands \$3.2M for upgrade

TN MEMPHIS — The University of Tennessee Health Science Center has landed \$3.2 million in federal money to upgrade a laboratory used for research on infectious diseases.

In a news release, the Memphis campus said the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases awarded the money for equipment and infrastructure improvements at the Regional Biocontainment Laboratory.

The school said the lab is one of about a dozen nationwide commissioned after 9/11 by the institute to study very contagious pathogens as a safeguard against bioterrorism.

Statue honors French officer’s battle exploits

SC CAMDEN — A statue of a French military officer killed on a South Carolina battlefield during the Revolutionary War was unveiled in Camden on Sunday.

A ceremony was held to honor

Johann de Kalb, who died in the August 1780 Battle of Camden after his horse was shot out from under him and British soldiers then shot and stabbed him.

De Kalb’s statue is at the newly opened Revolutionary War Visitor Center.

De Kalb was born in a German village and received a French military commission in the 1740s. He came to America in 1777 with the Marquis de Lafayette to fight for the patriots in the War for Independence. He was 59 years old when he died.

Free lunches legally get access to lawmakers

NM SANTA FE — Companies clamoring for contracts on internet services and student testing are buying state legislators in New Mexico free lunches at meetings about education policy. It’s a legal and a frequent practice that some people find unappetizing.

On Tuesday, Democratic and Republican state legislators and their policy staff enjoyed enchiladas, roast beef sandwiches, steak salads, and other entrees with soft drinks and sides “Sponsored by Comcast,” according to an agenda released by the Legislative Education Study Committee.

The New Mexico Foundation for Open Government says that as long as they are disclosed, it’s legal for companies to buy legislators lunches and give gifts.

Comcast’s name also appeared before the committee on Monday in a budget comparing bids from internet vendors collected by a school district in southern New Mexico. The Comcast bid in that district was around \$1.6 million.

— From wire reports



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Dodgers force deciding game with Giants

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Facing a second elimination game in less than a week, the Los Angeles Dodgers kept the same calm and cool approach.

It was their 52,935 fans who went bonkers, celebrating a 7-2 victory over the San Francisco Giants on Tuesday night to force a decisive Game 5 in their NL Division Series.

Mookie Betts homered and drove in three runs, and Will Smith also went deep to keep the season alive for the defending World Series champions. The Dodgers beat St. Louis in the NL wild-card game last Wednesday.

“Everybody was kind of chill, relaxed and wanted to play,” Betts said. “It’s not like we’re all of a sudden going to start hitting it harder or throwing it further or throwing it faster or whatever. It’s the same game we have been playing. It’s just a win-or-go-home situation.”

Next, the 106-win Dodgers head back to San Francisco to

play the 107-win Giants one more time Thursday night, with the winner advancing to face Atlanta in the NL Championship Series. The Braves eliminated Milwaukee earlier Tuesday.

“They know us, we know them really well,” Smith said. “It’s going to come down to who wants it a little more.”

San Francisco won the NL West by one game over the Dodgers in a historic race that went down to the final day of the regular season. Now, these storied rivals are set for a winner-take-all showdown.

“This is what baseball wants,” Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. “We’re going to be the only show in town. If you have a pulse or you’re a sports fan, you better be watching Dodgers-Giants.”

The Dodgers managed just five hits during a 1-0 loss in Game 3 — the second time they were shut out in this series — to reach the brink of elimination. Los Angeles had that many by the second inning Tuesday and

pounded out 12 in all to back a brief but effective outing from Walker Buehler on three days’ rest.

“Tonight’s a great example of kind of 26 guys coming together and figuring out a way to survive,” Buehler said.

Buehler went to Roberts as early as the Dodgers’ 9-2 victory in Game 2 and said he wanted the ball in Game 4 to start on short rest for the first time in his career. The right-hander allowed one run and three hits in 4⅓ innings. He struck out four and walked two on 71 pitches.

“I actually felt great,” Buehler said. “Probably the best I have in the second half of the year. We’ll see how I feel tomorrow, but for tonight I felt pretty good.”

After giving up a leadoff single to Evan Longoria and walking pinch-hitter Steven Duggar, Buehler exited to a standing ovation from blue towel-waving fans.

The Dodgers chased starter Anthony DeSclafani in the sec-

ond. He gave up two runs and five hits and struck out two.

The Giants ran through six pitchers by the fifth, leaving them with just three relievers. By the seventh, only backup catcher Curt Casali was available off the bench and he pinch-hit in the eighth.

The Giants have been outscored 16-9 in the series. They had seven hits Tuesday.

“This time of year you’re going to face great pitching night-in and night-out,” All-Star catcher Buster Posey said. “You’re hoping that when you do get some traffic out there, you can get a big hit because sometimes those opportunities are limited. Hopefully that’s something we will be able to do on Thursday.”

The biting, steady wind that prevailed throughout Game 3 was gone, leaving just a slight breeze to ruffle the center-field flags.

Smith hit a two-run homer to center in the eighth, extending the lead to 7-2.

Freeman’s HR lifts Braves over Brewers, into NLCS

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Freddie Freeman and the Atlanta Braves will get another chance to finish the job they came agonizingly close to achieving a year ago.

It doesn’t matter at all that they had fewer wins than any other playoff team.

Freeman hit an improbable, tiebreaking homer off Milwaukee closer Josh Hader with two outs in the eighth inning and the Braves advanced to the NL Championship Series for the second year in a row, finishing off the Brewers 5-4 on Tuesday night.

The Braves won the best-of-five Division Series three games to one, advancing to face either the 107-win San Francisco Giants or the 106-win Los Angeles Dodgers with a trip to

the World Series on the line.

“I’ve had a lot of cool moments in my career,” Freeman said. “I think that’s gonna top ‘em all. Hopefully it’s not the last one and I’ve got a couple more in these playoffs.”

The game was tied at 4 when the Brewers brought on Hader to make sure it stayed that way. The hard-throwing lefty struck out Eddie Rosario and Dansby Swanson, but he couldn’t get past the 2020 NL MVP.

Freeman caught up with an 84-mph slider, launching a 428-foot drive into the seats in left-center — only the fourth homer all season off Hader, and first since July 28.

Freeman became the first left-hander to homer off Hader since Jason Heyward in 2020.

“The first two guys went

down, so I just tried to get a pitch up and he hung a slider and I put a good swing on it,” Freeman said. “There was no rhyme or reason to it.”

Freeman celebrated wildly on his way around the bases, and popped back out of the dugout for a curtain call as the crowd of 40,195 roared. He became the first player in franchise history to hit a go-ahead home run in the eighth inning or later in a series-clinching win, ESPN Stats & Info said.

“When Freddie hit that ball, I mean, I lost my poise. Everybody in the dugout was going crazy,” teammate Ozzie Albies said.

Will Smith pitched a scoreless ninth for his third straight save in the series, getting Christian Yelich to look at strike

three with a runner on first for the final out. Tyler Matzek claimed the win with a perfect eighth.

“Freddie! Freddie! Freddie!” the crowd chanted as the Braves celebrated in the center of the field.

Despite having fewer wins (88) than any other playoff team — and even two teams that didn’t make the postseason — the NL East champion Braves are headed back to the NLCS for the second season in a row.

A year ago, manager Brian Snitker’s team had a 3-1 series lead, only to lose three straight games to the eventual World Series champion Dodgers.

Atlanta hasn’t been to the World Series since 1999, and hasn’t won it all since 1995.

Astros rout White Sox, return to ALCS

Associated Press

CHICAGO — It was Jose Altuve, Carlos Correa and Alex Bregman once again.

The Houston Astros are going to the AL Championship Series for the fifth straight year. Their October-tested stars led the way.

Altuve hit a three-run homer and scored four times, and Houston eliminated the Chicago White Sox with a 10-1 victory in Game 4 of their AL Division Series on Tuesday.

“We don’t get tired of this moment,” Correa said. “They’re special, and we perform our best when October comes.”

Correa and Bregman each hit a two-run double as the Astros bounced back from Sunday night’s 12-6 loss with their usual relentless brand of baseball. Michael Brantley had three hits and two RBIs.

Next up for Altuve and company is Game 1 of the ALCS against former Houston bench coach Alex Cora and the Boston Red Sox on Friday in Houston. The Red Sox eliminated Tampa Bay

with a 6-5 victory in Game 4 on Monday night.

“We’re playing another good team,” Altuve said.

It’s the Astros’ second ALCS under 72-year-old manager Dusty Baker, whose club got the best of 77-year-old Chicago skipper Tony La Russa. Baker replaced A.J. Hinch, who was fired in the fallout from the Astros’ 2017 sign-stealing scandal that also resulted in a one-year ban for Cora.

A testy La Russa argued with umpire Tom Hallion after he felt Houston reliever Kendall Graveman hit reigning AL MVP José Abreu intentionally with two outs in the eighth. Abreu was plunked 22 times during the regular season.

“There is a character choice there that they should answer for,” La Russa said. “Stupid, too. I’ll be interested to see if they admit it. If they don’t admit it, then they’re very dishonest.”

Baker, who has sparred with La Russa in the past, said his team did not throw at Abreu in-

tionally.

“There was no reason for us to hit Abreu,” Baker said. “He hadn’t done anything to us.”

Gavin Sheets connected for the White Sox, becoming the third rookie in franchise history to homer in a postseason game. But Carlos Rodón was knocked out in the third inning of his first start since Sept. 29, and the AL Central champions left eight runners on base.

Chicago also lost in the first round of the 2020 playoffs, dropping two of three in Oakland. Before this year, the franchise had never made consecutive postseason appearances.

“It was a fun ride. Ended a little short,” Rodón said.

The Astros are looking for the franchise’s second championship after winning it all in 2017, a title that still evokes a strong reaction around the game after the team was punished for using electronics to steal signs.

The crowd at Guaranteed Rate Field chanted “Cheater! Cheater!” at times during the two

games in Chicago, and White Sox reliever Ryan Tepera implied late Sunday night that Houston may have been stealing signs in Games 1 and 2.

But the Astros, used to dealing with boos since fans returned to the stands this season, brushed it all off.

“We’ve been constantly bombarded by negatives, especially on the road,” Baker said. “But these guys, they come to play and they love each other.”

Correa put Houston ahead to stay with his two-out double in the third, pulling Rodón’s high 0-2 fastball into left. The Astros loaded the bases on two walks and a fastball that hit Altuve, drawing a round of cheers from the crowd of 40,170.

Correa pointed to his left wrist and then pounded his chest and yelled, “It’s my time!” as he stood on second after the big hit in his 67th career postseason game.

“You know what time it is, baby. It’s October,” Correa said after the victory. “So yeah, I was happy with that.”

Penguins roll past sluggish Lightning in season opener

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Tristan Jarry had 26 saves, Danton Heinen and Brian Boyle scored early second-period goals, and the short-handed Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning 6-2 in their regular-season opener on Tuesday night.

Dominik Simon, Teddy Blueger, Bryan Rust and Evan Rodrigues also scored, and Kris Letang had two assists for the Penguins, who played without injured stars Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. The final three Pittsburgh goals were into an empty net.

“It’s a process, but I think we proved that we can play against a team like that, we can play well and we can win,” Simon said.

Tampa Bay got goals from Anthony Cirelli and Andrew Kilorn, and Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 29 shots. Star right wing Nikita Kucherov didn’t have a shot on goal, while defenseman Mikhail Sergachev was minus-5.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman was in attendance as the Lightning unveiled their 2020-21 Stanley Cup banner during a pregame ceremony. They have won two consecutive titles following pandemic-impacted and abbreviated regular seasons.

“We wanted to kind of spoil it,” Heinen said.

Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said the outcome would have been the same if the opponent had been the Penguins’ minor league team.

“They beat us to every puck,

they worked harder than us, they were better than us in every facet of the game,” Cooper said. “If it wasn’t for our goalie, it probably would have been way worse. They came here to win a hockey game, we came here and watched the banner raising, and then watched a team want to win a hockey game. We did a lot of watching tonight.”

Jarry turned aside Brayden Point’s low slot shot during the game’s first power play midway through the second.

Pittsburgh blocked 15 shots.

“It makes my job really easy,” Jarry said. “They’re playing hard, and they’re blocking shots. They did a great job for me.”

Golden Knights 4, Kraken 3: Vegas earned a victory in its first game in franchise history four

years ago. The host Golden Knights denied Seattle the same accomplishment.

Max Pacioretty scored twice, Chandler Stephenson and Jonathan Marchessault also scored and Robin Lehner made 25 saves as Vegas spoiled the Kraken’s debut.

The Golden Knights held off a rally from the NHL’s latest addition in what turned out to be a scrappy effort from Seattle.

The Kraken erased a 3-0 deficit and tied the score, but Chandler Stephenson’s goal midway through the third period held up.

Ryan Donato got Seattle’s first goal in franchise history, while Jared McCann and Morgan Geekie also scored. Phillip Grubauer had 18 saves in his first game as a Seattle player.

Fallout grows from Gruden resignation

Associated Press

The NFL is not planning to make public any of the hundreds of thousands of emails it obtained as part of an investigation of the Washington Football Team, some of which led to the resignation of Las Vegas Raiders coach Jon Gruden.

“Based on the material that we have reviewed, we haven’t identified anything that needed to be reported to club or league leadership,” NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy told The Associated Press on Tuesday. “We have released no emails during this process.”

The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times reported that, from 2011-18 while he was an ESPN analyst between coaching jobs, Gruden used racist, misogynistic and homophobic language directed at union chief DeMaurice Smith, Commissioner Roger Goodell and others around the NFL in written exchanges with former Washington executive Bruce Allen.

The emails were gathered as part of an investigation of the Washington Football Team after former employees made allegations about sexual harassment and other workplace misconduct. The club, which is valued in the billions, was fined \$10 million by the

NFL and owner Dan Snyder stepped away from day-to-day operations for a period of months, but there was no written report of lawyer Beth Wilkinson’s inquiry.

Lawyers representing 40 former employees of the team on Tuesday urged the NFL to immediately release the full findings of the investigation. They called it “outrageous” that only Gruden has been “held accountable” after the 10-month probe.

Gruden, who had a 10-year, \$100 million contract with the Raiders, stepped down Monday night during the fourth season of a mostly unsuccessful tenure, going 22-31 with no playoff appearances.

The fallout continued Tuesday, when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the team he led to a Super Bowl title nearly two decades ago, removed him from the Ring of Honor at Raymond James Stadium.

“The Tampa Bay Buccaneers have advocated for purposeful change in the areas of race relations, gender equality, diversity and inclusion for many years,” the Bucs said in a one-paragraph statement. “While we acknowledge Jon Gruden’s contributions on the field, his actions go against our core values as an organization.”

Others in and around the sport wondered what, if any, other ramifications might be on the horizon.

What did Allen write to Gruden? Allen hung up the phone when contacted by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Could other emails involving current or former coaches or front-office types surface? What disciplinary steps, if any, would the NFL take, after standing back while the Gruden episode played out?

And, perhaps most importantly: Just how pervasive and prevalent around the league are the attitudes and opinions expressed by Gruden?

The head of the Fritz Pollard Alliance, a watchdog group that champions diversity in the NFL, said this episode is a reminder the hiring process should lead to people who offer wide representation.

“There is no place for head coaches who secretly — or brazenly — share Gruden’s small-mindedness,” said FPA executive director Rod Graves. “We encourage in-depth due diligence and benchmark best practices on all levels when offering positions of leadership. It is imperative that all candidates espouse the values consistent with the responsibilities.”

COMMENTARY

Nets’ Irving skips the jab and benches himself — for now

Associated Press

It’s hard to know where Kyrie Irving is getting his vaccination information. Hopefully it’s not the same sources that had him convinced for a while the Earth was flat.

True story.

So maybe it wasn’t much of a surprise Tuesday when science tripped up the seven-time All-Star again. Hemmed in by a New York COVID-19 vaccine mandate that covers pro athletes and would have limited Irving to playing road games only, the Brooklyn Nets gave him an ultimatum: a.) take the shot; or b.) take the 2021-22 season off.

The argument for a.) is pretty straightforward. The Nets are paying Irving \$34 million per year to blend with Kevin Durant and James Harden — two of the best players in the game — and maybe deliver an NBA

title to Brooklyn. But b.) is not bad, either.

Irving can stay glued to his couch and still collect a cool \$16 million or so. That’s because Nets general manager Sean Marks and owner Joe Tsai, who together decided the “half-a-loaf” approach wasn’t worth the disruption, also said Irving would be paid for road games where he would have been eligible to play.

“Will there be pushback from Kyrie and his camp?” Marks said at a news conference. “I’m sure that this is not a decision that they like ... But again, this is a choice that Kyrie had, and he was well aware of that.”

Irving has ducked questions about whether he was vaccinated, saying three weeks ago in a Zoom interview with reporters, “I think I just would love to just keep that private, handle it the right way with my team and go forward together with the plan.”

Brady plans to play in spite of bruised hand

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Tom Brady said his heavily wrapped throwing hand is sore, but he expects to play when the Buccaneers visit the Philadelphia Eagles on Thursday night.

Brady injured his right hand in the first half of Tampa Bay’s 45-17 win over Miami on Sunday. He finished off his first career 400-yard, five-TD performance with a pair of scoring passes in the fourth quarter.

“It’s a little sore, but I expected it to be,” Brady said Tuesday. “We signed up for a contact sport. You get different bumps and bruises throughout the year and we’ll just deal with it the best we can. This bump and bruise happens to be on my hand. Just trying to be preventive and precautionary, be smart. It’s less than 48 hours since it happened so it’s not like it’s had five days, but again, I feel confident I’ll be able to go out there and do what I need to do.”