

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Trump vows to not allow Stripes shut down

BY COREY DICKSTEIN

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump vowed Friday not to allow the Pentagon's planned shutdown of Stars and Stripes, as senators this week implored Defense Secretary Mark Esper to continue funding the editorially independent news organization.

"The United States of America will NOT be cutting funding to @starsandstripes magazine under my watch," Trump tweeted Friday. "It will continue to be a wonderful source of information to our Great Military!"

In a memo sent last month to Stars and Stripes leadership, Pentagon officials ordered the organization to submit a plan by Sept. 15 for shuttering the

news organization by January and called for it to discontinue publishing "in all forms" by Sept. 30, the end of fiscal year 2020. That order rankled some senators, who in recent weeks implored Esper not to close Stars and Stripes until Congress, which ultimately sets the government's budget, had finished weighing the issue.

Esper proposed in his February budget submission for fiscal year 2021 to end the Defense Department's funding of about \$15.5 million to Stars and Stripes. He told reporters at the time that the savings would fund "higher-priority issues," like purchasing modern weapons. That funding accounts for about half of Stars and Stripes' budget and is primarily used

to print and distribute the newspaper to troops scattered across the globe, including in warzones such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

Trump's statement Friday came as major news organizations — including USA Today, The Associated Press, The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal — published stories on Stars and Stripes' apparent impending closure.

It also came as he fended off accusations first reported Thursday by The Atlantic that he called American service members killed in World War I "losers" and "suckers" during a 2018 trip to France, during which he canceled a trip to a cemetery there for Marines.

Trump adamantly denied the charge of disparaging military troops, telling reporters late Thursday that "there is nobody that respects them more" than he does. The AP and Fox News were among news organizations to report they had confirmed some of the accusations raised in The Atlantic story.

Republican and Democratic senators on Tuesday wrote a letter to Esper urging him to reverse his decision not to fund Stars and Stripes next year and delay any orders to shutter the organization until after Congress had fully considered his proposal.

The Tuesday letter was signed by 15 senators — 11 Democrats and four Republicans.

DOD restarts projects defunded for border wall

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's decision to use Pentagon money to pay for his border wall created problems on the campaign trail for Republican senators seeking reelection in states that lost military construction projects to the president's effort.

But the Defense Department's move in recent months to restart many of those domestic projects has provided political cover to several Republican incumbents facing tough reelections.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper announced in April that funding would be restored to 22 of the 34 construction projects at domestic military bases that were defunded last year. In a memo, Esper indicated that the Pentagon would obtain the \$545.5 million needed to revive the projects by diverting funds from projects overseas — many designed to shore up defenses against Russia.

Some of the revived projects are in states with two Democrats representing them in the Senate. But others are hot-button

projects in states such as North Carolina, Colorado and Arizona, where Republican senators in competitive races had been taking heat over their defunding.

In a statement, the Defense Department said that it undertook a "thorough, logical, and non-political process to determine which deferred military construction projects were executable in calendar year 2020," and that those projects were funded.

"This process obviously did not consider, nor was influenced by, the political affiliation of Members of Congress in whose district or state these projects reside," the Defense Department said.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump regularly said Mexico would pay for the wall, but after failing to obtain sufficient funds from Congress, he resorted to taking money from the Pentagon budget without congressional approval. To do so, Trump declared a national emergency and also relied on an obscure counternarcotics law that allows the Defense Department to pay for fencing in drug-smuggling corridors.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit ruled in June that it was illegal for Trump to take at least some of the money from the Pentagon, because the Constitution gives Congress the power of the purse. Still, border barrier construction using the funds has continued, with 275 miles finished as of August.

Last year, Trump's moves began reverberating on the campaign trail.

When the Senate voted for the second time on the emergency declaration last September, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee launched a digital ad campaign targeting Republican Sens. Cory Gardner of Colorado, Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Martha McSally of Arizona, John Cornyn of Texas, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, all of whom voted to uphold the declaration despite having military construction projects slated to lose funding in their states.

Most of the approximately \$3.6 billion in defunded construction projects remains frozen.

Microsoft reaffirmed as JEDI deal winner

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon on Friday reaffirmed Microsoft as winner of a cloud computing contract potentially worth \$10 billion, although the start of work is delayed by a legal battle over rival Amazon's claim that the bidding process was flawed.

"The department has completed its comprehensive re-evaluation of the JEDI cloud proposals and determined that Microsoft's proposal continues to represent the best value to the government," the Pentagon said.

The Pentagon had requested time to review how it evaluated certain technical aspects of the bids after the judge who is

presiding over Amazon's bid protest in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims issued a preliminary injunction on Feb. 13. The judge said that Amazon's challenge likely had merit in some respects.

The contract was awarded to Microsoft last October, prompting Amazon to cry foul.

Amazon Web Services, a market leader in providing cloud computing services, had long been considered a leading candidate to run the Pentagon's Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure project, known as JEDI. The project will store and process vast amounts of classified data, allowing the U.S. military to improve communications with soldiers on the battlefield and

use artificial intelligence to speed up its war planning and fighting capabilities.

In a statement Friday, Amazon said the Pentagon's further review was not based on the relative strengths of the two companies' bids.

"That is exactly where we find ourselves today, with the DoD's re-evaluation nothing more than an attempt to validate a flawed, biased, and politically corrupted decision," Amazon said.

Amazon has asserted that the bidding was improperly influenced by President Donald Trump's dislike of Amazon and its chief executive officer, Jeff Bezos. Bezos owns The Washington Post, a news outlet often criticized by Trump.

Racial tensions might be used in election meddling

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The tensions coursing through the United States over racism and policing are likely targets for adversaries seeking to influence the November election, lawmakers and experts warn — and there are signs that Russia is again seeking to exploit the divide.

Earlier this year, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pulled down dozens of accounts with names like "Blacks Facts Untold" that had been followed or liked by hundreds of thousands of people. The accounts were fake, created by an organization in Africa with links to Russia's Internet Research Agency.

Similarly, this week Facebook an-

nounced it had removed a network of accounts linked to the IRA that had pushed out stories about race and other issues. The network had tricked unwitting American writers to post content to the pages.

It's a troubling but familiar pattern from Russia, as the IRA overwhelmingly focused on race and the Black Lives Matter Movement when targeting the U.S. in 2016. The goal, part of the Russian playbook for decades, was to sow chaos by posting content on both sides of the racial divide. Indeed, "no single group of Americans was targeted by IRA information operatives more than African-Americans," concluded a report from the Senate intelligence committee.

With the election just two months away, some lawmakers are worried that the Russian efforts, now evolved and more sophisticated than four years ago, could again take hold. They fear the Trump administration's decision to limit what it tells Congress — and by extension the American people — about election threats will allow the propaganda to spread.

"Race was a big piece of what they did in 2016, and given heightened racial tensions this year, there's no reason they wouldn't be doing the same thing again," says Maine Sen. Angus King, an independent who sits on the Senate intelligence committee. He says the information that is now being limited "belongs to the American people."

University professor's racial hoax claim stokes anger

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — George Washington University is investigating the case of a history professor who allegedly admitted to fraudulently pretending to be a Black woman for her entire career, and said Friday that she will not be teaching her classes this semester.

In a blog post that has gained international attention, a writer claiming to be Jessica Krug, a GW associate professor of history, writes that she is in fact a white Jewish woman from suburban Kansas City. The writer claims she has lived most of her adult life "under various assumed identities within a Blackness that I had no

right to claim: first North African Blackness, then US rooted Blackness, then Caribbean rooted Bronx Blackness."

Krug did not respond to a request on her blog page for comment.

In a statement released Friday night, University Provost Brian Blake and Dean Paul Wahlbeck wrote: "Dr. Krug will not be teaching her classes this semester. We are working on developing a number of options for students in those classes, which will be communicated to affected students as soon as possible."

The blog post attributed to Klug expresses deep remorse, calling the deception "the very epitome of violence, of thievery and

appropriation."

The writer blames "unaddressed mental health demons" dating back to childhood and says she frequently thought of confessing the deception, "but my cowardice was always more powerful than my ethics."

Krug's biography on the GW website lists imperialism and colonialism and African-American history among her areas of expertise.

Her writings center heavily on issues of African culture and diaspora.

The post caused an immediate furor on social media, with Black academics, writers and activists recalling their interactions with Krug.

Biden slams Trump over alleged remarks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has declared President Donald Trump “unfit” for the presidency, delivering an impassioned reaction to a report that Trump — who never served in uniform — allegedly mocked American war dead.

The president and his allies have dismissed the report in *The Atlantic* as false.

The allegations, sourced anonymously, describe multiple offensive comments by the president toward fallen and captured U.S. service members, including calling World War I dead at an American military cemetery in France “losers” and “suckers” in 2018.

The reported comments, many of which were confirmed independently by *The Associated Press*, are shining a fresh light on Trump’s previous public disparagement of American troops and military families. That opens a new political vulnerability for the president less than two months from Election Day.

Voice cracking, Biden told reporters Friday that “you know in your gut” Trump’s comments, if true, are “deplorable.”

“I’ve just never been as disappointed, in my whole career, with a leader that I’ve worked with, president or otherwise,” Biden added. “If the article is true — and it appears to be, based on other things he’s said — it is absolutely damning. It is a disgrace.”

He added that “the president should humbly apologize to every Gold Star mother and father, to every Blue Star family that he’s denigrated. ... Who the heck does he think he is?”

Trump, in the Oval Office, said no apology was necessary, because it was a “fake story.”

Trump was alleged to have made the comments in November 2018, as he was set to visit the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery during a trip to

France. The White House said the visit was scrubbed because foggy weather made the helicopter trip from Paris too risky and a 90-minute drive was deemed infeasible.

Speaking Friday in the Oval Office, Trump denied ever uttering such comments: “It was a terrible thing that somebody could say the kind of things — and especially to me ‘cause I’ve done more for the military than almost anybody else.”

Later, in a press briefing, Trump suggested the source of the story was his former chief of staff, retired Marine Gen. John Kelly. “It could have been a guy like John Kelly,” Trump told reporters, saying his former top aide “was unable to handle the pressure of this job.”

Biden’s critique was personal. The former vice president often speaks about his pride for his late son Beau’s service in the Delaware Army National Guard.

“When my son was an assistant U.S. attorney and he volunteered to go to Kosovo when the war was going on, as a civilian, he wasn’t a sucker,” Biden declared. “When my son volunteered to join the United States military as the attorney general, he went to Iraq for a year, won the Bronze Star and other commendations; he wasn’t a sucker!”

Beau Biden died of cancer in 2015.

Returning to Washington from a Thursday visit to Pennsylvania, Trump told reporters that the *Atlantic* report was “a disgraceful situation” by a “terrible magazine.”

Biden has framed the election from the start as a referendum on Trump’s character. His allies quickly seized on the reported comments in hopes they could drive a wedge between military families and veterans and Trump. They also believe the issue could help win over disaffected Republican voters who are fed up with Trump’s constant controversies.

Trump building ‘permission structure’ to win back voters

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Showcasing Black Americans at the Republican National Convention to allay white voters’ fears that President Donald Trump is a racist. Sharing touching stories about the president’s concern for the military. Painting Democrat Joe Biden as an unacceptable alternative who threatens the American way of life.

It’s all part of the Trump campaign’s effort to construct a “permission structure” — a clunky catchphrase for creating an emotional and psychological gateway to help disenchanted voters feel comfortable voting for the president again despite their reservations about him personally.

Both the GOP convention and the president’s recent “law and order” mantra have been aimed squarely at former Trump supporters who’ve grown unhappy with his inflammatory rhetoric and handling of the coronavirus pandemic. The goal is to humanize Trump and demonize Biden so that these voters, particularly women and suburbanites, feel that they can vote for Trump again anyway.

“Their new theme is that it’s OK to support Trump even if you don’t care for him,” said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist who advised Florida Sen. Marco Rubio’s presidential bid four years ago. “People don’t like him because they think he is racist, sexist or doesn’t care about average people. But their message now is ‘Don’t look at what he said, look at what he does.’”

The phrase “permission structure” got a political cameo in 2013 when President Barack Obama advanced his theory that many congressional Republicans agreed with his proposals but withheld their support because of political considerations and the fear they would face challenges in GOP primaries.

“We’re going to try to do

everything we can to create a permission structure for them to be able to do what’s going to be best for the country,” Obama said then. “But it’s going to take some time.”

Within months of Trump taking office, aides noticed he was beginning to lose support among women, particularly those in the suburbs, who were turned off by some of his callous behavior and bellicose tweets. The suburbs, and female voters, largely broke for Democrats during the 2018 midterm elections in which the GOP suffered massive losses in House races.

Much of the four-day Republican convention was meant to repair the damage and soften Trump’s rough edges. There were testimonials from female staffers vouching for Trump’s caring side, as well as from minority staffers, elected officials and friends.

The campaign would like to improve Trump’s standing with Black men, despite his reflexive support for law enforcement involved in the killing of Black men, as well as his at times racist rhetoric and the disproportionate loss of life to COVID-19 in communities of color.

But the campaign’s message on race was largely aimed at a different audience.

“It was beamed at the suburbs, particularly college-educated suburban women: They don’t want to vote for somebody viewed as a racist,” said Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia’s Center for Politics.

Creating a permission structure for a voter to come home to Trump can be, at times, just as much about making the other candidate appear unacceptable as getting past reservations about the president.

Sabato said the campaign is “trying to make Trump an acceptable alternative again as they drive up fears of Biden.”

Judge tells US to stop placing migrant kids in hotels

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A federal judge ordered the Trump administration on Friday to stop detaining immigrant children in hotels before expelling them from the United States, saying the much-criticized practice skirted “fundamental humanitarian protections.”

U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee ruled that the use of hotels as long-term detention spaces violates a two-decade-old settlement governing the treatment of immigrant children in custody. She ordered border agencies to stop placing children in hotels by Sept. 15 and to remove children from hotels as soon as possible.

Immigration agencies since March have expelled 148,000 people crossing the U.S.-Mexico border under an emergency declaration citing the pandemic. The Trump administration says people crossing the border without authorization threaten public health and must quickly be forced out of the country. Advocates for immigrants argue the administration is using the pandemic as a pretext to sidestep federal anti-trafficking laws and asylum protections.

To prevent them from being allowed to stay in the U.S., the Trump administration has taken at least 577 unaccompanied children to hotels since March, where they are detained and then typically placed on deportation flights.

That's instead of sending them to shelters operated by the Department of Health and Human Services, where minors receive legal services, education, and the chance to be placed with relatives living in the U.S. Those facilities are licensed by the states where they are located. More than 13,000 beds in HHS facilities are currently empty.

Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas on Friday reported its greatest one-day increase in new coronavirus cases as the University of Arkansas moved to restrict campus activities and large parties off-campus as it strug-

gles with a growing outbreak.

The Department of Health reported 1,094 new confirmed cases of the virus that causes COVID-19, bringing the state's total since the pandemic began to 64,175. The number of people who have died from COVID-19 rose by 12 to 873.

The largest number of new cases, 215, came from Washington County where the main University of Arkansas campus is situated.

Illinois

CHICAGO — The number of diagnosed COVID-19 cases in Illinois shot up by nearly 5,400 but the state's health department said on Friday that the largest one-day total since the pandemic began is not a signal of a dramatic spike in cases but the result of backlog of tests that officials discovered earlier this week.

The Illinois Department of Public Health, in announcing the 5,368 newly diagnosed cases, also said that the number of tests had jumped by 149,273, a total that's nearly three times greater than the previous one-day record set on Aug. 22.

Derek Lindblom, who heads the state's testing team, explained that the state's data processing system started working “slower than normal” on Tuesday and by the time the backlog was cleared Thursday afternoon, two days worth-of tests had accumulated.

Louisiana

NEW ORLEANS — Amid positive trends in Louisiana's COVID-19 statistics, state athletic and education officials are cautiously planning for high school football games to begin in October — and Gov. John Bel Edwards is expressing hope he will be able to ease some restrictions on businesses next week.

State officials, leaders of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association and lawmakers discussed plans for resuming football Friday morning in Baton Rouge at a meeting of the House Education Committee.

Noting that current restrictions expire next Friday, Edwards said he hopes he will be able to announce that the state will be able to move to less restrictive “Phase 3” regulations.

Massachusetts

BOSTON — Northeastern University said Friday it has dismissed 11 freshman students for the fall semester for violating campus social distancing guidelines after they were discovered in the same hotel room.

The students were given 24 hours to leave the Boston campus and were ordered to undergo COVID-19 tests, the university said in a statement. It said any who test positive would be moved into isolated wellness housing rather than sent home, to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Northeastern said the 11 people, whose names were not released, were part of an international experience for first-year students. It said they were among more than 800 students housed in two-person rooms at the Westin Hotel not far from the main campus.

Texas

AUSTIN — A federal judge in Texas said Friday that she is “concerned” about the high rate of coronavirus infections in the state's troubled foster care system.

Court-ordered monitors say the positive test rate was at 20% in late August, The Dallas Morning News reported.

U.S. District Judge Janis Jack ruled in 2015 that the state foster care system was unconstitutionally broken and ordered sweeping reforms, which have also been partially upheld on appeal. Jack threatened Friday to hold state agencies in contempt for disobeying those orders.

There are nearly 11,000 children in what Texas calls “permanent managing conservatorship.” The rate of children testing positive for COVID-19 in the seven days before Aug. 28 was higher than the 12%

among all Texans, according to court-appointed monitors.

On Friday, Texas reported more than 4,200 confirmed new coronavirus cases and 140 more deaths. More than 13,000 people in Texas have died from COVID-19.

Utah

SALT LAKE CITY — The Utah State Board of Education has added \$1 million to extend a competitive grant program intended to connect more households to the internet as more students are learning remotely during the coronavirus pandemic.

The board voted Thursday to add funding from its state coronavirus relief funds to extend the grant program, bringing broadband access or hotspots to families with K-12 students, KSL-TV reported.

Board Director of Strategic Initiatives Sarah Young said the funding would supplement \$5 million previously allocated to the agency by the Utah Education and Telehealth Network, increasing available funds to \$6 million for the 2020-2021 school year.

West Virginia

CHARLESTON — A second county in West Virginia is on track to have schools go virtual-instruction only and cancel extracurricular activities after an increase in coronavirus cases reported Friday, a day before the state will announce which public schools are allowed to reopen next week.

Monongalia County is the second county to turn red on the state's color-coded map that gauges whether schools are ready for in-class teaching, sports and other activities. It comes two days after Gov. Jim Justice ordered the county's bars to close indefinitely after news of West Virginia University students packing bars in Morgantown.

Justice said that the map was to be next updated on Saturday night to determine which counties can welcome back students for in-person classes on Tuesday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

State hits triple-digit temps 61 days in row

NV LAS VEGAS — September has brought temporary relief from record high temperatures in Las Vegas, ending a 61-day triple-digit streak which ran from July 1 to Aug. 31, experts said.

The streak was the second-longest in Las Vegas history, meteorologist Trevor Boucher said, adding that a 66-day record was set in 1944.

The streak ended after the National Weather Service reported the hottest August on record for Las Vegas, with a record-breaking average temperature of 95.6 degrees, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported.

Boucher said the heat is expected to return

Job applicant at pizzeria steals tip jar with \$220

PA NORTH CATASAUQUA — After a man ran off with the tip jar at an eastern Pennsylvania pizza shop, investigators didn't have to do a lot of legwork to track him down, police said.

A worker at Pizza D'Oro in North Catasauqua told authorities that Nicholas M. Mark, 22, came to the shop to apply for a job, but at one point snatched the tip jar off the counter and ran outside.

The suspect ran into the woods near the parking lot with the jar, which authorities said contained \$220.

His backpack was found in the restaurant and contained multiple items bearing his name as well as items associated with drugs, and since he had applied for a job, the staff also had his name and phone numbers, authorities said.

Graceland among sites defaced with graffiti

TN MEMPHIS — Messages of Black Lives Matter and "Defund the Police" were spray painted on several tourist attractions in Tennessee, authorities said.

The graffiti phrases were found outside Graceland, the Levitt Shell Amphitheater in Overton Park and the "I Heart Memphis" mural in midtown Memphis, news outlets reported.

Besides "Defund the Police," expletive-laced messages about President Donald Trump and Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland and demands to arrest the Louisville police officers who killed Breonna Taylor were also scrawled on the walls.

Graceland visitors have been writing on the wall outside the estate since Presley's death in 1977.

Man shot, wounded after football game brawl

GA SUGAR HILL — A man was shot and wounded during a shootout after a semi-professional football game ended in a brawl in Georgia, authorities said.

The game, which was held at a park in Sugar Hill, was canceled following the fight, the Gwinnett County Police Department said in a news release. A shootout then erupted in the parking lot and bathroom areas of the park, police said.

The wounded man was shot in the leg and hospitalized with non-life threatening injuries.

9 city officers charged with overtime fraud

MA BOSTON — Nine current and former Boston police officers who worked in the department's evi-

dence warehouse were charged with collecting a total of more than \$200,000 in overtime pay they were not entitled to, federal prosecutors said.

The officers, six of them retired and three active, are each charged with conspiracy to commit theft concerning programs receiving federal funds and embezzlement from an agency receiving federal funds, according to a statement from the U.S. attorney's office in Boston.

The federal investigation was conducted with the cooperation of Boston Police Commissioner William Gross. The active officers have been suspended without pay, he said.

The scheme dated to May 2016, authorities said.

Man shoots girlfriend in hand at police station

AL TROY — An Alabama man was so intent on hurting a woman he had been dating that he chased her car into a police station parking lot, where he shot the woman in the hand before he was arrested, authorities said.

Police in Troy told news outlets they charged Henry Barr, 51, with three counts of attempted murder and three counts of shooting into an occupied vehicle.

Troy Police Chief Randall Barr, who is not related to Henry Barr, said both vehicles drove around the police station and stopped in the parking lot. The chief said Henry Barr then got out and fired a handgun at a woman in the backseat whom he had been dating.

The chief said an officer pulled into the parking lot just afterward, and confronted Barr. The woman was taken to a hospital with a non-life-threatening injury.

Orphaned bear cub to winter in rehab center

NH LEBANON — One of three black bear cubs orphaned by the recent death of their famous mother was captured and will be taken to a rehabilitation center for the winter.

Officials have been searching for the cubs since the mother bear known as Mink was found dead. She had gained fame when New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu spared her life in 2017 and when she traveled thousands of miles in a looping route through Vermont and New Hampshire to return to her home territory after being relocated near the Canadian border.

Andrew Timmins, bear project leader for New Hampshire's Fish and Game Department, said the male cub was captured near Route 10 in West Lebanon.

The Kilham Bear Center in Lyme will care for the 8-month-old cub over the winter and release it in the spring.

4 seriously burned in fire pit explosion

NY BRIDGEHAMPTON — Four people suffered serious burns when a fire pit exploded in the wealthy Hamptons area of New York's Long Island, police said.

The explosion happened at a house in Bridgehampton, the Southampton Town Police Department said in a news release.

A witness told the the East Hampton Star that the explosion occurred during an engagement party. Police and fire marshals are investigating the cause.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

NASCAR playoffs begin amid pandemic

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR has decided it will not grant COVID-19 relief during the playoffs, meaning a positive coronavirus test could be the end of a driver's championship bid.

The playoffs begin Sunday at Darlington Raceway in South Carolina without a safety net for the 16 participants during the pandemic. It's up to each driver to protect themselves from COVID-19, understanding there is no cushion for missing a race.

"I'm probably not going to go to college and hit up a keg stand," Clint Bowyer said. "If you have COVID, you can't race. It's not a judgment call."

NASCAR at its discretion grants waivers for illness, emergency or personal reasons. The waiver maintains playoff eligibility, if the driver qualifies, but no points are awarded while sidelined. A waiver during the playoffs would allow the driver to return once medically cleared, but they would have

lost valuable points needed to advance into the next round.

There are scenarios in which missing a race would not cripple a driver's title chances. Kevin Harvick, for example, accumulated enough bonus points during the regular season to ensure he should advance for several rounds. A driver could also return from missing a race, win an event during that round and earn an automatic advancement into the next round.

Jimmie Johnson and Austin Dillon both missed one race during the season following a positive COVID-19 test and earned zero points. Dillon won a race — worth an automatic berth in the playoffs — but the seven-time champion Johnson went winless and missed the cut by six points.

NASCAR made no changes for the 10-race playoff series, so missing a race could end a driver's championship chances.

"If a driver tests positive, that driver needs to have two negative tests in a 24-hour period, or a 10-day period. We are not going to change those rules,"

said NASCAR President Steve Phelps.

As one of the first major sports to resume competition during the pandemic, NASCAR put in place guidelines designed to limit both exposure to the virus and its spread. In-field access has been closed to all but essential personnel and events have been held with both limited spectators and empty grandstands.

NASCAR does not test for the coronavirus and is trusting its participants.

"If you look at the success that we've had to date, the protocols are working very well," Phelps said. "Is everything perfect and foolproof? It's not. But for us, we've been pleased with how it's gone thus far."

Harvick won the regular-season title and is the top seed in the playoffs with seven victories. The pandemic has already led to radical changes in his lifestyle that have been bolstered now that the postseason is here.

He kept his 8-year-old son home from school this semester,

and the Harvick family has eliminated all social events. They don't even go to the grocery store, he said.

"I travel by myself. I drive in the rental car by myself. I go to the motorhome by myself. I get back in the rental car and I go home," Harvick said. "It's touched pretty much every portion of our life, trying to create an environment to be as safe as possible."

NASCAR until 2004 crowned its champion on a season-long points system that penalized drivers for missing races. It forced competitors to drive injured — Ricky Rudd once infamously taped his eyelids open to drive and Dale Earnhardt Jr. hid concussions — and the waiver system was ultimately implemented.

The waiver helped reigning Cup Series champion Kyle Busch in his first title campaign when he missed 11 races during the 2015 regular season with a broken leg and broken ankle. He won four times to race his way into the playoffs and then claimed the title.

Osaka advances to fourth round with three-set victory

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Naomi Osaka spiked her racket after one errant forehand late in the second set at the U.S. Open, then flung it the length of the baseline after a missed backhand return ceded that tiebreaker.

Sometimes, that's the sort of reaction it takes to right things for Osaka. And, perhaps surprisingly, she needed whatever push she could get in Friday's third-round match.

Facing an opponent competing in just her second major tournament, two-time Grand Slam champion Osaka eventually figured out a way to turn a tight one into a runaway and beat 18-year-old Marta Kostyuk 6-3, 6-7 (4), 6-2 by claiming the final five games at Flushing Meadows.

"While I was playing, hon-

estly, I was cursing myself out," Osaka said during an on-court interview, "so you wouldn't want to know what I was saying."

After taking things out on her racket, Osaka sat with a white towel draped over head during a changeover.

"It's what I do in times of extreme anger and frustration," she said.

Still, she improved to 7-0 since tennis resumed after a hiatus of more than five months because of the coronavirus pandemic.

That's impressive, to be sure, but still a long way from what top-ranked Novak Djokovic has done in 2020. He is 26-0 this season — and his winning streak dating to late last year is now at 29 matches — after a 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 victory over No. 28 seed Jan-Lennard Struff on

Friday night.

Djokovic's bid for a fourth championship in New York and 18th Grand Slam title overall — Roger Federer, with 20, and Rafael Nadal, with 19, are the only men with more, and neither entered this tournament — will continue in the fourth round against 20th-seeded Pablo Carreno Busta on Sunday.

Another past U.S. Open champion moving into the fourth round Friday was 2016 titlist Angelique Kerber, who defeated 20-year-old American Ann Li 6-3, 6-4. Kerber's next opponent is another American, 28th-seeded Jennifer Brady, a 6-3, 6-3 winner against Caroline Garcia.

In the previous round, Garcia upset top-seeded Karolina Pliskova.

Next up for Osaka will be big hitter Anett Kontaveit, an Es-

tonian seeded 14th. She had a much easier time in a 6-3, 6-2 win over No. 24 Magda Linette.

In the day's last women's match, two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova beat 63rd-ranked American Jessica Pegula 6-4, 6-3. She'll face another American, 93rd-ranked Shelby Rogers, in the next round.

Men reaching the fourth round included No. 5 Alexander Zverev, No. 7 David Goffin, No. 12 Denis Shapovalov — who won a five-setter over No. 19 Taylor Fritz — Jordan Thompson and Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

The day ended with a meltdown by No. 4 Stefanos Tsitsipas, who wasted six match points in the fourth set and fell to Borna Coric 6-7 (2), 6-4, 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (4).

NBA playoffs roundup

Heat push Bucks to brink of elimination

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Jimmy Butler sent the ball out to Jae Crowder, then started celebrating before his teammate even took the shot.

He knew what was about to happen.

The Miami Heat did it again — and have the Milwaukee Bucks, the No. 1 overall seed in the NBA playoffs, on the brink of leaving the bubble weeks earlier than they anticipated.

Butler scored 17 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter, the Heat outscored the Bucks 40-13 in those final 12 minutes — the biggest fourth-quarter margin in NBA playoff history — and topped Milwaukee 115-100 to take a 3-0 lead in the Eastern Conference semifinal series.

“No, I’m not surprised,” Butler said. “I think everybody else in the world might be. But not us here.”

No team in NBA history has ever won after trailing 3-0.

“It can be us,” reigning MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo said.

“It can definitely be us.”

Bam Adebayo had 20 points and 16 rebounds, and Crowder had 17 points to help the Heat improve to 7-0 in this postseason. Brook Lopez scored 22 points for Milwaukee, which got 21 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists from Antetokounmpo — who twisted an ankle in the first quarter and appeared to labor at times.

He said he was fine afterward.

The Bucks’ spirit, that has to be hurting. They led by 14 late in the third, and by 12 going into the fourth. Then, disaster: Milwaukee shot 6-for-23 from the field, 0-for-10 from three-point range and got outscored 17-13 by Butler alone.

“They made every play,” Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. “And we didn’t make enough, obviously.”

Milwaukee led 87-75 going into the final quarter, up 12 with 12 minutes to go in a game that the Bucks knew they almost certainly had to win to

keep any realistic hopes of winning a championship alive.

Miami had other ideas.

Rockets 112, Lakers 97: Houston may play small, but it doesn’t use size to determine toughness.

And in Game 1, the Rockets’ style caused big problems for the Los Angeles Lakers.

James Harden scored 36 points and the Rockets ran away from the Lakers, the second straight round the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference lost its opener.

“It doesn’t matter how tall you are. If you have the heart and you’re a competitor you can be out there on the court,” Harden said.

Russell Westbrook added 24 points, nine rebounds and six assists, and Eric Gordon had 23 points for the Rockets, the No. 4 seed who had just one day of rest after needing seven games to win their first-round series.

They sure didn’t look tired, flying around the court all night to make up for the size disadvantage they face with

their small-ball style. They forced 17 turnovers that led to 27 points and played the much bigger Lakers even on the backboards.

“We’re small out there so we’ve got to be scrappy,” Westbrook said. “We’ve got to play hard.”

The Lakers never led after the first quarter and the Rockets blew it open by starting the fourth with a 16-3 run, turning a six-point advantage into a 101-82 cushion on Harden’s basket with 7:15 to play.

Anthony Davis had 25 points and 14 rebounds for the Lakers. LeBron James had 20 points, eight rebounds and seven assists.

He compared the Rockets to the speedy St. Louis Rams’ Super Bowl championship team of two decades ago, nicknamed the “Greatest Show on Turf.”

“There’s no way you can simulate their speed,” James said. “So getting out on the floor and having a Game 1 gives you a good feel for it.”

NHL playoffs roundup

Stars captain Benn finally gets through to third round

Associated Press

Jamie Benn has played in more postseason games for the Dallas Stars than anyone. Their captain has finally made it out of the second round.

“Obviously we were in the exact same situation last year and came out on the wrong end of it,” Benn said. “It’s nice to get that win and move on.”

On to the Western Conference finals for the first time since 2008, which was two years before Benn’s NHL debut.

General manager Jim Nill signed playoff veterans Joe Pavelski and Corey Perry in free agency last summer, putting them on a roster with Benn and Tyler Seguin. But the Stars

had an unlikely hero in their 5-4 overtime win over Colorado in Game 7 on Friday.

Rookie forward Joel Kiviranta, in his only game against the Avalanche, completed a hat trick with his series-clinching goal 7:24 into overtime of what was Benn’s 48th career playoff game over four different postseasons. Kiviranta’s second goal tied the game at 4 with 3:30 left in regulation, only 10 seconds after Colorado had gone ahead for the third time.

“I’m not the smartest guy in the world. But there’s a pretty good chance he’ll be in our lineup in the next game,” interim head coach Rick Bowness said of Kiviranta, who had one goal

in 11 games during the regular season. “I’ll talk to him ... and let him know that, yeah, you’re playing next game.”

Golden Knights 3, Canucks 0: At Edmonton, Alberta, Vegas was having enough problems solving Thatcher Demko. Then came another big obstacle — a major penalty.

The Golden Knights withstood a major penalty and ejection to Ryan Reaves in the second period, and Shea Theodore finally put the puck past Demko in the third, lifting Vegas to a 3-0 win over the Vancouver Canucks on Friday night in Game 7 of the second-round series.

Theodore’s goal with 6:08 re-

maining was the first in 138:40 for the Golden Knights against Demko, the rookie goalie who had brought Vancouver back from a 3-1 deficit in the series and held off Vegas for most of this game, too.

Robin Lehner tied a record with his third shutout of the series, and his sensational glove save on Brock Boeser in the second period kept the game scoreless.

Vancouver missed an opportunity when it failed to convert on an extended power play after Reaves was ejected with 3:30 remaining in the second. He received a major penalty for a hit to the head of Tyler Motte, but that power play was fruitless.

Darvish, Contreras lead Cubs past Cardinals

Associated Press

CHICAGO — While his manager is running out of things to say about him, Yu Darvish knows exactly how good he has been this year.

Asked to compare his recent roll to any previous point in his career, Darvish responded: “Three times better than before.”

No kidding.

Darvish pitched seven dazzling innings in his seventh consecutive win, and the Chicago Cubs beat the St. Louis Cardinals 4-1 on Friday night in the opener of a big five-game series.

“The way he commands the strike zone with his secondary pitches is some of the best I’ve ever seen,” manager David Ross said.

Led by Darvish and Willson Contreras, Chicago won for the fourth time in five games and strengthened its grip on the top spot in the NL Central. St. Louis dropped into a virtual tie with Milwaukee for second, 4½ games back of the Cubs.

Contreras had three hits and four RBIs, including a leadoff drive in the sixth for his

fifth homer. He also had a big two-run single on the ninth pitch of his at-bat against Jack Flaherty in the first.

Darvish (7-1) was working on a perfect game before Matt Carpenter opened the sixth with his second homer, a drive to the basket in right-center on the ninth pitch of the at-bat. The Japanese right-hander then retired his last six batters, striking out three more to give him 11 on the night.

“You’re seeing a guy that’s been as good as anybody in this league all year and you’re seeing why,” St. Louis manager Mike Shildt said. “A lot of different pitches, a lot of pitches on the plate, under the zone. Everything looks pretty much the same, a differential in speed, and he had a good fastball as well. He’s a tough guy to time up. He was tough.”

With less than a month left in the pandemic-delayed season, the 34-year-old Darvish looks like a leading candidate for what would be his first Cy Young Award. He improved to 11-5 with a 2.26 ERA in his last 21 starts dating to last season, with 181 strikeouts and just 15 walks.

But Darvish isn’t interested in any Cy Young talk.

“I didn’t want to think about that,” he said. “If I start thinking that, I will fail.”

Rowan Wick worked the eighth, and Jeremy Jeffress finished the two-hitter for his fifth save.

Flaherty (2-1) got off to a tough start and never quite recovered, allowing four hits and walking two in 2⅔ innings.

Chicago forced the ace right-hander to throw 43 pitches in the first. Jason Heyward’s eight-pitch walk with two outs loaded the bases for Contreras, who drove in Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo with a single to center.

“I just wasn’t very good,” Flaherty said. “I didn’t execute very well. Didn’t execute my slider, didn’t execute my fastball, didn’t execute my curveball, didn’t execute at all.”

Contreras added another two-out RBI single in the third, making it 3-0 and chasing Flaherty.

“Whenever you have a good at-bat like that in the first at-bat, obviously in DHing, that makes you feel great,” Contreras said. “It makes you have so much confidence for the second and third at-bats.”

Roundup

Orioles end 19-game skid against Yankees

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — The Baltimore Orioles ended their 19-game losing streak against the New York Yankees, using a strong offensive performance by rookie Ryan Mountcastle in a 6-3 victory Friday for a doubleheader split.

In the opener, Miguel Andujar singled in the tiebreaking run in the ninth inning and Clint Frazier added an RBI single to give New York a 6-5 win. Gary Sanchez homered, and Brett Gardner drove in two runs for the Yankees.

Mountcastle hit a two-run homer off 21-year-old Deivi Garcia in second inning of the nightcap and sparked a four-run fifth inning with an RBI single off Clarke Schmidt, who was making his major league debut. Rio Ruiz followed with a run-scoring single, and Pat Valaika capped the uprising with a two-run double.

That helped Baltimore secure its first win over New York since March 31, 2019. It also snapped the Yankees’ 18-game streak at Camden Yards.

Dodgers 10, Rockies 6: AJ Pollock, Joc Pederson and Mookie Betts homered in the eighth inning, and host Los Angeles shrugged off Kevin Pillar’s dramatic grand slam moments earlier to win its sixth straight.

Blue Jays 8-2, Red Sox 7-3: Yairo Munoz had three hits and Boston salvaged a split of their doubleheader as the “road” team at Fenway Park to end a five-game losing streak.

Phillies 5, Mets 3: Jake Arrieta bounced back from the shortest start of his career by pitching seven solid innings to lead visiting Philly past New York for its fifth straight win.

Padres 7, Athletics 0: Fernando Tatis Jr. and Manny Machado hit back-to-back homers in the seventh inning, and

San Diego pounded host Oakland as the Athletics returned to the field from a four-game postponement following a positive coronavirus test.

Rays 5, Marlins 4: At St. Petersburg, Fla., rookie left-hander Josh Fleming won his third consecutive start, Michael Perez had a three-run double and AL East-leading Tampa Bay beat Miami.

Braves 7-9, Nationals 1-10: Trea Turner gave Washington the lead with a sixth-inning home run off Will Smith and the visiting Nationals held on in the seventh to split a doubleheader.

Angels 6, Astros 5 (11): Mike Trout tied host Los Angeles’ franchise record for career home runs in the first inning and scored the winning run in the 11th.

Twins 2-3, Tigers 0-2: Marwin Gonzalez singled home Willians Astudillo in the eighth, and host Minnesota rallied to beat Detroit for a doubleheader

sweep.

Reds 4-3, Pirates 2-4: Pittsburgh took advantage of an uncharacteristic performance by visiting Cincinnati’s Trevor Bauer to split a doubleheader.

Diamondbacks 6, Giants 5: Ketel Marte homered, doubled twice and singled as Arizona beat host San Francisco to snap a five-game losing streak.

Mariners 6, Rangers 3: Yusei Kikuchi struck out seven, J.P. Crawford hit a three-run homer and Seattle beat visiting Texas.

Brewers 7, Indians 1: Corbin Burnes pitched six strong innings, Keston Hiura hit an RBI double in visiting Milwaukee’s four-run seventh inning and the Brewers scored three times on two weak infield grounders.

White Sox 7, Royals 3: Jose Abreu extended his hitting streak to 18 games with a two-run double, and Chicago beat host Kansas City.