

# STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## IG: DODEA failed to report serious events

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Hundreds of serious incidents involving students at Defense Department schools, including alleged sexual assault and threats of physical violence, have gone unreported because of policies that allow principals to decide whether to report them, a report by the DOD Inspector General has said.

School administrators failed to report 522 of 600 serious juvenile-on-juvenile incidents to headquarters and failed to notify law enforcement or base commanders in 524 and 593 cases, respectively, the report found. As a result, installation commanders were prevented from holding the offenders accountable, law enforcement was unable to investigate the

serious allegations, and DODEA's ability to "accurately identify trends, provide guidance, or target problems" was hindered, said the report released Wednesday.

Even when base authorities were informed, there appeared to be little accountability for juvenile offenders, it said.

Some DODEA personnel said they did not report incidents because they didn't want a student to "carry a negative label into the next school or school year," the report said.

The inspector general launched the investigation that led to the report after an investigation by The Associated Press in 2018 found the military had done nothing in response to allegations that a boy at Grafenwoehr Elementary School had sexually assaulted as many as five first-grade girls.

Reviewers visited seven DODEA elementary, middle and high schools, out of more than 160 worldwide, and reviewed more than 13,000 disciplinary records drawn up between Jan. 1, 2015 and Dec. 31, 2017.

Two of the schools were in Germany, at Ramstein Air Base and in Kaiserslautern; and two in Japan, at Camp Foster and Kadena Air Base. The schools were not named.

The auditors determined that of 600 cases that could have been categorized as serious juvenile-on-juvenile misconduct, more than 500 were not reported to DODEA headquarters or base officials. The report attributed that to school administrators being allowed to decide which incidents should be reported, and to unclear requirements for when an incident

should be reported.

DODEA has a database for what it defines as serious incidents, including drug and alcohol use, arson, vandalism, and knife possession, to name some. Misconduct included in that database must be reported to DODEA headquarters.

Another database, which includes report cards and attendance information, also has a section for disciplinary action. The audit team determined there were more than 500 incidents listed in that database that could have been categorized as "serious incidents" but were not, and went unreported.

In addition to the flawed reporting system, the report also found a lack of on-base counseling support services for offenders and victims of juvenile-on-juvenile misconduct.

## Biden: Small footprint is still needed in Middle East

BY STEVE BEYNON

*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — Former Vice President Joe Biden said Thursday he supports drawing down troops in the Middle East but would maintain a small footprint because extremist groups in the region still pose a threat to the United States and its allies.

"These 'forever wars' have to end. I support drawing down the troops. But here's the problem, we still have to worry about terrorism and ISIS," Biden told Stars and Stripes in a telephone interview.

He also said he does not foresee major reductions in the U.S. defense budget as the military refocuses its attention to potential threats from "near peer" powers such as China and Russia.

Stars and Stripes has also requested an interview with President Donald Trump, who has made ending the "forever wars" a cornerstone of his administration.

Biden spoke a day after Gen. Frank McKenzie, commander of U.S. Central Command, said that the U.S. plans to cut the troop level in Iraq from 5,200 to 3,000 by the end of the month, as Trump seeks to fulfill a key campaign promise to end "endless wars."

Biden says the reality on the ground in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq is complicated, and there needs to be a small footprint of troops on the ground. Their primary mission would be to facilitate special operations missions to prevent the Islamic State and other terror organization from threatening U.S. interests and those of America's allies.

"I think we need special ops capacity to coordinate with our allies," Biden said, adding there should be a maximum of "1,500 to 2,000" on the ground.

However, he said the military should not be engaged with the political dynamics of the countries where they operate. He said

U.S. forces must be able to coordinate with allies to train and lead to, "take out terrorist groups who are going to continue to emerge."

Despite the ongoing operations abroad, the pandemic at home, and increased government spending, Biden does not foresee the likelihood of budget cuts to the Pentagon. In fact, he said defense spending could increase in a Biden administration.

"I don't think [budget cuts] are inevitable, but we need priorities in the budget," Biden said, adding that the Defense Department is in desperate need to innovate in emerging technology such as beefing up its cyberwarfare capabilities and unmanned aircraft.

"We have to focus more on unmanned capacity, cyber and IT, in a very modern world that is changing rapidly," Biden said. "I've met with a number of my advisers and some have suggested in certain areas the budget is going to have to be increased."

# Army: Good night sleep better than naps

By J.P. LAWRENCE

*Stars and Stripes*

Catching up on sleep by taking cat naps during the day isn't as beneficial to the brain as getting a good night's sleep, and could increase the risk of developing neurological disorders including Alzheimer's disease and dementia, an Army study has found.

That's because the brain is better at flushing out toxins during normal sleeping hours, so at night, said the study published last week in *Nature Communications*.

"These findings suggest that people who rely on cat naps during the day to catch up on sleep or work the night shift may be at risk for developing

neurological disorders," Dr. Lauren Hablitz, lead author of the new study, said in an Army statement.

"In fact, clinical research shows that individuals who rely on sleeping during daytime hours are at much greater risk for Alzheimer's and dementia along with other health problems," said Hablitz, a research assistant professor at the Center for Translational Neuromedicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center, where the study was conducted.

The findings could be bad news for service members, who often resort to short naps during the day to make up for a lack of sleep at night.

More than 60% of service members are estimated to sleep

less than 6 hours per night on average, and those who have previously or are currently deployed get even less shut-eye, said a 2019 article in the journal *Neuropsychopharmacology*.

Lack of sleep significantly decreases performance, and increases the risk of developing major depression, the article said, also citing pre-deployment insomnia as a significant contributor to post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide ideation.

For the study, researchers focused on the glymphatic system, the central nervous system's waste clearance system. When a person sleeps, their glymphatic system pumps fluids through their brain tissue to wash away toxic proteins and

other waste.

Disrupted sleep or trauma can cause the system to break down and allow toxic proteins to accumulate in the brain, the study said.

When researchers anesthetized mice for an entire day, they found that their glymphatic systems peaked only during the hours they would typically be sleeping.

"These findings show that glymphatic system function is not solely based on sleep or wakefulness, but on the daily rhythms dictated by our biological clock," said neuroscientist Maiken Nedergaard, co-director of the Center for Translational Neuromedicine at URM and one of the study's authors.

## Lawmakers urge Esper to restore Stripes funding

By WYATT OLSON

*Stars and Stripes*

A group of House lawmakers expressed "strong opposition" to a planned funding cut for Stars and Stripes in a Wednesday letter to Defense Secretary Mark Esper.

"Beyond serving as a reminder of home, the journalists at Stars and Stripes provide over 1 million daily readers with unfiltered news and perspective free of institutional bias," said Wednesday's letter, signed by 10 U.S. representatives, all of whom are Democrats, including Rep. Jason Crow, D-Colo., a former U.S. Army Ranger; Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., who served as an infantry Marine; and Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif.

Pentagon officials, in a memo sent to Stars and Stripes' leaders last month, ordered the news organization to stop publishing "in all forms" by Sept. 30, the end of fiscal year 2020. They were also told to submit a plan by Sept. 15 for closing the

organization by January.

Wednesday's letter is the latest expression of support for Stars and Stripes, which operates with partial support from the Defense Department. The rest of its budget comes from advertising and subscriptions.

On Friday, President Donald Trump tweeted that funding for the news organization would not be cut "under my watch."

"The experience of military service brings unique concerns that oftentimes only the journalists with Stars and Stripes have the understanding and direct access required to address," the Wednesday letter said. "To meet the challenge of serving an audience stationed across the globe, including in combat zones, Stars and Stripes maintains thirteen international printing centers across three continents. No matter how far from home a servicemember may be stationed, they can be assured that they are still within the global reach of Stars and Stripes."

## Pacific USAF leader eager to take up Palau's offer

By WYATT OLSON

*Stars and Stripes*

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The head of Pacific Air Forces said Wednesday that the combatant command is "absolutely looking forward" to an expanded U.S. military presence in the Micronesian nation of Palau.

During Defense Secretary Mark Esper's visit to Palau late last month, Palauan President Tommy Remengesau Jr. presented a written offer to host new U.S. military ports and airfields, according to a report Tuesday by *The Wall Street Journal*. He proposed building joint-use facilities, which the United States could use as needed.

"[W]e do have desire to increase the options there in Palau," Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach said during a conference call with reporters Wednesday, two months to the day he assumed command of Pacific Air Forces.

"It's a pretty good location to

operate out of, although the airfields wouldn't accommodate much more at this point besides C-130-type aircraft," he said.

It would take "quite a bit more work" to expand or create a runway and facilities to accommodate fighters, tankers or heavy-lift aircraft, Wilsbach said.

"But that is something that we're absolutely looking toward," he said. "And, frankly, we so appreciate the government of Palau asking us to come in."

China has been pressuring the island nation to drop its diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in favor of Beijing. Only a handful of nations in the world officially recognize Taiwan, which China regards as a renegade province that must be reunified under Beijing's control.

Wilsbach said this example of support for a U.S. military presence is key strategic asset for America.



# California fire threatens thousands of homes

Associated Press

OROVILLE, Calif. — A Northern California wildfire threatened thousands of homes Thursday after winds whipped it into a monster that incinerated houses in a small mountain community and killed at least three people.

Several other people have been critically burned and hundreds, if not thousands, of homes and other buildings are believed to have been damaged or destroyed by the fire in the foothills of the northern Sierra Nevada, authorities said.

About 20,000 people were under evacuation orders or warnings in Plumas, Yuba and Butte counties.

Another California fire raging along the

Oregon border destroyed 150 homes near the community of Happy Camp and one person was confirmed dead, the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office said in a statement. About 400 more homes were threatened.

Numerous destructive wildfires were also burning in Oregon and Washington state.

Between Tuesday and Wednesday, the North Complex fire near the small Northern California city of Oroville — which had been burning for weeks in forestland and was 50% contained — exploded to six times its size as winds gusting to 45 mph drove a path of destruction through mountainous terrain and parched foothills.

The winds subsided Wednesday but the

fire was only 24% contained and officials said the fire was still very dangerous.

"Time and time again we have seen how dangerous wildfires can be. ... So I ask that you please, please please be prepared, maintain situational awareness and heed the warnings," Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea pleaded.

Honea announced the three deaths but declined to provide details. California Highway Patrol Officer Ben Draper told the Bay Area News Group that one person was found in a car and apparently had been trying to escape the flames.

Many homes were incinerated in the Butte County hamlet of Berry Creek, with a population of 525 people.

## Fires without precedent rage in usually wet Northwest

Associated Press

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — Numerous wildfires burned in Oregon's forested valleys and along the coast, destroying hundreds of homes and causing mass evacuations. Farther north, flames devoured buildings and huge tracts of land in Washington state.

Officials said the number of simultaneous fires and perhaps the damage caused was unprecedented. Several deaths were reported, including a 1-year-old boy in Washington state. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said communities have been "substantially destroyed" and warned there could be numerous fatalities.

Because of its cool, wet climate, the Pacific Northwest rarely experiences such

intense fire activity. But climate change driven by human-caused greenhouse gases is expected to keep warming the region, with most models predicting drier summers, according to the College of the Environment at the University of Washington.

Brown said Oregon could see the greatest loss of life and property from wildfires in state history. The small towns of Phoenix and Talent in southern Oregon were heavily damaged. Another fire leveled most of the small farming town of Malden in eastern Washington — burning down the fire station, post office, City Hall and library.

In Washington state, a fire burned more than 480,000 acres of forest, brush and shrubland, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee said Wednesday after a 30-minute tour of

the fire area in Sumner, east of Tacoma.

Inslee said low humidity, high temperatures and winds combined to likely make the blaze one of "the most catastrophic fires we've had in the history of the state."

Fires erupted along Interstate 5 in Oregon, hitting towns and forcing a shutdown of the main freeway along the West Coast. U.S. Highway 101, the main coastal highway running through California, Oregon and Washington, was also impacted.

At least three people in Oregon and the small child in Washington state were reported killed. In Oregon, authorities said one of the victims from Marion County near Salem was a young boy, whose remains were found alongside those of his dog.

## Trump admits to playing down the threat of coronavirus

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Try as he might to change the subject, President Donald Trump can't escape the coronavirus.

In April, the president tried to shift the public's focus to the economy. In July, to defending the country's "heritage." In September, to enforcing "law and order." But all along the way, the death toll from the coronavirus continued to mount.

And now, Trump's own words are redirecting attention to his handling of the pandemic when he can least afford it — less than two months before Election Day.

"I wanted to always play it down," Trump said of the threat from the virus. That was in a private conversation with journalist Bob Woodward last March that became

public on Wednesday with the publication of excerpts from Woodward's upcoming book "Rage."

In taped conversations released along with the excerpts, Trump insisted he didn't want to create "panic." But his comments also raised fresh questions about how he has managed the defining crisis of his presidency, one that has killed about 190,000 Americans so far, with no end in sight.

Trump's team would much rather center the November vote around the economy, cracking down on protests spawned by racial injustice, and the president's promise that he could appoint more conservative justices to the Supreme Court.

Revelations from the Woodward book emerged just as Trump's campaign was beginning to feel that the virus was reced-

ing from public view. The president himself has been thumbing his nose at public health experts' warning against the sort of large gatherings — with few people wearing masks — that his campaign has been staging around the country.

For all of that, Trump has faced devastating revelations of his own creation before and survived them.

On Wednesday, Trump didn't deny his remarks playing down the virus, he sought to justify them.

"The fact is I'm a cheerleader for this country. I love our country and I don't want people to be frightened. I don't want to create panic," Trump told reporters. "Certainly, I'm not going to drive this country or the world into a frenzy. We want to show confidence. We want to show strength."

# US layoffs stay high as 884K seek jobless aid

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits was unchanged last week at 884,000, a sign that layoffs are stuck at a historically high level six months after the viral pandemic flattened the economy.

The latest figure released by the Labor Department on Thursday still far exceeds those who sought benefits in any week on record before 2020.

The job market is improving fitfully as portions of the economy have reopened and companies are recalling some workers they had temporarily laid off. Employers have so far added back about half the record 22 million jobs that were lost to the pandemic.

But hiring has slowed since June, and a rising number of laid-off workers have said they regard their job loss as permanent. The recovery of those jobs will likely take longer to achieve.

## Colorado

GRAND JUNCTION — Hours after Gov. Jared Polis said he had discussions with high school sports officials about bringing back fall football, the board of directors that governs prep sports decided to keep the schedule as is.

The governor announced Tuesday that if the Colorado High School Activities Association released a proposal for a fall football season, he would be “thrilled to work with them to make that happen for the districts that are ready to go.” But the CHSAA Board of Directors voted unanimously late Tuesday night not to allow football this fall, the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel reported.

High school football in the state was postponed to spring on Aug. 4 as a precaution due to the coronavirus pandemic.

## Massachusetts

BOSTON — Alcohol regulators in Massachusetts issued fines or warnings last week against 300 businesses for failing to enforce regulations

meant to stop the spread of the coronavirus, Gov. Charlie Baker said Wednesday.

An additional 900 establishments were found to be following regulations, according to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission.

Restaurants with alcohol licenses are among the businesses subject to inspections by the commission. Restaurants have been allowed to remain open provided they take precautions like limiting diners or opening outdoor seating.

Baker said that during the Labor Day weekend, the state ramped up public awareness campaigns — including distributing signs, fliers and 4,000 bottles of hand sanitizer — in five high-risk cities: Everett, Lynn, Revere, Chelsea and Lawrence.

## Michigan

LANSING — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer late Wednesday clarified her order requiring masks in organized sports, saying they must be worn in training and competition only when athletes cannot consistently keep 6 feet apart.

The measure explicitly mentions football, soccer and volleyball as sports where face coverings are a must due to the coronavirus pandemic. But it also now exempts sports in which athletes can keep distance “except for occasional and fleeting moments” — such as tennis, golf, cross country, baseball and softball.

Her initial order to reopen gyms and let additional organized sports resume, issued last week, required all athletes — “while on the field of play” — to wear a mask except when swimming. The Michigan High School Athletic Association, which quickly reinstated the postponed football season, said in a memo to schools it was seeking more interpretations and guidance on the mandate.

One question was about fall sports that had been underway for weeks without face coverings — golf, tennis and cross country statewide, and soccer in northern counties.

## Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS — State and local inspections of dozens of bars and restaurants for compliance to coronavirus requirements found about half were following the rules in Minnesota.

Inspections were done at 167 establishments outside the Twin Cities metro. During a recent visit to Minnesota, Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, said rural communities needed to do more to reduce the spread of the virus.

The inspections done in Scott and Carver counties, as well as the cities of Mankato, St. Peter, Waseca, Faribault and New Ulm, found that 88 bars and restaurants were following state COVID-19 requirements and 79 were not.

A Minnesota Department of Health summary said that 31 establishments were referred for follow-up inspections by state health and licensing officials for issues such as customers and workers not wearing masks, failure to maintain social distancing, and a lack of preparedness plans and worker training, the St. Paul Pioneer Press reported.

## Mississippi

STARKVILLE — Officials in a central Mississippi county have enacted a temporary curfew that is aimed at breaking up block parties which have drawn hundreds of people in the last several weeks, sparking fears of possible coronavirus outbreaks.

Oktibbeha County supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved a midnight to 4 a.m. curfew that was set to last through the weekend and could be extended further, The Dispatch reported.

Sheriff Steve Gladney asked the board to consider the measure, adding that even when deputies shut down the gatherings, groups often reconvene elsewhere.

The resolution did not outline any penalties for curfew violations.

## New York

ALBANY — New York is now allowing visitors to see loved ones at assisted living homes that are COVID-free for 14 days, up from 28 days under previous guidance.

Family members and friends of residents at the state’s nursing homes and assisted living homes have been urging the state for months to ease its March 13 ban on most visits. The state’s guidance has thus far allowed visits for medically necessary or end-of-life services.

Visits are limited to outdoor areas with weather permitting, though visits of no more than 10 individuals in a well-ventilated space can be allowed in “certain limited circumstances.”

The 28-day threshold for restricted visits still applies to nursing homes.

## Texas

HOUSTON — Houston officials on Wednesday announced new rules that would allow some live events like concerts and attendance by fans at some sporting events to resume as the positivity rate for the coronavirus in the city continued to drop.

Events will be limited to small audiences of up to 25% of a venue’s capacity. People will have to wear masks, practice social distancing, have their temperatures checked and answer a health questionnaire after entering a venue.

Mayor Sylvester Turner said such events could expand as the city’s positivity rate for coronavirus infections continues to drop to 5%. The positivity rate has steadily dropped in recent weeks and was at 7% as of Wednesday. The rate got as high as 26% in July.

The downward positivity rate trend is statewide as the rolling, seven-day average reached 8% Tuesday, the most recent day for which the average is available. That’s down from 16% on Aug. 22 and a peak of 25% on Aug. 11, the Texas Department of State Health Services reported Wednesday.



# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## WWII vet gets medal on 100th birthday

**MS** RIDGELAND — A Mississippi World War II veteran was awarded a Bronze Star Medal on his 100th birthday this week.

Billups “Bill” H. Allen of Ridgeland served in the U.S. Army as an infantry platoon leader with the 29th Division in Europe.

Allen, a lieutenant, also received a replacement medal for his Purple Heart, which was lost in December 1945 when he was evacuated from a hospital during the Battle of the Bulge. Allen also was awarded the Army of Occupation medal, an honor to recognize veterans who had served in Germany, Italy, Austria, Japan or Korea immediately following World War II.

## Dog’s bark saved family from fire

**AL** BIRMINGHAM — A dog was credited with saving an Alabama family’s lives after his bark awakened them to a fire that was sweeping through their rental home.

When Derek Walker, who lived in the home with his wife and two children, heard a “different kind of bark” coming from Ralph, a 4-year-old Great Dane, he got up to investigate. That’s when he saw the fire outside the family’s kitchen window.

The blaze had started on a grill and spread to the home, according to Robert Lawson, a battalion chief with the North Shelby Fire Department.

## Gator on the mend after injury treated

**FL** GAINESVILLE — A 38-year-old al-

ligator named Bob is on the mend thanks to a team of veterinarians at the University of Florida.

Bob was taken from his home at the St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park for an evaluation in Gainesville. His right rear leg had been hurting and the 660-pound reptile needed a medical exam.

Staff at the alligator farm strapped the gator to a long wooden board, tied his jaws shut and covered his eyes with a towel.

Once Bob arrived at the University of Florida’s College of Veterinary Medicine, he was put on a gurney and taken for radiographs.

The veterinary school tweeted that the gator’s right rear leg was assessed for a cause of lameness.

## Man profiled in magazine pleads guilty

**MN** MINNEAPOLIS — A Minnesota man whose profile in Popular Science magazine sparked an investigation into his pyrotechnics pleaded guilty in federal court to illegally manufacturing and selling explosives.

Federal agents raided the Brownsville home of Kenneth Miller in March, after the magazine article showed photographs of Miller shooting red flares off the hood of his pickup and packing powdered chemicals in a nearby shack he used as a makeshift laboratory, the Star Tribune reported.

Investigators said Miller, 58, had previous felony convictions that precluded him from touching the highly combustible material used to create these devices.

Miller was first convicted of a felony for conspiracy to make illegal explosives in 1986. A few years later, he was convicted of illegally possessing a firearm

in North Dakota.

## Cyclist accused of indecent exposure

**VA** ARLINGTON — A 55-year-old man was arrested in connection with what police said was a string of confrontations along trails in northern Virginia involving a cyclist who sometimes exposed himself to pedestrians.

Arlington County police initially issued a news release about the incidents that included a photo of the then-unidentified assailant. A few days later, they said that the community had provided “numerous tips and investigative leads” that led to the arrest of David Marlowe of Arlington.

Police said the incidents involved a cyclist yelling at or striking pedestrians as well as exposing his buttocks in some instances.

Marlowe has been charged with robbery, three counts of assault and battery, five counts of indecent exposure and felony possession of marijuana with the intent to distribute.

## Grizzly bear attacks 69-year-old man

**MT** BIG SKY — A mother grizzly bear with cubs attacked a 69-year-old man in the mountains of southwestern Montana, authorities said.

The victim had been hunting near Flattop Mountain near Big Sky when he called 911 to say he had been attacked by a bear, the Gallatin County Sheriff’s Office said. He was taken to a hospital for injuries to his shoulder and hip.

Officials said the man suspected he had been too close to a site where another hunter had recently harvested an animal, the sheriff’s office said. Grizzly

bears are drawn to carcasses of elk and other big game shot by hunters.

## Old Tucson attraction closing indefinitely

**AZ** TUCSON — Old Tucson, a western-themed attraction and former film set for dozens of classic movies, is closing indefinitely due to financial fallout from the coronavirus.

Pima County announced that it will assume responsibility for the attraction Sept. 14 and begin working on a new plan for the park’s future.

Built in 1939 as a replica of the 1860’s-era Tucson by Paramount Pictures for the movie “Arizona,” Old Tucson has served as the site for more than 400 films, television series, music videos and commercials.

## Man arrested after threat during lecture

**TX** HOUSTON — A man was arrested after being accused of making a bomb threat against the University of Houston during a Zoom lecture.

Ibraheem Ahmed Al Bayati, 19, was accused by federal authorities of joining a university lecture on Zoom on Sept. 2 and interrupting it by saying “what does any of this have to do with the fact that UH is about to get bombed in a few days?”

Al Bayati, who identified himself as Abu Qital al Jihadi al Mansur on the call, was also accused of uttering in Arabic a phrase that means “Islamic State will remain,” according to a criminal complaint.

Al Bayati, a U.S. citizen, told investigators the incident was a joke devised by him and a friend, according to the complaint.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

# Colts' Rivers eager to show he's still got 'it'

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Philip Rivers felt the adrenaline rush long before arriving at the Indianapolis Colts complex Wednesday.

Yes, even a 17-year veteran, a father of nine and a future high school football coach still gets geeked up for the start of football.

And as much as the Colts' new starting quarterback wants to keep Sunday's season opener at Jacksonville in perspective, it's not just another game. It's the start of a new, exciting and uncertain future.

"I had that nervous energy last night, and I think there will be a little bit of that all week long," Rivers said. "My dad would always tell me if you don't have butterflies, something's wrong. But it's the good kind of butterflies because you care, you care about it, you love it and you want to go out and perform at a high level."

For most of Rivers' career, he's been one of the league's top players.

He's been to the playoffs six times, made eight Pro Bowl appearances and begins this season needing three touchdown passes to become the sixth player in league history with 400. He's also within striking distance of passing Hall of Famer Dan Marino for fifth on the league's career lists for completions, yards passing and TDs.

But his final season with the Los Angeles/San Diego Chargers proved to be one

of Rivers' worst.

He won five games, the second fewest of his career, and threw 20 interceptions, matching the second-highest total of his career. His 23 touchdown passes were the fewest he had in more than a decade, and his completion percentage dipped to 66%.

Predictably, critics questioned whether the 38-year-old QB with the unorthodox throwing motion was just losing arm strength. Or worse, whether he was finished. The Colts didn't buy it and instead gave Rivers a one-year, \$25 million contract in March to prove the doubters wrong.

"I expect the same Philip Rivers that we had when we were in San Diego together," offensive coordinator Nick Sirianni said. "He's accurate. He makes good, fast decisions. I expect that out of him in the passing game — getting us into the right protection call because this guy studies blitzes and the opposing team more than anyone I've ever been around."

A different philosophy might help, too.

The Chargers spent much of last season playing from behind, forcing Rivers into 591 attempts and prompting him to take more chances late in games. Only six quarterbacks threw the ball more than Rivers in 2019; only Jameis Winston and Baker Mayfield threw more interceptions.

Rivers might not come close to those numbers in Indy given coach Frank Reich's preference for a run-heavy offense.

The Colts finished seventh in rushing last season, their first top-10 appearance since 2001, and could lean even more heavily on the ground game this year as 1,000-yard rusher Marlon Mack and second-round draft pick Jonathan Taylor share the carries.

Rivers' receiving corps also includes two Pro Bowlers, T.Y. Hilton and tight end Jack Doyle.

Reich believes the balanced attack coupled with shorter, quicker throws will help Rivers rebound.

"Just use your experience and your intelligence to make the checks, do it with confidence, don't feel like you have to win the game for us every week," Reich said. "We've got a good team, we've got a good roster. When shots are there be aggressive and don't think twice about it."

Rivers also could benefit from improved pass protection.

With two-time All-Pro left guard Quenton Nelson, Pro Bowl center Ryan Kelly and longtime left tackle Anthony Castonzo paving the way, the Colts allowed 50 sacks over the past two seasons. Last year, it was the NFL's only five-man unit to start the same players in all 16 games — a streak they hope extends beyond Sunday.

"I'm fired up," Rivers said. "We've got a heck of a group and I feel personally I can still play at a high level."

## Brady thinks Bucs have edge as season opens

Associated Press

TAMPA BAY, FLA. — As if there aren't enough challenges for a 43-year-old quarterback in the NFL, Tom Brady recognizes the uniqueness of 2020.

He's switched teams for the first time in a two-decades-long career, and during the pandemic has had less on-field work with his new teammates in Tampa Bay than he normally got in a couple of weeks with the Patriots.

Brady suggests, though, that the Buccaneers could have an edge as the season opens with lofty expectations in Tampa.

"It's obviously been a different training camp with the amount of time that we've practiced against one another,"

he said, "but they have a great group of core leaders, a great group of veteran players that play with great dependability and consistency. And they have a lot of young players that really want to make a name for themselves."

"So I've really liked the way that we've performed the last six weeks as a team, and now we get a chance to come together as an entire team — offense, defense and special teams — and see what we can make of this season."

Expectations are through the roof in Tampa, which has not been in the playoffs since 2007, the second-longest current drought in the NFL behind Cleveland. Brady has been in the postseason every year ex-

cept three in his career — 2000 as a rookie and non-starter; 2002; and 2008 when he injured his knee in Week 1.

So the goals always are higher for Brady — like a certain game played in early February each year. Still, he knows how unusual this season has been and will continue to be.

"Sports challenge you in many different ways," he said. "It's the beginning of the season and we haven't had the live reps that we typically would have had at this point, so all of us are trying to establish a role — and we've got to do it at a very high level. Certainly to go against the Saints in Week 1 is a big challenge, but we'll be ready for the challenge."

Quite a challenge, perhaps

bigger than any Brady has faced since becoming a champion. He's no longer in his prime, he joins a perennially underachieving franchise, and the pandemic has not done anything to ease the transition.

"It hasn't been a typical off-season, so it's been a different type of process," he admitted. "The preseason was different, but really I've just tried to focus on each day ... Whether that was working out in the offseason or a day of training camp, it's really been a focus on the day-to-day moments and trying to, again, learn from my teammates, prepare my body mentally and physically, and continue to get acclimated to the area and the processes that it takes to win."



# Late Kucherov goal lifts Bolts over Islanders

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Even though the Tampa Bay Lightning seem to possess some overtime magic in the playoffs, this was not the time for more hockey.

Losing leading scorer Brayden Point to injury and Alex Killorn to ejection and after going into the game with just 11 forwards, the Lightning played much of Game 2 of the Eastern Conference finals with nine. Extra minutes would have taken their toll against a New York Islanders team that responded in a big way from a series-opening blowout.

Instead of going into OT, Nikita Kucherov scored with 8.8 seconds left to break the tie and give Tampa Bay a 2-1 victory Wednesday night and a 2-0 series lead.

"Any goal is a good goal and a huge goal in the series, especially that one," said Kucherov, who scored the near-buzzer-beater off a pass from defenseman Ryan McDonagh. "We were short (at forward), and we tried to play disciplined defensively and we knew our chances were going to come. We just had to wait and we got rewarded and definitely it was huge for us. We'll take it."

Tampa Bay won thanks to some timely scoring, 27 saves from Andrei Vasilevskiy and two big penalty kills. But the biggest question moving forward is the status of Point, who trails only Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon in points this postseason.

Point was injured going down awkwardly late in the first period, came back for two shifts in the second and then left the game for good.

"We all know the character of that kid and what a competitor and gamer he is," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "So for him not to come back, I know it was tough on him and clearly it was tough on us as well."

This was a much tougher game to win for Tampa Bay than its 8-2 romp over New York on Monday night.

Two nights after Point scored 1:14 in, Matt Martin did the honors 1:24 in to give the Islanders the lead. A broken play helped defenseman Nick Leddy get behind the net, and he fed Martin for his fifth goal of the playoffs on a rare play in which Vasilevskiy lost sight of the puck.

Six minutes in, Killorn hit New York's Brock Nelson into the glass from behind and was ejected and given a 5-minute major penalty for boarding. The Lightning killed the entire Islanders power play.

After Nelson returned later, Barclay Goodrow cross-checked him in the back of the neck, a play that went uncalled.

# Raptors survive in double-OT

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The Toronto Raptors faced a sizable early deficit. They trailed in the fourth quarter. And again in the first overtime. And again in the second overtime.

Exhausted and on the brink, the reigning NBA champions rose to the moment.

Next up: Game 7, for a spot in the Eastern Conference finals against Miami.

OG Anunoby — the hero of Game 3 with a buzzer-beating three — put the Raptors ahead to stay with a three-pointer with just under a minute left in double overtime, Kyle Lowry got an acrobatic jumper to fall with 11.7 seconds left and the Raptors beat the Boston Celtics 125-122 in Game 6 on Wednesday night.

"Game 7 to go to the Eastern Conference finals," Toronto guard Fred VanVleet said. "All you can ask for is a chance."

Lowry scored 33 points in 53 minutes for Toronto. Norman Powell had 23, including a three-point play with about 39 seconds left and a pair of free throws to help finish it off. VanVleet scored 21 points for the Raptors, and Anunoby had 13 points and 13 rebounds.

Lowry was on his back, laying on the court, breathing fairly heavily and with his fists thrown high in the air when Powell had the three-point play.

That's about when he realized the Raptors weren't flying home Thursday.

"Thank you, Norm. ... That was cool. We needed that," Lowry said.

Jaylen Brown had 31 points and 16 rebounds for the Celtics, who had their starters on the floor — without a single sub — for the final 22-plus minutes.

Jayson Tatum had 29 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists. Marcus Smart had 23 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists, and missed a three-pointer that would have tied it with about three seconds left in the second extra session.

"We had a lot of opportunities down the stretch and we didn't take care of the all as good as we needed to," Brown said. "That's fine. We're heading into a Game 7. We feel good about ourselves."

It was the first time that a team went multiple overtimes and won to stave off elimination in a best-of-seven series since April 30, 2009 — when Chicago forced Game 7 by beating Boston 128-127 in triple OT. The Celtics went on to win Game 7.

Daniel Theis had 18 points for the Celtics. Theis played 47 minutes — the other four Boston starters, Tatum, Smart, Brown and Kemba Walker (who was held to five points, in large part because of the box-and-one that Toronto used at times), all logged at least 50. And tempers flared when it was over, everyone getting a few extra words in before Game 7 on Friday.

The numbers were ridiculous: Boston shot 44-for-100, Toronto 44-for-101.

# Clippers put Nuggets in 3-1 hole

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Kawhi Leonard has the Los Angeles Clippers a win away from the franchise's first-ever trip to the Western Conference finals.

They're not celebrating anything just yet.

"We've got a lot of work to do still," Leonard said. "We're still fighting."

Leonard finished an assist shy of his first playoff triple-double and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Denver Nuggets 96-85 in Game 4 on Wednesday night to take a 3-1 lead in the series.

Leonard filled up the stat sheet with 30 points, 11 rebounds, four steals and two blocked shots. He has scored 30 or more points six times during this postseason.

Reserve Montrezl Harrell added 15 points to help the Clippers.

The mood in the locker room on the precipice of such a momentous moment was subdued.

"Zero reaction," Clippers coach Doc Rivers said. "We haven't done anything yet."

Nikola Jokic had 26 points and 11 boards for a Nuggets team that finds itself in an all-too-familiar situation. They were down in their first-round series against Utah before becoming the 12th team in NBA history to overcome a 3-1 deficit.

"This is a different opponent, obviously. A very talented, deep team," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "But I think we do have a confidence in being a team that when everyone else has written us off, we have found a way."

Los Angeles relied on stellar defense, holding Denver to 39.7% shooting and forcing three shot-clock violations. The Nuggets never led in the game.

One of the leaders of the defensive charge was George, who helped hold Jamal Murray to 6-of-15 shooting and 18 points.

"We knew that when we were getting him," Rivers said of George's defensive tenacity. "It gets lost at times, with P.G., because he's such a great shooter. The better shooter you are the more people forget how good you are defensively."

# Serena rallies into US Open semifinals

Associated Press

NEW YORK — They were just two particular points from Serena Williams' latest three-set comeback at the U.S. Open, yet they were pivotal and consisted of the sorts of lengthy exchanges filled with athleticism and brilliance that in any other, non-pandemic year would be marked by thousands of folks rising to their feet for delirious roars and raucous applause.

She needed both of these points, one of which included a shot she hit left-handed, to reverse a deficit that reached the scale of a set and a break after 45 minutes of her quarterfinal against Tsvetana Pironkova on a cloudy Wednesday in empty Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Williams needed both of these points during a five-game, match-altering run — along with 20 aces, her most in a match in eight years — to end up on the right side of a 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 score after more than two hours to get to the semifinals at Flushing Meadows for an 11th consecutive appearance.

"It's not how you start, it's how you finish, right?" Williams said.

Two more victories would allow her to claim a record-tying 24th Grand Slam singles title.

"In the beginning, I was a little fatigued, for whatever reason," Williams said. "Obviously, I can't do that if I want to keep winning, so I need to figure that out."

How big an upset would this have been if Pironkova had held on? Not only is she not seeded at Flushing Meadows, she doesn't even appear in the WTA rankings at all — this was her first tournament of any sort in more than three years, because she left the tour to become a mother.

"It's unbelievable," Williams said about Pironkova's impressive return to competition. "Wow. I couldn't even do that."

When the players stepped out onto the court, the stadium announcer — announcing for whom, exactly, was something of a mystery — referred

to Pironkova, a 32-year-old from Bulgaria, as "Alexander's mom" and then to Williams as "Olympia's mom" during the pre-match introductions.

"It just shows me how tough moms are," Williams said.

"You play a match and you go home and you're still changing diapers," said Williams, whose daughter turned 3 on Sept. 1 and is a little older than Pironkova's son. "It's like a double life. It's really surreal."

The American, who turns 39 in less than three weeks, has won six U.S. Open championships; she was the runner-up the past two years.

Williams last lost before the semifinals in New York in 2007, when Justine Henin eliminated her in the quarterfinals.

On Thursday, Williams will face Victoria Azarenka, who returned to the U.S. Open semifinals for the first time since 2013 by overwhelming Elise Mertens 6-1, 6-0 on Wednesday night. Williams leads her head-to-head series against Azarenka 18-4, including beating her

in the 2012 and 2013 finals in New York.

It was in a 2012 match against Azarenka at Wimbledon that Williams last topped 20 aces, producing 24.

The other women's semifinal Thursday was 2018 champion Naomi Osaka vs. No. 28 seed Jennifer Brady.

In the men's quarterfinals Wednesday, 2019 runner-up Daniil Medvedev beat No. 10 Andrey Rublev 7-6 (6), 6-3, 7-6 (5) to return to the final four. Medvedev hasn't dropped a set in the tournament and will face second-seeded Dominic Thiem. Thiem advanced to the semifinals with a 6-1, 6-2, 6-4 win over Alex de Minaur.

None of the remaining men has won a Grand Slam title, and they all have their best chance with Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic not in the field. Nadal and Federer did not play and Djokovic, the top seed, was kicked out of the U.S. Open for accidentally hitting a line judge in the throat with a tennis ball.

## MLB roundup

# Braves set NL scoring record in rout of Marlins

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Adam Duvall drove in nine runs with three homers, including a grand slam, and the Atlanta Braves set a National League scoring record while obliterating their franchise mark in a 29-9 romp over the Miami Marlins on Wednesday night.

Atlanta broke loose for 11 runs in the second inning and nearly matched the modern scoring mark since 1900, set by the Texas Rangers in a 30-3 rout of Baltimore in 2007.

The Braves had 23 hits, including seven homers, to score the most runs in their history in Boston, Milwaukee and Atlanta.

**Yankees 7, Blue Jays 2:** At Buffalo, N.Y., Deivi Garcia (1-1)

earned his first major league win, Gleyber Torres drove in four runs and New York snapped a five-game losing streak by beating Toronto.

**Padres 5, Rockies 3:** Zach Davies won his career-best fifth consecutive start and Mitch Moreland hit his first homer as host San Diego beat Colorado.

**Mets 7, Orioles 6:** Pete Alonso hit his second dramatic homer in a week, when his shot to center field leading off the eighth inning lifted host New York to a win over Baltimore.

**White Sox 8, Pirates 1:** James McCann went deep twice for the first multi-homer game of his seven-year career as visiting Chicago rolled past Pittsburgh.

**Royals 3, Indians 0:** Danny

Duffy (3-3) pitched four-hit ball into the sixth inning and snapped a winless streak of nearly six years in Cleveland as Kansas City posted a shutout.

**Brewers 19, Tigers 0:** Corbin Burnes (3-0) allowed one hit in seven innings in another outstanding performance, and visiting Milwaukee slugged its way to its highest run total in over a decade, beating Detroit.

**Reds 3, Cubs 0:** Trevor Bauer (4-3) tossed three-hit ball into the eighth inning to outpitch Chicago ace Yu Darvish (7-2) and lift visiting Cincinnati.

**Rangers 7, Angels 3:** Isiah Kiner-Falefa matched a career high with four hits, Nick Solak drove in a pair of runs and host Texas won consecutive games

for only the third time this season, beating Los Angeles.

**Athletics 3, Astros 2:** Ramon Laureano, suspended last month for charging the Houston dugout and triggering a bench-clearing brawl, hit an RBI single with two outs in the ninth inning that lifted host Oakland.

**Dodgers 6, Diamondbacks 4 (10):** Chris Taylor and AJ Pollock each hit a run-scoring single in the 10th inning as visiting Los Angeles overcame a rare off night for ace Clayton Kershaw to beat Arizona.

**Giants 10, Mariners 1:** Mike Yastrzemski hit a three-run homer and host San Francisco routed Seattle for its fifth straight win under skies turned orange by raging wildfires in Northern California.