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Hurricane Sally swamps Gulf Coast

Associated Press

PENSACOLA, Fla. — Hurricane Sally lumbered ashore near the Florida-Alabama line Wednesday with 105 mph winds and rain measured in feet, not inches, swamping homes and trapping people in high water as it crept inland for what could be a long, slow and disastrous drenching across the Deep South.

Moving at an agonizing 3 mph, or about as fast as a person can walk, the storm made landfall at 4:45 a.m. close to Gulf Shores, Ala., battering the metropolitan areas of Mobile, Ala., and Pensacola, Fla., which have a combined population of almost 1 million.

Emergency crews plucked people from flooded homes. In Escambia County, which includes Pensacola, more than 40 were rescued, including a family of four found in a tree, Sheriff David Morgan said.

He estimated thousands more will need to flee rising waters in the coming days. County officials urged residents to stick to text messages for contacting family and friends to keep cellphone service open for 911 calls. "There are entire communities that we're going to have to evacuate," Morgan said. "It's going to be a tremendous op-

eration over the next several days."

The storm collapsed a section of the Three Mile Bridge across Pensacola Bay, the sheriff said, and crews struggled to stop a barge that had broken loose from drifting into a nearby bridge that is part of Interstate 10. Officials closed I-10, which runs parallel to the Gulf Coast, in hard-hit areas of both Florida and Alabama.

More than 2 feet of rain was recorded near Naval Air Station Pensacola, and nearly 3 feet of water covered streets in downtown Pensacola, the National Weather Service reported.

"It's not common that you start measuring rainfall in feet," said forecaster David Eversole in Mobile. "Sally's moving so slowly, so it just keeps pounding and pounding and pounding the area with tropical rain and just powerful winds. It's just a nightmare."

The storm knocked out power to about a half-million homes and businesses.

It was the second hurricane to hit the Gulf Coast in less than three weeks and the latest blow in one of the busiest hurricane seasons ever recorded, so frenetic that forecasters have nearly run through the alphabet of storm names with 2½ months still to go. At the start of the week, Sally was

one of a record-tying five storms churning simultaneously in the Atlantic, strung out like charms on a bracelet.

Like the West Coast wildfires, the onslaught of hurricanes has focused attention on climate change, which scientists say is causing slower, rainier, more powerful and more destructive storms.

An emergency crew rescued two people on Dauphin Island, Ala., after the hurricane ripped the roof off their home and the rest of the house began to crumble.

"As things started to peel off and fall apart, they got scared and called for assistance," Dauphin Island Mayor Jeff Collier said by phone. He said no one was injured.

In Orange Beach, Ala., winds blew out the walls in one corner of a condominium building, exposing the interiors of condos on at least five floors, video posted online showed. Other images showed boats shoved onshore by storm surge.

At least 50 people in Orange Beach were rescued from flooded homes and taken to shelters, Mayor Tony Kennon said.

"We got a few people that we just haven't been able to get to because the water is so high," Kennon said. "But they are safe in their home, as soon as the water recedes, we will rescue them."

Over half a Marine tank company joins Army Guard

By CHAD GARLAND

Stars and Stripes

Over three-dozen former Marine Corps tank company members became soldiers last weekend, after their prior unit disbanded under a broader plan to redesign the service for more agile naval warfare.

The Marines, dressed in that service's digital camouflage, gathered Sunday at Gowen Field in Boise, Idaho, where they raised their right hands and became Idaho Army National Guardsmen, an online photo and caption showed.

All 39 of those transferring were reservists who'd served in Company C, 4th Tank Battalion,

which disbanded a month earlier, the Idaho Army National Guard said in a statement. Ten more from the company joined other states' National Guard units, it said. A tank company typically has about 80 Marines.

"We tried to match their Marine skill sets to an Army military occupational specialty as much as possible," said Brig. Gen. Farin Schwartz, commander of the Idaho Army National Guard. "We'll continue to pay them special attention for the foreseeable future to ensure their transition is as smooth as possible."

Most were tankers, maintainers or other support personnel,

the statement said. About one-third switched to the Guard either to continue working on or in tanks, or to remain in the local area, said 1st Sgt. Craig Wilcox, a Marine quoted in the statement.

The Marine Corps tank company operated M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks, which the service began shipping to logistics hubs to be stored, demilitarized, retired from service or sold to other branches earlier this year.

The Idaho National Guard's 116th Brigade Combat Team operates updated M1A2s.

As the Corps began divesting its three tank battalions in a new 10-year force restructur-

ing effort, some 800 Marines in tank-related job fields were given the option to switch jobs and units in the Corps, transfer to a new branch or, in the case of those with at least 15 years of service, retire early.

Staff Sgt. Kyle Dycus switched to the Guard to stay close to family. After initially wanting to stay in the tank community, he chose to try "a more real-world option for my future," and switched to information technology.

"I am looking at this from a positive aspect and I am thankful for this new opportunity," Dycus said in the Guard statement. "Change can often be a good thing."

Bill would make it easier for troops to end leases

BY STEVE BEYNON
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said she would introduce a bill Wednesday alongside a bipartisan group of senators that aims to make it easier for service members to terminate residential and car leases as the coronavirus pandemic has put a tight squeeze on renters across the country.

The Modernizing Notice of Lease Terminations for Servicemembers Act would allow active duty, reservists and National Guard troops to break leases electronically, including by email, if they are deployed, reassigned to a new base, or sent to a long training event.

“Our service members and their families make incredible sacrifices to keep our country safe, so we should take every opportunity to make it easier for them to manage major financial transactions like residential and car leases,” Warren said in a statement.

Troops who are called to duty for at least 90 days are allowed to break leases under the Servicemembers Civil Relief

Act, which was passed in 2003 before the internet became a primary means of communicating. However, service members technically have to deliver written notices that they intend to break a lease and the law does not explicitly permit electronic notification.

Beyond the pandemic, not allowing service members to end their leases early due to sudden military orders could put a burden on some troops deploying overseas or to training events where mail service isn’t easily available. It could also be difficult on families who have to move on short notice.

Nothing else would change in the SCRA under Warren’s measure. Under the law, service members still have to pay the following month’s rent if they terminate the lease. For example, if a soldier terminates their lease on Sept. 18, they still owe rent on Oct. 1 and the lease is suspended Oct. 31. If a service member pays month-to-month, the lease is ended 30 days after the landlord was noticed. If a service member is killed on duty, the spouse can terminate the lease within one year of the death.

China’s 3rd aircraft carrier takes shape

The Washington Post

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Shipbuilders in Shanghai have laid out the hull of China’s first modern aircraft carrier, which could be launched into the water in the coming months as it enters the latter phases of construction, according to new satellite images and state media reports.

High-resolution photos recently obtained by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington, D.C., show for the first time sections of the carrier being assembled in the open at a dry dock at the sprawling Jiangnan shipyard. The vessel, which will be China’s third carrier but the first to be equipped with modern technology, is likely to be larger than the previous two that were based on Soviet designs. At the waterline, the new ship will be about 1,000 feet long and 130 feet wide, the photos show.

Matthew Funaiole, a researcher at the CSIS ChinaPower project, said it is

not yet clear from the images whether the new carrier will have an electromagnetic catapult to efficiently sling fighter jets off its deck — the biggest question mark over current Chinese carrier technology. The USS Gerald R. Ford, commissioned in 2017, was the first carrier to include the cutting-edge feature.

Still, “the Chinese are showing tremendous capability of designing and fitting out vessels,” Funaiole said. “It’s moving along on pace. It’s impressive the process they’re going through to position themselves at the forefront of carrier technology.”

China has commissioned two carriers in the past decade: the Liaoning was a retrofit of an old Soviet model and the second, the Shandong, was Chinese-built but mostly a reverse-engineered copy of the Liaoning. The Shandong entered service in December and the third carrier likely won’t be combat-ready until 2023, Funaiole said.

Commander touts Pacific missile defense capabilities

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

SAGAMI GENERAL DEPOT, Japan — The Army could send missile defense units from all over the world to Japan to safeguard allied forces in a contingency, according to the commander of an air defense unit near Tokyo.

The 38th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, which reactivated at Sagami General Depot in Kanagawa prefecture in October 2018, oversees air and missile defense units on mainland Japan, Okinawa and Guam, said Col. Matthew Dalton, 46, of Portland, Conn.

“There are two main mis-

sions,” he said in an interview Monday at his headquarters. “The defense of Japan and homeland defense.”

The threat of Chinese and North Korean missiles is an ever-present concern for U.S. commanders in the Far East. As recently as 2017, the North Koreans fired a ballistic missile over northern Japan and tested an intercontinental ballistic missile that experts believed to be capable of striking the U.S. mainland.

The same year, Google Earth images revealed that China, which has a vast arsenal of missiles, was firing them at targets configured to look like U.S. bases in Japan.

“I get apprehensive that we are not fully conscious as a nation of the threats that we face,” Adm. Charles Richard, commander of U.S. Strategic Command, told reporters Monday at the Pentagon. “China now has the capability ... to directly threaten our homeland from a ballistic missile submarine. That’s a pretty watershed moment.”

Dalton’s brigade oversees Patriot missile defense units at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, and a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, battery at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. However, the brigade could expand to command and control as many as six battal-

ions, each with several missile defense batteries, if necessary.

“Because we have the headquarters here, we have the ability to quickly expand,” he said. “We can receive units from any part of the world and integrate them here on Honshu or anywhere in Japan.”

U.S. air defense forces in Japan work closely with their Japanese counterparts.

“We have to constantly work together and rehearse and practice,” he said, adding that the most effective training involves multiple service branches from the U.S. and Japanese militaries.

Feds outline plan for free virus vaccine in US

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The federal government outlined a sweeping plan Wednesday to make vaccines for COVID-19 available for free to all Americans, assuming a safe and effective shot is established and widely accepted, though polls show skepticism remains across America.

In a report to Congress and an accompanying “playbook” for states and localities, federal health agencies and the Defense Department sketched out complex plans for a vaccination campaign to begin gradually in January or even later this year, eventually ramping up to reach any American who wants a shot. The Pentagon is involved with the distribution of vaccines, but civilian health workers would be the ones giving shots.

The campaign is “much larger in scope and complexity than seasonal influenza or

other previous outbreak-related vaccination responses,” says the playbook for states from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Although President Donald Trump asserted Tuesday in an ABC News town hall that a vaccine could be three to four weeks away, officials made it clear to reporters on a call Wednesday that widespread availability would take months.

Among the highlights of the plan:

■ For most vaccines, people will need two doses, 21 to 28 days apart. Double-dose vaccines will have to come from the same drugmaker. There could be several vaccines from different manufacturers approved and available.

■ Vaccination of the U.S. population won’t be a sprint but a marathon. Initially there may be a limited supply of vaccines, and the focus will be on pro-

tecting health workers, other essential employees and people in vulnerable groups. A second and third phase would expand vaccination to the entire population.

■ The vaccine itself will be free of charge, thanks to billions of dollars in taxpayer funding approved by Congress and allocated by the Trump administration. The goal is that patients won’t be separately charged for administration of their shots, and officials said they are working to ensure that’s the case for all Medicare recipients and uninsured people, as well those covered by insurance at their jobs.

■ States and local communities will need to devise precise plans for receiving and locally distributing vaccines, some of which will require special handling such as refrigeration or freezing. States and cities have a month to submit plans.

■ A massive information technology effort will be needed to track who is getting which vaccines and when, and the key challenge involves getting multiple public and private databases to link with each other.

Some of the broad components of the federal plan have already been discussed, but Wednesday’s reports attempt to put the key details into a comprehensive framework.

But the whole enterprise is facing public skepticism. Only about half of Americans said they’d get vaccinated in an Associated Press poll taken in May. Of those who said they wouldn’t get vaccinated, the overwhelming majority said they were worried about safety.

Since the poll, questions have only mounted about whether the government is trying to rush treatments and vaccines to help Trump’s reelection chances.

Trump denies playing down threat of virus

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Fielding compelling questions about voters’ real-world problems, President Donald Trump denied during a televised town hall that he had played down the threat of the coronavirus earlier this year, although there is an audio recording of him stating he did just that.

Trump, in what could well be a preview of his performance in the presidential debates less than two weeks away, cast doubt on the widely accepted scientific conclusions of his own administration strongly urging the use of face coverings and seemed to bat away the suggestion that the nation has racial inequities.

“Well, I hope there’s not a race problem,” Trump said Tuesday when asked about his campaign rhetoric seeming to ignore the injustices carried out against Black Americans.

Face-to-face with everyday voters for the first time in months, Trump was defensive but resisted agitation as he was pressed on his administration’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and why he doesn’t more aggressively promote the use of masks to reduce the spread of the disease.

“There are people that don’t think masks are good,” Trump said, though his own Centers for Disease Control and Prevention strongly urges their use.

Questions from uncommitted voters were pointed and poignant: a diabetic man who said he felt he’d been thrown “under the bus” by mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic, a Black woman with a disease that left her uninsurable until the Obama health care law came along who is worried that she could lose coverage again and a Black pastor who questioned Trump’s campaign motto to “Make America Great Again.”

Biden courts Latino voters in first trip to Fla. as nominee

Associated Press

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Joe Biden made his first trip to Florida as the Democratic presidential nominee with an urgent mission to boost support among Latinos who could decide the election in one of the nation’s fiercest battleground states.

“More than any other time, the Hispanic community, Latino community holds in the palm of their hand the destiny of this country,” Biden said Tuesday during a Hispanic Heritage Month kickoff event in Kissimmee. “You can decide the direction of this country.”

A Biden win in Florida would dramatically narrow Trump’s path to reelection. But in a state where elections are often decided by a percentage point, there are mounting concerns that Biden may be slipping, particularly with the state’s influential Latino voters.

An NBC-Marist poll released last week found Latinos in the state about evenly divided between Biden and Trump. Democrat Hillary Clinton led Trump by a 59% to 36% margin among Latinos in the same poll in 2016 — and Trump won Florida by about 1 percentage point.

To regain lost ground, Biden made the case Tuesday night that he would be a better president for Hispanics than Trump, touting his commitment to immigration reform and a new plan to support Puerto Rico’s economy.

Still, Hispanic voters in Florida tend to be somewhat more Republican-leaning than Hispanic voters nationwide because of the state’s Cuban American population. Nationally, little public polling is available to measure the opinions of Latino voters this year and whether they differ from four years ago.

Doubts persist as NYC begins school year

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York City's already delayed school year was scheduled to start remotely Wednesday in a soft opening that will serve as a prologue to the return of students to physical classrooms next week.

Even as more than 1 million kids remotely return to class, it's an open question whether the city can pull off the hybrid learning system Mayor Bill de Blasio announced in July.

Unions representing teachers and principals in the nation's largest public school district say schools still don't have the teachers or the coronavirus safety measures that are needed, but de Blasio, a Democrat, has insisted that the school year will start as planned with three days of online orientation this week.

Students begin returning to their physical classrooms Monday for the first time since March.

The reopening comes as an average of around 240 people a day are still being diagnosed with the coronavirus in New York City, one of only a few large U.S. cities attempting to start the school year with students in physical classrooms.

The city plans to do random testing of students and staff for the virus starting Oct. 1. The mayor said Monday that a COVID-19 "situation room" would be set up to respond swiftly to school coronavirus cases.

California

SACRAMENTO — California's coronavirus infection rate has reached its lowest level since the early days of the pandemic but San Diego County, the state's second-largest, is seeing an uptick that could shut down some recently reopened businesses.

California's seven-day positivity rate — comparing infections to the overall number of virus tests conducted — was 3.3% on Tuesday, according to state data.

But virus cases in San Diego County have trended higher

recently and now are above statewide averages and health officials are trying to figure out why.

"We don't yet have enough evidence that it can be attributed to the businesses that have already begun to increase their operations in San Diego, although we're closely looking at that," Dr. Mark Ghaly, California's health and human services secretary, said during a weekly briefing.

Ghaly said another factor might be a series of virus cases reported at San Diego State University. The school has reported nearly 650 cases among students since August.

Illinois

CHICAGO — Chicago officials cautioned city residents Tuesday about travel to Wisconsin, citing a recent COVID-19 spike in Illinois' neighbor to the north.

The Chicago Department of Public Health stopped short of adding Wisconsin to a travel advisory list. There are 16 states on the list, including Utah, which was announced Tuesday. City officials said with some exceptions, Chicago residents who travel to the states must quarantine for two weeks upon return. Visitors from those states are expected to quarantine while in Chicago.

On Sunday, Wisconsin reported its highest one-day case count with 1,582 new confirmed COVID-19 cases and a 21% positive test rate.

Meanwhile, Illinois reported 1,466 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Tuesday and 20 additional deaths.

Iowa

DES MOINES — Plenty of Republican governors initially rejected mask mandates, but few have held to their skepticism amid soaring coronavirus cases with the tenacity of Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds.

Reynolds scoffs at calls for a statewide mask order, calling them "feel-good" actions, and refuses to let city officials enforce local mandates, even as

the small, largely rural state maintains one of the highest COVID-19 positivity rates and has topped 1,200 dead. While she implores residents to wear masks while indoors when social distancing isn't possible, she has said not everyone believes they're effective.

Reynolds' argument against a mandate boils down to three points: a mask requirement can't be enforced, other factors are to blame for rising virus cases and people should have the freedom to make their own choices.

Kansas

WICHITA — Wichita area health officials are cracking down on face masks and bar curfews to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Sedgwick County health officer Dr. Garold Minns made compliance mandatory in a new emergency public health order that took effect Tuesday. The Wichita Eagle reports that the order runs through Oct. 21.

The health order has required face masks, an 11 p.m. curfew on bars and a 15-person limit on mass gatherings. But previous versions of the order said that while it was lawful, compliance was voluntary. The update removed wording that the order "cannot be enforced through criminal charges, fines, or civil penalties."

Kansas health officials reported 1,513 newly confirmed cases of COVID-19 statewide over the weekend, for a total of 49,899 across the state.

Maine

PORTLAND — At least seven people have died in connection to a coronavirus outbreak that continues to sicken people in Maine following a wedding reception held over the summer that violated state virus guidelines, public health authorities said.

The August wedding reception at the Big Moose Inn in Millinocket is linked to more than 175 confirmed cases of the virus, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

said Tuesday.

Maine authorities have identified overlaps between the wedding reception and outbreaks elsewhere in the state. Maine health officials said an outbreak at a Madison rehabilitation center, which is the site of six of the seven deaths, is connected to the wedding because an employee of the facility lives in the same household as a person who attended.

Missouri

O'FALLON — With more than 1,300 of its students infected with the coronavirus, the University of Missouri in Columbia said Tuesday that two students were expelled and three others suspended for violating rules meant to slow the virus' spread.

A news release said the sanctions were necessary because of flagrant violations of rules and regulations that require students who test positive for the COVID-19 virus to isolate themselves and comply with social distancing requirements.

"Unfortunately, a few students have violated these policies and violated the trust of their fellow community members," University System President and MU Chancellor Mun Choi said.

Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania House on Tuesday passed a bill that would prevent governors from applying their disease control powers to shut down gatherings at churches or other houses of worship.

The chamber voted 149 to 53 for the proposal, which the Democratic leader called a solution in search of a problem.

The bill would amend the state's Religious Freedom Protection Act to ban governors from using disaster response and disease prevention powers to infringe on anyone's ability to assemble for worship or to travel to their place of worship.

Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf and authorities have not restricted religious gatherings during the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, he asked religious leaders to protect their congregants.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Sheriff: Fleeing suspect leaves winning ticket

GA CANTON — A suspect in Georgia left his good luck behind when he abandoned a winning lottery ticket while fleeing sheriff's deputies.

The Cherokee County Sheriff's Office said the man had a Georgia Lottery scratch game card worth \$100 when he ran away during a traffic stop on Interstate 75.

The man, who was not identified, was later taken into custody, sheriff's spokesman Capt. Jay Baker told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Baker said the man was a passenger in a vehicle that was pulled over for a tag violation, and he ran into the woods. The lottery ticket was in a backpack that also had methamphetamine, according to Baker. The man can have the lottery ticket back, but the sheriff's office said it will keep the drugs.

Police: Woman died in elevator accident

MA BOSTON — A woman in her 30s was killed in an elevator accident in a Boston apartment building, police said.

Police responded to the building in the city's Allston neighborhood for reports of "trauma" in the five-story building, police spokesman John Boyle said.

Officers found the woman in the elevator on the first floor. She was pronounced dead at the scene. Her name was not made public.

A second person was taken to the hospital suffering from shock, but was not physically hurt, police said.

The death remains under investigation and police are looking at surveillance video from inside the building.

Officials: Sub sent vulgar messages to students

AL PINCKARD — An Alabama substitute teacher was arrested and accused of sending inappropriate messages to students, authorities said.

Darius Salter, 21, was charged with two counts of possession of obscene matter, news outlets reported.

Dale County Chief Deputy Mason Bynum said Salter worked at South Dale Middle School and Dale County High School.

School administrators immediately removed Salter from the classroom. Investigators found multiple victims.

Bynum said all inappropriate communication between Salter and the victims were done electronically.

Man charged in standoff at Arrowhead Stadium

MO KANSAS CITY — A 33-year-old Kansas City, Kan., man was charged with three felonies for his alleged role in a daylong standoff at Arrowhead Stadium.

Joshua D. Newton was charged with making a terrorist threat, armed criminal action and unlawful use of a weapon, The Kansas City Star reported.

Court records show police found a Facebook page under Newton's name and a post threatening to go to the stadium and murder people, the newspaper reported.

A Kansas City Royals groundskeeper told police he was working when a man pulled out two handguns and started shooting.

The Kansas City Royals' game against the Pittsburgh Pirates was delayed about half an hour because of the standoff

but was played after the arrest.

Police said they found two loaded semi-automatic handguns, a Beretta and a Glock 17 on Newton.

River stocked with endangered mussels

KY FRANKFORT — The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources stocked about 2,400 endangered freshwater mussels into the Green River.

A statement from the agency said about half were placed into the river within Mammoth Cave National Park earlier this month and the other half were placed upriver.

The initiative seeks to restore the rayed bean mussel, which has not been found in Kentucky waters in more than 40 years. The mussels were moved from the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania because of a tar spill, the Department of Fish and Wildlife said.

911 dispatcher saves 2 lives in 1 shift

FL BUNNELL — A 21-year-old dispatcher for the Flagler County Sheriff's Office helped save two lives in the span of an hour during a recent 12-hour shift.

The News-Journal reported that the shift started when McKenzie Davis took a call from a frantic mother whose 6-month-old child wasn't breathing.

Davis calmed the woman down and described how to administer CPR to the infant. After a full round of CPR, the baby began breathing and was transported to a children's hospital.

A little over an hour later, the switchboard lit up again and Davis answered another call.

A woman said that her 71-year-old husband was in a swim-

ming pool and not breathing.

Davis again gave instructions and counted aloud while the family took turns performing compressions. Emergency workers transported the man to the hospital. He was expected to make a full recovery.

Hiker seeking help for boyfriend found dead

GA DAWSONVILLE — A hiker seeking help for her injured boyfriend was found dead at the bottom of falls along a trail in the north Georgia mountains, news outlets reported.

The two were hiking at Cochran Falls when the man injured himself, Dawson County Fire Chief Danny Thompson told reporters, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Rescuers found the man, and he was taken to a hospital with head, back and knee injuries. He said his girlfriend had gone for help.

Search crews discovered her body a short time later.

Authorities have not said how she died, according to the newspaper.

Woman charged with stealing lottery tickets

IA SIOUX CITY — A Sioux City woman was charged with stealing scratch tickets from her work and redeeming the tickets for herself.

KCAU-TV reported that Ricki Shear, 19, was charged with 21 counts of forgery or theft of a lottery ticket.

She is accused of stealing 94 scratch tickets while working as a clerk for Transit General Store. Court documents say she redeemed 21 of them for \$195.

From wire reports

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Woods resumes chase for another major

Associated Press

MAMARONECK, N.Y. — The older he gets, the more difficult it gets for Tiger Woods.

He is one victory away from setting the PGA Tour career record, and it's been that way since January.

Every major he plays this year is a chance to tie the mark for the most titles. He missed out on a fifth PGA Championship victory last month. He goes for No. 4 in the U.S. Open this week at Winged Foot. He gets a shot at a sixth green jacket at the Masters in November.

"I think it gets harder to win as we all age," Woods responded to a query about records getting harder to achieve the closer a player gets to them. "I think that when you're in your prime, in your peak years, you have to take advantage of those opportunities so then when you get to the all-time marks, you have that opportunity."

It doesn't figure to get any easier at Winged Foot.

Two days before the start

of the 120th U.S. Open — and sixth at Winged Foot — the course already is living up to its reputation as being a brute even without the USGA grooming it for the toughest test in golf.

Jon Rahm doesn't expect anyone under par by the end of the week.

Defending champion Gary Woodland arrived over the weekend and was chipping around the green when his caddie tossed golf balls in his direction.

"We lost a ball for about five minutes and it was right in front of me," Woodland said. "We didn't find it until we stepped on it. The golf ball can disappear pretty quickly."

He at least was heartened to hear that volunteer marshals were being brought in for the practice rounds. There is no gallery to direct, only tee shots to locate.

"The practice rounds would have been 10 hours out here trying to find golf balls," Woodland said.

None of this is news for Woods, one of 15 players who played in the 2006 U.S. Open at Winged Foot, the first major that he missed the cut as a pro. It was a month after his father died, and Woods said Tuesday in retrospect that he spent more time grieving than preparing and it showed that week.

He returned a few weeks ago for a practice round with Justin Thomas and while the course was soft, Woods thought it was ready that day for the U.S. Open. His opinion didn't change when he arrived over the weekend.

"I think it's right up there next to Oakmont and I think Carnoustie as far as just sheer difficulty without even doing anything to it," Woods said.

He is 18-over par in the six rounds he has played at Winged Foot (including the 1997 PGA Championship), 6 over in his one appearance at Oakmont (runner-up) and 3 over in his 12 rounds at Carnoustie for the British Open.

"Those three golf courses, they can host major championships without ever doing anything to them," he said. "This one or Oakmont is either one or two."

Having the U.S. Open in September for the first time since 1913, a move forced by golf being shut down for three months because of the COVID-19 pandemic, allows for cooler temperatures and better control of the greens and their wild contours at Winged Foot, along with a sub-air system. The pandemic also means no spectators, which means no foot traffic by 40,000 people to trample the long, lush blades of grass.

No wonder Rahm said he would be surprised if anyone broke par, and if they did, would win by a large margin.

Woods played nine holes Tuesday with Thomas, and they'll be spending even more time together later in the week. They are in the same group for the second straight major.

Big Ten reverses course, opts to play football this fall

Associated Press

Big Ten is going to give fall football a shot after all.

Less than five weeks after pushing football and other fall sports to spring in the name of player safety during the pandemic, the conference changed course Wednesday and said it plans to begin its season the weekend of Oct. 23-24.

Each team will play eight games in eight weeks and the conference championship game will be held Dec. 19 — if all goes well. That should give the Big Ten an opportunity to compete for the national championship.

The Big Ten said its Council of Presidents and Chancellors voted unanimously Tuesday to restart sports. The vote last month was 11-3 to postpone, with Ohio State, Iowa and Nebraska voting against.

"We're in a better place, regardless of how we got here or

how painful it was during the time we waited to get this moment," Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith said. "That's all behind us. What's beautiful is that we have a process and protocols in place that's based on science and based on lessons learned since Aug. 11."

The decision to play came after sharp pressure from coaches, players, parents and even President Donald Trump, all of them pushing for a Big Ten football season.

The emergence of daily rapid-response COVID-19 testing, not available when university presidents and chancellors decided to pull the plug on the season, helped trigger a re-vote. The Big Ten said it will begin daily antigen testing of its athletes, coaches and staff on Sept. 30.

Team positivity rates and population positivity rate

thresholds will be used to determine whether teams must halt practice or play. The earliest an athlete will be able to return to game competition would be 21 days following a COVID-19 positive diagnosis.

"Everyone associated with the Big Ten should be very proud of the groundbreaking steps that are now being taken to better protect the health and safety of the student-athletes and surrounding communities," said Dr. Jim Borchers, team physician for Ohio State.

The Big Ten will take a bow, but the conference has been battered for a month.

First-year commissioner Kevin Warren was the main target, criticized for a lack of communication within the conference and not providing enough information to back the initial decision.

The Big Ten postponed on

Aug. 11, indicating it would try to make up the season in the spring.

The Pac-12 followed the Big Ten in postponing. Pac-12 Commissioner Larry Scott released a statement Tuesday saying the conference has not been given the go-ahead by state officials in California and Oregon to begin preparing for a football season.

Meanwhile, the three other Power Five conferences forged ahead. Games have started, with the Big 12 and Atlantic Coast Conference kicking off last week. The Southeastern Conference is scheduled to start playing games Sept. 26.

"We're excited and we can't wait to get started," Michigan State linebacker Antjuan Simmons said.

In Nebraska, eight players had filed a lawsuit against the Big Ten over its decision to postpone.

Islanders win in 2OT, fight off elimination

Associated Press

EDMONTON, Alberta — Islanders forward Jordan Eberle knew exactly what to do upon seeing teammate and captain Anders Lee pounce on the loose puck once Tampa Bay's Kevin Shattenkirk whiffed on his shot from the right point.

Eberle raced up the middle, drove to the net and converted Lee's pass to cap a two-on-one break and keep the Islanders' playoff hopes alive. The goal, scored 12:30 into the second overtime, sealed a 2-1 win over the Lightning in Game 5 of their Eastern Conference final series Tuesday night.

"Things happen quick out there. You've got to react. You see the fanned shot. You see Leesy poke it by," said Eberle, who scored his second winner of the postseason. "You've played this game a long time, you know when you have odd-man rushes and an opportunity is about to come. Leesy made a heck of a play to get the puck

over to me."

The sixth-seeded Islanders cut the second-seeded Lightning series lead to 3-2, with Game 6 scheduled for Thursday night. The winner will advance to the Stanley Cup Final and face West champion Dallas, which eliminated Vegas in five games on Monday night.

Islanders defenseman Ryan Pulock also scored and Semyon Varlamov capped a 36-save outing by skating the length of the ice and making a head-first dive into the pile of players mobbing Eberle.

The goal came off the Lightning winning a faceoff to the left of the Islanders net. The puck was drawn back to Shattenkirk, who fanned on the shot. It dribbled to Lee, who banked the puck off the sideboards to get around Shattenkirk.

"It took the stars aligning on a fanned shot for them to get the break they got," Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said. "We had opportunities to put

the game away."

Victor Hedman scored for the Lightning, and Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 22 shots.

The Lightning were minus co-leading playoff scorer Brayden Point, who had a goal and assist in a 4-1 win in Game 4 after missing a 5-3 loss in Game 3 with an undisclosed injury. Tampa Bay's other co-leader, Nikita Kucherov, was shaken up eight minutes into the second period Tuesday, but returned and had several scoring chances in the third period and overtime.

Cooper called it "hard to tell right now" as to whether Point will be able to play Thursday.

One thing Hedman was sure of, is knowing the Lightning will bounce back.

"It came down to one play. It's tough for us obviously, but this is hockey," Hedman said. "It's how you respond to this that's going to define you as a team. I'm not worried about how our group's going to re-

spond to this."

The Islanders opened the scoring 15:41 in on Pulock's power-play goal, just their second in 15 opportunities this series.

The Lightning responded with Hedman tying the game 4 minutes into the second period.

Tampa Bay's Carter Verhaeghe had a goal overturned 10:01 into the second period, when the Islanders challenged the play for being offside. Replays showed Tampa Bay's Cedric Paquette clearly entered New York's zone well ahead of the puck.

The Lightning dropped to 4-1 in overtime games this postseason, including a 5-4 5OT win over Columbus in Game 1 of their first-round series.

The Islanders continue to persevere in being the only team left that played a best-of-five preliminary round series, and showed signs of fatigue in opening the series against Tampa Bay with an 8-2 loss.

NBA playoffs roundup

Nuggets stun Clippers, advance to Western finals

Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Nikola Jokic picked out two birthday presents for his coach. He just didn't know which one he would be wrapping.

"Before the game I told him, 'Coach, I'm going to give you a really good present — I'm going to get you home or I'm going to get you to the conference finals,'" the Denver Nuggets center said.

Michael Malone was thrilled with the present he received.

Denver's dynamic duo of Jamal Murray and Jokic led another stunning turnaround as the Nuggets advanced to the Western Conference finals for the first time since 2009.

Murray scored 40 points, Jokic had a triple-double by the third quarter and Denver again overcame a double-digit deficit

to shock the Los Angeles Clippers 104-89 in Game 7 on Tuesday night.

Denver became the first team in NBA history to rally from a 3-1 series deficit twice in the same postseason. The team beat Utah in Game 7 in the first round.

"Those guys stepped up on the biggest moment," said Malone, who turned 49 on Tuesday. "You find out a lot about people in these moments. Man, did we pass the character test or what?"

Even more history: The Nuggets are the third team in the U.S. major pro sports to rally from a pair of 3-1 deficits in the same playoffs, joining the 1985 Kansas City Royals and 2003 Minnesota Wild.

Denver will face LeBron James and the Los Angeles

Lakers in the conference finals. They'll be the underdogs, of course. That's fine with Murray.

"It's fun to silence everybody," said Murray, who scored 25 in the first half.

Heat 117, Celtics 114 (OT): Jimmy Butler's three-point play with 12 seconds left put Miami ahead for good, Bam Adebayo finished it off with a stunning rejection of Jayson Tatum at the rim on the ensuing Boston possession, and the Heat struck first in the Eastern Conference finals with a win in Game 1 on Tuesday night.

The Heat were down by 13 in the opening minutes, down by 14 in the final quarter and felt like a bad call took the lead from them in the final seconds. They found a way in overtime, improving to an NBA-best 9-1

so far in these playoffs.

Goran Dragic scored 29 points, Jae Crowder scored 22, Butler had 20 and Adebayo had 18.

Kemba Walker's basket with 23.2 seconds left in overtime put the Celtics up by one, before Butler muscled his way to the rim for a score while getting fouled by Tatum. Boston went to Tatum on the ensuing possession, only to watch him get denied by Adebayo.

Tatum scored 30 points for the Celtics, Marcus Smart had 26 points, Walker had 19 and Jaylen Brown added 17. Boston had been 156-1 since the shot-clock era started 65 years ago — winners of 92 straight — when leading by 12 or more points going into the fourth quarter of a playoff game.

Texas 'bubble' to host World Series

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The World Series will be played entirely at the Texas Rangers' new ballpark in Arlington, Texas, and Major League Baseball hopes fans can attend.

The Division Series, League Championship Series and World Series all will be part of a bubble designed to minimize exposure to the coronavirus, which limited the regular season to a 60-game schedule for each club and caused 45 postponements.

This will be the first World Series played entirely at one site since 1944, when the Cardinals beat the Browns 4-2 at Sportsman's Park in St. Louis, where both teams shared the field.

"The elimination of travel is obviously a positive because it cuts exposure," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said. "Less interaction outside with

the group that you're looking to protect is a huge positive. It's all about what the risk of interacting with the community is."

While MLB was pleased with the players' response to protocols during the regular season, the bubble was preferred for the latter stages of the postseason, when there is little time available for rescheduling.

After playing the entire regular season in empty ballparks, MLB hopes to be allowed to have about 25% capacity for postseason games at Arlington, where total capacity is about 40,000.

Manfred views the neutral-site World Series as a one-off, along with other innovations for 2020 that included runners at second to start extra innings and seven-inning doubleheaders.

"It's not something that we're contemplating as a permanent

change," he said.

Off days were eliminated for the Division Series and League Championship Series, which will stress pitching depth among starting rotations and bullpens.

"It tells you the talent of the whole team, and it's what we do for 162 games," Philadelphia Phillies manager Joe Girardi said. "There might be a little bit more offense just because of that."

No off days may impact teams' decisions on how many pitchers to carry for postseason series.

"It will probably affect everyone's pitching staff. It probably depends on the depth of your bullpen," Houston Astros manager Dusty Baker said. "Every game is important during that streak. You might have to carry an extra pitcher when you ordinarily wouldn't have because

you see off days as a rest day."

The two traditional off days were kept for the World Series.

First-round best-of-three matchups in a postseason expanded from 10 to 16 teams this year will be held entirely at the higher-seeded clubs. The final eight teams will shift to bubble environments.

"The agreement attempts to balance players' experiences and concerns while making the accommodations necessary to best ensure a safe, healthy and successful conclusion to the 2020 season," union head Tony Clark said in a statement.

The World Series will be at Globe Life Field in Arlington, a retractable roof stadium with artificial turf that opened this year adjacent to the Rangers' old ballpark. Texas is last in the AL West at 17-30 entering Tuesday, with little chance of advancing to the postseason.

MLB roundup

Gregorius, Arrieta help Phillies get past Mets

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Jake Arrieta pitched effectively into the sixth inning before leaving with an injury, Didi Gregorius hit a two-run homer and the Philadelphia Phillies beat the New York Mets 4-1 Tuesday night.

The scuffling Mets played their first game since billionaire hedge fund manager Steve Cohen agreed to buy the team from the Wilpon and Katz families. The agreement was announced Monday and the deal is subject to the approval of Major League Baseball owners.

Arrieta (4-4) allowed one run on Brandon Nimmo's homer and eight hits in 5¹/₃ innings. But he walked off the mound, grabbing the back of his right leg, after hitting Andres Gimenez with a pitch to load the bases. JoJo Romero entered and retired Wilson Ramos on a double-play grounder.

Yankees 20, Blue Jays 6: Luke Voit and Aaron Hicks homered to key a seven-run second-inning burst made possible when right fielder Derek Fisher misplayed a pair of flyballs, and host New York rocketed past Toronto into second place in the AL East with a blowout that extended its winning streak to six.

Dodgers 3, Padres 1: Tony Gonsolin quieted opposing bats for seven innings, Edwin Rios homered and Los Angeles earned a road win to snap San Diego's eight-game winning streak.

Red Sox 2, Marlins 0: Tanner Houck gave up just two singles over five innings to win his major league debut, pitching Boston to a win at Miami.

Reds 4, Pirates 1: Tucker Barnhart hit a home run and Brian Goodwin prevented one with a leaping catch as host Cincinnati extended its winning streak to a season-high

four games with a win over Pittsburgh.

Rays 6, Nationals 1: Ryan Yarbrough stopped a personal 16-game winless streak, Nate Lowe homered and AL East-leading Tampa Bay beat visiting Washington.

Tigers 6, Royals 0: Miguel Cabrera hit a homer and a double to help host Detroit beat Kansas City.

Braves 5, Orioles 1: Adam Duvall tied a team record with his 10th homer in September, and Atlanta used six pitchers to win at Baltimore.

Brewers 18, Cardinals 3: Christian Yelich broke out of his slump with a home run and three hits, Ryan Braun also went deep and host Milwaukee routed St. Louis.

Astros 4, Rangers 1: George Springer and Martin Maldonado homered, Alex Bregman hit a go-ahead two-run single in the seventh inning and Houston got a needed win over visit-

ing Texas.

White Sox 6, Twins 2: Dane Dunning pitched seven effective innings, Luis Robert had a key two-run single and Chicago strengthened its hold on the AL Central by topping visiting Minnesota.

Cubs 6, Indians 5: Willson Contreras and Cameron Maybin were plunked by consecutive pitches from Cleveland reliever Nick Wittgren in the ninth inning, forcing home the winning run for host Chicago.

Rockies 3, Athletics 1: Antonio Senzatela pitched the first complete game of his career and Elias Diaz hit a two-run homer to lead host Colorado over Oakland.

Diamondbacks 9, Angels 8: David Peralta hit a tiebreaking homer in the eighth inning, and visiting Arizona blew a seven-run lead before rallying for the win.