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Taunts drown out policy at first debate

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The first debate between President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden deteriorated into bitter taunts and near chaos Tuesday night as Trump repeatedly interrupted his opponent with angry — and personal — jabs that sometimes overshadowed the sharply different visions each man has for a nation facing historic crises.

In the most tumultuous presidential debate in recent memory, Trump refused to condemn white supremacists who have supported him, telling one such group known as Proud Boys to “stand back, stand by.” There were also heated clashes over the president’s handling of the pandemic, the integrity of the election results, deeply personal attacks about Biden’s family and how the Supreme Court will shape the future of the nation’s health care. But it was the belligerent tone that was persistent, somehow fitting for what has been an extraordinarily ugly campaign. The two men frequently talked over each other with Trump interrupting, nearly shouting, so often that Biden eventually snapped at him, “Will you shut up, man?”

“The fact is that everything he’s saying so far is simply a lie,” Biden said. “I’m not here to call out his lies. Everybody knows he’s a liar.”

The presidential race has been remarkably stable for weeks, despite the historic crises that have battered the country this year, including a pandemic that has killed more than 200,000 Americans and a reckoning over race and police brutality. With

just five weeks until Election Day and voting already underway in some key states, Biden has maintained a lead in national polls and in many battlegrounds.

It’s unclear whether the debate will do much to change those dynamics.

Over and over, Trump tried to control the conversation, interrupting Biden and repeatedly talking over the moderator, Chris Wallace of Fox News. The president tried to deflect tough lines of questioning — whether on his taxes or the pandemic — to deliver broadsides against Biden.

The president drew a lecture from Wallace, who pleaded with both men to stop talking over each other. Biden tried to push back against Trump, sometimes looking right at the camera to directly address viewers rather than the president and snapping, “It’s hard to get a word in with this clown.”

Again refusing to commit to honoring the results of the election, Trump spread falsehoods about mail voting. Without evidence, he suggested that the process — surging in popularity during the pandemic — was ripe for fraud and incorrectly claimed impropriety at a Pennsylvania voting site.

But despite his efforts to dominate the discussion, Trump was frequently put on the defensive and tried to sidestep when he was asked if he was willing to condemn white supremacists and paramilitary groups.

“What do you want to call them? Give me a name. Give me a name,” Trump said, before Biden mentioned the far right, violent group known as the Proud Boys. Trump then pointedly did not condemn the group,

instead saying: “Proud Boys, stand back, stand by. But I’ll tell you what, somebody’s got to do something about antifa and the left because this is not a right-wing problem. This is a left-wing problem.”

Biden attacked Trump’s handling of the pandemic, saying that the president “waited and waited” to act when the virus reached America’s shores and “still doesn’t have a plan.” Biden told Trump to “get out of your bunker and get out of the sand trap” and go in his golf cart to the Oval Office to come up with a bipartisan plan to save people.

Trump snarled a response, declaring: “I’ll tell you Joe, you could never have done the job that we did. You don’t have it in your blood.”

“I know how to do the job,” was the solemn response from Biden, who served eight years as Barack Obama’s vice president.

The pandemic’s effects were in plain sight, with the candidates’ lecterns spaced far apart, all the guests in the small crowd tested and the traditional opening handshake scrapped. While neither candidate wore a mask to take the stage, their families did sport face coverings.

Trump struggled to define his ideas for replacing the Affordable Care Act on health care in the debate’s early moments and defended his nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, declaring, “I was not elected for three years, I’m elected for four years. We won the election. Elections have consequences. We have the Senate. We have the White House and we have a phenomenal nominee, respected by all.”

F-35B crashes after colliding with refueler over Calif.

Stars and Stripes

An F-35B Lightning II stealth fighter crashed Tuesday afternoon after colliding with an aerial refueler in California, according to Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz.

The F-35B made contact with a KC-130J Super Hercules during an air-to-air refueling operation, resulting in the fighter jet crashing at about 4 p.m., the air station announced in a news release.

The pilot of the F-35B safely ejected from

the aircraft, which went down in Imperial County, according to the release.

The Desert Sun newspaper said it crashed in Salton City near a state park, igniting fires upon impact. They were put out by local firefighters, the report said.

The aerial refueler landed safely in the vicinity of an airport in Thermal, Calif., and all crew members have been reported safe, according to the air station.

The Desert Sun report said it landed in a carrot field with eight people onboard and was leaking fuel.

The accident’s cause is under investigation.

The incident comes nearly two years after a similar but fatal incident involving Marine aviators off the coast of Japan.

Five crew members of a KC-130J tanker and the pilot of an F/A-18 Hornet died during the nighttime training mission on Dec. 6, 2018. The Hornet collided with the Super Hercules during a refueling operation.

The Hornet’s weapons officer was the sole survivor. Both aircraft were based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

Destroyer USS Stout sets Navy at-sea record

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

The guided-missile destroyer USS Stout broke a U.S. Navy record Saturday for remaining at sea for almost seven months, the Navy said.

The ship, commissioned in 1994, has been deployed in the 5th Fleet's area of operations, which includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean.

When Stout reached 208 consecutive days at sea on Saturday, it surpassed the Navy's known record previously held by the

Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group and USS San Jacinto, which had remained at sea this year as a result of the coronavirus and operational requirements, the Navy said in a news release Tuesday.

The strike group returned to its homeport in Norfolk, Va., in August, but the Stout remained in theater, the Navy said.

Stout is part of Destroyer Squadron 26 under the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, the Navy said.

"USS Stout has been instrumental in maintaining freedom of navigation in the region,"

Commodore Rob Bellfield, commander of Coalition Task Force Sentinel, said in the news release. "Its regular presence has helped to deter potential threats and provide reassurance to the global merchant community."

The Sentinel task force is the operational arm of the International Maritime Security Construct, a consortium that includes the United Kingdom, Australia, Albania, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Lithuania, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

Stout spent 139 days at sea in

support of the task force, providing overwatch for more than 550 vessels transiting maritime chokepoints, the Navy said.

The ship patrolled the Bab el Mandeb and Strait of Hormuz in support of the Eisenhower and Nimitz carrier strike groups, the Navy said.

"Stout also conducted the first-ever Mid-Deployment Voyage Repair period at sea and executed significant repairs, preservation and preventative maintenance," the Navy said.

Pearl Harbor shooter showed signs of being a threat

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Navy investigators said they were unable to determine why a seaman shot three civilians at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, Hawaii, in December before turning the gun on himself despite the sailor displaying a number of risk factors leading up to the incident, according to a report released Tuesday.

"The evidence does not establish with certainty why [Seaman Gabriel A.] Romero chose to shoot three civilians and kill himself, but it does show that he had several stressors in his life in the months leading up to the shooting that, when taken together, likely led him to choose violence. No effective formula exists to predict violent behavior with any level of accuracy," the report states.

The Navy's 190-page redacted report of the investigation examined the shooting on Dec. 4, 2019, the mental health of the 22-year-old Romero, the mental health services that were offered at the base and the command climate of his ship. The investigation was completed in March and approved in July by Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of

naval operations.

Romero, a machinist's mate auxiliary fireman, was assigned to the USS Columbia, a fast attack submarine that was in dry dock at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard for maintenance. On the day of the shooting, he was on a security patrol during which he carried an M-4 rifle and an M-9 pistol. The report states that once he was given his weapons, he told the other sailor standing watch, "I'll be back," before walking along the dry dock that surrounded the submarine.

Three civilians had left their workstations and were walking on the dry dock when Romero passed them, then turned around and approached them from behind. He then shot them, according to the report. Two of the civilians would later die of their wounds.

After shooting the civilian workers, Romero then used the pistol to shoot himself and died at the scene. Security forces responded to the scene within one minute and medical services responded within six minutes, according to the report.

"The shooting only lasted a few seconds from beginning to end," the report states.

Romero was considered an

"insider threat," according to the report, and the investigators determined he had "long-developing problems that in aggregate should have raised concerns about his mental condition, and his maturity, stability and dependability."

The report also concludes if the risk factors had been shared between medical professionals and his chain of command, the shooting might have been prevented.

Leading up to the shooting, Romero had received 10 counseling papers — the second-most in the command — for poor work performance and being late to his duties, including a formal counseling for his tardiness the day before the shooting. At the counseling session, Romero became emotional and began to cry, the report states.

The report also states that nine days before the shooting, Romero found out he had not passed an exam to be promoted to the rank of E-4 or petty officer third class.

Romero had also shown signs of stress and isolation from his shipmates in the months before the shooting. He had been referred to the base's embedded mental health program and was

diagnosed with "phase of life problems" and "unspecified problem related to unspecified psychosocial circumstances."

Romero attended several individual therapy sessions in the three months before the shooting, but only with a behavioral health technician and not the clinic's psychologist. He never expressed threats of violence or suicidal thoughts during his visits, according to the report.

"No one could not have reasonably predicted Romero's violent behavior on Dec. 4, 2019, but he did demonstrate potential risk indicators that should have been reported to supervisors," the report states.

Investigators concluded the mental health clinic had underdiagnosed his mental health condition, did not properly manage his mental health during his visits to the clinic and did not work with his command to let them know about his ability to do his job.

"Romero showed signs of an undiagnosed mental disorder that likely would have disqualified him from submarine duty," the report states. "Romero's care and the ... data indicate a potential pattern of underdiagnosis to maintain patients on submarine duty."

Hot, dry conditions stoke persistent Calif. wildfires

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Flames devoured swaths of brush and trees in Northern California on Wednesday amid unseasonably hot and dry weather.

High winds that spread new fires this week in the Napa and Sonoma wine country and in a far northern area of the state were reduced to breezes, but vegetation remained ripe for burning in high temperatures amid very low humidity.

The National Weather Service said the weather conditions would last for several days due to high pressure centered over the state. Heat advisories were in effect or pending along about three-quarters of the California coast and many areas had poor air quality due to smoke.

Numerous studies in recent years have linked bigger wildfires in America to global warming from the burning of coal, oil and gas, especially because climate change has made California much drier. A drier California means plants are more flammable.

About 70,000 people were under evacuation orders in the wine region north of San Francisco where the Glass Fire has incinerated dozens of homes along with winery installations and other buildings.

The Napa County Sheriff's Office posted photos and video of a hellish scene of fires raging on forested hillsides at midnight close to a highway in the

western part of the county.

About 150 miles to the north, there was no containment reported for the Zogg Fire, which also erupted during Sunday's high winds and grew quickly, killing three people. The Glass and Zogg fires are among nearly 30 wildfires in California. Fire-related deaths total 29.

Three fires, driven by gusty winds and high temperatures, merged into one Sunday, tearing into vineyards and mountain areas, including part of the city of Santa Rosa. About 70,000 people were under evacuation orders, including the entire 5,000-plus population of Calistoga in Napa County.

Mike Christianson and his wife, Mluz Torres, who were at an evacuation center Tuesday, had watched the fire engulf their Napa County home.

"It was within five minutes, the entire side of the hill was on fire. All trees, all burning, all roaring like a jet," he said. "And at that moment, we realized that it was time to go. So we grabbed a few things, jumped in the car."

Sonoma County Sheriff Mark Essick acknowledged "some significant fire fatigue" in the community during a news conference Tuesday.

"Many people are feeling the effects, many people are evacuating, and evacuated multiple times, and I just want everyone to know that we continue to support you," Essick said.

Senate moves bill funding government through December

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A bill to fund the federal government cleared a key Senate procedural hurdle Tuesday as lawmakers sought to accomplish the bare minimum before they depart Washington to campaign — preventing a shutdown for when the new fiscal year begins.

The measure to keep the government running through Dec. 11 advanced by a tally of 82-6. A final vote on Wednesday would send the stopgap spending bill to President Donald Trump in time for his signature before the new budget year starts Thursday.

The funding measure advanced while House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin made a last-ditch effort to strike an agreement on a separate COVID-19 rescue bill that has eluded them for weeks. The two spoke Tuesday for almost an hour, Pelosi's office said, and plan to meet Wednesday.

"We're going to give it one more serious try to get this done, and I think we're hope-

ful that we can get something done," Mnuchin said Wednesday morning on CNBC.

Wednesday afternoon's meeting at the Capitol was supposed to feature a new Trump administration offer. Mnuchin told CNBC that he expected the proposal to resemble a plan released a couple of weeks ago by the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus that totaled about \$1.5 trillion — but was previously rejected by Pelosi and other top Democrats as inadequate.

The two sides remain far apart on COVID relief, and neither side has publicly offered the kind of concessions that would generate tangible momentum. Pelosi and Mnuchin have worked effectively together in the past and were key forces on an earlier \$2 trillion aid package that passed in March, but the bipartisan spirit that drove that measure into law has all but evaporated.

Republicans say they cannot stomach any agreement close to the \$2.2 trillion bill Democrats are pushing, and Pelosi has not been willing to offer greater concessions without Republicans giving more ground.

GOP senators visit with, praise Trump's high court pick

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republican senators praised President Donald Trump's Supreme Court nominee Tuesday as Judge Amy Coney Barrett held one-on-one meetings at the Capitol, but Democrats said her conservative views are out of step with Americans as they object to a fast-track confirmation before the Nov. 3 election.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he was "even more convinced" of Bar-

rett after their brief meeting. Noting she is a working mother of seven children, he scoffed at Democratic objections that the judge would put Americans' access to health care at risk or turn back the clock on women's rights. "What a joke," he said.

But the Republican leader declined to answer questions about whether Barrett should recuse herself if legal challenges in the election between Trump and Democrat Joe Biden land at the high court.

One key Republican, Sen. Ted Cruz, of Texas, said that's "the entire reason" why the Senate should rush to fill the vacant seat — "so that the Supreme Court can resolve any cases that arise in the wake of the election."

Democrats are confronting the limits of their power as they fight against the nomination and some have said they won't meet with Barrett, who is expected to be confirmed for the seat held by the late Justice

Ruth Bader Ginsburg by the end of October. With Republicans holding a 53-47 Senate majority, and just two GOP senators opposing a quick vote, Barrett appears to have enough support for confirmation. The White House formally submitted the nomination Tuesday.

"She's got a good chance of getting my vote," said Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, the former Judiciary Committee chairman who now helms the Finance Committee.

Nevada to loosen its cap on gatherings

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Nevada is lifting a 50-person cap on public and private gatherings, in a step toward kick-starting conventions, concerts, sports events and trade shows that power the state's economy, Gov. Steve Sisolak announced Tuesday.

"This is not the end. This is the first step toward getting us where we need to get back to. We need to get some people back to work," the Democratic governor told reporters. "I'm confident, under these circumstances we can get them back to work safely."

Sisolak said written guidelines, dubbed "Nevada Guidance for Safe Gatherings — Celebrations, Ceremonies, and Events," have been posted on a state coronavirus response website.

The removal of the 50-person cap with conditions including submittal of safety plans, was to take effect at 12:01 a.m. Thursday.

It represents the most significant loosening of state restrictions designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 since June 4, when Sisolak let casinos partially reopen after statewide closures imposed in mid-March prompted waves of hospitality industry layoffs.

To return to larger events, businesses will have to submit plans to local authorities to ensure social distancing and other pandemic directives. Venues that can accommodate more than 2,500 guests will be allowed to operate at 10% capacity. Smaller venues will be able to host up to 50% capacity or 250 patrons — whichever is less.

Only the state can approve large gatherings in stadiums, arenas and convention halls, Sisolak said.

Arizona

TUCSON — The University of Arizona said a two-week shelter-in-place recommendation intended to limit the spread of COVID-19 expired Tuesday.

University officials Monday cited recent COVID-19 testing

data that has shown numbers headed in the right direction.

Officials said the university's daily positivity rate — a measure of the virus' community spread — fell to 3.4% on Friday, below the targeted 5%.

"This is not a time to become complacent, however," said university President Robert Robbins. "I continue to see groups of students around the university boulevard and elsewhere without face coverings, and I beg you to please listen and follow the guidelines."

Robbins warned students that the recommendation could be reinstated if cases start to rise again, and Pima County health officials could take more restrictive measures.

Dr. Richard Carmona, who is leading the re-entry task force, said the university would like to increase its testing but students are not getting tested because they do not want to quarantine.

"So it may be that we have to start considering mandatory testing for students who come on campus and make it a condition of being a student if this continues," Carmona said.

The university has implemented mandatory random testing for students living on campus and is considering similar options for students living off-campus.

California

SACRAMENTO — California has relaxed coronavirus restrictions in 40 of its 58 counties, including all but one in the San Francisco Bay Area where the illness first took hold in the state, even as signs emerge of a possible surge of new cases.

On Tuesday, state officials upgraded seven counties from its most restrictive rules, clearing the way for a return to indoor restaurant dining, worship services, gym workouts and movies in theaters — all with modifications to require face coverings and limit capacity to ensure physical distancing.

The state is moving more slowly than the reopening last spring that brought with it a dramatic spike in cases, hospitalizations and deaths. California leads the nation with

815,000 confirmed cases and its 5,730 deaths are the fourth-highest state total, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

In the last two months hospitalizations have fallen to their lowest level since early April and the statewide rate of new cases among those tested is a record-low 2.8% over the last two weeks.

Kentucky

FRANKFORT — Kentucky's spike in coronavirus cases accelerated Tuesday when 1,018 more cases were reported — the state's second-highest daily total since the pandemic began.

The near-record number should be a "wake-up call," Gov. Andy Beshear said as he kept urging people to wear masks in public and follow other health guidelines to contain the virus.

Having warned that Kentucky is at the start of a new escalation of cases, Beshear said: "We're certainly seeing that in today's numbers. That means we've got to work harder."

The spike in Kentucky cases comes as many children have returned to school across the state.

Beshear has warned Kentuckians not to become complacent in responding to the health crisis, which could lead to more cases and ultimately more deaths. To reinforce his point, he said the state is on pace to exceed last week's total number of virus cases, which was a weekly record.

Kentucky reported eight more virus-related deaths Tuesday, raising its death count to at least 1,170. The near-record daily case count increased the statewide total to more than 67,850 cases.

Michigan

LANSING — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer extended Michigan's state of emergency Tuesday, continuing a declaration that is the basis for various orders designed to fight the coronavirus.

While the emergency had been scheduled to expire

Thursday, the governor had been expected to continue it. The declaration will now run through Oct. 27.

In her order, the Democratic governor said the health, economic and social harms of the COVID-19 pandemic remain "widespread and severe." State emergency operations are necessary to bring the virus outbreak under control, she said.

Tennessee

NASHVILLE — Businesses in 89 of Tennessee's 95 counties will no longer have to adhere to social distancing guidelines, Gov. Bill Lee announced Tuesday, even though cases of COVID-19 in the state have been persistently high.

The Republican governor said he would lift all virus-related limits on businesses and social gatherings for most of the state. The action, which takes effect Thursday, notably does not apply to Tennessee's six populous counties with locally run health departments: Sullivan, Knox, Hamilton, Davidson, Madison and Shelby counties. They can continue implementing their own restrictions.

Shelby County, which includes Memphis, last week removed occupancy restrictions for all businesses, after limiting them to operating at 50% of capacity for months. Social distancing guidelines, such as keeping customers 6 feet away from each other, still apply, officials said.

In Nashville, officials say the city will soon allow certain events to have up to 500 people conditional on the health department's approval starting Oct. 3. Bars and restaurants may operate at 50% capacity but must close by 11 p.m. Retail stores can operate up to 75% capacity.

According to data kept by The Associated Press, there were about 287 new cases per 100,000 people in Tennessee over the past two weeks, which ranks 13th in the country for new cases per capita. The state has seen at least 2,389 virus-related deaths.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Argument over shoes led to shooting

LA MONROE — A man was accused of fatally shooting another person in Louisiana following an argument with the victim over Nike sneakers.

An arrest warrant for Dexstavius Deon James said the shooting happened in Monroe after James, 38, and his brother got into the dispute with the victim, Marshall L. Carter, the Monroe News-Star reported.

It is not clear what led to the argument, but the newspaper reports the brothers first fought with Carter while James' brother held a gun in his hand.

The warrant from Monroe police said James then took the gun from his brother and fatally shot Carter in the head.

Sheriff: 1 wounded in haunted house shooting

NC CHINA GROVE — One person was wounded in a shooting at a Halloween haunted house attraction in North Carolina over the weekend, authorities said.

Investigators arrested five juveniles and seized three guns after responding to a report of shots fired at the Reaper's Realm haunted house in China Grove, the Rowan County Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

The Charlotte Observer reported that fights broke out among a crowd of about 1,000 people at the attraction, a scene that the sheriff's office described as "chaotic."

One person was treated at a hospital for a gunshot wound on one of his feet, the sheriff's office said. The person has been released from the hospital.

"This victim said that he was initially unaware that he had suffered a gunshot wound until

he had left the Reaper's Realm location, and that he must have suffered the wound as he was running away from the location where there were shots fired," the news release said.

Over 100 arrested at unauthorized car rally

MD OCEAN CITY — More than 100 people were arrested on criminal and traffic offenses during an unauthorized car rally in a Maryland city, where confrontations between participants and police were captured on videos.

The Baltimore Sun reported that police from neighboring jurisdictions helped Ocean City police officers with crowd control at the H20i rally in the beach town.

Ocean City Police Chief Ross Buzzuro said in a statement that the rally participants came to the city "to disrupt, destroy and disrespect our community and our law enforcement officers."

"This is not a car show and the majority of these visitors are not car enthusiasts," he said.

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan has vowed to end the annual event.

Eight empty rail cars derail, 3 land in creek

OH CINCINNATI — CSX Transportation says it's trying to find out what caused eight empty rail cars to derail in Ohio, sending three of them into a creek.

CSX spokeswoman Cindy Schild said in an email that three of the cars ended up in Mill Creek and another three landed on the banks of the creek.

She said "there were no releases to the environment as the cars were empty."

The cause of the derailment remains under investigation.

Virus shrinks annual run honoring firefighter

NY NEW YORK — The coronavirus pandemic forced the cancellation of an annual run honoring a fallen firefighter, but the firefighter's brother joined a handful of people in walking through the Battery Tunnel last weekend to honor the memory of those who died on Sept. 11, 2001.

The Tunnel to Towers 5K Run and Walk retraces the footsteps of Frank Siller's firefighter brother Stephen, who was killed at the World Trade Center on 9/11 after running through the tunnel between Brooklyn and Manhattan in full gear.

The run is hosted by the foundation Frank Siller created to raise money for wounded veterans and families of fallen first responders.

Planetarium plans first expansion in 125 years

VT ST. JOHNSBURY — The Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium in St. Johnsbury is planning its first expansion in 125 years.

The plans call for a three-story, 6,000-square-foot addition of glass and wood framing. The addition would house space for modern, hands-on exhibits focused on meteorology and astronomy, and an elevator to provide access to the museum's balcony.

Museum Executive Director Adam Kane said current cost estimates range from \$2.25 million to \$2.5 million. The museum has received \$600,000 in funding for part of the project. It's awaiting word on a \$2 million grant application.

Cops: Car rolls into lake as owner takes photos

UT SALT LAKE CITY — A car accidentally rolled into a Utah reservoir while the owner of the vehicle got out of his car to take photos, authorities said.

Wasatch County Search and Rescue was asked to help recover the car from Deer Creek Reservoir, KUTV-TV reported. The car was safely removed, and no injuries were reported.

Officials said the owner of the car was on a boat ramp at the state park taking pictures of the car in order to rent or sell it.

No one was inside the vehicle when it submerged.

Tractor runs over, kills woman on beach

CA OCEANSIDE — A woman lying on a Southern California beach was crushed to death by a tractor that was helping in a harbor dredging project, police said.

The woman may have been asleep when the Caterpillar tractor ran over her near a jetty at Oceanside Harbor, north of San Diego, police said.

The woman, who may have been homeless, was fully clothed rather than being in a swimsuit and didn't have any identification, police spokesman Tom Bussey said.

The tractor driver felt a bump and at first thought he had hit a dip but then turned around and saw the woman in the sand, Bussey said.

The accident remains under investigation.

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Offensive numbers off charts in NFL

Associated Press

The NFL has never had a start to a season like this one when it comes to offensive production.

Through three weeks, teams have combined for 51 points per game, 738.2 yards per game and a 96.3 passer rating, the most ever at this juncture of an NFL season.

Only the 1961 AFL, when teams combined to average 53.1 points per game, was more conducive to scoring.

The offensive explosion has come after a virtual offseason and no exhibition games because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which appears to have had a bigger impact on defenses than offenses.

One other factor leading to the high scoring is a lack of penalties on offense. Teams have been penalized 283 times on offense so far this season, down from 443 at the same point last year.

There have also been some impressive performances with Seattle's Russell Wilson becoming the fifth player with back-to-back games with at least five TD passes while set-

ting a record with 14 through three games.

Dallas' Dak Prescott became the second quarterback with back-to-back games with at least 450 yards passing, and the Green Bay Packers have scored at least 35 points with no turnovers in each game. Only the Patriots have done that for a three-game stretch previously, accomplishing it in 2010 and '12.

The Packers and Seahawks have started with three straight wins despite struggling to stop anyone. Seattle has allowed 86 points through three games and Green Bay has given up 85. Only the 2000 Rams (94 points) and 2018 Chiefs (92 points) gave up more while winning the first three games.

NFC East: The teams in the NFC East have produced more Super Bowl titles than any other division with 13 and it is the only division in which all four teams have won the Super Bowl. That success has been lacking early this season. Washington, Dallas, Philadelphia and the Giants have combined for a 1-8-1 record outside of the division with the Cowboys' Week 2 comeback at

Atlanta and the Eagles' Week 3 tie against Cincinnati the only non-losses.

The only divisions to have a worse record in nondivision games after three weeks since the start of the eight-division format in 2002 are the 2005 NFC North (1-6), 2002 AFC North (1-7) and 2013 NFC East (1-7).

Comeback kids: Three teams overcame double-digit deficits to win last week, with Chicago rallying from 16 points down to beat Atlanta, Pittsburgh coming back from 11 points down to beat Houston and Tennessee overcoming a 12-point deficit against Minnesota.

There have now been 10 teams this season to win games they trailed in by at least 10 points, tied for the second-most double-digit comebacks through three weeks. There were 11 in 2011.

The Falcons have been a big reason why. They became the first team in NFL history to blow back-to-back games in which they led by at least 15 points in the fourth quarter with losses to Dallas and Chicago the past two weeks.

Just for kicks: After starting the season by missing three field goals and one extra point in the opener, Tennessee's Stephen Gostkowski has turned into the NFL's most clutch kicker. He is the first kicker since the merger to kick a game-winning field goal in the final two minutes of regulation in each of his team's first three games of a season. He also hit three field goals of at least 50 yards for the first time in his career in Sunday's win over Minnesota, the first in the NFL to do that since Justin Tucker of Baltimore on Nov. 27, 2016. Gostkowski's field goals Sunday totaled 260 yards, the seventh most in NFL history, according to Football Perspective.

Twos are wild: Tampa Bay's Mike Evans had an efficient game against Denver last week. His only two receptions came on 1-yard TDs from Tom Brady. Evans became the third player to post the line of two catches for 2 yards and two touchdowns. Howard Cross did it for the Giants against Arizona in 1994, and Lee Folkins for Dallas against Washington in 1963.

Steelers-Titans game postponed due to outbreak

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Pittsburgh-Tennessee game originally scheduled for Sunday will be played either Monday or Tuesday due to positive coronavirus tests among the Titans, the NFL announced Wednesday.

The NFL said a new date and time would be announced as soon as possible and that the postponement would allow additional time for further testing.

On Tuesday, the NFL said three Titans players and five team personnel had tested positive for COVID-19. The Titans have closed their facility at least through Friday and will not be able to practice in any fashion together until Saturday

at the earliest.

Titans coach Mike Vrabel said soon after the announcement Wednesday: "Some of them are indeed experiencing flu-like symptoms, nothing I think out of the ordinary. We anticipate they will feel better shortly. Nothing of overly concern. But my concern is always with the health and safety of our players, our staff and their families."

As for a potential Saturday return to working out, Vrabel was skeptical.

"I wouldn't just assume that Saturday," he said. "We are preparing to play the football game now as early as Monday. Again, I think the focus and the understanding of this football team is now going to be shifted

toward playing on Monday. I'm confident the league will allow us time ... to get some good practice in, to get on the field and move forward with the game."

Both the Titans and Steelers are 3-0 and among the NFL's seven undefeated teams.

Tennessee beat Minnesota 31-30 on Sunday in Minneapolis, and the Vikings' team facility is closed at least through Wednesday.

"The Steelers-Titans game, originally scheduled for Sunday at 1 p.m. ET, will be rescheduled to allow additional time for further daily COVID-19 testing and to ensure the health and safety of players, coaches and game day personnel," the NFL said. "Details on the new game

date and time on either Monday or Tuesday will be announced as soon as possible."

In other NFL news:

■ The NFL is threatening teams with possible suspensions for sideline personnel, including coaches, who do not properly wear face coverings during the pandemic.

Forfeiting draft picks also could be among disciplinary measures for failing to comply with league/players' union protocols.

In a memo obtained by The Associated Press, Troy Vincent, who oversees NFL football operations, told the 32 teams Wednesday that "accountability" is required on the sidelines.

Rondo, Howard on other side of Finals

Associated Press

Last time the Los Angeles Lakers ruled the NBA, Rajon Rondo and Dwight Howard were trying to beat them.

Howard fell short with Orlando in the 2009 NBA Finals. Rondo lost with Boston in Game 7 in 2010.

They finally have another chance, this time trying to support rather than stop the Lakers.

Both are key veterans on a team that will try to top Miami in a series that started Wednesday. Howard's opportunity at Walt Disney World comes just down the road from where the Lakers celebrated their championship victory 11 years ago.

"It's been the hardest road to get back here and I'm very grateful," Howard said. "One thing is I've never just given

up on myself. I've always continued to work as hard as I can knowing that one day things will change."

He was the NBA's dominant center while in Orlando, when the Magic ended the Celtics' title reign on their way to the finals. Rondo carried Boston right back to the championship round with some impressive play in 2010, but that turned out to be the Celtics' last chance.

"I won at 21 years old and now being 34, it's a completely different experience, and understanding that this doesn't come often or annually," Rondo said. "Being back here over a decade later is a very humbling experience, and I'm letting my young guys know from all the rookies to the second- or third-year players like (Kyle Kuzma) that this opportunity doesn't come often."

It nearly didn't come at all. Both Howard and Rondo weighed the decision about coming to the restart, with Howard one of the last Lakers to commit. Rondo thought his presence might have been needed more back home in Louisville, Ky., after the shooting of Breonna Taylor, a Black woman, by police.

"For me, it was tough to actually come to the bubble, knowing so much is going on where I'm from and me feeling like I have one of the biggest impacts in my city," Rondo said.

"I take a lot of pride in trying to figure out how I can make change, understanding what I have to do as far as you go from protesting. But without the protesting you have to get to the boardrooms and make change, and understanding who we need to vote for and who we can

support as a community."

Both players have seen their roles grow during this postseason. Rondo wasn't available when the playoffs started as he recovered from right thumb surgery and then later back spasms, but has since provided valuable ballhandling and defense off the bench.

Howard barely played in the second round against Houston's small lineup, but moved into the starting lineup during the Western Conference finals. Whichever spot he has in this series, he's determined for it to end differently than his other NBA Finals.

"With however long I play on the court, just go all out knowing it's going to take just four games to win an NBA title and how close we are to the goal line," he said. "I just want to give it all."

Injury forces Serena to withdraw from French Open

Associated Press

PARIS — Serena Williams laughed at her own jokes and sounded an upbeat tone — or one as positive, at least, as could be expected from a player whose latest bid for a record-tying 24th Grand Slam title ended because of injury, as did her season, probably.

Williams tried to warm up for her second-round match at Roland Garros on Wednesday but huddled afterward with her coach and determined that if walking on the Achilles tendon she hurt at the U.S. Open nearly three weeks ago was difficult, then trying to run and compete made little sense.

"If it was my knee, that would be more really devastating for me. But this is something that just happened, and it's super acute. That's totally different. I feel like my body is actually doing really, really well," said Williams, who turned 39 on Saturday. "I just ran into, for lack of a better word, bad timing and bad luck, really, in New York."

Williams withdrew about an hour before she would have played Tsvetana Pironkova at Court Philippe Chatrier, her earliest exit from a major tournament in six years and the most significant development in Paris on Day 4, which also included a straight-set loss by U.S. Open runner-up Victoria Azarenka and straightforward wins for Rafael Nadal and Dominic Thiem over a couple of American men.

"That's disappointing on many levels, of course," said John Isner, the 21st-seeded man who was beaten in four sets by 20-year-old American qualifier Sebastian Korda. "It's disappointing personally for Serena, but it's disappointing for the tournament and for tennis fans worldwide."

Williams' departure, and the 10th-seeded Azarenka's 6-2, 6-2 dismissal by 161st-ranked Anna Karolina Schmiedlova — someone who lost 13 consecutive Grand Slam matches until defeating Williams' older sister, Venus, earlier this week

— meant zero of the four female semifinalists at Flushing Meadows made it past the second round at Roland Garros.

Champion Naomi Osaka didn't make the trip to France at all; No. 21 seed Jennifer Brady was upset in her opening match by a 17-year-old qualifier.

The French Open's start was postponed to September from May because of the coronavirus pandemic, and there were plenty of questions beforehand about what effects there would be from the quick and unusual shift from North America to Europe, from hard courts to red clay.

Azarenka wouldn't entertain the premise.

"I'm just going to speak only for myself, and I will say that today was not the case of a turnaround, was not the case of the court, was not the case of anything else," said the former No. 1 and two-time Australian Open champion. "This is a lesson for me to learn. I don't think about what happened in New York, today. So, to me, it doesn't

really matter."

It was in the third set of Williams' semifinal against Azarenka at Flushing Meadows that Williams stretched her left Achilles while chasing a shot. Williams took a long pause, clutched at that leg and then took a medical timeout so a trainer could wrap it.

"Didn't have enough time to properly heal after the Open. I was able to get it somewhat better, but just looking long-term in this tournament, will I be able to get through enough matches? And so, for me, I don't think I could," Williams said Wednesday. "I'm struggling to walk, so that's kind of a telltale sign that I should try to recover."

She played with a vertical strip of black athletic tape along her Achilles during her first-round match Monday, but there were no obvious sign of trouble during the 7-6 (2), 6-0 victory over Kristie Ahn.

"I felt like I needed to, like, walk with a limp," Williams said, "and that was no good."

Yankees hammer Indians in opener

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — On a night for debates, Aaron Judge, Gerrit Cole and the New York Yankees made quite an opening statement.

Shane Bieber had no rebuttal.

Judge smashed a tone-setting, two-run homer on Bieber's fourth pitch, Cole struck out 13 in his New York playoff debut and the Yankees opened their AL wild-card series with a resounding 12-3 win over the Cleveland Indians on Tuesday.

Just a few miles from where President Donald Trump and campaign opponent Joe Biden made their cases to the nation in their presidential debate, the Yankees teed off against Bieber, who was baseball's best pitcher during the condensed regular season but ineffective in his playoff debut.

Judge and the rest of New York's hitters hadn't faced Bieber in 2020, but they were well prepared and took some meaty cuts against the 25-year-old ace, who gave up season highs in runs (seven) and hits (nine) over 4²/₃ innings — his shortest stint since June 9 last season against the Yankees.

"The first inning didn't go as planned," Bieber said. "I wish I would have been with my off-speed stuff in the zone, and challenged those guys a little more. I forced myself into some bad situations and some bad counts on top of not having my best stuff and making mistakes."

"No excuses. It was not good."

The best-of-three series continues Wednesday night with Carlos Carrasco trying to save Cleveland's season against Ma-

sahiro Tanaka.

When Bieber's final pitch clanged loudly off the empty left-field bleachers on a two-run homer by Gleyber Torres in the fifth, the Yankees were up 7-2 and had delivered a boisterous postseason message to the rest of baseball: Don't forget us.

"We scored quite a few runs," said Brett Gardner, who hit a two-run homer in the seventh and drove in three. "I don't think you ever expect that against a pitcher the caliber of Shane Bieber. Hopefully that's a sign of more good things to come."

After giving up Torres' homer, Bieber handed the ball to acting Indians manager Sandy Alomar Jr. and walked slowly toward Cleveland's dugout, seemingly carrying all of the city's hopes for a long run with him. The Indians have lost

seven straight playoff games.

Staked to an early lead on Judge's homer, Cole showed why the Yankees shelled out \$324 million for him in the offseason. The right-hander gave up two runs — including Josh Naylor's homer — and six hits without a walk in seven innings.

Naylor, who came over in the deadline trade from San Diego, went 4-for-4 and became the first player with three extra-base hits in his postseason debut.

Cole's strikeouts were the second-most by a New York pitcher in postseason history. Roger Clemens fanned 15 in Game 4 of the 2000 ALCS. Cole also became the first pitcher to strike out at least 12 in three postseason games.

"We needed to set the tone for the series," Cole said.

MLB playoffs roundup

Astros extend Twins' playoff futility

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Tarnished by scandal at the start of the year and below average during this pandemic-abbreviated season, the Houston Astros showed up for the playoffs with their usual confidence and poise.

Just like that, they've got the edge on the Minnesota Twins in an elimination game.

Jose Altuve drew a walk to force in the go-ahead run in the ninth inning Tuesday after a two-out error by shortstop Jorge Polanco, and the Astros beat the Twins 4-1 to open their AL playoff series and stretch Minnesota's all-time postseason record to 17 straight losses.

"These guys know how to battle. They know what it's like," said manager Dusty Baker, after the Astros became the first team in major league history to win a game after reaching the postseason with a losing record. "They know how to win, and they take pride in what they do."

Game 2 in the best-of-three wild-card matchup is Wednesday at Target Field.

Michael Brantley tacked on a two-run single against Caleb Thielbar in the ninth

after Sergio Romo issued the full-count walk to the 5-foot-6 Altuve, who batted 127 points lower (.219) this year than his 2017 AL MVP season.

White Sox 4, Athletics 1: Lucas Giolito released a brief yell of delight and marched quickly back to the dugout, his work day going just brilliantly for the Chicago White Sox.

Giolito simply dazzled in his postseason debut at Oakland, stymieing the Athletics through six perfect innings and sending the White Sox to a victory in the opener of their best-of-three wild-card series.

"Unreal. Unreal to watch. Unreal to be behind him," shortstop Tim Anderson said. "He put the work in. When you set yourself apart to put the work in and want to be a superstar, you want to be that dominant. The work is showing. Happy for him and hopefully he can keep it up and continue to grow as a player and as a person. He's our guy. I expect nothing but that from him."

It also brought back memories of Giolito's no-hitter against Pittsburgh on Aug. 25.

"It was a different feel though because throwing a perfect game, no-hitter is a

great personal accomplishment, but we're in the playoffs, the goal is to win the game," Giolito said. "For me it was all about I'm going to give the team the best possible chance."

Rays 3, Blue Jays 1: Ace Blake Snell took a no-hitter into the sixth inning, shortstop Willy Adames made splashy defensive plays and Manuel Margot delivered a two-run homer as the AL East champions opened the wild-card playoffs with a victory over the visiting Toronto.

"Tonight was a pretty good representation of the Tampa Bay Rays — our players, how we go about winning games," manager Kevin Cash said. "We found success being really good in tight games. Pitching, the defense, and timely hits are the reasons for it."

The Rays will try to advance in the best-of-three wild-card matchup in Game 2 at Tropicana Field, where the seats will be empty except for family and friends.

"I think the biggest thing is not to press, not to really panic. That's probably the worst thing we can do as a team," Blue Jays third baseman Cavan Biggio said.