

Measles cases halt Afghan evacuations

Associated Press

The U.S. on Friday halted U.S.-bound flights of Afghan evacuees, pulling some off planes, after discovering a few cases of measles among new arrivals in the United States.

A U.S. government document viewed by The Associated Press warned the development would have a severe impact on an evacuation that since Aug. 15 has moved many thousands of people out of Taliban-held Afghanistan, but also been grindingly drawn out for Afghan evacuees and Americans alike, and was plagued by attacks and other deadly violence.

The decision was made by U.S. Customs and Border Protection on the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the halt stemmed from discovery of measles among four Afghans who had arrived in the United States. It was not immediately clear from Psaki's remarks whether the stop applied to flights from all transit sites overseas, or only two of the biggest ones, in Qatar and in Germany.

Customs and Border Protection spokespe-

ople did not immediately respond to questions, including how long the halt would last.

The development had American officials overseas Friday removing from planes Afghan families who already had struggled through a grueling, dangerous escape to safety after Kabul fell to the Taliban on Aug. 15. Afghans faced Taliban checkpoints and crushing crowds to enter the Kabul airport. A suicide attack at an airport gate killed 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. military members.

The government document viewed by The Associated Press said the halt would "severely impact" operations at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, one of the biggest transit sites. It also said U.S.-bound flights would stop from the U.S. al-Udeid base in Qatar.

Many thousands of Afghan evacuees airlifted out of Kabul are still en route to new homes in the United States. Some face relocation for further screening in Kosovo.

The government document said the flight halt announced Friday would also have an "adverse effect" on the nearly 10,000 evacuees at Ramstein. It noted many have been there more than 10 days and are increasingly

fatigued.

Germany had set a 10-day limit for Afghans to stay at the U.S. base, but the time has appeared more as a guideline than a hard deadline. Some German politicians and media grumbled when some Afghans asked for asylum after reaching Germany.

Germany and Qatar, along with Italy, Spain, Kosovo, Kuwait and other countries, agreed to temporarily host U.S. processing sites for evacuees after Kabul fell, after allies initially balked over worries of getting stuck with U.S. security problems. Refugee groups have criticized the Biden administration for not bringing the Afghan evacuees to U.S. territory for screening.

Processing at many of the transit sites largely appears to be taking place in a peaceful and orderly fashion.

It was not clear Friday if the halt would affect evacuation flights from Kabul itself. Friday was only the second day that the Taliban have allowed evacuation flights to leave the country, after the frantic U.S. military-led airlifts ended with the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan on Aug. 30.

US marks 20 years since 9/11 with solemn remembrance

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Americans solemnly marked the 20th anniversary of 9/11 on Saturday, remembering the dead, invoking the heroes and taking stock of the aftermath just weeks after the bloody end of the Afghanistan war that was launched in response to the terror attacks.

The ceremony at ground zero in New York began exactly two decades after the deadliest act of terrorism on U.S. soil started with the first of four hijacked planes crashing into one of the World Trade Center's twin towers.

"It felt like an evil specter had descended on our world, but it was also a time when many people acted above and beyond the ordinary," said Mike Low, whose daughter, Sara Low, was a flight attendant on that plane.

"As we carry these 20 years forward, I find sustenance in a continuing appreciation for all of those who rose to be more than

ordinary people," the father told a crowd that included President Joe Biden and former presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton.

The anniversary unfolded under the pall of a pandemic and in the shadow of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, which is now ruled by the same Taliban militant group that gave safe haven to the 9/11 plotters.

"It's hard because you hoped that this would just be a different time and a different world. But sometimes history starts to repeat itself and not in the best of ways," Thea Trinidad, who lost her father in the attacks, said before reading victims' names at the ceremony.

Bruce Springsteen and Broadway actors Kelli O'Hara and Chris Jackson sang at the commemoration, but by tradition, no politicians spoke there. In a video released Friday night, Biden addressed the continuing pain of loss but also spotlighted what he called the "central lesson" of Sept. 11: "that at our most

vulnerable ... unity is our greatest strength."

Biden was also scheduled to pay respects at the two other sites where the 9/11 conspirators crashed the jets: the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pa. Together, the attacks killed nearly 3,000 people.

At the Pennsylvania site — where passengers and crew fought to regain control of a plane believed to have been targeted at the U.S. Capitol or the White House — former President George W. Bush said Sept. 11 showed that Americans can come together despite their differences.

"So much of our politics has become a naked appeal to anger, fear and resentment," said the president who was in office on 9/11. "On America's day of trial and grief, I saw millions of people instinctively grab their neighbor's hand and rally to the cause of one another. That is the America I know."

"It is the truest version of ourselves. It is what we have been and what we can be again."

US pulls missile defenses in Saudi Arabia despite attacks

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The U.S. has removed its most advanced missile defense system and Patriot batteries from Saudi Arabia in recent weeks, even as the kingdom faced continued air attacks from Yemen's Houthi rebels, satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press show.

The redeployment of the defenses from Prince Sultan Air Base outside of Riyadh came as America's Gulf Arab allies nervously watched the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, including their last-minute evacuations from Kabul's besieged international airport.

While tens of thousands of American forces remain across the Arabian Peninsula as a counterweight to Iran, Gulf Arab nations worry about the U.S.'s future plans as its military perceives a growing threat in Asia that requires those missile defenses. Tensions remain high as negotiations appear stalled in Vienna over Iran's collapsed nuclear deal with world powers, raising the danger of future confrontations in the region.

"Perceptions matter whether or not they're rooted in a

cold, cold reality. And the perception is very clear that the U.S. is not as committed to the Gulf as it used to be in the views of many people in decision-making authority in the region," said Kristian Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.

"From the Saudi point of view, they now see Obama, Trump and Biden — three successive presidents — taking decisions that signify to some extent an abandonment."

Prince Sultan Air Base, some 70 miles southeast of Riyadh, has hosted several thousand U.S. troops since a 2019 missile-and-drone attack on the heart of the kingdom's oil production. That attack, though claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels, appears instead to have been carried out by Iran, according to experts and physical debris left behind. Tehran has denied launching the attack, though a drill in January saw Iranian paramilitary forces use similar drones.

A redeployment of the missiles had been rumored for months, in part due to a desire to face what American officials see as the looming "great powers conflict" with China and

Russia. However, the withdrawal came just as a Houthi drone attack on Saudi Arabia wounded eight people and damaged a commercial jetliner at the kingdom's airport in Abha. The kingdom has been locked in a stalemate war with the Houthis since March 2015.

Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby acknowledged "the redeployment of certain air defense assets" after receiving questions from the AP. He said the U.S. maintained a "broad and deep" commitment to its Mideast allies.

"The Defense Department continues to maintain tens of thousands of forces and a robust force posture in the Middle East representing some of our most advanced air power and maritime capabilities, in support of U.S. national interests and our regional partnerships," Kirby said.

In a statement to the AP, the Saudi Defense Ministry described the kingdom's relationship with the U.S. as "strong, longstanding and historic" even while acknowledging the withdrawal of the American missile defense systems. It said the Saudi military "is capable of defending its lands, seas and airspace, and protecting its people."

Thousands pay respects to Marine in Kabul blast

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Thousands of people lined the procession route along Omaha streets on Friday afternoon to pay tribute to a local man and Marine who died in a suicide bombing in Afghanistan.

The body of 23-year-old Cpl. Daegan Page was driven from Eppley Airfield to Braman Mortuary in southwest Omaha.

Page was one of 13 U.S. service members killed Aug. 26 in the bombing at the Kabul airport, which also killed at least 169 Afghans. He was born in Omaha and lived his first five years in Red Oak, Iowa, before moving back to Omaha with his family.

An obituary for Page notes he was an avid hockey fan and played throughout his childhood and was a member of the 2016 state champion Westside Warriors hockey team. Page graduated from Millard South High School in 2016.

He enlisted in 2017 with the Marines on a delayed entry program and deployed multiple times during his service, including to Japan, South Korea, Australia and Jordan before his final deployment to Afghanistan.

Page is survived by his parents and four siblings.

Recruit who died during Parris Island training identified

Associated Press

PARRIS ISLAND, S.C. — A recruit who died this week at a Marine Corps training center in South Carolina has been identified.

Pvt. Anthony Munoz, 21, of Lawrence, Mass., was on his first day of training with

the 3rd Recruit Training Battalion's Lima Company when the accident occurred Tuesday at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, WSAV-TV reported.

The Beaufort County Coroner's Office confirmed Munoz fell off a balcony at the barracks. Parris Island officials said the Na-

val Criminal Investigative Service is investigating.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of Pvt. Anthony Munoz. Our Marines send heartfelt condolences to his family and friends," a statement from the training center said.

New vaccine rules anger GOP leaders

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden's aggressive push to require millions of U.S. workers to get vaccinated against the coronavirus is running into a wall of resistance from Republican leaders threatening everything from lawsuits to civil disobedience, plunging the country deeper into culture wars that have festered since the onset of the pandemic.

In South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster says he will fight "to the gates of hell to protect the liberty and livelihood of every South Carolinian." South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a potential 2024 presidential candidate, says she is preparing a lawsuit. And J.D. Vance, a conservative running for the U.S. Senate in

Ohio, is calling on businesses to ignore mandates he describes as an "attempt to bully and coerce citizens."

"Only mass civil disobedience will save us from Joe Biden's naked authoritarianism," Vance says.

Biden is hardly backing down. In a visit to a school Friday, he accused the governors of being "cavalier" with the health of young Americans, and when asked about foes who would file legal challenges, he retorted, "Have at it."

The opposition follows Biden's announcement Thursday mandating that employers with more than 100 workers require their workers to be vaccinated or test for the virus

weekly.

The move brought Republican outrage from state capitals, Congress and the campaign trail, including from many who have supported vaccinations and have urged their constituents to take the shots.

"The vaccine itself is life-saving, but this unconstitutional move is terrifying," tweeted Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves.

Texas Rep. Dan Crenshaw, who has promoted the vaccines' safety to his constituents, said, "The right path is built upon explaining, educating and building trust, including explaining the risks/benefits/pros/cons in an honest way so a person can make their own decision."

CDC: Unvaccinated 11 times more likely to die

Associated Press

New U.S. studies released Friday show the COVID-19 vaccines remain highly effective against hospitalizations and death even as the extra-contagious delta variant swept the country.

One study tracked over 600,000 COVID-19 cases in 13 states from April through mid-July. As delta surged in early summer, those who were unvaccinated were 4.5 times more likely than the fully vaccinated to get infected, over 10 times more likely to be hospitalized and 11 times more likely to die, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Vaccination works," Dr. Rochelle Wa-

lensky, CDC's director, told a White House briefing Friday. "The bottom line is this: We have the scientific tools we need to turn the corner on this pandemic."

But as earlier data has shown, protection against coronavirus infection is slipping some: It was 91% in the spring but 78% in June and July, the study found.

So-called "breakthrough" cases in the fully vaccinated accounted for 14% of hospitalizations and 16% of deaths in June and July, about twice the percentage as earlier in the year.

An increase in those percentages isn't surprising: No one ever said the vaccines were perfect and health experts have

warned that as more Americans get vaccinated, they naturally will account for a greater fraction of the cases.

Walensky said Friday that well over 90% of people in U.S. hospitals with COVID-19 are unvaccinated.

CDC released two other studies Friday that signaled hints of waning protection for older adults. One examined hospitalizations in nine states over the summer and found protection for those 75 and older was 76% compared to 89% for all other adults. And in five Veterans Affairs Medical Centers, protection against COVID-19 hospitalizations was 95% among 18- to 64-year-olds compared to 80% among those 65 and older.

UN raises alarm on Taliban crackdown on dissent, media

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The United Nations on Friday sounded the alarm over Taliban crackdowns on peaceful protests, many of them by women demanding equal rights, and journalists covering such events.

In one case, two Afghan video journalists were beaten with iron rods.

Tagi Daryabi, 22, said he and a colleague were covering a protest last week by women demanding their rights from Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers. Taliban fighters stopped the two journalists, bound their hands and dragged them away to a police station in Kabul's District Three.

The photographer told The Associated

Press that the first thing he heard in the station were screams from a nearby room. Several fighters then began beating him and his colleague, Neamatullah Naqdi, 28.

At one point, Daryabi said he was beaten non-stop for 10 minutes. "I couldn't think. I didn't know if I would be killed or if I would live," he said, his face and body still bearing the scars.

"We call on the Taliban to immediately cease the use of force toward, and the arbitrary detention of, those exercising their right to peaceful assembly and the journalists covering the protests," the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement Friday.

It said reports point to an increasing use

of force by the Taliban "against those involved in or reporting on the demonstrations."

Daryabi and Naqdi work for the small, privately owned Etilaat Roz newspaper, which also broadcasts video news on a YouTube channel.

Daryabi's newspaper and other media houses say it's not clear whether the heavy handedness of some local police commanders is sanctioned by the Taliban's media wing. That office has shown a more engaging side, welcoming foreign journalists, and allowing some women presenters to remain on the air at the country's most popular TV station, TOLO TV.

Storms help some Calif. fires, spark others

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Thunderstorms that dropped light rain gave some breathing room to crews struggling to quench California's massive wildfires but lightning sparked several new blazes in the drought-stricken north, fire officials said.

The storms that rolled through Thursday night into Friday were followed by weekend forecasts of clear weather and a warming trend in fire areas into next week.

The National Weather Service said there were more than 1,100 cloud-to-ground lightning strikes in California between Thursday evening and Friday morning. Fire officials said lightning strikes ignited at least 17 fires.

Firefighters were diverted from the huge Caldor Fire south of Lake Tahoe to fight

multiple overnight lightning fires throughout El Dorado County, fire officials said. However, most of the blazes were kept to under 10 acres.

Three new fires were reported in Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks in steep, dense forest areas of the Sierra Nevada.

"Fire management officials in the parks believe the fires have spread potential and could affect operations in the coming days or weeks," a statement from the parks warned.

Up to a half-inch of rain fell on portions of the Dixie Fire, which began in mid-July and has burned through huge swaths of the northern Sierra Nevada and southern Cascades. The second-largest fire in California history has burned 1,490 square miles of

land and more than 1,300 homes and other buildings. It was 59% contained.

The rain wet tinder-dry vegetation and will cool down the fire for one or two days, which firefighters hoped to use to strengthen and expand fire lines in an effort to finally surround the blaze, fire officials said.

However, after a weekend of clear skies and light winds, a ridge of high pressure could bring a warming trend through next week, Jack Messick, incident meteorologist for the fire, said Friday evening.

The rain slowed down the fire but "once the sun gets on it, the wind's blowing on it, it eventually is going to pick up again and dry off enough and it's going to start running again," said Tony Brownell, an operations section chief with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Woman in Slender Man attack to be freed Monday

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — A Wisconsin woman who admitted to helping stab a classmate to please online horror character Slender Man will be freed Monday from a mental health institution under strict conditions, a judge ruled Friday.

Anissa Weier, 19, will be released after spending almost four years at the Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Oshkosh. A conditional release plan calls for her to live with her father, submit to around-the-clock GPS monitoring and receive psychiatric treatment, among other things. She won't be allowed to use the internet except at home, and the state Department of Corrections will monitor her online activity.

Weier and a friend, Morgan Geysler, both were committed to Winnebago after pleading guilty to attacking Payton Leutner when they were all 12 years old. Geysler stabbed Leutner

multiple times as Weier urged her on. Leutner suffered 19 stab wounds — including one that narrowly missed her heart — and barely survived.

Waukesha County Judge Michael Bohren said the conditions of Weier's release were fair and the plan "provides for the protection of the community" as well as for Leutner and for Weier herself.

Weier, dressed in a dark suit and smiling occasionally, said nothing during the 20-minute proceeding. The judge delayed her release until Monday after her attorney, Maura McMahon, said the mental health facility would be able to better process her release after the weekend.

"She looks forward to moving on into a productive life," McMahon told the judge.

Leutner's family declined to speak during the hearing. Leutner declined to comment

when reached by phone later Friday afternoon.

As part of Weier's release conditions, a case manager will monitor her medication for post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and a personality disorder. Her cellphone won't be able to access the internet, and she won't be allowed to use social media at all. She also won't be allowed to consume alcohol or drugs, enter a bar, possess a weapon or have any contact with Leutner or her family.

Deputy District Attorney Ted Szczupakiewicz said he had no objections to the release conditions.

The attack happened in May 2014, after Weier and Geysler invited Leutner to a sleepover. The next day they lured Leutner into the woods at a Waukesha park. Weier and Geysler left Leutner for dead, but she managed to crawl out of the woods and a passing bicyclist found her.

Judge loosens Apple's grip on app store in Epic ruling

Associated Press

SAN RAMON, Calif. — A federal judge ordered Apple to dismantle a lucrative part of the competitive barricade guarding its closely run iPhone app store, but rejected allegations that the company has been running an illegal monopoly that stifles competition and innovation.

The ruling issued Friday continues to chip away at the so-called "walled garden" that Apple has built around its crown jewel, the iPhone, and its app store, without toppling it

completely.

The 185-page decision from U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers also provided Apple with some vindication. The judge didn't brand Apple as a monopolist or require it to allow competing stores to offer apps for iPhones, iPads and iPods.

Those were two of the biggest objectives sought by Epic Games, the maker of the popular Fortnite video game that filed what it would hoped would be a landmark antitrust

case last year after brazenly defying an exclusive payment system that funnels 15% to 30% of all in-app digital transactions on iPhones to Apple.

Such transactions can include everything from Netflix or Spotify subscriptions to the sale of digital items such as songs, movies or virtual tchotchkes for video games. Epic cast that highly lucrative fee as a price-gouging tactic that wouldn't be possible if competing stores were allowed to offer iPhone apps.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Fetuses were from university collection

ID POCATELLO — Police say the remains of roughly 50 fetuses found at a Pocatello, Idaho, funeral home were part of a biological collection that Idaho State University provided to the funeral home for cremation in 2017.

The fetuses and at least 12 other decomposing bodies were discovered at the Downard Funeral Home after a state health inspector alerted police. Investigators have been working to identify the remains.

The business was previously in charge of donating cadavers to Idaho State University for scientific study, but the relationship ended last year after the university had stopped receiving donations for a time. ISU spokesperson Stuart Summers said in a statement that the fetuses recovered from Downard Funeral Home were part of a decades-old biology collection showing fetal development, and that the collection had been brought to the funeral home for cremation four years ago, the Idaho State Journal reported.

Tiny music history museum now open

VT BURLINGTON — A new museum dedicated to Vermont's musical heritage is now open in Burlington.

The Tiny Museum of Vermont Music History opened during the first day of the annual South End Art Hop, the Burlington Free Press reported.

The museum on Howard Street is a permanent addition to the headquarters of the non-

profit group Big Heavy World, which promotes and preserves Vermont-made music.

The museum features photographs, posters and instruments from old venues, the newspaper reported.

Woman who missed flight claims bomb

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A Chicago woman falsely claimed a bomb was on a plane at a South Florida airport after missing her flight, authorities said.

The woman, 46, was arrested at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and charged with falsely reporting a bomb, explosive or weapon of mass destruction, according to a Broward Sheriff's Office news release.

Airline employees told responding deputies that the woman had stated that a bomb was in her checked-in luggage that was aboard a plane, officials said. She made the claim after workers told her that she and her party had arrived too late to board the plane.

No explosives were found, officials said.

Police want probe after man dies in custody

AL HUNTSVILLE — Huntsville police are asking state law officers to investigate the circumstances of a man who died while in their custody.

Huntsville officers were investigating a report of a stolen vehicle and encountered the man, who tried to run from police but was taken into custody, police said. Police say he

showed signs of a possible drug overdose, and paramedics were called to treat him. He later died at a hospital.

Huntsville police have asked the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency's State Bureau of Investigation to investigate, WHNT-TV reported.

Company charged with bribing doctors

MA BOSTON — A Massachusetts spinal device company and two of its top executives have been charged with carrying out a scheme to bribe surgeons to use the company's products, federal prosecutors said.

SpineFrontier, Inc.'s chief executive officer and chief financial officer are accused of conspiring to pay millions of dollars in bribes disguised as consulting fees to surgeons in exchange for the surgeons using the manufacturer's products, according to court documents.

Authorities say the company paid the surgeons between \$250 and \$1,000 per hour. They often determined how much to pay the doctors based on the number of procedures they performed and the amount of money those procedures made for the company, prosecutors say.

State moves to outlaw 'stealthing' of condoms

CA SACRAMENTO — California lawmakers moved to make the state the first to outlaw "stealthing," which is removing a condom without permission during intercourse.

Legislators sent Gov. Gavin Newsom a bill adding the act to

the state's civil definition of sexual battery. It makes it illegal to remove the condom without obtaining verbal consent.

But it doesn't change the criminal code. Instead, it would amend the civil code so that a victim could sue the perpetrator for damages, including punitive damages.

Democratic Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia has been pushing for the legislation since 2017, when a Yale University study said acts of stealthing were increasing against both women and gay men. Her original bill attempted to make it a crime.

Police: 2 die in driving, parking disputes

OR SALEM — A suburban Portland man was stabbed to death over a parking spot while a Salem man was shot and killed during a "road rage incident" near Beaverton, according to police.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reported Shawn Hamilton is suspected of stabbing Robert "Randy" Ricketts, 68, at the Hogan Woods Apartments. Police say the two men had been arguing over a parking space at the complex before Ricketts was attacked.

On the same day, deputies and Beaverton Police responded to a report of a shooting during a road rage incident, the Statesman Journal reported. The Washington County Sheriff's Office said Mark E. Stadamire, 51, of Salem, died. The sheriff's office says he and another man got out of their vehicles with handguns, and multiple shots were fired.

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Browns-Chiefs top matchup in Week 1

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs have ruled the AFC for the better part of three seasons, making back-to-back trips to the Super Bowl and beating the San Francisco 49ers about 19 months ago for their first championship in 50 years.

The Cleveland Browns could offer the stiffest test to their perch at the top.

The two teams met in the divisional round of the playoffs last season, when Kansas City beat the Browns 22-17 in part by converting an audacious fourth-down pass play near midfield with just over a minute to go. And perhaps fittingly, they will start this season back at Arrowhead Stadium, where a full house is expected for the Sunday afternoon kickoff.

“I don’t think you can go there right now,” said Chiefs coach Andy Reid, when asked about Super Bowl aspirations harbored by both teams. “You work on what you can control. That’s the game plan and making sure we master that, and master the opponent, the best we can before game time. And once you get in the game, take care of each play.”

The Chiefs have certainly mastered the art of winning in September. They’ve won 14 consecutive games in the first month of the regular season, and quarterback Patrick Mahomes is 10-0 with 32 touchdown passes and no interceptions.

The Browns? They’ve gone an NFL-record 16 seasons without winning their opener, and they’re 1-20-1 in Week 1 since they returned to Cleveland for the 1999 season.

Last year was a particularly gruesome 38-6 loss at Baltimore.

“Obviously any time you’re playing in the NFL, you’re playing against the best of the best,” Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield said. “For us, it’s about playing the guy in front of us and doing our job. ... For us, we erased last year. We’re trying to start from Game 0 and move on from there.”

The personnel alone make Sunday’s game one of the marquee matchups of Week 1.

Mahomes and Mayfield are two of the best quarterbacks in the league. The Chiefs have one of the best wide receivers in Tyreek Hill; the Browns counter with a healthy Odell Beckham Jr. and Jarvis Landry. Both teams have talented tight ends and running backs, to say nothing of playmakers on the opposite side of the ball.

The Browns signed Jadeveon Clowney to pair with pass rusher Myles Garrett, and cornerback Denzel Ward is among the best in the game. The Chiefs feature fearsome Chris Jones, who is moving from defensive tackle to defensive end, and have safety Tyrann Mathieu on the back end — assuming he is cleared of his positive COVID-19 test.

“They have a lot of good players,” Mahomes said, “that’s the biggest thing. They have talented players at every position, a mixture of younger players and veteran players, and players that have made plays in this league for a long time.”

Beckham’s back

Beckham is expected to play for the first

time since a season-ending knee injury in Week 7 last season. One of the NFL’s fastest players, Beckham made an equally speedy recovery and will likely start, giving Mayfield another option alongside Landry, tight end Austin Hooper and running backs Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt.

Unfamiliar faces

Mahomes won’t recognize Cleveland’s defense, which has nine new starters since the previous time the teams met. That includes free agents such as Clowney, linebacker Anthony Walker Jr. and safety John Johnson III.

“We’re in a great spot right now,” said Walker, who spent the past four seasons with Indianapolis. “Obviously not where we want to be, but where we’re at right now, I think we’re taking right steps in the right direction.”

Arrowhead Stadium

The Chiefs were limited to 22% of capacity (about 16,500 fans) for home games last season, including that playoff matchup with the Browns. But there are no restrictions for Week 1 and a crowd of more than 75,000 is expected.

“The only time I’ve been in the stadium where it was full was the Garth Brooks concert,” said second-year Chiefs running back Clyde Edwards-Helaire. “It’s one thing sitting in the stands, but when you can put on a helmet and get on the field and the stadium is full, you have a different outlook. It’s going to be a surreal feeling.”

Titans set to unveil new-look offense against Cards

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Titans finally get to show off what adding a seven-time Pro Bowl wide receiver can do for their already high-powered offense.

Julio Jones, a trade acquisition in June, joins AP NFL Offensive Player of the Year Derrick Henry, Pro Bowl wide receiver A.J. Brown and quarterback Ryan Tannehill coming off a career year of his own. The Titans open the season hosting Arizona, believing an offense

that already was one of the NFL’s best is a bit better.

“It is a big opportunity, we are finally getting everyone back out there,” Tannehill said. “A lot of opportunities in front of us, it is just a matter of making it happen.”

The Titans are coming off their first AFC South title in 12 years, and this will be their first game without pandemic restrictions in 630 days. In that span, this franchise also reached the AFC championship game in January 2020, and

Henry now is the NFL’s back-to-back rushing champ.

This also will be the first time the Titans have opened a season at home since Mike Vrabel was hired as head coach.

Add in Arizona with Kyler Murray and All-Pro DeAndre Hopkins, it should be quite a game.

The Cardinals have made changes as well after going 8-8 last season and missing the playoffs after a strong start. They now have three-time AP NFL Defensive Player of the

Year J.J. Watt and their own seven-time Pro Bowl receiver in A.J. Green.

Titanic offense

Not only did Henry lead the NFL in rushing in 2020, he was the eighth man to run for at least 2,000 yards with 2,027 the fifth-best total in league history. The Titans tied for second averaging 396.4 yards per game and fourth scoring 30.7 per game. Tannehill set a franchise record with 40 touchdowns.

Now comes Jones, determined to prove himself at 32.

One to go: Djokovic into US Open final

Associated Press

NEW YORK — If Novak Djokovic does complete the first calendar-year Grand Slam for a man since 1969—and he is headed to the U.S. Open final, just one victory away—he, and everyone else, will remember one particularly pivotal, and epic, game along the way.

It came at the conclusion of the third set of what eventually became a 4-6, 6-2, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 victory over Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Alexander Zverev in the semifinals at Flushing Meadows on Friday night, making Djokovic 27-0 in major championships this season.

Beating No. 2 Daniil Medvedev on Sunday for the title will allow Djokovic to secure two significant milestones. He would add the 2021 U.S. Open trophy to those he won at the Australian Open in February, French Open in June and Wimbledon in July. And the 34-year-old from Serbia would collect his 21st Slam title in all, breaking the men's career mark he currently shares with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

"There's only one match left.... All in. Let's do it," Djokovic said, spreading his arms wide, in an on-court interview. "I'm going to put my heart and my soul and my body and my head into that one. I'm going to treat the next match like it is the last match of my ca-

reer."

That key game against Zverev featured one extended exchange after another, including a 53-shot, minute-plus point that was the longest of the tournament and actually was lost by Djokovic. Zverev delivered a forehand winner, then hunched over with his hands on his knees. Djokovic went to grab a towel. Both men were breathing heavily as most of Arthur Ashe Stadium's 21,139 spectators rose in unison on a cool, crisp evening.

But that one, tiny outcome didn't matter. Never seems to with Djokovic, especially in best-of-five-set matches on his sport's most prestigious stages. As usual, he used his superb returning and never-take-a-rest defense to wear down Zverev.

"I'm proud of the fight that I delivered," Djokovic said.

So, yes, Djokovic lost that point—which was preceded by others lasting 13, 19, 22 and 31 shots, and followed by one that went 16—but he won that game, and that set with it. Just as he had lost the first set about 1½ hours earlier but turned things around, with the help of a dip in level from the fourth-seeded Zverev. And just as, later, Djokovic lost the fourth set but immediately rebounded and was nearly untouchable while going ahead 5-0 in the fifth then held on.

Djokovic, who has spent more weeks at

No. 1 in the ATP rankings than anyone, figures out what is required to emerge on top and does it. In each of his past four matches—and 10 in all at the Slams this year—he trailed by a set and won.

He equaled Federer by getting to a 31st career Slam final; Djokovic's total now includes a record nine in New York, where he has won three championships.

It will be Slam final No. 3 for Medvedev, a 25-year-old from Russia, who eliminated 12th-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada 6-4, 7-5, 6-2 in the afternoon. Medvedev was defeated by Djokovic in this year's Australian Open final and by Nadal in the 2019 U.S. Open final.

"The more you lose something, the more you want to win it. The more you want to gain it and take it," said Medvedev, who has lost only one set over the past two weeks. "I lost two finals. I want to win the third one."

Djokovic is trying to go 4-for-4 at the majors over the course of one season, something last done in men's tennis by Rod Laver 52 years ago. It was also done by Laver in 1962 and Don Budge in 1938. Three women have completed what's known as a true Grand Slam, most recently Steffi Graf in 1988. Serena Williams' attempt in 2015 ended at the U.S. Open with a semifinal loss to Roberta Vinci.

No. 17 Coastal Carolina wins third straight over Kansas

Associated Press

CONWAY, S.C. — Reese White was thinking even bigger for No. 17 Coastal Carolina after his strong start to the season.

White finished with 102 yards and three rushing touchdowns and the Chanticleers beat Kansas for a third straight year, 49-22, as the fledgling FBS program hosted a Power Five team for the first time Friday night.

White is a junior who was a backup behind last year's rushing leader, C.J. Marable, during Coastal's breakthrough season in college football's top division.

So far, White is filling in very nicely. He had two rushing touchdowns in a 52-14 victory over The Citadel last week and wondered if he couldn't do even better.

How about his first-ever 100-yard performance and those

three critical TDs.

"I wanted to add one to the total," he said. "I thought, 'Why not go for three?' and I did it."

So is four on the table when Coastal Carolina travels to play Buffalo next week?

"Maybe," White said with a grin.

Quarterback Grayson McCall threw for two scores and ran for a third in the victory.

It was a big spot for a program on the rise and Kansas (1-1) didn't have the firepower to spoil the home team's "White Out" promotion in front of the largest crowd here ever at 17,697.

"I never imagined this could happen," said freshman defensive tackle Josiah Stewart, who set a team record with 3½ sacks. "It's unreal."

Much like the Chanticleers'

wins at Kansas the last two years that certainly raised eyebrows. This one wasn't much of a shocker as Coastal Carolina showed off a deep, talented offense and a relentless defense to put away its Big 12 Conference opponent.

White had touchdown runs of 2, 19 and 3 yards against Kansas after two touchdowns in his team's 52-14 opening victory over The Citadel last week. McCall began the scoring with a 33-yard TD pass to Jaivon Heiligh, then had a 2-yard scoring run.

White talked this week of going for three touchdowns after his two a week ago.

Kansas quarterback Jason Bean, a North Texas transfer, had touchdown runs of 34 and 46 yards as the Jayhawks drew to 28-22 midway through the

third quarter.

However, the Chants responded with White's final two touchdowns to open up a 20-point lead.

Kansas entered after snapping a 13-game losing streak in the opener and hoped to keep the momentum going on Coastal's teal blue turf.

But the Chanticleers and McCall proved too potent for first year Jayhawks coach Lance Leipold's program. They scored on three of their first four possessions and got a blocked punt for a TD by Alex Spillum to take a 28-9 lead.

McCall finished 17-for-21 passing for 245 yards. Heiligh had six catches for 122 yards, his fourth consecutive game with 100-plus receiving yards.

Bean led Kansas with 102 yards rushing.

Mets cruise past reeling, bumbling Yanks

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The reeling Yankees made a Subway Series of mental and physical mistakes in their weekend opener at the Mets.

Catcher Gary Sánchez had a pair of glaring defensive lapses, and throwing errors by third baseman Gio Urshela and shortstop Gleyber Torres led to three runs in the Yankees' 10-3 loss on Friday night.

The Yankees lost their season-high seventh in a row and for the 11th time in 13 games following a 13-game winning streak. They remained a half-game ahead of Toronto for the AL's second wild-card berth.

"I think we're beyond frustrated," second baseman DJ LeMahieu said, "but now's not the time to point fingers at anyone, and just everyone to raise their game and collectively get out of it together."

Rookie Tylor Megill struck out a career-high 10 in a career-long seven innings, and Jeff McNeil had a drag bunt for an RBI single in a five-run third inning.

"Just a poor performance, period," Yan-

kees manager Aaron Boone said. "It's a bit of a broken record. We got to keep grinding at it. We got to keep working at it and we will, and trust that it will turn, but it's obviously going to take everyone and, obviously, that starts with me and making sure we're ready to roll."

This is the Yankees' worst 13-game stretch since losing 13 of their final 15 in 2000 — before rebounding to win their fourth World Series title in five seasons.

They wasted a 1-0 lead in the first when Sánchez bailed on a play at the plate and allowed Jonathan Villar to score on a throw by left fielder Joey Gallo that beat the runner by more than 20 feet. Sánchez's defensive lapse was the type that hardly occurs since Major League Baseball and the players' association adopted a rule in 2014 limiting home plate collisions.

Plate umpire Ted Barrett called out Villar on Gallo's throw, but a video review showed that by standing up and reaching out, Sánchez allowed the sliding Villar to get his foot on the plate before his helmet

was tagged.

"Obviously he's going to be out easy," Boone said. "He got out of his crouch and athletic position. In that spot, where you've got a guy dead to rights, you got to just lower your body, maybe initiate the contact but remain athletic in your legs."

Jordan Montgomery (5-6) allowed a career-high seven runs in 3⅓ innings — just five earned. Francisco Lindor chased him with an opposite-field home run just inside the right-field pole.

The Mets, who closed within four games of a playoff spot, got their first win in four games this year while wearing black jerseys.

Megill (3-4) allowed two runs, four hits and one walk as the Mets got back to .500 at 71-71. The 26-year-old right-hander threw up to 97.2 mph, well above his 94.5 mph average coming in.

"I commanded the zone from bottom to top with all three of my pitches," Megill said. "I was making them feel uncomfortable."

Bryant returns to Wrigley Field, Giants beat Cubs

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Kris Bryant drew a pair of standing ovations in his return to Wrigley Field, Evan Longoria and Brandon Belt homered in the seventh inning and the San Francisco Giants beat the Chicago Cubs 6-1 on Friday for their fifth straight victory.

The Giants improved to a major league-best 91-50.

Bryant was traded to the Giants for two prospects at the July 30 deadline as the rebuilding Cubs unloaded marquee stars who were set to become free agents after this season. The 29-year-old got a standing ovation from the crowd of 29,439 during a pregame video tribute and again before his first inning at-bat. Bryant went 0-for-3 with a walk, run and struck out swinging twice.

San Francisco's Dominic Leone opened with two perfect innings on a bullpen day, and the Giants used eight pitchers in a combined two-hitter. Camilo Doval (2-1) got the final out of the sixth for the win. Trevor Megill (1-1) was the loser.

Rookie Frank Schwindel hit a solo drive for the Cubs, giving him 12 homers and seven in the last 11 games. Chicago lost for just the second time in 10 games.

White Sox 4, Red Sox 3: José Abreu hit a three-run homer and Carlos Rodón pitched five effective innings on extended

rest, helping Chicago beat visiting Boston.

The Red Sox lost for the fourth time in five games, but maintained their one-game lead for the top AL wild card because of the New York Yankees' 10-3 loss to the Mets. Boston also remained nine games back of AL East-leading Tampa Bay.

Dodgers 3, Padres 0: Julio Urías pitched seven shutout innings for his major league-leading 17th victory, Max Muncy slugged a two-run homer and host Los Angeles beat San Diego to snap a two-game skid.

Pirates 4, Nationals 3: Ke'Bryan Hayes capped off a ninth-inning rally with an RBI single and Pittsburgh slipped past visiting Washington.

Brewers 10, Indians 3: Lorenzo Cain hit a grand slam to cap a six-run fifth inning, Eduardo Escobar homered from both sides of the plate and Milwaukee beat host Cleveland to move closer to the NL Central title.

Orioles 6, Blue Jays 3: Cedric Mullins and Ryan McKenna homered off Robbie Ray and Baltimore ended visiting Toronto's season-high winning streak at eight.

Tigers 10, Rays 4: Miguel Cabrera got his ninth straight hit before the string ended, Jonathan Schoop launched a grand slam and host Detroit beat Tampa Bay.

Braves 6, Marlins 2: Jorge Soler had a

two-run single during a five-run fifth inning, Ian Anderson tied a career high with nine strikeouts and Atlanta beat visiting Miami.

Rockies 11, Phillies 2: Elias Díaz hit a grand slam, Germán Márquez pitched six shutout innings and Colorado continued to hurt host Philadelphia's playoff chances.

Astros 10, Angels 5: Shohei Ohtani hit his major league-leading 44th home run, but got tagged early by José Altuve and Alex Bregman in Houston's victory over visiting Los Angeles.

Mariners 5, Diamondbacks 4: Tom Murphy hit a two-run home run in the second inning and added a solo shot in the sixth and host Seattle beat Arizona for its eighth victory in 11 games.

Royals 6, Twins 4 (11): Andrew Benintendi had four hits and two home runs, the last a two-run shot in the 11th to send visiting Kansas City past Minnesota.

Reds 4, Cardinals 2: Jose Barrero made the most of an unexpected start by doubling in the tiebreaking run in the ninth inning, leading Cincinnati past host St. Louis.

Athletics 10, Rangers 5: Matt Olson had four hits and drove in four runs, Starling Marte added an RBI triple and Oakland beat visiting Texas for its third straight win.