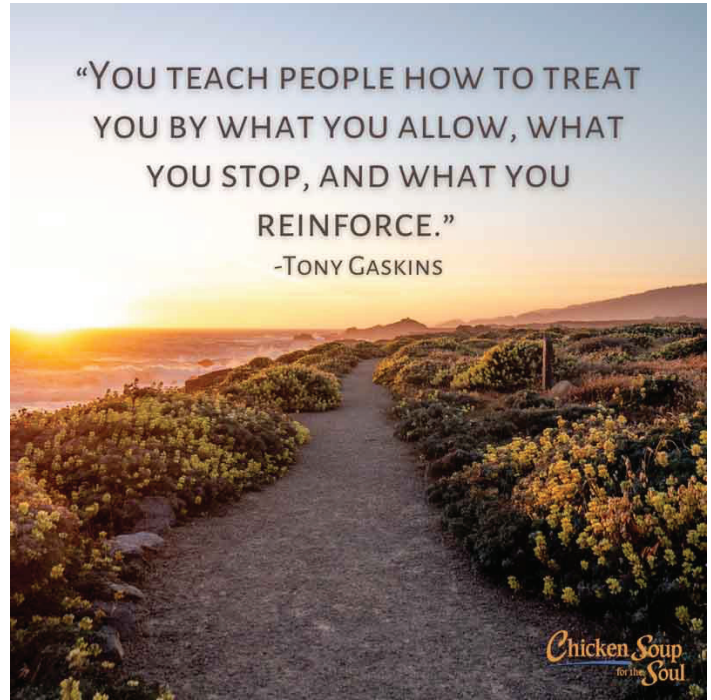


# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 1 of 88

- [1- Truss Pros Help Wanted Ad](#)
- [2- JVT Annual meeting ad](#)
- [3- Antique Military Parade held Wednesday in Groton](#)
- [5- Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller](#)
- [9- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [10- Weather Pages](#)
- [13- Daily Devotional](#)
- [14- 2021 Community Events](#)
- [15- News from the Associated Press](#)





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**OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

## **JAMES VALLEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS 64TH ANNUAL MEETING**

**Thursday, August 5th at 9am  
Groton Area High School**

Registration begins at 8:30am in the old gym.

All members who register for the meeting will receive a **\$20 credit** on their JVT account.

\$500, \$250 (2) and \$100 (2) JVT credits to be given away!



**JAMES  
VALLEY**  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 3 of 88



## Antique Military Parade held Wednesday in Groton

There was an antique military vehicle parade in Groton on Wednesday. It consisted of 45 antique vehicles and started at the north end of Main street and go to the south end. They set up the vehicles for display on the last block of Main Street. The above panoramic photo distorts the straightness of Main Street, but you can see how they were all parked. Discussion on having this parade come to Groton started back in April. They are traveling the Yellowstone Trail and have other stops to make. They have been doing this for a number of years on historic highways across the US.

The members of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association (MVPA) are proud to introduce the next MVPA Cross-Country Convoy ... the MVPA 2021 Yellowstone Trail Convoy ... "YT'21". This Convoy will travel along the Yellowstone Trail.

This will be the 8th Cross-Country Convoy presented by the MVPA.

The Yellowstone Trail – the first transcontinental highway in the US (established in 1912) runs from Seattle, WA to Plymouth, MA., or vice versa, with a route to (of course) Yellowstone National Park. The YT'21 Convoy will focus on a section of the Yellowstone Trail from Aberdeen, SD through to the east side of OH.

The goal of each MVPA Cross-Country Convoy is to inform the Public about the importance of the Military Vehicles that were and are in service and to say THANK-YOU to our Military Veterans and current service personnel.

The Yellowstone Trail is around 3,500 miles long and as mentioned earlier in this note, travels from Seattle, WA to Plymouth Rock in MA. This transcontinental highway began as a route to link the twin Cities of St. Paul / Minneapolis, Minnesota to Yellowstone National Park. These roads, like most others of the time began as private endeavors. As time passed, this road system truly became transcontinental. The original Yellowstone Trail Association was established in 1912 or so, dissolved in 1930 with the Federal road numbering program and then re-established in 2003 and is a strong association today (see [www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org) for more information on this association).

The following are key points of this Convoy:

- The Convoy launches on Wednesday, 28 July 2021 @ 0800 hrs local time at the pre-stage location – Brown County Fairgrounds in Aberdeen, SD.
- The Convoy will arrive at the MVPA Convention site (the Century Center) in South Bend, IN on Wednesday, 11 August 2021 – and join the entire Convention.
- The Convoy will conclude in Conneaut, OH on Friday, 20 August 2021 – at the site of and during the annual Conneaut D-Day Landing event.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 4 of 88

- The Convoy will travel along the Yellowstone Trail through SD, MN, WI, IN and OH. The YT'21 Convoy route will depart from the Yellowstone Trail in WI and travel through MI to get to South Bend.
  - Convoy speed ranges from 25 – 35 mph for our Historic Military Vehicles.
  - The Convoy looks to gain the support of local detachments of Police and Fire along the Convoy route.
- MVPA Cross-Country Convoys have been described as "... the Longest 4th of July parade in the Country ...".



## #455 in a series Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

By every metric, we are worse off—substantially so—than when we last talked, just a few days ago. Fourteen-day new-case average is now over 60,000 at 62,248. A month ago, we were at 11,838, so our current situation is more than five times worse than it was then. I've recently seen speculation that we might top 200,000 new cases per day before this thing is over; that would rival the very worst days we've seen thus far.

Hospitalizations are also soaring, now up to 34,870, placing serious stress on institutions and workers who've been stretched to the limit for a year and a half now. I have real concerns about the fallout in the health care sector—the damage to workers, the numbers who may leave the field, the financial stress on the organizations, and what this all is going to do to our ability to deliver quality health care where it is needed in the future. We were having problems with that before the pandemic, and I can't think any part of this is helping the situation.

Deaths are increasing, albeit more slowly; we're now at 290. The difficult thing about this is that pretty much all of them were unvaccinated people, that is, entirely preventable. I get the angry impulse to say, "Serves them right;" but we need to remember these are all someone's dad or sister or teacher or neighbor or friend, people beloved of someone who is grieving today.

We in the US are now 49.1 percent fully vaccinated. Thirty states have vaccinated fewer than half their residents. How does that translate in the current situation? Every state is experiencing an increasing new-case number. In 48 states, the increase was at least 10 percent, and in 34 states, the increase was over 50 percent. Hospitals continue to report larger and larger patient numbers and see younger and younger patients. Here's a news flash: Our biggest problem is not Delta. Our biggest problem is lagging vaccinations. We're not equipped for the last variant either, much less the next one. We could have been. We should have been. We're not. That's on us.

Southern California's in trouble. San Diego and Los Angeles Counties are reporting case numbers they hadn't seen since February, back when we were in our biggest wave of the pandemic. Hospitalizations are on the way up too. Hospitalizations have quadrupled in Alabama just since the 4th. The vaccination rate in the state is 36 percent. Missouri and Mississippi are looking awful. Arkansas, with its 36 percent vaccination rate is top-3. Their test positivity rate of 19.3 percent indicates high community transmission and not much chance things will get better soon. In second place is Florida with a new-case average that has more than tripled in two weeks; it also reports more deaths by far than any other state, partly a function of its large population. Worst state is Louisiana, which has reported a huge per capita increase in cases and also has one of the five largest clusters of unvaccinated people in the US—the cluster has just a 30 percent vaccination rate.

In Florida and Arkansas, every single county has community transmission classified as "high" by the CDC. Not quite all, but almost every county in Missouri, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama is also in the high transmission category. High transmission is more than 100 cases per 100,000 residents or test positivity rate of 10 percent or more; those are pretty bad signs.

In the midst of all the ugly, we have a hopeful note. Over the past couple of weeks, four of the five states with the highest new-case rates, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Florida, have vaccination rates above the national average. We can hope the needless dying is finally sinking in; it would appear so in some locations.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 6 of 88

No one is surprised that the CDC issued updated masking guidance on Tuesday. Due to increasing case-loads and new information about the Delta variant, they are advising vaccinated people who are in areas with substantial or high transmission and those who have vulnerable people in their households wear masks in indoor public spaces again. They are also recommending universal masking in schools irrespective of vaccination status, a step up that matches the American Academy of Pediatrics' guidance issued last week. B.1.617.2 or Delta, the variant first identified in India, represented just one percent of cases in the US back in May when the CDC first eased masking guidance for the vaccinated; now it accounts for 83 percent of cases and we understand how brief a contact can transmit it. Further, there are new data that emerged just within the past few days, not yet published, that vaccinated persons infected with Delta are carrying a higher viral load than had been seen with earlier variants. We're pretty sure viral load is directly correlated with transmission risk.

Now we need to keep in perspective that vaccinated persons are highly unlikely to become infected at all and, if they do become infected, are largely protected from severe disease. However, we have to consider that when an infection does occur, the vaccinated person poses more of a risk to others than was thought a few days ago. I think it's wise to play it safe here; wearing a mask is a small inconvenience until we have this possible threat sorted out and/or we persuade some folks to grow up and step up for vaccination. The guidance for unvaccinated persons to mask in all public settings has not changed, and of course, unvaccinated persons are ignoring it anyhow, just as they're ignoring all the other science. Meanwhile, state officials in many of the places with the worst transmission have decided public health is a matter of personal choice. I don't think there's much we're going to be able to do about that—not enough dead people yet, I guess. So we'll wait for some more bodies to pile up; surely someone will notice soon.

I just read a paper published Thursday in The Lancet's EClinicalMedicine, which looked for an association between cognitive performance data and Covid-19 infection. They had data from something called the Great British Intelligence Test, a joint endeavor of Imperial College London and the BBC intended to collect information about ability to remember, reason, concentrate, and plan and how those abilities are affected by various factors. It used data from a clinically validated web-optimized assessment of cognitive performance and a questionnaire regarding suspected and confirmed Covid-19 infection and respiratory symptoms for 81,337 participants. Findings were stark: "Our analyses provide converging evidence to support the hypothesis that COVID-19 infection is associated with cognitive deficits that persist into the recovery phase. The observed deficits varied in scale with respiratory symptom severity." The difference noted scales to a 7-point difference in IQ, a greater cognitive deficit than experienced, on average, by stroke patients. The greatest effects were on functions such as reasoning, problem-solving, spatial planning, and target detection with particular effects on what is called executive function, a set of skills involving paying attention, organizing and planning, starting and staying focused on tasks, managing emotions, and keeping track of what you are doing. The more severe the infection was, the greater the degree of deficit. The effect appears to be a long-lasting one; this comports with many of the cognitive symptoms reported by sufferers of so-called long-Covid, the brain fog and difficulty concentrating. What we still don't know is what's going on neurologically in these folks, but it will, I suspect, be comforting to those who've complained of these symptoms to have their experience confirmed. No way, really, now to tell them they're imagining things.

On the topic of cognitive effects, there is some Covid-19-related research being presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference which started on Monday. I read a preview on Monday morning; here's a quick summary. (1) PET (positron emission tomography) scans aimed at assessing cognitive function use injected radiotracers to produce a three-dimensional image of the brain's metabolism of oxygen and glucose, activities that are greatly diminished in Alzheimer's disease. Before and after PET scans of Covid-19 patients are showing changes that look a whole lot like Alzheimer's. Coupled with the fact that Alzheimer's diagnoses appear to exceed the normal background rate in people in their 60s and

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 7 of 88

70s who have recovered from severe Covid-19, that's worrisome. (2) The neurologic/cognitive problems appear to be more common in patients who lost their sense of smell. The current thinking is that the sensory loss is due to effects of the virus on the olfactory bulb, the region of the brain that receives incoming sensory data from smell receptors. Surrounding areas of the brain which have shown changes in recovering patients are involved in memory, thinking, planning, and mood, the same functions in which we've been seeing lingering effects. (3) The specific brain effects seem to vary with age; people over 60 primarily experience forgetfulness. Dr. Gabriel de Erausquin, professor of neurology at UT Health San Antonio, described it thus to NPR: "These folks tend to forget where they placed things, they tend to forget names, they tend to forget phone numbers. They also have trouble with language; they begin forgetting words." This looks a whole lot like the earliest manifestations of Alzheimer's. De Erausquin added, "These people look really bad right now, and the expectation is that it may behave as Alzheimer's behaves, in a progressive fashion. But the true answer is we don't know." To be clear, that word, progressive, denotes a condition that continues to get worse, one we can't fix. (4) There is some possibility having Covid-19 in your younger years may increase your risk for Alzheimer's in your 60s and 70s. Previous research suggests some viruses can trigger changes in the brain that make Alzheimer's more likely to develop or accelerate its development in later years. Obviously, we're not going to know about this for sure for some time, but with the millions of cases we've had just in the US, the implications for individuals and society are enormous. The more we know, the less it seems like a smart idea to just take your chances with this virus.

We've been talking about breakthroughs. We know only a vanishingly small percentage of fully vaccinated people get breakthroughs. I have another bit of information on that: Of the fully vaccinated people who end up in the hospital with Covid-19, 44 percent were immunocompromised. That means we can just about halve that tiny percentage for those with healthy immune systems. These vaccines are that good. If we start getting an additional dose of vaccine into the immunocompromised, we can further drive that percentage down. I'd be in favor of that, and I suspect the FDA will be in favor of that one day soon too.

We haven't had an animal infection in the news lately, but now a snow leopard at the San Diego zoo has been diagnosed. Snow leopards are critically endangered; estimates are that there are fewer than 6000 left in the world. The zoo has been on a campaign of vaccination for its great apes and big cats, but this one had not yet been vaccinated. We should note that the vaccines in use are not suitable for use in humans, so no human doses are being diverted to zoos. The infected snow leopard is having only mild symptoms and is expected to recover; it has been isolated from other cats to prevent further transmission.

This pandemic may have produced one side effect we can consider a good thing: willingness to fund a proposal that's been floating around for over four years, one that might substantially change the outlook for the next pandemic threat—and there will most definitely be another one of those; it's only a matter of time. Consider that one large reason we were able to produce the current crop of Covid-19 vaccines so quickly is that, by happenstance, scientists had been studying coronaviruses for well over a decade, understood their structure and the importance of the spike (S) protein, and had figured out how to stabilize that protein so the one incorporated into a vaccine would provide the proper antigenic stimulus. Absent that preliminary work, we could still be five or 10 years out on this thing. (The other large reason is about 30 years' work on the mRNA vaccine platform which had been done before Covid-19 ever showed up. If you missed the discussion on these points, check out my Update #443 posted June 5, 2021, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4789540054395696>.)

The proposal came from the deputy director of the Vaccine Research Center at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr. Barney Graham. He pointed out that, every time a new virus threatens to reach pandemic proportions, we're starting out behind because we don't know enough about the virus to design an effective vaccine, that by the time we had vaccines designed for Ebola, SARS, and other

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 8 of 88

viruses, the outbreak receded before we could test and deploy them. He was worried about a future virus that wouldn't recede on its own, a virus like SARS-CoV-2, one that would rampage through the population until we managed to come up with vaccines that work. Now, this was back in 2017, so he couldn't know for sure what was coming a couple of years later, but he certainly looks like a smart guy now, doesn't he? We know we got lucky this time.

So he was pointing out that we now have tools for sorting out the molecular structure of viruses, identifying antibodies that neutralize them, and designing vaccines tailored to elicit production of just those antibodies. His idea was that we should invest in studying each of about 20 large families of viruses and design in advance prototype vaccines targeted at them so we would be ready to immunize people around an initial future outbreak, nipping it in the bud. This would include collaborative agreements with pharmaceutical companies so the prototypes could be produced rapidly when needed. Dr. Dennis Burton, chairman of the department of immunology and microbiology at Scripps Research Institute, told NPR, "The name of the game would be to try and restrict spillovers to outbreaks." That would be something.

Thing is, this sort of thing is expensive; the estimates for filling in gaps in our knowledge about the various virus families and getting prototypes designed are a few billion dollars per year. Even though the proposal received broad scientific support, with no pandemic on the horizon, it wasn't going anywhere back in 2017. That situation has changed now: nothing like a catastrophe to focus the attention on prevention. Stacked up against the trillions in economic damage, direct spending on social safety nets and health care costs, lost years of individual economic productivity for the deceased and the disabled survivors, and mitigation costs, a few billion a year is looking more like a bargain than it used to do. The thinking is that this thing can get funded now. That would be a marvelous thing.

If you've been anxiously awaiting emergency use authorization (EUA) for vaccines in children five to 11 in age, I'm afraid I have not-so-great news: It looks like this is going to be somewhat delayed. The FDA has just requested the pharmaceutical companies incorporate several thousand more children into their clinical trials in order to more fully assess whether that rare heart inflammation (myocarditis) will pose an increased risk in the age group. We know that extremely rare side effects are more likely to show up when you include more participants in trials, so this is not an unreasonable request at all. It's going to create some disappointment though since the FDA will probably require two months of follow-up data. While no one thinks it will be difficult to enroll more volunteers—there's a whole lot of parents salivating at the opportunity to get their kids vaccinated, this will likely move back the previously-anticipated early fall timeline; we have unofficial word regulators are looking at early November. It seems likely the FDA may require four to six months' data for younger children and infants, so those age groups are probably looking at a longer wait too.

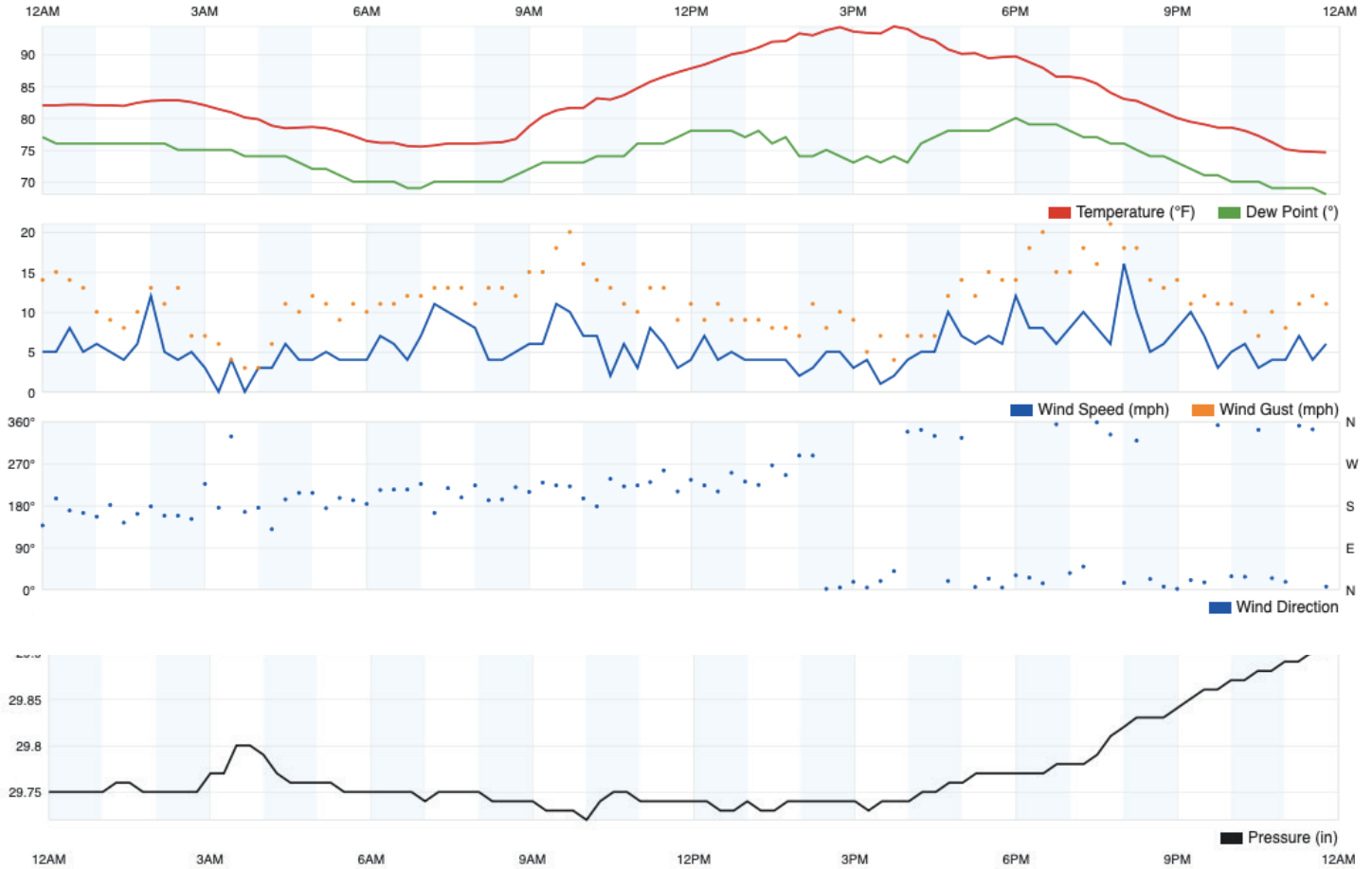
That's all I've got for today. It's been a depressing run, and I'm fairly sure we're far from through it yet. Please take care. We'll talk in a few days.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 9 of 88

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 11 of 88

## Today in Weather History

July 29, 1896: A destructive hailstorm originated in the central part of Edmunds County near Ipswich, passing southeast. This storm destroyed crops and broke glass in many windows along a path to the eastern portions of Spink County.

July 29, 2003: Winds of 70 mph, to over 100 mph caused damage in and around Redfield east to Frankfort and south to Tulare. The winds and hail damaged many roofs, crops, outbuildings, downed power lines, and poles, and also downed many branches and trees. In Redfield, a trailer home with two occupants was rolled three to four times over 75 feet. The trailer home rolled over a pickup truck and damaged it. Much of the contents in the trailer home were damaged, and the trailer home itself was a total loss. The people inside the home received minor injuries. A garage was also blown apart in Redfield with the car damaged inside. At the grain elevator in Redfield, several vehicle windows were broke out by airborne sand and rocks. A street light was ripped from the concrete in Redfield. East of Redfield, a 70-foot silo of over 70 tons was crumbled to the ground, and a large tractor shed was blown apart with damage to the contents. Wind equipment by Redfield measured winds at 106 mph before the power went out.

July 29, 2006: Record heat and high humidity affected central, north central, and northeast South Dakota for the end of July. Heat indices rose to 105 to 115 degrees across the area. Record high temperatures were set at Pierre, Mobridge, Kennebec, Timber Lake, and Aberdeen. Pierre rose to 111 degrees on each of the three days. Mobridge rose to 111 degrees on the 28th and 112 degrees on the 30th. Several record highs of 108 and 109 degrees were set at Timber Lake and Kennebec in the three-day period. Aberdeen set a record high of 106 on the 30th.

1898 - The temperature at Prineville, OR, soared to 119 degrees to establish a state record, which was tied on the 10th of August at Pendleton. (The Weather Channel)

1905 - Heavy rain in southwestern Connecticut caused a dam break, and the resulting flood caused a quarter of a million dollars damage at Bridgeport. As much as eleven inches of rain fell prior to the flood. (David Ludlum)

1958: The U.S. Congress passes legislation establishing the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a civilian agency responsible for coordinating America's activities in space.

1960: Severe thunderstorms brought damaging winds, possibly as high as 100 mph to central Oklahoma. Eight planes and several hangars were damaged at Wiley Post Airfield, while two aircraft and additional hangars were damaged at Will Rogers World Airport. The winds caused seven injuries in the area, including two youths who were injured by flying debris.

1981 - Fifty cattle, each weighing 800 pounds, were killed by lightning near Vance, AL. The lightning struck a tree and then spread along the ground killing the cattle. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Minnesota to Indiana and Illinois. A thunderstorm at Janesville, WI, produced wind gusts to 104 mph which flipped over two airplanes, and blew another plane 300 feet down the runway. The northeastern U.S. experienced some relief from the heat. Nine cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Saint Johnsbury, VT, with a reading of 42 degrees. Barnet, VT, reported a morning low of 33 degrees, with frost reported on vegetation. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Hail three inches in diameter was reported south of Saint Cloud, MN. Hot weather prevailed in the western U.S. Fresno, CA reported a record thirteen straight days of 100 degree heat. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms in the Upper Midwest produced more than five inches of rain west of Virgil, SD. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms deluged the foothills and adjacent plains of Colorado with heavy rain. Rains of six to seven and a half inches fell in eight hours north of Greeley. Hail and heavy rain caused several million dollars damage in Weld County. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2004: A record-setting flash flood occurred over part of the Greenville, South Carolina, during the morning hours. Six to eight inches of rain fell just east of Berea, a northwestern suburb, which caused the Reedy River through downtown Greenville crested 9 feet above flood stage. This crest was the highest level since 1908.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 13 of 88



## TRYING TO ESCAPE GOD

God seems to appear when we least expect Him. He certainly will not be confined within the walls of a church or restrained by the rituals of a religion. He is, after all, God the Creator, Sustainer, and Savior. He makes Himself known when and where and as He pleases.

Once, during the transatlantic crossing of a large ocean liner, a major storm erupted, breaking the silence of calm seas. A huge wave swept over the bow of the ship and swept a sailor into the raging waters. His cry for help went unheard.

But in Philadelphia, his Christian mother, who was sound asleep, suddenly awoke with an urgent desire to pray for him. Even though she was not aware of what had happened or his life-threatening situation, she prayed for his safety with urgency and intensity. She then returned to bed and fell asleep with peace in her heart.

Weeks later her son returned home, opened the door and shouted, "Mother, I'm saved!" Then he described what had happened, how he had been swept overboard. As he was sinking in the swirling waves, he remembered thinking, "I'm lost forever!" Then he remembered a hymn he once sang in church about looking to Jesus to be saved. He cried out, "O God, I look to Jesus to be saved," and another wave swept him back onto the ship.

When he finished his story, his mother told her story. They then thanked God for the storm that saved his soul. As the Psalmist wrote, "Pursue them with Your tempest and terrify them with your storm." God does all He can to reach us. Our God is amazing.

Prayer: Thank You, God, for what You are willing to do to save us. Although we will never understand Your love, we willingly accept it! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Pursue them with Your tempest and terrify them with your storm. Psalm 83:15

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 14 of 88

## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)  
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)  
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS  
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament  
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon  
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament  
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament  
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton  
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament  
08/28/2021 Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course  
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)  
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)  
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)  
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes  
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

## News from the Associated Press

### **CDC mask guidance met with hostility by leading Republicans**

By JILL COLVIN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — One of the Republican Party's most prominent rising stars is mocking new government recommendations calling for more widespread use of masks to blunt a coronavirus surge.

"Did you not get the CDC's memo?" Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis joked Wednesday before an almost entirely unmasked audience of activists and lawmakers crammed into an indoor hotel ballroom in Salt Lake City. "I don't see you guys complying."

From Texas to South Dakota, Republican leaders responded with hostility and defiance to updated masking guidance from public health officials, who advise that even fully vaccinated people return to wearing masks indoors if they live in areas with high rates of virus transmission. The backlash reopened the culture war over pandemic restrictions just as efforts to persuade unvaccinated Americans to get shots appeared to be making headway.

Egged on by former President Donald Trump, the response reflects deep resistance among many GOP voters to restrictions aimed at containing a virus they feel poses minimal personal threat. The party is also tapping into growing frustration and confusion over ever-shifting rules and guidance.

But the resistance has real implications for a country desperate to emerge from the pandemic. Beyond vaccinations, there are few tools other than mask-wearing and social distancing to contain the spread of the delta variant, which studies have shown to be far more contagious than the original strain.

Many Republican leaders, however, are blocking preventative measures, potentially making it harder to tame virus outbreaks in conservative communities.

At least 18 Republican-led states have moved to prohibit vaccine passports or to ban public entities from requiring proof of vaccination. And some have prohibited schools from requiring any student or teacher to wear a mask or be vaccinated.

In its announcement, the CDC cited troubling new — thus far unpublished — research that found that fully vaccinated people can spread the delta variant just like the unvaccinated, putting those who haven't received the shots or who have compromised immune systems at heightened risk. The CDC also recommended that all teachers, staff and students wear masks inside school buildings, regardless of vaccination status.

The backlash was swift.

"We won't go back. We won't mask our children," declared Trump, who routinely cast doubt on the value of mask-wearing and rarely wore one in public while he was in office. "Why do Democrats distrust the science?"

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson called the new guidance "disappointing and concerning" and "inconsistent with the overwhelming evidence surrounding the efficacy of the vaccines and their proven results."

He, like others, warned that the measure would undermine efforts to encourage vaccine holdouts to get their shots by casting further doubt on the efficacy of approved vaccines, which have been shown to dramatically decrease the risk of death or hospitalization, despite the occurrence of breakthrough cases.

Last week, White House officials reported that vaccination rates were on the rise in some states where COVID-19 cases were soaring, as more Republican leaders implored their constituents to lay lingering doubts aside and get the shots to protect themselves. That includes Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey, who has pleaded with unvaccinated residents, saying they are the ones "letting us down."

"This self-inflicted setback encourages skepticism and vaccine hesitancy at a time when the goal is to prevent serious illnesses and deaths from COVID-19 through vaccination," Parson tweeted. "This decision only promotes fear & further division among our citizens."

The announcement "will unfortunately only diminish confidence in the vaccine and create more challenges for public health officials □ people who have worked tirelessly to increase vaccination rates," echoed

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 16 of 88

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, who has banned mask and vaccine mandates in his state.

In his Wednesday speech, DeSantis took particular aim at the CDC's call for kids to wear masks in the classroom.

"It's not healthy for these students to be sitting there all day, 6-year-old kids in kindergarten covered in masks," he said — though there is no evidence that wearing masks is harmful to children older than toddler age.

And in South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem called out the CDC for shifting its position on masking "AGAIN." She said that those who are worried about the virus can get vaccinated, wear a mask or stay home, but that "Changing CDC guidelines don't help ensure the public's trust."

On Capitol Hill, some Republicans were in revolt after the Capitol's attending physician sent a memo informing members that masks would again have to be worn inside the House at all times.

The change set off a round robin of insults, with Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calling Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy "a moron" after McCarthy tweeted, "The threat of bringing masks back is not a decision based on science, but a decision conjured up by liberal government officials who want to continue to live in a perpetual pandemic state."

The mandate also prompted an angry confrontation, as Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., verbally assailed Rep. Burgess Owens, R-Utah, who exited the House chamber and walked past her without a face covering.

Conservatives also forced a vote to adjourn the chamber in protest to the mandate, which was defeated along mostly party lines.

"We have a crisis at our border, and we're playing footsie with mask mandates in the people's House," railed Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, the motion's sponsor. "The American people are fed up. They want to go back to life. They want to go back to business. They want to go back to school without their children being forced to wear masks."

The nation is averaging nearly 62,000 new COVID-19 cases a day, and the vast majority of those hospitalized and dying haven't been vaccinated. As of Sunday, 69% of American adults had received one vaccine dose, and 60% had been fully vaccinated, according to the CDC.

Last year, early on in the pandemic, public health officials told Americans that masks offered little protection against the virus (and could even increase the risk of infection). The guidance was driven by a lack of knowledge about how the novel virus spread and a desire to save limited mask supplies for medical workers. But the CDC soon changed course and advised Americans to wear masks indoors and outdoors if they were within 6 feet (1.8 meters) of one another.

Then in April of this year, as vaccination rates rose sharply, the agency eased its guidelines, saying fully vaccinated Americans no longer needed to wear masks outdoors unless they were in big crowds of strangers. In May, the guidance was eased further, saying fully vaccinated people could safely stop wearing masks outdoors in crowds and in most indoor settings.

Subsequent CDC guidance said fully vaccinated people no longer needed to wear masks at schools, either.

Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House principal deputy press secretary, on Wednesday defended the changes, saying the CDC "did exactly what it was supposed to do."

"The CDC has to adapt to the virus," she said, "and unfortunately because not enough Americans have stepped up to get vaccinated, they had to provide new guidance to help save lives."

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

01-09-13-32-35

(one, nine, thirteen, thirty-two, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$25,000

Lotto America



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 17 of 88

18-32-46-48-49, Star Ball: 4, ASB: 4

(eighteen, thirty-two, forty-six, forty-eight, forty-nine; Star Ball: four; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.15 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$166 million

Powerball

25-30-53-59-60, Powerball: 5, Power Play: 3

(twenty-five, thirty, fifty-three, fifty-nine, sixty; Powerball: five; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$186 million

## COVID-19 rates a worry as 1 million head for Iowa State Fair

By DAVID PITT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — With coronavirus cases rising throughout Iowa and around the nation, health experts are becoming increasingly worried about next month's Iowa State Fair, which will bring more than 1 million people to Des Moines from around the state, including many from counties with low vaccination rates and increasing prevalence of the disease.

Iowa's biggest annual event comes at a time when giant summer events will draw crowds throughout the nation, including in states that are experiencing more virus infections due to low vaccination rates and growth of the delta variant. They range from the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota to the Minnesota State Fair, which typically draws more than 2 million people.

In Iowa, officials have encouraged people to get vaccinated, but the state's Republican-majority legislature and governor have blocked local governments from imposing vaccination or mask requirements, so there will be no limits on who can attend the fair when the event begins its 11-day run on Aug. 12.

"Unfortunately our current leadership has turned their back on science and turned their back on what's available to us to fight this pandemic and leaving Iowans struggling against what could be prevented," said Dr. Megan Srinivas, an Iowa-based infectious disease physician nationally recognized for her research, which includes COVID-19.

She said people have the misconception that being outdoors ensures safety, when the virus actually can spread in large dense crowds such as state fairs and large concert venues.

"Anytime we see a large congregation of people especially with the mixed vaccination status, we're going to see high risk for transmission and increases in transmission," she said.

In addition, the delta variant is two to three times more transmissible than prior virus strains, creating an additional risk among fairgoers as they stand in line for food, share condiment dispensers and hop into carnival rides, Srinivas said.

The Iowa State Fair will be in Polk County, where health department spokeswoman Nola Aigner Davis expressed concern about the state's virus trends and a reluctance to get vaccinated or wear masks.

"We know what the numbers say. We know that our cases are going up. We know trends are going up. What is the safe thing to do when people can't get vaccinated? They need to wear a mask," Davis said.

Asked Wednesday if she was concerned about infections at the Iowa State Fair, Gov. Kim Reynolds didn't directly answer but advised potential fairgoers to get vaccinated and noted most people hospitalized with COVID-19 have not been vaccinated.

"So it's a decision that they've made," she said. "They've made the calculation on whether to do it or not and so I don't feel that we should punish everybody because some have made the decision not to."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Wednesday that 49% of Iowans were fully vaccinated, ranking the state 21st in the nation. In at least 18 of Iowa's 99 counties, fewer than 40% of the population is vaccinated, and CDC data shows 35 counties with a high rate of spread and 12 counties with substantial spread of the virus.

Iowa also has the sixth-lowest testing rates in the nation among states reporting the data, which could make it difficult to pinpoint an outbreak if one occurs.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 18 of 88

Srinivas said she's also concerned by RAGBRAI, an annual week-long bike ride across Iowa that continues through Friday, drawing about 15,000 cyclists from around the country to small towns in counties with some of the state's lowest vaccination rates.

She called it the "perfect environment for outbreaks to occur."

In South Dakota, the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is expected to attract over 700,000 people. The event went forward last year amid the pandemic, leading to 463 infections traced among rallygoers. Many health experts labeled the event "a superspreader." Cell phone data shows that, for two weeks in August, the rally turns the normally-sleepy city of Sturgis into a travel hub comparable to a major U.S. city. The event is scheduled this year for Aug. 6-15.

"It's sort of the perfect storm for pandemic spread," said Dr. Doug Lehmann, a doctor who runs a health clinic in Rapid City.

While South Dakota this summer has seen significantly lower case rates compared to last year, local doctors are still worried the massive crowds could lead to a fresh surge.

"This year, there's a lot of forces that are coming together to make it potentially worse (than last year)," said Dr. Jim Buchanan, a retired physician.

Only about 37% of people in Meade County -- where the rally will be held -- have been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Chicago, the city's top public health officials said Tuesday that she's still comfortable with the four-day Lollapalooza music festival set to begin Thursday. Organizers are requiring attendees to show proof of full vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test result, Dr. Allison Arwady said Tuesday. People attending all four days will have to be tested at least twice.

The festival — the city's largest music event — is expected to draw 100,000 people each day to Chicago's Grant Park. Those who are not fully vaccinated must wear face masks when they are attending the festival.

The Minnesota State Fair will be back starting Aug. 26 after a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic. It typically draws more than 2 million visitors during its 12-day run, which ends on Labor Day.

Nearly all of Minnesota's pandemic restrictions have been lifted, so fair officials don't anticipate daily attendance limits. As things currently stand, masks will not be required for guests but are "strongly encouraged" for anyone not fully vaccinated. Proof of vaccination will not be required. Hand sanitizer will be provided at locations throughout the 322-acre fairgrounds in the St. Paul suburb of Falcon Heights.

Garth Brooks fans will have a chance to be vaccinated against COVID-19 when the country music star performs at Arrowhead Stadium on Aug. 7. Chiefs president Mark Donovan said Monday the team plans to take every opportunity to offer vaccinations at Arrowhead, The Kansas City Star reported.

## South Dakota governor lifts mask requirement in prisons

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Staff and inmates at South Dakota prisons are no longer required to wear masks following an order from Gov. Kristi Noem lifting the requirement.

The Republican governor's move, made after a meeting with prison staff Friday, comes as virus cases have seen a recent uptick and defies a recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that masks still be worn in facilities like prisons where large numbers of people are in close proximity to each other. Among neighboring states, South Dakota is the only one to lift a mask requirement in prisons, the Argus Leader reported

Noem's move was spurred by a meeting she had with employees at the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls. They cheered when she told them they could remove their masks. The governor was at the prison to respond to an ongoing human resources investigation into complaints of low employee morale, shorthanded prison staff and insufficient tactical gear for corrections officers.

Noem's spokesman Ian Fury told the Argus Leader the governor would have made the move even sooner if she was aware of the Department of Corrections policy. He said it was "common sense" given the rate of virus cases and would help boost employee morale.

But cases are on the rise in South Dakota after dropping during the spring and early summer. The

Department of Health reported 269 new infections statewide over the last seven days. Fresh waves of the virus across the country prompted the CDC to change course Tuesday on some masking guidelines, recommending that even vaccinated people return to wearing masks indoors in places where the delta variant of the virus is prevalent.

The governor criticized the CDC's shift and noted that South Dakota's case rates remain low compared with other points during the pandemic.

"Changing CDC guidelines don't help ensure the public's trust," she said in a statement.

The CDC also recommended indoor masks for all teachers, staff, students and visitors at schools nationwide, regardless of vaccination status. But Noem said she will not be issuing any statewide directives either requiring or prohibiting masks in schools.

South Dakota's prisons last year suffered through one of the nation's worst rates for infections. Two out of every three inmates were infected with COVID-19, according to data collected by The Associated Press and The Marshall Project.

The Department of Corrections said 70% of inmates have received at least one vaccination. It does not track the vaccination rate among staff.

## Woman who injured child with hairbrush sentenced to prison

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal magistrate judge in South Dakota has sentenced a Dupree woman to six months in federal prison for injuring a child with a hairbrush.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Moreno also sentenced Cache Patricia Hebb Tuesday to one year of supervised release after the 25-year-old woman pled guilty to assault.

Hebb was indicted by a federal grand jury in 2019 and was accused of using unreasonable force causing injuries to the child inflicted with a hairbrush as she attempted to discipline the youngster.

The case was investigated by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Law Enforcement Services.

Hebb was ordered to surrender to the U.S. Marshals Service on August 10, 2021.

## Marion man accused of beating, holding woman captive

MARION, S.D. (AP) — Sheriff's officials in southeastern South Dakota say they've arrested a man suspected of beating his girlfriend and holding her against her will for several days.

The woman was able to escape from a residence in Marion Tuesday afternoon and run to a nearby church where she called 911, Turner County Sheriff Steven Luke said Wednesday.

According to authorities, the woman stated she had been punched and kicked several times over the last few weeks by the man she lived with.

Luke said the man wouldn't let the woman leave the house in the last several days and attempted to strangle her. Deputies went to the residence, but didn't find the suspect. They later spotted the man's vehicle, pulled him over and arrested him.

The sheriff's office says the man is being held on possible charges of aggravated assault-domestic, first-degree kidnapping and possessing marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

## Officials in Tokyo alarmed as virus cases hit record highs

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese officials sounded the alarm Thursday as Tokyo reported record-breaking coronavirus cases for the third-straight day with the Olympics well underway.

Tokyo reported 3,865 new cases Thursday, up from 3,177 on Wednesday and double the numbers a week ago.

"We have never experienced the expansion of the infections of this magnitude," Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters. He said the new cases were soaring not only in the Tokyo area but across the country.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 20 of 88

Nationwide, Japan reported more than 9,500 confirmed cases on Wednesday, also a record, for a total of about 892,000 infections and about 15,000 deaths since the pandemic began.

Japan has kept its cases and deaths lower than many other countries, but its seven-day rolling average is growing and now stands at 28 per 100,000 people nationwide and 88 per 100,000 in Tokyo, according to the Health Ministry. This compares to 18.5 in the United States, 48 in Britain and 2.8 in India, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

"While almost nothing is helping to slow the infections, there are many factors that can accelerate them," said Dr. Shigeru Omi, a top government medical adviser, noting the Olympics and summer vacation. "The biggest risk is the lack of a sense of crisis, and without it the infections will further expand and put medical systems under severe strain."

Tokyo has been under its fourth state of emergency since July 12, ahead of the Olympics, which began last Friday despite widespread public opposition and concern that they could worsen the outbreak.

People are still roaming the streets despite stay-at-home requests, making the emergency measures largely ineffective at a time the more infectious delta strain is spreading.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said his government will decide Friday whether to expand the emergency measures. The government is expected to extend Tokyo's emergency until Aug. 31 and add the capital's three neighboring areas and Osaka, local media reported.

Suga defended his virus measures and denied the Olympics had anything to do with the record surge.

Tokyo officials said Thursday that two foreign Olympic athletes are currently hospitalized and 38 others are self-isolating at designated hotels in the city.

Gov. Yuriko Koike urged the organizers to make sure not to burden Tokyo's hospitals.

Japan's vaccine minister, Taro Kono, said in an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday that there is no evidence of the coronavirus spreading from Olympic participants to the general public.

"I don't think there have been any cases related to the Olympic Games. So we aren't worried about that issue," he said.

Koike said the medical system was under severe stress, and noted that experts have projected cases in Tokyo could exceed 4,500 a day by mid-August.

Koike noted that adults in their 30s or younger dominate recent cases and reminded them of following basic anti-virus measures including mask-wearing and avoiding having parties.

"I would like young people to be aware that the delta strain is a very tough, dangerous enemy," she said.

She also urged those below 64, who are largely unvaccinated, to get their shots as soon as their turn comes.

As of Wednesday, 26.3% of the Japanese population has been fully vaccinated. The percentage of the elderly who are fully vaccinated is 70%, or 24.8 million people.

Dr. Norio Ohmagari, director of the Disease Control and Prevention Center, said Tokyo's surge is "heading toward an explosive expansion we have never experienced before."

Dr. Masataka Inokuchi, another expert on the Tokyo metropolitan COVID-19 panel, said the rapid increase of patients is beginning to force hospitals to postpone scheduled surgical operations and reduce other treatment. Thousands of people who tested positive are now staying at home or designated hotels while waiting for hospital beds.

## Infrastructure deal: Senate suddenly acts to take up bill

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate has voted to begin work on a nearly \$1 trillion national infrastructure plan, acting with sudden speed after weeks of fits and starts once the White House and a bipartisan group of senators agreed on major provisions of the package that's key to President Joe Biden's agenda.

Biden welcomed the accord as one that would show America can "do big things." It includes the most significant long-term investments in nearly a century, he said, on par with building the transcontinental railroad or the Interstate highway system.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 21 of 88

"This deal signals to the world that our democracy can function," Biden said ahead of the vote Wednesday night. "We will once again transform America and propel us into the future."

After weeks of stop-and-go negotiations, the rare bipartisan showing on a 67-32 vote to start formal Senate consideration showed the high interest among senators in the infrastructure package. But it's unclear if enough Republicans will eventually join Democrats to support final passage.

Senate rules require 60 votes in the evenly split 50-50 chamber to proceed for consideration and ultimately pass this bill, meaning support from both parties.

The outcome will set the stage for the next debate over Biden's much more ambitious \$3.5 trillion spending package, a strictly partisan pursuit of far-reaching programs and services including child care, tax breaks and health care that touch almost every corner of American life. Republicans strongly oppose that bill, which would require a simple majority, and may try to stop both.

Lead GOP negotiator Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio announced the bipartisan group's agreement on the \$1 trillion package earlier Wednesday at the Capitol, flanked by four other Republican senators who had been in talks with Democrats and the White House.

After voting, Portman said the outcome showed that bipartisanship in Washington can work and he believed GOP support would only grow. "That's pretty darn good for a start," he said.

That group had labored with the White House to salvage the deal, a first part of Biden's big infrastructure agenda. Swelling to more than 700 pages, the bill includes \$550 billion in new spending for public works projects.

In all, 17 Republican senators joined the Democrats in voting to launch the debate, but most remained skeptical. The GOP senators were given a thick binder of briefing materials during a private lunch, but they asked many questions and wanted more details.

According to a 57-page GOP summary obtained by The Associated Press, the five-year spending package would be paid for by tapping \$205 billion in unspent COVID-19 relief aid and \$53 billion in unemployment insurance aid some states have halted. It also relies on economic growth to bring in \$56 billion, and other measures.

Giving Wednesday night's vote a boost, Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell announced late in the day he would vote to proceed, though whether he will support the final bill remains uncertain. The Republican negotiators met with McConnell earlier Wednesday and Portman said the leader "all along has been encouraging our efforts."

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, a lead Democratic negotiator who talks often with Republicans also spoke with Biden on Wednesday and said she hoped the results showed "our government can work."

Democrats, who have slim control of the House and Senate, face a timeline to act on what would be some of the most substantial pieces of legislation in years.

Filling in the details has become a month-long exercise ever since a bipartisan group of senators struck an agreement with Biden in June over the broad framework.

The new spending in the package dropped from about \$600 billion to \$550 billion, senators said, as money was eliminated for a public-private infrastructure bank and was reduced in other categories, including transit.

The package still includes \$110 billion for highways, \$65 billion for broadband and \$73 billion to modernize the nation's electric grid, according to a White House fact sheet.

Additionally, there's \$25 billion for airports, \$55 billion for waterworks and more than \$50 billion to bolster infrastructure against cyberattacks and climate change. There's also \$7.5 billion for electric vehicle charging stations.

Paying for the package has been a slog throughout the talks after Democrats rejected a plan to bring in funds by hiking the gas tax drivers pay at the pump and Republicans dashed an effort to boost the IRS to go after tax scofflaws.

Along with repurposing the COVID-19 relief and unemployment aid, other revenue would come from the sale of broadcast spectrum, reinstating fees that chemical companies used to pay for cleaning up the

nation's worst hazardous waste sites and drawing \$49 billion from reversing a Trump-era pharmaceutical rebate, among other sources.

The final deal could run into political trouble if it doesn't pass muster as fully paid for when the Congressional Budget Office assesses the details. But Portman said the package will be "more than paid for."

House Democrats have their own transportation bill, which includes much more spending to address rail transit, electric vehicles and other strategies to counter climate change.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi did not commit to supporting the package until she sees the details, but said Wednesday she's "rooting for it."

Pelosi said, "I very much want it to pass."

A recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC found 8 in 10 Americans favor some increased infrastructure spending.

Senators in the bipartisan group have been huddling privately for months. The group includes 10 core negotiators, split evenly between Democrats and Republicans, but has swelled at times to 22.

Transit funding has remained a stubborn dispute, as most Republican senators come from rural states where highways dominate and public transit is scarce, while Democrats view transit as a priority for cities and a key to easing congesting and fighting climate change.

Expanding access to broadband, which has become ever more vital for households during the coronavirus pandemic, sparked a new debate. Republicans pushed back against imposing regulations on internet service providers in a program that helps low-income people pay for service.

Meanwhile, Democrats are readying the broader \$3.5 trillion package that is being considered under budget rules that allow passage with 51 senators in the split Senate, with Vice President Kamala Harris able to break a tie. It would be paid for by increasing the corporate tax rate and the tax rate on Americans earning more than \$400,000 a year.

## **Simone Biles makes mental health the talk of the Tokyo Games**

By JENNA FRYER AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Brittney Griner has long been open about her ongoing battle with depression, an ailment that triggered suicidal thoughts when she was younger and last year drove her out of the WNBA bubble because the isolation was too much to handle.

Her own struggles made the U.S. women's basketball player feel deeply connected to Simone Biles for choosing her own well-being over sporting glory. Considered the best gymnast in the world, Biles pulled out of team competition in the middle of the event and then opted not to defend her 2016 gold medal in the all-around Thursday night at the Tokyo Games.

"It's a very tough decision to step away. Especially at the Olympic level," Griner said Thursday. "If you're not your best self, you're not going to be the best in your sport or help your team."

The topic of mental health, growing in frequency in sports over the past year, was everywhere at the Tokyo Olympics on Thursday, a day after Biles made her decision to not compete in the all-around. Olympians in many sports have spent the past two days coming forward to recount their own battles while offering support to Biles.

"This Olympic Games has not only had a conversation about mental health, but now has movement in the right direction of mental health support," U.S. swimmer Allison Schmitt said after the Americans won silver in the 4x200 freestyle relay.

On Thursday, Biles expressed appreciation about the response she's received, posting on Twitter: "the outpouring love & support I've received has made me realize I'm more than my accomplishments and gymnastics which I never truly believed before."

Portland Trail Blazers star Damian Lillard, a member of the U.S. men's basketball team, said his success and salary doesn't make him immune to personal struggles. The discussion sparked by Biles made him reflective Thursday of his own journey.

"When people describe what depression looks like or battling mental health issues, sometimes I think back

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 23 of 88

like, 'Man, I had a couple of those moments. I just didn't recognize that's what was happening,'" he said. Lillard said he's careful about his social media consumption, which can distort and intensify already strong emotions.

"We are in an era where everybody has access to us," Lillard said. "In the past, being a professional athlete or being an Olympian, you were in front of the world but everybody couldn't just tweet you and everybody couldn't slander you on Twitter and you become a trending topic and talk about you on Instagram and the Internet just wasn't such a powerful place."

At the Olympics, the support for Biles has been overwhelmingly supportive. Social media has been harsher; strangers have accused Biles of being weak, a quitter, and said her decisions in Tokyo have tarnished her legacy.

Former Olympic swimmer Kirsty Coventry, an IOC member and chair of the IOC Athlete's Commission, recommends athletes avoid the social platforms during competition. "Some people can leave negative comments, and they can be really hurtful to athletes," Coventry said.

Across the Games, here is some of the other discussion about mental health heard among Olympians on Thursday:

## SAM MIKULAK

The three-time U.S. Olympian and six-time national champion will retire following next week's parallel bars final and plans to attend grad school. A gymnast for most of his 28 years, Mikulak said he's considering a career as a mental health professional.

He said he's spoken to Biles since her stunning withdrawal Tuesday from team competition after she botched her vault routine and recognized she wasn't in the right mental space to continue.

"She seems like she's doing what's best for her," Mikulak said. "I am really proud of her for prioritizing mental health and making sure that everyone knows and understands that we're not just athletes. We're human beings, and sometimes it's too much, and when that's the case you have to do what's best for you."

## CHRISTEN PRESS

The U.S. women's soccer star said she relies on a twice-daily meditation practice to decompress and process, a tool she uses year-round whether playing in a tournament or out of season.

"I've spent a lot of time trying to develop a self-love and self-care that can power me through stressful times," Press said. "We all have history and baggage. And I think as people, knowing that it is our responsibility to take care of ourselves and to love ourselves first, can really help us take care of each other in a more beautiful way."

## RORY MCILROY

The Irish Olympic golfer welcomes the conversations. To him, they're like any other health discussions — and shouldn't have a stigma attached.

"I'm glad that at least the conversation has started," he said. "It's not taboo anymore. People can talk about it just as (if) somebody has a knee or elbow injury. If you don't feel right, 100% right mentally, that's an injury too."

The persisting notion of "powering through it" persists, he acknowledges. But McIlroy says hearing from people like Biles and swimmer Michael Phelps about mental health makes an impact — a positive one.

"When you hear the most decorated Olympian ever talk about his struggles and then probably the greatest gymnast ever talk about her struggles, then it encourages more people that have felt that way to come out and share how they felt."

## ISADORA CERULLO

The Brazilian rugby player said her team works regularly with a psychologist.

"We treat our brains as much as we treat bodies," Cerullo said. "Every international event, especially

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 24 of 88

the Olympics, has its own mental struggle and additional mental weight attached to it. You see that with Simone Biles putting her mental health ahead of everything, and it's opening up a conversation about how important mental health is for athletes — and everyone else. Athletes are just the tip of the iceberg."

PHIL DALHAUSSER

The U.S. men's beach volleyball player said criticism of Biles was unfair. He noted the enormous pressure Biles has been under as the face of the Olympics and her status as the greatest of all time, with "GOAT" sometimes printed on her leotard.

"She's been in the gym, probably since she's been 3. And this is her life," he said. "So whatever is going on in her head must be so bad that she's willing to pull herself out of a competition? To me, that sucks."

## Olympics Latest: Biles cheers on all-around gymnasts

TOKYO (AP) — The Latest on the Tokyo Olympics, which are taking place under heavy restrictions after a year's delay because of the coronavirus pandemic:

Simone Biles is in the stands supporting American teammates Sunisa Lee and Jade Carey in the Olympic women's gymnastics all-around final.

Biles topped qualifying but opted not to defend the title she won in Rio de Janeiro to focus on her mental health. Biles sat with Grace McCallum, Jordan Chiles and MyKayla Skinner to cheer on Lee and Carey.

Rebeca Andrade of Brazil is in the lead following the first rotation, followed by Carey and Angelina Melnikova of the ROC.

Katie Ledecky has advanced to the final of her final Olympic event, posting the top time in preliminaries of the 800-meter freestyle.

After anchoring the United States to a silver medal in the 4x200 free relay during the morning session, Ledecky returned to the Tokyo Aquatics Centre in the evening to post the top qualifying time of 8 minutes, 15.67 seconds.

Another American, Katie Grimes, was the second-fastest qualifier at 8:17.05. Australia's double gold medalist, Ariarne Titmus, also advanced to Saturday morning's final to set up a fourth and final showdown with Ledecky.

Ledecky will be going for her second gold medal of these games and sixth individual medal overall, which would be the most of any female swimmer. She's currently tied with Hungarian great Krisztina Egerszegi.

The women's all-around gymnastics final is underway without reigning champion Simone Biles.

Biles pulled out of the competition on Wednesday to focus on her mental health. That leaves the bid for the gold medal wide open.

American Sunisa Lee, Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, and Russian athletes Angelina Melnikova and Vladislava Urazova were separated by mere tenths during qualifying. Biles' withdrawal opened the door for American Jade Carey to also compete in the event.

The top six gymnasts from qualifying will start on vault before making their way to uneven bars, balance beam and floor.

An American has won each of the last four Olympic titles. The last non-American to win was Simona Amanar of Romania in Sydney in 2000.

Novak Djokovic is into the medal rounds of the Olympic tennis tournament.

The top-ranked Serb rolled past home favorite Kei Nishikori of Japan 6-2, 6-0 to reach the semifinals and extend his bid for a Golden Slam.

Steffi Graf in 1988 is the only tennis player to achieve the Golden Slam by winning all four Grand Slam tournaments and Olympic gold in the same calendar year.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 25 of 88

Djokovic has already won the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon this year and needs the Tokyo Games title and the U.S. Open trophy to complete the Golden Slam.

Djokovic's semifinal opponent will be either Alexander Zverev of Germany or Jeremy Chardy of France.

Djokovic was to play again later with Serbian partner Nina Stojanovic against the German pair of Laura Siegemund and Kevin Krawietz in the mixed doubles quarterfinals.

## MEDAL ALERT

Aaron Wolf has won Japan's eighth gold medal in judo at the Tokyo Olympics, defeating South Korea's Cho Gu-ham 5:35 into golden score for his first Olympic title in the men's 100-kilogram division.

Wolf, whose father is American, won the draining final bout by ippon with an o-uchi-gari throw. Wolf beat Georgian veteran Varlam Liparteliani in the semifinals to reach his first Olympic final.

Japan has won eight golds, one silver and one bronze from the first 12 judo weight classes, adding to their record total of gold medals and total medals in the nation's homegrown martial art. Wolf and Shori Hamada (women's 78 kilogram) swept both golds available Thursday at the Budokan.

Portugal's two-time world champion Jorge Fonseca and Russian athlete Niaz Iliasov won bronze. Cho upset Fonseca in the semifinals.

Allison Schmitt has entered rare territory with her swim in the women's 4x200-meter freestyle relay.

Schmitt became only the fourth American female swimmer to win 10 Olympic medals in her career. She earned a silver for her leadoff leg at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

The 31-year-old Schmitt is a team captain as she takes part in her fourth Olympics. She's earned a pair of relay medals in Tokyo, also picking up a bronze for swimming in the preliminaries of the 4x100 free relay.

Schmitt now has four golds, three silvers and three bronzes in her career. The only other American female swimmers to win more are Jenny Thompson, Dara Torres and Natalie Coughlin, each of whom had 12 career medals.

Asked about her milestone, Schmitt broke down in tears. She says "getting to the Olympics is hard. Winning an Olympic medal is even harder."

## MEDAL ALERT

Shori Hamada has won Japan's seventh gold medal in judo at the Tokyo Olympics, beating French former world champion Madeleine Malonga by ippon just 1:08 into the women's 78-kilogram final.

The result was a reversal of the two players' bout in the 2019 world championship final, which was also held in Tokyo. Hamada pinned Malonga early and held on for the ippon to win her first Olympic medal at the Budokan.

Hamada, who won the 2018 world title, is the third Japanese woman to win gold in the past week. The home nation is dominating its homegrown martial art with nine medals from the first 11 weight classes.

Germany's Anna-Maria Wagner -- the current world champion -- and Brazil's Mayra Aguiar won bronze.

## MEDAL ALERT

Australia's Jessica Fox has made Olympic history at the Tokyo Games as the first gold medalist in women's canoe slalom.

Fox made the last run of the final and crushed it, beating rival and silver-medalist Mallory Franklin of Britain with a winning run of 105.04 seconds through the rapids of the Kasai Canoe Slalom Center.

It was a clean run without the mistakes and penalty seconds that prevented her from winning gold in the kayak slalom two days earlier, when she won bronze.

The women's canoe slalom is one of 18 new events introduced to the Olympics this year in a push for gender equity. It replaced the men's double canoe slalom.

Andrea Herzog of Germany took bronze.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 26 of 88

## MEDAL ALERT

Czech shooter Jiri Liptak has outlasted teammate David Kostelecky in a shoot-off to win men's trap gold at the Tokyo Olympics.

Liptak and Kostelecky tied after 50 shots, hitting 43 targets to set an Olympic record. Both shooters hit the first six targets in the shoot-off before Kostelecky missed on the seventh.

Great Britain's Matthew Coward-Holley took bronze.

Liptak finished 18th at the 2012 London Games, but did not compete in Rio five years ago. Kostelecky earned his second medal in his sixth Olympics with the gold he won at the 2008 Beijing Games.

More than 50 athletes and officials with the Australian track and field team were briefly isolated in their rooms at the Olympics after American pole vaulter Sam Kendricks tested positive for COVID-19.

Kendricks, the two-time world champion, is out of the Games.

The Australian Olympic committee said three of its athletes were still being kept isolated after "a brief casual contact with a U.S. track and field athlete who had tested positive." Those three can still train, but away from other team members.

The Australian Olympic committee said the three returned negative tests and would be tested daily. All three were vaccinated. The committee did not name them.

Another 41 Aussie athletes and 13 officials who were also initially isolated were allowed to return to their regular routines after about two hours. The committee says all athletes are expected to compete as planned. The track and field events begin Friday.

Kendricks was a strong contender for gold in Tokyo. His dad posted on social media that his son had no symptoms but was informed while in Tokyo that he tested positive for the virus and was out of the Olympics. He has been placed in isolation at a hotel.

The German Olympic team says a cycling official will be sent home a day after he used a racist slur during the men's time trial.

Patrick Moster is the sports director for the German cycling federation and was overseeing the cycling squad at the Tokyo Olympics.

He used the slur to describe a rider from Algeria while urging a German rider to catch up. It was heard on TV broadcasts.

German national Olympic committee president Alfons Hörmann says he considers Moster's subsequent apology to be "sincere" but that "fair play, respect and tolerance ... are non-negotiable" for the German team.

## MEDAL ALERT

Slovakia's Zuzana Rehak Stefecekova has set an Olympic record in women's trap to deny the United States a third-straight shotgun gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

Rehak Stefecekova hit 43 of 50 targets on a breezy day at Asaka Shooting Range, beating American Kayle Browning.

Alessandro Perilli took bronze to earn the first medal in San Marino's 61-year Olympic history.

Americans Vincent Hancock and Amber English opened the shotgun events by sweeping skeet on Tuesday.

A 37-year-old police officer, Rehak Stefecekova took silver at the 2008 Beijing and 2012 London Games, and missed Rio in 2016 due to the birth of her son.

The IOC's medical director says COVID-19 cases at the Tokyo Games are not burdening the city's medical system.

Officials say that from July 1 through Wednesday, 198 people accredited for the Tokyo Games have tested positive for COVID-19, including 23 athletes. Three of the new cases from Wednesday were athletes staying in the Olympic Village.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 27 of 88

Olympic organizers say two people among the 198 are receiving hospital treatment. Neither of those two cases is severe.

Medical Director Richard Budgett says care for athletes is being provided by their own team medical staff and a polyclinic at the village.

He says he's confident "the Olympics are being run without actually affecting that essential secondary care and hospital provision" for residents of Japan.

Tokyo, meanwhile, reported 3,177 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, setting an all-time high and exceeding 3,000 for the first time.

Experts say Tokyo's surge is being propelled by the new, more contagious delta variant of the virus. There is no evidence of the disease being transmitted from Olympics participants to the general public.

American world-champion pole vaulter Sam Kendricks will miss the Olympics after testing positive for COVID-19.

Kendricks' dad posted on social media that his son had no symptoms but was informed while in Tokyo that he tested positive and was out of the competition.

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee confirmed the news and said Kendricks has been placed in isolation at a hotel. He is being supported by the USOPC and USA Track and Field.

Kendricks won the bronze medal at the 2016 Olympics and took gold at the last two world championships. He holds the American record at 19 feet, 10 1/2 inches (6.06 meters).

## UPSET ALERT

China has surprised the U.S. and Australia with a world-record performance in the women's 4x200-meter freestyle relay.

Katie Ledecky took the anchor leg for the Americans in third place, nearly 2 seconds behind the Chinese and also trailing the Aussies.

Ledecky passed Australia's Leah Neale and closed the gap significant on China's Li Bingjie, but couldn't quite catch her at the end.

Li touched in 7 minutes, 40.33 seconds, denying both Ledecky and Ariarne Titmus another gold medal. After winning both the 200 and 400 free individual titles, Titmus led off for Australia in the relay.

The Americans claimed silver in 7:40.73, while Australia took the bronze in 7:41.29. It was the second swimming world record of the Tokyo Games -- in fact, all three medalists broke the previous mark of 7:41.50 set by the Aussies at the 2019 world championships.

Phil Dalhausser and Nick Lucena are moving on in the Olympic beach volleyball tournament.

The Americans beat Julian Azaad and Nicolas Capogrosso of Argentina 21-19, 18-21, 15-6 to improve to 2-1 in the round-robin. That's good for at least one more match in Tokyo.

In all, the American teams are 8-1 in the preliminary stage. Three other teams still have one match to play.

USA Climbing head coach Josh Larsen has returned to the United States due to the death of his father.

Meg Coyne, national teams manager and assistant coach, will temporarily step into Larson's role.

Sport climbing is making its Olympic debut at the Tokyo Games. Qualification rounds begin on Aug. 3 with the men. The women qualifying the following day.

Reigning BMX racing gold medalists Mariana Pajon of Columbia and Connor Fields of the United States have moved on to the semifinals at the Tokyo Olympics.

Pajon is the only BMX rider to earn two Olympic gold medals. She won all three of her qualifying rounds to finish with three points. Her top challenger, American Alise Willoughby, also won her three qualifying runs.

Fields, gold medalist at the 2016 Rio Olympics, won two qualifying heats and finished second in another. France's Joris Daudet and Sylvain Andre won all three of their heats.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 28 of 88

Former world champion Niek Kimmann of the Netherlands won two heats to qualify after colliding with a race steward who had wandered onto the course during a training run on Monday. The top four riders from each of two semifinals will move on to Friday's finals.

Simone Biles has expressed her gratitude on social media for the support she has received since dropping out of the women's team gymnastics final at the Tokyo Olympics.

She withdrew after the first rotation, vault, because she said wasn't in the right headspace to compete. A day later, she gave up her chance to defend her all-around title.

The most decorated gymnast ever said in a tweet, "the outpouring love & support I've received has made me realize I'm more than my accomplishments and gymnastics which I never truly believed before." Biles still has not decided if she will compete in the individual events.

The women's all-around competition is Thursday night Tokyo time, while individual events start Sunday.

## MEDAL ALERT

Living up to the hype, American swimmer Caeleb Dressel has claimed the first individual Olympic gold medal of his career.

Dressel held off the defending Olympic champion, Australia's Kyle Chalmers, with a furious sprint to the wall. The winning time was an Olympic record of 47.02 seconds.

Dressel beat Chalmers by a mere six-hundredths of a second, leaving the 2016 winner with a silver medal this time. The bronze was claimed by Russia's Kliment Kolesenikov.

The first three gold medals of Dressel's career were all in the relays. Now, he's got one earned all by himself.

## MEDAL ALERT

China has claimed its first gold medal at the Olympic pool.

Zhang Yufei turned in a dominating performance to win the women's 200-meter butterfly with an Olympic-record time of 2 minutes, 3.86 seconds. She was more than a body length ahead of the pair of Americans, Regan Smith and Hali Flickinger.

The U.S. swimmers dueled back and forth for the silver, with Smith pulling ahead at the end to touch in 2:05.30. Flickinger earned the bronze in 2:05.65.

Italian tennis player Fabio Fognini has apologized for yelling at himself with a homophobic slur during a loss at the Tokyo Games.

Fognini used the offensive Italian word repeatedly during the three-set defeat to Russian athlete Daniil Medvedev in the third round on Wednesday.

Fognini writes in an Instagram story that the extremely hot conditions "affected his head" and that he "used a really stupid expression toward myself."

He adds that "obviously I didn't want to offend anyone's feelings" and that "I love the LGBT community and I apologize for the nonsense that I let out."

The Instagram story was written on a rainbow background.

The often volatile Fognini was kicked out of the U.S. Open doubles tournament in 2017 for vulgarly insulting the chair umpire during his first-round loss in singles.

## MEDAL ALERT

Izaak Stubblety-Cook of Australia has won the 200-meter breaststroke at the Olympic pool in Tokyo.

Stubblety-Cook rallied on the final lap to pass Arno Kamminga of the Netherlands, who went out fast and tried to hold on. The winning time was an Olympic record of 2 minutes, 6.38 seconds as the Aussies captured their fifth gold of the swimming competition, matching the powerful American team.

Kamminga was under world-record pace through the first 150 meters, but he faded to the silver in 2:07.01. The bronze went to Finland's Matti Mattsson in 2:07.24.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 29 of 88

American Nic Fink finished fifth.

## MEDAL ALERT

Bobby Finke of the United States has captured gold in the debut of the men's 800-meter swimming freestyle event at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri grabbed the silver after leading most of the race, while the bronze went to Mykhailo Romachuk of Ukraine.

It was a thrilling finish. Germany's Florian Wellbrock grabbed the lead from Paltrinieri on the final flip, with Finke lurking back in fourth. But the American turned on a dazzling burst of speed at the end of the 16-lap race, passing all three swimmers ahead of him to take the gold.

Finke's winning time was 7 minutes, 41.87 seconds, just 0.24 ahead of Paltrinieri. Romachuk finished in 7:42.33, knocking Wellbrock back to fourth.

The men's 800 freestyle was added to the Olympic program for the Tokyo Games, marking the first time that approximate distance was contested by the men since there was an 880-yard race at the 1904 St. Louis Games.

## MEDAL ALERT

Italy's Valentina Rodini and Federica Cesarini have surged over the final 50 meters to snatch the gold medal in the women's lightweight double sculls.

The Dutch team of Marieke Keiser and Ilse Paulis had led nearly the entire race but collapsed to the bronze medal in the final 20 meters as the French team of Laura Tarantola and Claire Bove won silver.

The Dutch team nearly slipped out of the medals entirely, and only took the podium by 0.01 seconds ahead of Great Britain.

American beach volleyball players Kelly Claes and Sarah Sponcil dispatched Kenya in just 25 minutes, the fastest women's match since the Olympics adopted their current format.

The U.S. pair beat Brackcides Khadambi and Gaudencia Makokha 21-8, 21-6 to improve to 2-0 and almost certainly clinch a spot in the knockout round of 16. They have one match remaining, against Brazil on Saturday.

The match was the fastest since the international volleyball federation adopted the rally scoring and best-of-three sets format in 2002.

## MEDAL ALERT

Ireland's duo of Fintan McCarthy and Paul O'Donovan held off a late charge from Germany's Jonathan Rommelmann and Jason Osborne to win the gold medal in men's lightweight double sculls.

The Irish boat looked secure through the first 1,000 meters before the Germans closed the gap with 500 to go and threatened to pull even.

A late surge over the final 200 meters sent the Irish to the win by 0.86 seconds.

Italy's Stefano Oppo and Pietro Ruta won bronze.

## MEDAL ALERT

New Zealand's Grace Pendergrast and Kerri Gowler have won gold in the rowing women's pair.

The Kiwi duo won the world championship in 2019 and were favored to grab victory in Tokyo. They are just the third non-European team to win the Olympic event and the first since 1996.

Russia's Vasilisia Stepanova and Elena Oriabinskaia surged past Canada's Cailleigh Filmer and Hillary Janssens over the final 300 meters to take the silver medal. Canada won bronze.

## MEDAL ALERT

Croatian brothers Martin and Valent Sinkovic have dominated the men's pair in Olympic rowing, cruising

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 30 of 88

to victory in a race they led from the start.

The Croatians were the heavy favorites. They won double sculls in 2016, then switched boat disciplines and won two world championships before claiming another Olympic gold medal. They are the first men to win Olympic gold in both double sculls and the sweep pairs.

Romania's duo of Marius Cozmiuc and Ciprian Tudosas won silver. Denmark's Frederic Vystavel and Joachim Sutton won bronze.

## Floods make thousands homeless in Bangladesh Rohingya camps

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Days of heavy rainfall have pounded Rohingya refugee camps in southern Bangladesh, destroying dwellings and sending thousands of people to live with extended families or in communal shelters.

In the 24 hours until Wednesday afternoon, more than 30 centimeters (11.8 inches) of rain fell on the camps in Cox's Bazar district hosting more than 800,000 Rohingya, the U.N. refugee agency said. That's nearly half the average July rainfall in one day, and more heavy downpours are expected in the next few days and the monsoon season stretches over the next three months.

"The situation is further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is currently a strict national lockdown in response to rising cases across the country," the agency said.

It said six people died in the camps earlier this week — five people in a landslide caused by the rains and a child swept away by floodwaters.

Citing initial reports, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said more than 12,000 refugees were affected by the heavy rain and an estimated 2,500 shelters were damaged or destroyed. More than 5,000 refugees have been temporarily relocated to other family members' shelters or communal facilities, the agency said in a statement.

Hannah Macdonald, a spokesperson for the UNHCR, said in an email that emergency response teams have been deployed to help affected families.

Refugees said they were struggling to eat and drink properly.

"Due to the continuous rainfall for the last four days, today my house is full of water," said Khatija Begum, who has five children. "We are not even able to eat." Begum said she fears her children will drown and die in their sleep.

The refugee agency said the bad weather, landslides and floods have further exacerbated the suffering and humanitarian needs of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Cyclones, heavy monsoon rains, floods, landslides and other natural hazards are an annual difficulty in the camps. More than 700,000 Rohingya have fled to refugee camps in Bangladesh since August 2017, when the military in Buddhist-majority Myanmar began a harsh crackdown on the Muslim ethnic group following an attack by insurgents.

The crackdown included rapes, killings and the torching of thousands of homes, and was termed ethnic cleansing by global rights groups and the United Nations. While Bangladesh and Myanmar have sought to arrange repatriations, the Rohingya are too fearful to return home.

The International Organization for Migration says Cox's Bazar district, where more than 1 million Rohingya refugees live, is one of the most disaster-prone parts of Bangladesh.

It is a delta nation crisscrossed by many rivers that regularly receives intense rainfall due to its monsoon climate and location on the Bay of Bengal, where the warm waters can generate destructive tropical cyclones.

## Europe on vacation, but vaccinations not taking a break

By NICOLAS GARRIGA and MIKE CORDER Associated Press

CARRY-LE-ROUET, France (AP) — Europe's famed summer holiday season is in full swing, but efforts to

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 31 of 88

inoculate people against the coronavirus are not taking a break.

Instead, with lockdowns easing despite concerns about variants and nations looking to breathe new life into their ailing tourism industries, vaccinations are being taken to vacationers. It's all part of an effort to maintain momentum in campaigns to protect against the pandemic that has killed more than 1 million across the continent, including in the European Union, the United Kingdom and Russia.

From France's sun-kissed Mediterranean coast to the azure waters of Italy's Adriatic beaches and Russian Black Sea resorts, health authorities are trying to make a COVID-19 shot as much part of this summer as sunscreen and shades for those who are not yet fully vaccinated.

The new drive to take shots to tourists is a way of adapting to Europe's annual summer migration, when it seems whole cities empty of their residents for weeks. Those long absences from home pose a particular challenge for many nations European, where public health systems often focus on delivering vaccines to people based on where they live.

In Britain, where 70% of adults already are fully vaccinated, campaigns now are aimed at the younger generations with walk-in pop-up clinics in parks, a recent event complete with DJ at the Tate Modern museum and shots on offer to music lovers at the Latitude Festival.

Mickael Bomard, from Le Plessis-Robinson in the Paris region, recently took his 15-year-old son Nolan to a squat building just meters (yards) from the gently lapping waves of the Mediterranean at Carry-le-Rouet, a popular holiday spot near the port city of Marseille.

"Given the measures that are being taken now and the obligations when school starts again in September, we have decided to get him vaccinated," Bomard said.

The vaccination center is giving shots to about 200 people each day — vacationers and locals — says Agnes Gatto, a nurse who runs the facility.

In France, where resistance to the vaccine has been particularly stubborn, a new rule came into effect last week that forces those who want to visit public sites ranging from cinemas to casinos to the Eiffel Tower to get a pass that shows they are either fully vaccinated, have tested negative for the coronavirus or recovered from COVID-19. The measure will be extended to restaurants and cafes from next month. That's part of the reason more people are leaving the sand for a shot in the arm.

It was enough to push Bomard to take Nolan: "Not being able to go out for dinner together with the family, go to restaurants, and maybe having to find at the last minute an appointment in a packed vaccination center in September in order for him to go to middle school."

After a slow start to vaccinations, 57% of adults in the European Union are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the bloc's executive says.

Even so, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is warning against complacency given the well-established presence in Europe of the highly contagious delta variant.

She recently said that the "variant is very dangerous. I therefore call on everyone — who has the opportunity — to be vaccinated. For their own health and to protect others."

To that end, flexible vaccination initiatives are cropping up across Europe.

In Italy, a vaccination van is set to start circulating in the popular Adriatic Sea destination Rimini this weekend, following a similar mobile campaign at Lazio's beaches, where many Romans have second homes. At Rome's main airport, meanwhile, authorities this week opened a "Vax&Go" area where any traveler passing through can get a vaccine just before departure.

Ilaria Iannuzzi, a doctor at the airport facility, said Thursday that its main goal "is to bring vaccination closer to people, especially by facilitating those who need it, those who couldn't book it or couldn't respect their appointment."

Still, some have complained of difficulties of getting vaccine shots outside of their home regions. Milan residents on vacation along the Ligurian coast have not been able to get a second shot, *Corriere della Sera* daily reported, for instance. But Liguria's regional governor, Giovanni Toti, said the bureaucratic bug responsible could be ironed out in days.

In Russia, which is struggling with widespread vaccine skepticism, the popular southern vacation destination of Krasnodar, a region home to the renowned Black Sea resort of Sochi, is trying to persuade the

hesitant: Starting Aug. 1, it will only let visitors into hotels and spas if they have a negative coronavirus test or a vaccination certificate. Tourists with a negative test will be required to get vaccinated locally within three days of arrival.

"We will provide the vaccine," Krasnodar Gov. Veniamin Kondratyev said.

In France, the pandemic pass appears to be having the desired effect of pushing some people skeptical of COVID-19 vaccines to get the shot anyway.

"I wasn't really in favor of the vaccine because I'm young. I haven't settled yet, I have no children, etc. so I'm a bit afraid of the long-term side effects," said 24-year-old Carry-le-Rouet resident Noemie Cienzo. "But now, with the PCR tests we have to do every time we want to go out, I think I will (get vaccinated) otherwise it will become complicated."

## Is Biden overlooking Bureau of Prisons as reform target?

By COLLEEN LONG and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden took quick action after his inauguration to start shifting federal inmates out of privately run prisons, where complaints of abuses abound.

"It is just the beginning of my administration's plan to address systemic problems in our criminal justice system," Biden promised in January as he signed an executive order on the matter.

The administration also is expected to encourage reductions in bulging state and local prison populations by allowing the use coronavirus relief dollars to help reduce overcrowding.

But in both of these efforts, Biden is overlooking a prime -- and, in some ways, easier -- target for improving the conditions of incarcerated people: the federal Bureau of Prisons.

While most criminal justice overhauls require action from local officials or legislation, reforming the federal prison system is something Biden and his Justice Department control. And there are crying needs there for improvement.

Even before the coronavirus, federal prisons were plagued by violence, suicide, escapes, understaffing and health concerns. The pandemic made things worse. And now these facilities are set to absorb even more prisoners from private institutions that are no longer in business with the government.

Advocates say that while the Democratic president has talked a good game, his actions tell a different story, particularly because the Justice Department has refused to reverse a legal opinion requiring inmates released during the pandemic to return to prison.

"There isn't an appetite in the administration to act," said Inimai Chettiar of the Justice Action Network.

The administration has prioritized infrastructure as its top legislative target and is intently focused on working to contain rising coronavirus cases. Other issues -- like prisons -- have prompted impassioned speeches but less action. Administration officials say it's just been six months, a half-year colored by the virus, and much more is in store.

But a key part of Biden's agenda is combating racism, and nowhere is racial equity a more fraught issue than inside prisons -- institutions that first proliferated in the 1800s as a way to lock away Black men for minor offenses after the abolition of slavery and that are still disproportionately filled with Black people.

In his January speech on racial equity in which he issued the prisons order, Biden said it was a step "to stop corporations from profiteering off of incarcerating -- incarceration that is less humane and less safe, as the studies show."

Meanwhile, the number of federal prisoners is rising. Defendants end up in federal prison usually because their crime crossed state lines, or they violated a specific federal law. There are about 156,000 federal inmates. In total, 38% are Black and 57% are white, 1.5% Asian and 2.4% Native American.

Most are serving sentences between 5 and 20 years, and 46% of those sentences are for drug offenses. Another 20% are for weapons, explosives or arson charges.

The administration can't control the laws that get someone sent to prison. But it can control staffing, transparency, health care, the use of solitary confinement and, most of all, agency leadership.

The head of the Bureau of Prisons is a Trump holdover, Michael Carvajal, who has been in charge as the



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 33 of 88

coronavirus raged behind bars, infecting more than 43,000 federal inmates. He also oversaw an unprecedented run of federal executions in the last six months of Donald Trump's presidency that was a likely virus super spreader.

Administration officials have been mulling whether to replace him, but no decision has been made, according to officials who spoke to The Associated Press.

One question they should be asking, according to Andrea Armstrong, a Loyola Law School professor who studies prisons, is whether the director's role is to do more than keep operations running smoothly.

"Real leadership," she says, "would be convening people incarcerated, wardens and programming staff together to say, OK, we have an enormous problem ... how do we address this?"

Armstrong and other advocates do not diminish what has been done already in six months, including the private prisons order and a moratorium by the Justice Department that halted federal executions.

It's just they had higher hopes for action, including a more definitive end to executions, especially because Biden is the first president to openly oppose the death penalty. And they hoped he would push harder to make sure the Justice Department was implementing changes enacted under former President Donald Trump.

The "First Step Act," approved in 2018, gives judges more discretion when sentencing some drug offenders, eases mandatory minimum sentences and encourages inmates to participate in programs designed to reduce the risk of recidivism, with credits that can be used to gain an earlier release.

But those programs can't be completed right now, because there are not enough workers to facilitate them. Nearly one-third of federal correctional officer jobs in the United States are vacant, forcing prisons to use cooks, teachers, nurses and other workers to guard inmates.

"There need to be enough people working in a prison to keep people housed in a prison safe. And they must be able to get access to the programs that should allow their release," said Maria Morris of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Prison Project.

Under Trump, the Bureau of Prisons wasn't granting the early-release credits that inmates were due. In addition, the absence of a uniform policy on masks and hygiene led to massive coronavirus outbreaks.

More than 28,000 inmates were released as part of an effort to ease pandemic conditions as long as they met certain criteria, including they were not likely a danger to others. But about 1,900 of the more than 7,000 people who remain on home confinement - the others completed their sentences - likely have to go back, and advocates question why it is necessary to send them back, particularly as the highly transmissible delta variant surges.

A legal opinion issued in the waning weeks of the Trump administration said the remaining inmates would have to return to prison at the end of the coronavirus emergency, and the Biden administration appears on track to stand behind that legal interpretation.

That approach is frustrating civil rights groups and advocates who say Biden is ignoring opportunities for real reform.

"If the president is really trying to walk back from his '94 crime bill and be supportive of criminal justice reform, it would just be completely in conflict to allow these individuals to return to prison," Chettiar said, referring to Biden's support as a senator of a bill that was aimed at reducing crime and wound up sending thousands more to prison.

Advocates for the incarcerated are puzzled by the president's reluctance to step in on matters that could be addressed with the stroke of a pen or internal changes.

"It is clear it is their willingness and not their inability," Chettiar said.

## Harris releases strategy to tackle migration's root causes

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris said Thursday that efforts to address root causes of migration from three Central American countries won't produce immediate results as she unveiled a broad strategy that avoids detailed targets and deadlines.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 34 of 88

Harris said the United States alone cannot tackle deep-seated motives for people to leave Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, including corruption, violence and poverty. The governments of Mexico, Japan and South Korea, along with the United Nations, have committed to joining the push, she said without elaborating.

A one-page letter from the vice president and a fact sheet adhere to previous statements supporting short-term relief for migration pressures like extreme weather while committing sustained attention to long-term motivations for people to leave their countries.

"We will build on what works, and we will pivot away from what does not work," she wrote. "It will not be easy, and progress will not be instantaneous, but we are committed to getting it right."

Harris noted that she recently traveled to Guatemala, "where one of the largest challenges is corruption." On Tuesday, the Biden administration said it suspended cooperation with Guatemala's Attorney General's Office after the firing of the agency's top anti-corruption prosecutor, saying it "lost confidence" in the country's willingness to fight corruption.

The White House also released a "Collaborative Migration Management Strategy," which President Joe Biden ordered in February to outline how the United States will work with other countries to address migration flows. Like the strategy on root causes, the one-page document is a broad statement of principles, many of which have been espoused by Biden and top aides before. They include expanding protections and job opportunities in countries where people are leaving, creating more legal pathways to come to the United States and fostering "secure and humane management of borders."

Harris' task, which Biden assumed when he was President Barack Obama's vice president, is enormous in scope and complexity, and the administration has struggled for short- and long-term responses.

U.S. border authorities reported large numbers of arrivals at the Mexican border in June, with significant increases in people arriving in families and children traveling alone. The trend appears to be continuing in July, when soaring temperatures often deter people from coming.

A group of 509 migrants from Central and South America turned themselves in Monday night in Hidalgo, Texas, hours after another group of 336 migrants was encountered nearby, said Brian Hastings, the Border Patrol sector chief in Rio Grande Valley, the busiest corridor for illegal crossings.

On Monday, the Department of Homeland Security said it resumed fast-track deportations, known as expedited removals, for "certain" families that don't express fear of being returned home. While it never announced a suspension, many families that enter the country illegally have been getting released in the United States with orders to appear in immigration court or report to immigration authorities.

## Sneaking a peek: Fans find creative ways to glimpse Olympics

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

MISHIMA, Japan (AP) — The soon-to-be Olympic champion was in what cyclists derisively call "the pain cave," empty lungs searing and legs feeling like dead weight. The climb he was on seemed interminable, the evil gradient sending him straight into the sky.

Hardly the time for Richard Carapaz to look fondly upon a near-naked man running beside him on the road.

Except ... did the stoic rider from Ecuador actually crack a smile?

Indeed, he did. That same stunt that overzealous fans pull in the Alps and Pyrenees during the Tour de France, where it might annoy Carapaz to no end, was actually welcomed by him in the Olympic road race. That's because the draconian measures taken by the organizers of the Tokyo Games to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have also prevented fans from the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see most of the world's best athletes perform on their own soil.

Or roads, as it were.

"It gave us a sensation of somehow coming back to normality, seeing the fans there," Carapaz said later. "I loved it."

Technically speaking, a ban on fans for almost every event remains in place. Police and volunteer se-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 35 of 88

curity guards are on almost constant patrol. But that hasn't stopped many locals from catching a glimpse of the action.

On the way to the opening ceremony, thousands lined the street to cheer for the buses, even though they had no idea who was riding inside. They held up signs that read "Welcome to Tokyo," despite public sentiment that has run strongly against the staging of the Games. When drones rose above the stadium, they were oohing and ahing and taking pictures, just as they would have been watching their beloved Shohei Ono competing in their national pastime, Judo.

Sixty miles to the east, where surfing made its Olympic debut, fans found their way to Tsurigasaki Beach. Starting on the first day of the three-day tournament, dozens crowded around the plastic orange fence marking the security perimeter, their revelry building throughout the day. Far off in the distance, locals could see the beach and athletes moving into the water, along with coaches, journalists and volunteers at work.

Nobody seemed to mind the jetties near the surf zone that blocked much of the competition. Over at Ariake Urban Sports Park, a dazzling stadium setup that would have seated 7,000 spectators for the Olympic debut of skateboarding, 8-year-old Ayane Nakamura was doing ollies on her "Peanuts" skateboard outside the venue.

She had come with her mother, Rie, and camped outside at 7 a.m. in hopes of seeing her hero, Yuto Horigome, and the rest of the men arriving for competition. When the security guards inevitably showed up to shoo away Nakamura and her friend, 8-year-old Sora Yamagishi, the sprightly youngster in the blue Nike skateboarding cap kept slipping away.

"Some people scold me several times," Nakamura said, "so I have to hide when I see these people." Others managed to find vantage points to watch skateboarding, too, and they were richly rewarded. Not only did Horigome win the men's street event, Momiji Nishiya took gold and Funa Nakayama bronze in the women's event.

"I love skateboarding and follow all Japanese top skaters," said Tamura, who works for a Tokyo staffing agency and managed to catch some of the kickflips and railstands through binoculars.

Were fans bummed they couldn't get in the venue? Maybe get a little closer to the athletes? "To be honest," Tamura said, "I couldn't get a ticket, so I am not that shocked. But in this circumstances, the decision makes sense, although it is sad."

Shogo Miyamoto, a freelancer from Kyoto, also thought the decision to ban spectators was correct. But that hasn't stopped him from trying to breathe in the Olympic atmosphere. He arrived in Tokyo on the second full day of competition and tried to get a glimpse of a few of the venues, then planned to head down the coast to catch some sailing.

"I wasn't really interested in sports," Miyamoto said. "But the Olympics is something that you wouldn't have in your home country twice in your life. Maybe not even once. That's why I wanted to come and explore the venues."

There are still plenty of opportunities, too, for the most intrepid of fans. With the right equipment and and a little bit of gumption, golf fans might be able to catch a glimpse of Masters champion Hideki through the trees lining the East Course at Kasumigaseki Country Club. At Odaiba Marine Park, where a few souls braved the rain to watch the triathlon this week, long-distance swimmers will compete in the marathon.

Speaking of marathons, the track and field marathon will take place next week in Odori Park in Sapporo, about 700 miles northeast of Tokyo, where temperatures should be slightly cooler. That could mean sightings of reigning Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge, Kenya's marathon world record-holder Brigid Kosgei or American four-time Olympian Galen Rupp.

Technically speaking, fans are prohibited from lining the route. But good luck policing 26.2 miles (42.2 kilometers) of road.

Those unwilling to run afoul of the law can catch the final week of cycling, which will shift to the velodrome in Izu for track cycling. Its location in the Shizuoka prefecture, like the mountain bike course and the road race finish at Fuji International Speedway, falls outside the spectator ban, meaning up 1,800

people will be able to squeeze inside.

Good for the fans. Good for the athletes missing their support, too.

"Initially I was quite gutted. Without fans completely would have been different," said Britain's Laura Kenny, a four-time Olympic champion in cycling. "Would they have played crowd noise? Could they have chosen the London crowd? It wouldn't have felt as exciting as it could have been. I'm glad to have some people coming in."

## From the Emperor on down: Memories of the '64 Tokyo Olympics

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — From Emperor Naruhito on down, every Japanese of a certain age remembers the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Even younger Japanese connect through parents or aunts and uncles who stored old photos, told stories or recalled getting a television set for the first time to watch the Games.

These were the first Olympics broadcast live using satellites and the last to be run on a cinder track; a bridge between older Olympics and the modern.

There are recollections of new bullet trains, urban expressways going up — not all of them completed for the Games — and complaints about cost overruns, just like today.

Emperor Naruhito, whose grandfather Emperor Hirohito opened the Games, has his own memories. He was a 4 1/2 year-old child at the time and reminisced last week with guests, including American first lady Jill Biden.

"I myself have a lasting memory of the closing ceremony of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, where athletes from different countries paraded together shoulder to shoulder, not divided by country," the emperor said.

American Robert Whiting arrived in Tokyo in 1962, has lived in the Japanese capital for 43 of the last 59 years and has written several books about Japan. The latest is "Tokyo Junkie," which traces the growth of the city and his own maturity.

"Historians call the '64 Tokyo Games the greatest urban transformation in history. So it's hard to idealize something that had such a profound effect," Whiting said in an interview. "The city was completely remade from a polluted backwater that nobody wanted to visit to this high-tech megalopolis where the James Bond people came to film a movie. There was the physical transformation of the city, but also the psychological boost that it gave the Japanese."

A few of the memories.

**KATSUSHIGE NISHIMURA** — He was a superstar in 1964. Nishimura was a 28-year-old pilot flying with the Blue Impulse aerobatic team that sketched out the five Olympics rings during the opening ceremony in the sky above Tokyo.

"Our leader came up with the idea of depicting the five rings, and we trained for about a year," the retired Japan Airlines pilot told the AP. "It's very difficult for five planes to draw five rings. There was no radar back then to rely on for each of us to set the right speed and keep the right distance apart."

He added: "I was the third pilot who drew the black ring."

He said the air-sketch took about 40 seconds, and he knew the pressure was on.

"It was about the rebirth of Japan after the war, and how the nation was rebuilding. We couldn't mess up. We also knew the air forces of the world would be watching. After we finished, we flew up higher and turned upside down to see what we had done. I saw the stadium and the five rings all the same size and all the same shape. Perfect."

**MARIKO NAGAI** — She was a university student who worked as an interpreter at the swimming venue where American Don Schollander won four gold medals.

"It wasn't actually an interpreter's job," joked Nagai, who has built a career since then interpreting for Japanese prime ministers and American presidents, and is working as an English-Japanese interpreter in these Olympics.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 37 of 88

"It wasn't even an interpreter, it was only making announcements in English," she said. "I would be sitting at the announcer's desk together with the Japanese announcer. The results would come and I would read the result in English."

She also did introductions.

"In the first lane, Mr. So-And-So from the United States. In the second lane — something like that."

"I thought it was the greatest fun I could ever have as a student," Nagai added. "It was the Olympics, I was working as a helper and I would get paid. I was given a uniform and everything — the blazer coat, the skirt, handbag, shoes and everything. It was fun. It was really fun."

**SETSUKO WATANABE** — She grew up in the Tokyo neighborhood near the old National Stadium, and she recalls watching the opening ceremony in 1964 from the rooftop of her building.

"I could clearly see the stairs leading up to the cauldron and the torchbearer going up the stairs and lighting the flame," Watanabe said in an interview with the AP.

The torchbearer who lit the cauldron was Yoshinori Sakai, a 19-year-old at the time who was born in Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945 — the same day the Americans dropped the atomic bomb on the city.

She also recalled the performance of the Blue Impulse, the aerobic team that painted the five Olympic rings in the sky.

"Back then I was a junior high school student and there was a lottery at school and those who won could go see the Games. I was the last one to pick in the lottery as my family name Watanabe was very end in Japanese alphabetical order, but surprisingly I won."

**SEIICHI KUROKI** — His father, Masatoshi Kuroki, was a marshal at the opening ceremony of the '64 Games. He said he knew nothing of his father's experience until Tokyo was named the host this time and the subject came up.

"This Olympics have given me the opportunity to discover many things about dad for the first time, and I am very grateful for that," he said. "Really, without this, I might not have known all these details, and I am glad that I do."

In an interview, he showed off a name tag and patch — with the famous Rising Sun logo — that his father wore. He also displayed a certificate of appreciation from Games officials.

"He looks happy when I ask him questions such as what were you doing then at the Games, because that is like his legacy," he explained.

**SHUNICHI SEKIGAWA** — A retired elementary school teacher, in his days as a student he and classmates were invited to run with a torchbearer and hold up flags displaying the five Olympic rings.

"I did it because the teacher told us to," Sekigawa told the AP in an interview. "The impression at the time was that the flame came from Athens, Greece, and it would be absolutely outrageous if we were to let it die out. I took this so seriously."

He said he received a red-and-white Mizuno outfit to wear, made smaller to fit children.

"I'd forgotten all about it, but my mother had kept it and so I found it years later. It was useful to show my students something that represented those times. They couldn't believe I was part of it."

He also said the athletes he recalled most from '64 were women — the gold-medal women's volleyball team, known as the "Witches of the Orient," and hurdler Ikuko Yoda.

"We didn't think about it then, but no female students were asked to take part in the torch run," he said.

**TAKUMI SHIBATA** — A retired asset manager, he was 11 years old and in the sixth grade and all the students at school were hoping for tickets to the Olympics. His teacher came in one day and said he had tickets. And students asked to what.

"And the teacher said he had tickets for soccer, and we said: 'What's that?'"

He said the teacher explained that this is a game where "people cannot use their hands to play."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 38 of 88

"We said it's not interesting," Shibata recalled.

Shibata said he and his classmates turned down the tickets. And it was not until Japan won a bronze medal in soccer in the 1968 Olympic that the game became popular.

He also recalled a slightly earlier time when not everyone had a television.

"TV was something neighbors shared," he explained. "So at 6 p.m. children from the neighboring houses would come to my house. I didn't even have a right to choose my channel."

## Ron Popeil was the sizzle of American ingenuity, personified

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

Come, young ones: Gather around the glow of the smartphone's screen for a tale of a distant time when we watched TV on big boxy machines, and switched channels when we were bored.

There were commercials — several of them — between the segments of TV shows. What's more, in the distant era before streaming, you had to watch them all — or, if you had time, run to the kitchen or the bathroom. You couldn't pause, or fast forward, or take the screen with you.

And in the darkest, wee-est hours, when all the real programming ran out, the night creatures emerged — beasts called infomercials that were entire TV programs about people selling products that might be useful to you but that you probably didn't know you wanted.

These immediate forebears of home-shopping channels and, beyond them, the content marketing techniques of the 21st century were where Ron Popeil, an American original who gave the world the word "Ronco" and died Wednesday at 86, thrived.

America has always been smitten by both high-spirited inventors and yarn-spinning salesmen. Popeil was both, amplified by the airwaves into millions of homes. He was a gadget innovator like his father, yes, but a popularizer as well, a man who intuited consumers' common-sense needs, then found accessible ways to entice them into making purchases.

He titled his 1996 memoir "Salesman of the Century," and he was a 20th-century man to the core, a cultural descendant of both Thomas Edison and P.T. Barnum. He was a guy whose "As Seen On TV" commercials in the 1970s, from the astonishingly wireless Mr. Microphone to the Popeil Pocket Fisherman to the Rhinestone & Stud Setter, became pop-culture touchstones — because he managed to both come up with them and become their public face for the television-soaked generation we now call X.

He was CEO, sales rep and user-in-chief rolled into one. Be it the Showtime Rotisserie ("Set it and forget it"), the Food Dehydrator or aerosol cans of GLH-9 ("GLH" being short for "great-looking hair"), he was right there, barking out its virtues to us in the 1980s and 1990s as we laid in our beds and contemplated turning off the TV. He edited his own infomercials, scrawled out his own cue cards, wrote the copy for his "operators standing by."

He would call his babies by affectionate names (The Popeil Electric Pasta-Sausage Maker became, simply, "Pasta-Sausage"), and he was known to say things like, "I created the jerky category." Now and then he would drift into Shatner-style staccato to make his points: "A child! Can make! Homemade sausages!" he was found shouting on QVC one night in 1997.

But wait — there's more. As 20th century as he was — a Chicago open-market barker who used TV to propel himself toward success — he also saw the possibilities that were just ahead and are now playing out in the fragmented 21st century, an era when all media blends into one big glop and advertising becomes content, then becomes advertising again.

One chief reason for Popeil's ubiquity became evident when people decided to poke fun at him — because he chose, craftily and strategically, to always be in on the joke.

When Dan Aykroyd sent him up on "Saturday Night Live" in 1976 with the "Bass-O-Matic" commercial parody, Popeil realized it was free publicity, just as he did when "Weird Al" Yankovic recorded a parody song. Years later, Popeil guest-starred as himself on various TV shows from "The X Files" to the animated "The Simpsons" and "King of the Hill."

Most prominently, though, he cheerfully gave away his infomercial content to moviemakers looking for something to be playing on TV in the background of their films. In this way did he extend his reputation

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 39 of 88

for ubiquity — and his growing wink-nudge pop-culture brand — for free, with no effort at all. Others did the work, and he got the eyeballs.

Even after success, bankruptcy and a second chapter of success, Popeil insisted that his drive to invent was more than mercantile; it was, he said, a bit obsessive. "I have enough money today," he told this reporter for a 1997 Associated Press profile. "But I can't stop. If there's a need for these things, I can't help myself."

In that profile, Popeil demonstrated how "GLH-9" was doing on the bald spot on the back of his scalp after several hours, some of them under a shopping channel's blistering lights. What didn't make it into the story was that Popeil exhorted the visiting journalist: "Touch it! It even feels real." The journalist did, and it did — sort of.

Interludes like that — in-person interactions that felt like moments in an infomercial — help explain the reverse: moments in his infomercials that felt like in-person interactions. Those were Popeil's stock in trade. The best performers — and that cohort includes the best salespeople — can make you feel as if they're not performing at all.

So in the 1970s, you believed that a Mr. Microphone could open the door to all sorts of ways to impress the opposite sex. In the 1990s, you completely bought the notion that if Ron Popeil could stand there, on the set of his infomercial, and make a delectable sausage of fresh salmon, dill, soy and crushed red pepper in two minutes, that somehow you could too.

You believed. Which has always been the underpinning of good sales. And you believed, too, that this guy — this garrulous man who was both nationally recognizable and RIGHT THERE in your room at 2 a.m., talking obviously to only you — would, tomorrow and next month and next year, keep visiting you late at night with things you never, ever knew you needed.

Or, as Popeil himself loved to say, wait — there's more. For Ron Popeil, his feet planted squarely at the intersection of Barnum and Edison, there always was.

## Tsunami warning issued for parts of Alaska after 8.2 quake

PERRYVILLE, Alaska (AP) — A tsunami warning was issued for parts of Alaska after a large earthquake struck the peninsula.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake was magnitude 8.2 and hit 56 miles (91 kilometers) east southeast of Perryville, Alaska at about 8:15 p.m. Wednesday. The quake was about 29 miles (46 kilometers) below the surface of the ocean, according to USGS.

The US National Tsunami Warning Center issued warnings for South Alaska and the Alaska Peninsula, from Hinchinbrook Entrance, 90 miles (144.84 kilometers) east of Seward, to Unimak Pass, and for the Aleutian Islands, from Unimak Pass, 80 miles (128.75 kilometers) northeast of Unalaska, to Samalga Pass, Alaska, which is 30 miles (48.28 kilometers) southwest of Nikolski.

A tsunami warning issued for Hawaii has been canceled.

Two other earthquakes with preliminary magnitudes of 6.2 and 5.6 occurred in the same area within a half hour of the first one, the U.S. Geological Survey reported.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issued a notice that the potential threat to Guam and American Samoa was still under investigation.

"Based on all available data a tsunami may have been generated by this earthquake that could be destructive on coastal areas even far from the epicenter," PTWC said.

Based on the preliminary seismic data, the quake should have been widely felt by almost everyone in the area of the epicenter. It might have caused light to moderate damage.

Moderate shaking probably occurred in Perryville, Chignik Lake and Sandpoint.

## Nightmares, panic attacks: Belgian flood survivors struggle

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN, VIRGINIA MAYO and MARK CARLSON Associated Press

TROOZ, Belgium (AP) — Visions of cars being swept away in a raging current keep coming back to

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 40 of 88

trouble Eric Mouqué. His wife, Cindy, gets triggered by the slightest noise.

So when her husband turns on the hose to clean a few things, all she can think about are those tumultuous floodwaters that ripped away homes, streets, businesses and entire neighborhoods two weeks ago in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

"I panic," Cindy Mouqué says.

The couple's neighbor, Carine Lacroix, can't sleep at night, remembering how her and her companion feared for their lives during the floods. Isolated and trapped in the top floor of their house, it took two days before they were rescued on a small boat by firefighters. In her nerve-wracking nightmares, she is desperately trying to keep the floods out of her home or sees one of her cats drowning before her eyes.

All three are among hundreds of survivors in the small Belgian town of Trooz who are experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety.

"I've been traumatized for life, this is not something you recover from," Eric Mouqué, a lumberjack, told The Associated Press during a visit to the eastern town. "We will hear these noises for the rest of our lives. The sound of the water, it's atrocious."

Three people were killed in Trooz after the Vesdre River spilled its banks amid heavy rainfall. Overall, 38 people died across Belgium - one person was still missing Thursday, according to police - and at least 182 people lost their lives during the floods in Germany.

In Belgium, the uncontrollable flooding was one of the most violent natural disasters to hit in a century. Fast-moving waters destroyed several towns and left tons of debris in their wake.

With electricity and gas cut off and communication lines damaged, the working-class neighborhood of La Brouck and its brick-terraced houses looks like a ghost town. Since the waters receded, many people have left to find shelter with relatives or friends, but the Mouqués decided to stay.

Cleaning up the wreckage and restoring an appearance of normality remains a tall order, but hundreds of volunteers have been coming from across Belgium and abroad to help.

"It's a big, big disaster. We're in trouble, but we're so well-supported," Eric Mouqué said. "We've got food on all sides, we've got drinks on all sides, we've got hot meals. We've got everything you can imagine to help us."

In the end, recovering from the psychological shock may be the more complicated task. Psychologist Etienne Vendy said the trauma induced by exposure to a natural disaster can have long-lasting effects.

"For all the people who went through hell, it will remain forever in their body and mind," he said.

At the helm of the social aid center in Trooz, Vendy and his team have been providing psychological assistance to those seeking a benevolent ear. He said his task is to identify victims who need hospital treatment and to talk with the others as much as possible.

"I think it works pretty well, because a lot of people ask for consultations. Sometimes it's just to talk. It's not to do psychotherapy," he said. "We're really in front-line psychology. It's about allowing people to let out their rage and their fear."

La Brouck is among the most affected spots in the flood-stricken town of 8,600 people. According to Trooz Mayor Fabien Beltran, nearly half of the population has been hit by the disaster.

"The first emergency is rehousing, and providing people with food and cleaning products for their homes and for themselves so that they can get back to a normal life as soon as possible," he said.

The Walloon government in charge in the French-speaking region has announced a 2 billion-euro plan for the reconstruction. To help citizens cope with urgent needs before insurance companies pay out claims, every household affected by the catastrophe can be granted interest-free loans of 2,500 euros (\$2,960) to cover basic needs.

Still, that money won't cover all the losses suffered by Alan Mereschal.

When the floodwaters burst through a side door and poured into the first floor of his house in the nearby village of Chaudfontaine, he ran up the spiral staircase to the second floor, sat on his bed, and hoped for the best.

The next morning after the deluge was over he peered downstairs. The floodwaters had receded but



all of his furniture, a new television and nearly all of his belongings had disappeared.

"The water came in one door and went out the other and took everything with it," Mereschal said. "I had a car in the driveway, that's gone too. I have no idea where everything ended up."

Mereschal was uncertain when asked if he would stay in his house.

"I would really like too, it depends if they let me," he said. "If not, I will move to an apartment somewhere and believe me, it won't be located on the first floor."

Experts say such floods will become more frequent and severe due to climate change. But many residents in the Vesdre valley believe the human mishandling of river systems amplified the flooding. Several specialists in hydrology have suggested that lowering the water level at the Vesdre dam earlier, after forecasters had issued dire weather warnings, would have prevented a lot of damage in nearby towns.

An investigative judge was appointed this week to lead an inquiry into the flooding, which will examine whether there is evidence to charge anyone with involuntary manslaughter by failure of care or precaution.

"We want answers to understand what actually took place," said Stevens Tagadirt, whose house in the town of Vaux-sous-Chèvremont has been badly damaged.

Tagadirt is a founding member of the group People against Flows, which is asking Belgian authorities to shed the light on the disaster.

"We want to understand how they dealt with the dams," he said.

## Denied ticket over COVID, Guinean Olympian clings to dream

By GERALD IMRAY, BOUBACAR DIALLO and TRISHA THOMAS Associated Press

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP) — Fatoumata Yarie Camara is used to being thrown to the ground and getting up again, getting back into the fight. She's dedicated her life to wrestling, a sport that breeds tenacity. On the mat, she qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, the only athlete from Guinea to do so. Off the mat, she has battled the beliefs of her culture and family that women don't belong in sports.

Camara endured delays as the pandemic threatened the Games. Then, three days before the rescheduled opening ceremony, her dream of standing alongside the world's best athletes teetered on a plane ticket — one she couldn't afford and government officials hadn't given her. Saying they wanted to keep Guinea's athletes safe from COVID-19, the West African country withdrew from the Olympics entirely.

Camara and others were skeptical of officials' reasoning and believe Guinea mismanaged its planning for the Games. She gives the nation hope, officials tell her, but they've never given her any.

At home, the 25-year-old clutched her medals in her hands — from regional competitions, the African Games, and her Olympic qualifying event — and cried.

It was the one time Camara felt she couldn't get back up and fight.

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This story is part of a yearlong series on how the pandemic is impacting women in Africa, most acutely in the least developed countries. AP's series is funded by the European Journalism Centre's European Development Journalism Grants program, which is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. AP is responsible for all content.

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In the neighborhood of Hamdallaye, one of the most populous and poorest areas of the capital city, Conakry, few dare to dream of leaving. Camara's family lives shoulder-to-shoulder with neighbors. Streets are strewn with garbage. Children play in the mud.

Camara sleeps on a mattress on the floor. Her medals hang from a nail on the wall, a constant reminder of her Olympic dream.

At age 14, Camara was playing soccer — then her favorite sport — when she caught the eye of a soldier who wrestled. He was impressed with her strategy, her moves, her physique. "You have talent," he told her, and asked if she'd ever considered wrestling. She'd never heard of it. He described the combat sport, and visited her family to earn their support.

At her very first competition, Camara won a gold medal. "It was there that I started to love wrestling,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 42 of 88

she said.

Back then, Camara's mother, Kadiatou Soumah, supported her, despite resistance in the community and their own family. Sports aren't meant for girls, they said. But Soumah backed her daughter with what little funds the family had. Soumah's husband stopped working when Camara was 3. Soumah had to support him, too, and Camara's brother and sister.

It's rare for a West African woman like Soumah to be the family's sole breadwinner. Employment isn't easy for the 13 million residents of Guinea, a largely Muslim country where many live in poverty despite the country's rich reserve of bauxite, the base material for aluminum, and mines for gold and diamonds. The health care system is still recovering from the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak that killed more than 11,000 people in Guinea and neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Soumah saw wrestling as a lifeline, a means to change the family's life. Camara won more medals. She gave up school.

Soumah sold candy and eggs out of a roadside kiosk and went door-to-door in better-off neighborhoods offering to wash clothes, clean homes and prepare meals. After working all day, she then cooked for her own family.

She even managed to buy Camara small presents to encourage her wins. Soumah was her daughter's manager and cheerleader. She gave her pocket money for traveling to competitions and picked her up in taxis at the airport, often late at night.

But when Camara's victories never clinched any earnings, Soumah's support waned.

"It only comes with medals," Soumah said. "Never with money. My daughter has nothing."

As she grew older, Camara was expected to help support the family, even if it meant giving up wrestling. Instead, she continued competing and was often away training, one less person to provide.

She moved to Morocco to train via a grant from United World Wrestling, the international governing body. But when the pandemic hit, Camara and her training partners were locked down. They weren't allowed to wrestle for 10 months, the body-on-body contact deemed too high-risk.

Camara used a wrestling term to describe what happened. "COVID blocked us," she said.

She tried jogging in her room for exercise but gained weight. Inactivity is the enemy of world-class athletes, and Camara feared she wouldn't be able to stay under the required weight for her 57-kilogram freestyle event.

Morocco ultimately asked the wrestlers to leave because of the virus. Camara went home, to a country without proper wrestling facilities.

Fearing the pandemic and a lack of activity, coach Vincent Aka — a former Olympian himself — moved Camara and three other West African wrestlers to his native Ivory Coast.

"Fatoumata's situation is very special because she is more talented," Aka said.

In April, Camara beat wrestlers from Egypt, Guam and Algeria to make the final of the African and Oceania qualifying tournament in Tunisia. She lost, but the silver medal was good enough — she'd officially qualified for the Olympics. She was on top of the world.

Aka managed to secure money for a two-week summer training camp in Italy. Camara wrestled in a competition in Sardinia — her first in three months — then went to Rome.

Camara knew where she needed improvement: "I am a bit weak on attack," she said, working with a partner at a judo and karate center. She ducked her head under his arm and into his chest, then heaved him up on her back, flipped him over and slammed him down onto the mat. He grunted, but she wasn't happy; she practiced the move again.

She wore a T-shirt, tight pants rolled up above her ankles and no shoes — saving her best wrestling uniform for Tokyo. She lived in a dormitory, in a cubicle room similar to Olympic Village accommodations. For her, it was luxurious living.

Without the camp, she'd have been living on about \$4 a day, as the Guinea Olympic committee gave her \$500 to prepare after she qualified — and no plane ticket.

"If I were in another country, maybe my life would change a bit," Camara said. "You are bringing honor

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 43 of 88

to your country. The country hopefully pays you back. If the country does not, if they do nothing for their athletes, then how will others have the courage to come train like you? Because it requires a lot of sacrifice.”

Before she left Rome, she had one crucial pre-Olympic task on her list. Vaccinations are encouraged for these Games, but Camara knew Guinea had no plans for her; authorities there have warned of low supply as they fear a third wave across the region.

So she went to an Italian hospital where shots were being given to homeless people, immigrants without documents and others without health care access. She joined the queue and got her jab. Aka and UWW treated her and her training partners to a pizza at an outdoor restaurant at the trip’s end.

Camara then returned to Guinea; she was big news in her country as the Games neared.

In the muddy streets of her neighborhood, young girls approached her — strong, muscular ones who want to be athletes like her.

“There are girls who are training every day,” Camara said, “who come to me and ask me how I got to become a wrestler. ... If one has a bit of support and means, I know that they could be like me and like other girls who are champions today in other countries.”

But she fears they will also feel unsupported by Guinean leaders, who praised her upon her return home.

“Fatoumata Yarie Camara carries the hope of the entire Guinean nation. She is the hope of a whole people,” said Ben Daouda Nansoko, secretary general of Guinea’s Olympic committee. “This is the career of this girl that shines.”

Yet, days before the Games, the budget for the trip hadn’t been approved. And she still had no plane ticket.

Soumah grew tired of empty promises and no longer believed Camara should go to the Olympics. After officials visited their home to change Soumah’s mind, she relented. But she remained skeptical of vows to pay bonuses and reimbursement when Camara returned.

At night, Camara prayed: “Please make it easier for me.”

She once believed she would carry Guinea’s flag at the opening ceremony as teams marched into the Olympic stadium. Guinea has four additional athletes listed to compete who didn’t qualify but instead were given places through a program that helps underrepresented nations.

Camara is world-ranked and thought she would certainly be the flag-bearer — the focus of the world’s cameras, if just for a few seconds. But Guinean officials told her she would fly to Tokyo the week after the ceremony, with the country’s flag carried instead by a Japanese volunteer.

Camara told herself it was just a crack in her dream. She’d still get to compete.

Or would she? Confusion reigned over the next several days, with the government announcing it would withdraw the entire team due to “the resurgence of COVID-19 variants.” But reports theorized that the country simply hadn’t set aside funds for the delegation.

Camara grieved for her Games, but ultimately accepted that she wouldn’t make the trip.

“The Olympics have always been a dream,” she said. “But this is God who controls all. I must just keep the courage, like always.”

The news of the country’s withdrawal caused an uproar — nationally and beyond Guinean borders. The government reversed its decision a day after its announcement and said athletes would indeed compete. Officials said they’d received guarantees from health authorities that put their coronavirus worries at ease.

Camara and others remained skeptical that COVID-19 was ever the issue. But it didn’t matter — once again, she was headed to the Olympics.

Coach Aka and United World Wrestling were ready to pay for Camara’s flight, in case Guinean officials didn’t follow through. But in the end, they did. On the day of the opening ceremony, Camara boarded an airplane. Gripping her seat, she smiled for a photograph.

It was too late to carry her nation’s flag. And maybe her mother still disapproved.

But the flight was confirmed. She had a 48-hour trip ahead of her. And on Wednesday, Camara — ranked eighth in the world in her class — will compete in the Olympic Games.

She and Aka took photos of her ticket.

It has her name: Fatoumata Camara. Destination: Tokyo.

## **GLIMPSES: Medalists' bouquets hold deeper meaning for Japan**

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Of course, an Olympic medal has significance. But the bouquet of flowers that every medal winner is being handed at the Tokyo Olympics has deeper meaning. Much deeper.

The sunflowers and all the other flowers in the bouquet were grown in the three northeastern Japanese prefectures that were devastated by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and the subsequent meltdown of three nuclear reactors.

About 18,000 people died in the catastrophe that hit the prefectures of Iwate, Fukushima, and Miyagi. The recovery is still on-going from that day — March 11, 2011.

Organizers had hoped the Olympics would promote the area. But the pandemic changed much of that and put the focus, instead, on the postponement and running off the Games during a global health crisis. In fact, some residents of the area complained that holding the Olympics distracted time and resources from the recovery.

In Fukushima, a nonprofit organization was set up to grow flowers, hoping to lift area spirits. Many of the blooms were raised on vacated agricultural land that was abandoned when fruit and vegetable sales plummeted from the area.

In Miyagi, parents who lost children in the disaster planted sunflowers on the hill where their children sought refuge from the tsunami. The act of remembrance has also been told in a children's book.

Iwate is known for producing gentians, a blue-indigo flower that is the same shade of color as that used in the Olympic and Paralympic emblems.

The 5,000 bouquets were arranged for both the Olympics and Paralympics — they open on Aug. 24 — by the Nippon Flower Council.

## **Living up to the hype: Dressel wins 1st individual gold**

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Caeleb Dressel climbed atop the lane rope, a look of wonder in his eyes. He gazed all around the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, eager to soak up every last moment of something he's never done before.

Win an individual gold medal at the Olympics.

The most dominant swimmer of the post-Michael Phelps era filled in the last hole on his resume, winning a gold all by himself with two furious laps of the pool Thursday.

Dressel, whose three previous golds were all on relays, lived up to the hype at an Olympics where several U.S. stars have faltered.

"I knew that weight was on my shoulders," he said after a nail-biting victory in the 100-meter freestyle over defending champion Kyle Chalmers of Australia.

Katie Ledecky got another shot at Ariarne Titmus, but this time neither won gold. China knocked off both the Americans and the Australians with a world-record performance in the 4x200-meter freestyle relay.

All three teams went faster than the previous mark, but it was China that earned the second world record of the Tokyo Games despite a blistering anchor leg from Ledecky.

"I wasn't as nervous maybe and knew I was going to let it go and go for it each lap of that race," said Ledecky, who went faster than anyone but couldn't quite catch the Chinese, winding up with her second silver of the Games.

Dressel was golden. As is his style, the 24-year-old Floridian dived into the pool and popped out of the water with the lead. He was still ahead at the lone flip, and grittily turned away Chalmers' bid for a second straight gold.

Dressel's winning time was an Olympic record of 47.02 seconds — a mere six-hundredths ahead of Chalmers, who had to settle for a silver this time.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 45 of 88

"I wasn't worried about anything," Dressel said. "During the race there's only so much you can do. Whatever's going to happen is going to happen. I stuck to my race plan so if it got me first, OK, if it got me second, OK."

The two have developed quite a rivalry. Chalmers won at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, where Dressel was sixth, but the American won the last two world championships, with Chalmers finishing second in 2019.

"We do enjoy racing against each other and we do bring the best out of each other," Chalmers said. "It's almost a relief to get it done with now."

The bronze was claimed by Russian swimmer Kliment Kolesnikov (47.44), who added to his silver in the 100 backstroke.

The first three gold medals of Dressel's career were all in the relays — two in Rio, another in the 4x100 free relay at the Tokyo Games.

Now, he's got one of his own.

"It is a lot different. I guess I thought it would be, I just didn't want to admit to it," he said. "It's a lot tougher. You have to rely on yourself, there's no one to bail you out."

After Phelps retired, Dressel emerged as the world's dominant swimmer. He turned in staggering performances at the last two world championships, earning seven gold medals at Budapest in 2017, followed by a six-gold, two-silver performance at Gwangju in 2019.

As important as those meets were, they're not the Olympics. Dressel knew he needed an individual gold to solidify his legacy.

From his perch on the lane rope, he cherished the significance of his victory.

"These moments are a lot different than worlds," Dressel conceded.

Dressel's gold was the second of the morning for the Americans, who got a surprise victory from Bobby Finke in the Olympic debut of the men's 800 free.

Also winning golds: Australia's Izaak Stubblety-Cook in the men's 200 breaststroke and China's Zhang Yufei in the women's 200 butterfly.

Zhang returned to swim a leg on the 4x200 free relay, joining Yang Junxuan, Tang Muhan and closer Li Bingjie for a winning time of 7:40.33.

That broke the previous record of 7:41.50 set by Australia at the 2019 world championships.

Ledecky took the final leg for the Americans, diving into the water in third place — nearly 2 seconds behind Li and also trailing Australia's Leah Neale. She quickly zipped by Neale and closed the gap significantly on Li, but couldn't quite catch her at the end.

China's surprising win denied both Ledecy and Ariarne Titmus another gold medal. After winning both the 200 and 400 free individual titles, the Terminator led off for Australia but was a bit sluggish; she was more than a second slower than her gold medal performance in the 200.

Ledecky had finished second to Titmus in the 400 and didn't even win a medal in the 200, finally claiming her first Tokyo gold in the debut of the women's 1,500 free.

She got another silver in the relay, but certainly had nothing to be ashamed of. Her split time of 1:53.76 was the fastest of the race. She simply ran out of time to catch Li as the Americans finished in 7:40.73. Australia took the bronze in 7:41.29.

Finke pulled out his victory with a dazzling burst on the final lap.

Making the final turn in fourth, he turned on the speed at the end of the 16-lap race, passing all three swimmers ahead of him to take the gold. Finke's final 50 was 26.39 — nearly 2 seconds faster than anyone else.

"I had no idea I was going to do that," said Finke, whose winning time of 7:41.87 was just 0.24 ahead of Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri, with Mykhailo Romanchuk of Ukraine (7:42.33) taking the bronze.

Mirroring Finke's finish, albeit over a much shorter distance, Stubblety-Cook rallied on the final lap to pass Arno Kamminga of the Netherlands, who went out fast but couldn't quite hang on.

The winning time was an Olympic-record 2:06.38, giving the team from Down Under its fifth gold of the swimming competition — and its first men's breaststroke gold since Ian O'Brien at the 1964 Tokyo Games.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 46 of 88

Stubblety-Cook was surprised as anyone to be standing on the top step of podium.

"I was happy enough just to be here," he said. "Honestly, I'm just pretty lost for words at the moment. It's still all sinking in."

Kammaing was under world-record pace through the first 150 meters, but he faded to the silver in 2:07.01. The bronze went to Finland's Matti Mattsson in 2:07.24.

Dressel's victory pulled the Americans ahead of the Aussies with six golds in Tokyo. They also lead the overall medal tally with 21, nine ahead of their rivals.

Zhang had a remarkable session.

She turned in a dominating performance to win China's first swimming gold of the Tokyo Games in the 200 butterfly. Her Olympic-record time of 2:03.86 put her more than a body length ahead of the pair of Americans, Regan Smith and Hali Flickinger.

The U.S. swimmers dueled back and forth for the silver, with Smith pulling ahead at the end to touch in 2:05.30. Flickinger earned the bronze in 2:05.65.

About an hour later, Zhang returned to the pool to win another gold in the freestyle relay.

## Lawyer for Hong Kong protester asks court for shorter term

By ALICE FUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — A lawyer for the first person convicted under Hong Kong's national security law asked Thursday for no more than 10 years in prison instead of the possible life sentence faced by the former restaurant waiter in a closely watched case as China's ruling Communist Party tries to crush a pro-democracy movement.

Tong Ying-kit was convicted Tuesday of inciting secession and terrorism for driving his motorcycle into a group of police officers during a July 1, 2020, pro-democracy rally while carrying a flag bearing the banned slogan, "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times."

Tong, 24, will be sentenced Friday, the Hong Kong High Court announced.

Beijing imposed the security law on the former British colony last year following anti-government protests that erupted in mid-2019. The crackdown prompted complaints the ruling party is violating the autonomy promised when Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 and hurting its status as a global business center. Officials reject the criticisms and say Beijing is restoring order and instituting national security protections similar to those of other countries.

At a hearing, Tong's lead defense lawyer, Clive Grossman, asked the three-judge panel for a sentence of no more than 10 years. He said the court hadn't found the attack was deliberate, no one was injured and Tong's secession-related offense qualified as minor under the law.

The court ruled Tuesday that Tong's actions were an act of violence aimed at coercing the Hong Kong and mainland governments and intimidating the public. It said carrying the flag was an act of incitement to secession, rejecting defense arguments that Tong couldn't be proven to be inciting secession just by using the slogan.

Prosecutor Ivan Cheung asked for at least three years.

Judge Anthea Pang said the court will follow the "usual statutory term" and legal interpretations of the national security law but gave no indication what that might be.

Tong, wearing a black shirt and tie with a blue blazer, talked with his lawyers before the hearing but didn't address the court. Relatives waved to Tong as he left and said, "see you tomorrow."

The last pro-democracy Hong Kong newspaper, Apple Daily, shut down last month after journalists and executives were arrested.

Tong's trial was conducted by judges without a jury under rules that allow an exception to Hong Kong's British-style common law system if state secrets need to be protected or foreign forces are involved. The judges were picked by Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam.

## Pro-Sanders group rebranding into 'pragmatic progressives'

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 47 of 88

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Stinging from the disappointment of Bernie Sanders' loss in the 2016 Democratic presidential primary, supporters pumped millions into the powerful advocacy group Our Revolution to keep the progressive fight alive and prepare for another swing at the White House.

But after another defeat in 2020, the 79-year-old Vermont senator is unlikely to run for president a third time. And the organization centered on his fiery brand of politics is undergoing a rebranding.

Rather than insisting on "Medicare for All" — Sanders' trademark universal, government-funded health care plan — or the climate-change-fighting Green New Deal, Our Revolution is focusing on the more modest alternatives endorsed by President Joe Biden. Those include expanding eligibility for the existing Medicare program and curtailing federal subsidies for fossil fuel companies.

The shift reflects a progressive movement that is at a crossroads. Biden won the Democratic nomination last year by offering more centrist alternatives to much of Sanders' agenda. Since then, progressive candidates have faced a series of electoral disappointments and are contending with anxiety from moderate Democrats worried that the party's leftward shift could cost them control of Congress during next year's midterm elections.

And, for the first time since 2016, Sanders is no longer the undisputed leader of the left.

"Coming out of Bernie's 2016 campaign, in some ways the organization was probably more of a bridge organization between the two electoral cycles," Joseph Geevarghese, Our Revolution's executive director, said in an interview. "What we're trying to build is something that is longer term" and "part of the overall ecosystem of the progressive movement."

"I think we are rooted in a bold, progressive vision, but we're also pragmatic progressives," Geevarghese said.

Sanders, who now heads the powerful Senate budget committee, can't legally work with outside political groups like Our Revolution. But many of his top allies have been closely aligned with the group since its August 2016 founding.

The senator didn't comment for this story.

Despite the group's change in emphasis, it remains deeply engaged in progressive politics. Its Ohio chapter has contacted more than 190,000 voters ahead of next week's Democratic primary to replace Rep. Marcia Fudge, who left Congress to become Biden's housing chief.

Former Ohio state Sen. Nina Turner, one of the top voices in Sanders' presidential campaigns and a former president of Our Revolution, is competing in a crowded Democratic field that has emerged as one of the final tests of the left's political strength this year. Her principal rival, county councilwoman Shontel Brown, has been endorsed by Hillary Clinton, House Minority Whip Jim Clyburn and the Congressional Black Caucus' advocacy arm.

Turner recently interrupted an evening of canvassing to address Our Revolution's weekly conference call.

"I need you, whether you live in this district or not, to help us turn out the vote," said Turner, joining a video chat from a grocery store parking lot. "Our Revolution family, please keep doing what you are doing."

Sanders himself will campaign for Turner this weekend, and Our Revolution's all-out effort for one of his key acolytes shows that the group is not yet ready to distance itself from the democratic socialist. But Geevarghese said Our Revolution has forged an identity beyond its highest profile ally.

"Is our brand identified with Bernie? Yes. But it's really not the individual more than what he stands for," he said, "and we're still committed to that."

Turner's race also exemplifies Our Revolution's renewed emphasis on on-the-ground organizing. It depends on roughly 600 chapters around the country who train activists to more efficiently mobilize behind candidates or causes — like cities raising their minimum wages to \$15 per hour, even as the federal proposal to do so languishes in Congress.

Geevarghese dismisses perceptions that moderate Democrats are on the rise as "fuzzy math." He notes that, some higher profile races this year aside, progressive candidates endorsed by Our Revolution have made down-ballot gains nationwide.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 48 of 88

"We're building a bench," Geevarghese said, "and the establishment should take notice."

In Congress, in addition to its more modest health care and environmental goals, the group is prioritizing passage of a major bill to make voting easier. While the bill faces significant hurdles, it would counter voting restrictions passed by many Republican-controlled legislatures.

"We're not getting Medicare for All, but we can get major pieces of it," Our Revolution Board Chair Larry Cohen said on the same call where Turner spoke. "But we've got to fight with every one of the Democrats. No Republicans are going to vote for any of these things."

California Rep. Ro Khanna, a member of the House Progressive Caucus, said Our Revolution has mastered an "understanding of the minutia" of policy better than many activist groups. Recently, the group's focus has been "translating the ideals into practical wins," Khanna said.

That's a far cry from the group's founding, when some activists worried that it was the kind of outside fundraising organization that could make Sanders — and his denunciations of big-money politics — look hypocritical. Sanders also spent the 2020 presidential campaign saying he didn't want a super PAC, even as Our Revolution effectively acted like one for him.

Now, though, some other progressive organizations salute Our Revolution as further mobilizing grassroots activists heartened by Sanders' strong presidential runs.

"You can see a real change in the trajectory of where the Democratic Party is when it comes to the big investments, the use of government levers to improve people's livelihoods, the fight against climate change," said Erich Pica, president of Friends of the Earth Action. "That is Our Revolution and Sen. Sanders really energizing that progressive base out there — and that base has made itself known in the electoral context."

With next year's midterms approaching, Our Revolution doesn't plan to stop supporting progressives who challenge more moderate Democrats in primaries — even as the party clings to its narrow majority in both chambers.

"We want to have a united party going in, and that means mainstream Democrats have to make progress on our policy priorities," Geevarghese said. "They can't just talk the talk in the campaign and then get elected and then say, 'Oh, it's not doable.'"

## Olympic Stadium opens in Tokyo for start of track and field

By JENNA FRYER AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Track and Field begins competition on Day 6 of the Tokyo Games and four medal events will be decided in the pool in Thursday's coverage of the Olympics.

The gymnastics women's all-around competition will go on without defending gold medalist Simone Biles, who pulled out citing struggles with her mental health.

Both the men's and women's American volleyball teams play, and the U.S. women's basketball team faces Japan.

Here are some things to watch (all times Eastern):

### TRACK & FIELD

Olympic Stadium will be open for the first time since the opening ceremony when qualifying rounds in track and field begin.

The Americans have medal contenders in Rai Benjamin in the men's 400-meter hurdles, and Athing Mu and Ajee' Wilson in the women's 800 meters.

A medal will be awarded in the men's 10,000-meter final. Coverage will be live on USA Network.

### SWIMMING

It's again a busy day of swimming at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre with medals awarded in four events.

Two-time Olympic gold medalist Lilly King, who won a bronze medal in the women's 100 meter breaststroke earlier this week, will be a gold medal contender alongside Annie Lazor in the women's 200 meter breaststroke.

Three-time Olympic gold medalist Ryan Murphy, who won bronze this week in the men's 100 meter backstroke, will attempt to win a second consecutive gold medal in the men's 200 meter backstroke.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 49 of 88

The men's 200 meter individual medley will also be decided, as well as the women's 100 meter freestyle. Coverage begins at 8 p.m. on NBC.

## GYMNASTICS

There will be a new women's all-around gymnastics champion now that Simone Biles has pulled out of competition. The gymnast considered the greatest of all time has cited her mental health and the pressure she's been under as her reason for not competing in the all-around competition.

Jade Carey, who finished ninth in qualifying, will take Biles' place in the all-around. Carey initially did not qualify because she was the third-ranking American behind Biles and Sunisa Lee. International Gymnastics Federation rules limit countries to two athletes per event in the finals.

Now the competition will likely come down to Rebeca Andrade of Brazil, who finished second to Biles during qualifying, followed by Lee and Russians Angelina Melnikova and Vladislava Urazova. The four were separated by three-tenths of a point in qualifying. The all-around will be streamed live Thursday morning at 6:50 a.m. on Peacock, with a replay on NBC during primetime coverage.

## BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Beach volleyball resumes with the American "A-team" of April Ross and Alix Klineman meeting the Netherlands. A win would advance them to the knockout round with a perfect 3-0 record.

Ross won the silver medal at the London Games and the bronze at the Rio Games. Klineman is a first-time Olympian. The match will be on CNBC in coverage that begins at 8 p.m.

## MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

The U.S. men's volleyball team faces its toughest test yet of the Olympics when the Americans face defending champion Brazil in their fourth match of pool play.

The United States is 2-1 so far at the Games after beating Tunisia in four sets behind strong performances from T.J. DeFalco and Max Holt. The Americans are in good shape to advance to the quarterfinals after winning bronze four years ago. The match is part of CNBC's primetime coverage that begins at 8 p.m.

## FOR THE LATE CROWD

The BMX Racing finals will be held in NBC's late night coverage that runs until 2 a.m., and the U.S. Women's basketball team faces Japan at 12:40 a.m. on USA Network.

The semifinals of the men's singles and mixed doubles, and the men's doubles final begin at 11 p.m. on the Olympic Channel, while the second round of the men's golf tournament runs through 3 a.m. on the Golf Channel.

## What is a COVID-19 vaccine 'breakthrough' case?

By The Associated Press undefined

What is a COVID-19 vaccine "breakthrough" case?

It's when a fully vaccinated person gets infected with the coronavirus.

In studies, the two-dose COVID-19 vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna were around 95% effective at preventing illness, while the one-shot Johnson & Johnson shot was 72% effective, though direct comparisons are difficult. So while the vaccines are very good at protecting us from the virus, it's still possible to get infected with mild or no symptoms, or even to get very sick.

If you do end up getting sick despite vaccination, experts say the shots help reduce the severity of the illness — the main reason to get vaccinated.

But the understanding of how vaccinated people who are infected might spread the virus to others is changing.

Previously, health officials believed vaccinated people who get breakthrough infections were unlikely to spread the virus. But with the more contagious delta variant that is now dominant, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said new data shows people who get infected could carry enough virus in their noses and throats to spread it to others.

The agency recently cited the data in updating its guidance to say vaccinated people should go back to wearing masks indoors in areas where the virus is surging.

"It is concerning enough that we feel like we have to act," said CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky. Still, health experts say the vaccines provide strong protection against serious illness. In the U.S., people who weren't vaccinated make up nearly all hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19.

## Ron Popeil, inventor and king of TV pitchmen, dies at 86

By ANDREW DALTON and TED ANTHONY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Ron Popeil, the quintessential TV pitchman and inventor known to generations of viewers for hawking products including the Veg-O-Matic, the Pocket Fisherman, Mr. Microphone and the Showtime Rotisserie and BBQ, has died, his family said.

Popeil died "suddenly and peacefully" Wednesday at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, his family said in a statement. He was 86. No cause of death was given.

Popeil essentially invented the popular image of the American television pitchman, whose novel products solved frustrating problems viewers didn't know they had. He popularized much of the vernacular of late-night TV ads and infomercials, with lines like "Now how much would you pay?" and "Set it and forget it."

Popeil, whose father was also an inventor-salesman, built his ability to sell things as a young man in the open-air markets of Chicago, where he moved as a teen in the 1940s after spending his earliest years in New York and Miami.

Building on an invention of his father's, the Chop-o-Matic, he marketed the slicing-and-chopping machine he called the Veg-O-Matic, sold by the company he founded and named after himself — Ronco.

He would take the product-slinging style previously done at state fairs and Woolworth stores to television starting in the late 1950s, offering viewers a chance to skip stores and buy straight from the source with a simple phone call.

As his influence grew, he crafted an enthusiastic, guy-next-door presence that suffused the 1970s with commercials for such gadgets as the the Popeil Pocket Fisherman, a self-contained fishing apparatus, and Mr. Microphone, a then-groundbreaking wireless mic that was amplified through the nearest AM radio.

"But wait — there's more," he'd say in the ads.

Though Ronco Teleproducts went bankrupt in 1984, Popeil started from the bottom again and built himself and his company back up. By the 1990s, as the infomercial gained footing and cable television's influence spread, he was doing full-length shows that evangelized about such devices as pasta makers, food dehydrators and "GLH" (Great-Looking Hair), which was commonly called "hair in a can."

He appealed to consumers in part because he was a classic American showman, equal parts P.T. Barnum and Thomas Edison — an inventor and innovator, yes, but a popularizer as well, a man who saw consumers' needs and then found accessible ways to entice them into making purchases.

In a 1997 Associated Press interview, he said his drive to invent was more than mercantile; it was a bit obsessive. "I have enough money today," he said at the time. "But I can't stop. If there's a need for these things, I can't help myself."

He seemed always to have new products at the ready: the Ronco Electric Food Dehydrator, Popeil's Pasta & Sausage Maker, the Inside the Eggshell Egg Scrambler, the Bagel Cutter, the Hav-A-Maid Mop, the Speed Tufting Kit, The Whip-O-Matic.

When home shopping networks arose, he found a natural home, and he sold Showtime Rotisseries in droves on QVC.

Popeil was constantly parodied in pop culture. He was sent up by Dan Akroyd in the early days of "Saturday Night Live" with his "Bass-O-Matic" sketch.

"Weird Al" Yankovic had a song on his "In 3-D" album titled "Mr. Popeil," whose lyrics said, "I need a Veg-O-Matic! I need a pocket fisherman! I need a handy appliance that'll scramble an egg while it's still inside its shell! ... Help me, Mr. Popeil!"

Popeil was happy to take part in the parody himself, understanding and embracing his campy public image. He played or voiced himself on shows including "The X Files," "The Simpsons" and "King of the Hill."

Popeil is survived by his wife of 25 years Robin; daughters Kathryn, Lauren Contessa and Valentina; and

four grandchildren. A fifth daughter, Shannon, died before him.

## Infrastructure deal: Senate suddenly acts to take up bill

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate voted Wednesday night to begin work on a nearly \$1 trillion national infrastructure plan, acting with sudden speed after weeks of fits and starts once the White House and a bipartisan group of senators agreed on major provisions of the package that's key to President Joe Biden's agenda.

Biden welcomed the accord as one that would show America can "do big things." It includes the most significant long-term investments in nearly a century, he said, on par with building the transcontinental railroad or the Interstate highway system.

"This deal signals to the world that our democracy can function," Biden said ahead of the vote. "We will once again transform America and propel us into the future."

After weeks of stop-and-go negotiations, the rare bipartisan showing on a 67-32 vote to start formal Senate consideration showed the high interest among senators in the infrastructure package. But it's unclear if enough Republicans will eventually join Democrats to support final passage.

Senate rules require 60 votes in the evenly split 50-50 chamber to proceed for consideration and ultimately pass this bill, meaning support from both parties.

The outcome will set the stage for the next debate over Biden's much more ambitious \$3.5 trillion spending package, a strictly partisan pursuit of far-reaching programs and services including child care, tax breaks and health care that touch almost every corner of American life. Republicans strongly oppose that bill, which would require a simple majority, and may try to stop both.

Lead GOP negotiator Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio announced the bipartisan group's agreement on the \$1 trillion package earlier Wednesday at the Capitol, flanked by four other Republican senators who had been in talks with Democrats and the White House.

After voting, Portman said the outcome showed that bipartisanship in Washington can work and he believed GOP support would only grow. "That's pretty darn good for a start," he said.

That group had labored with the White House to salvage the deal, a first part of Biden's big infrastructure agenda. Swelling to more than 700 pages, the bill includes \$550 billion in new spending for public works projects.

In all, 17 Republican senators joined the Democrats in voting to launch the debate, but most remained skeptical. The GOP senators were given a thick binder of briefing materials during a private lunch, but they asked many questions and wanted more details.

According to a 57-page GOP summary obtained by The Associated Press, the five-year spending package would be paid for by tapping \$205 billion in unspent COVID-19 relief aid and \$53 billion in unemployment insurance aid some states have halted. It also relies on economic growth to bring in \$56 billion, and other measures.

Giving Wednesday night's vote a boost, Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell announced late in the day he would vote to proceed, though whether he will support the final bill remains uncertain. The Republican negotiators met with McConnell earlier Wednesday and Portman said the leader "all along has been encouraging our efforts."

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, a lead Democratic negotiator who talks often with Republicans also spoke with Biden on Wednesday and said she hoped the results showed "our government can work."

Democrats, who have slim control of the House and Senate, face a timeline to act on what would be some of the most substantial pieces of legislation in years.

Filling in the details has become a month-long exercise ever since a bipartisan group of senators struck an agreement with Biden in June over the broad framework.

The new spending in the package dropped from about \$600 billion to \$550 billion, senators said, as money was eliminated for a public-private infrastructure bank and was reduced in other categories, including transit.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 52 of 88

The package still includes \$110 billion for highways, \$65 billion for broadband and \$73 billion to modernize the nation's electric grid, according to a White House fact sheet.

Additionally, there's \$25 billion for airports, \$55 billion for waterworks and more than \$50 billion to bolster infrastructure against cyberattacks and climate change. There's also \$7.5 billion for electric vehicle charging stations.

Paying for the package has been a slog throughout the talks after Democrats rejected a plan to bring in funds by hiking the gas tax drivers pay at the pump and Republicans dashed an effort to boost the IRS to go after tax scofflaws.

Along with repurposing the COVID-19 relief and unemployment aid, other revenue would come from the sale of broadcast spectrum, reinstating fees that chemical companies used to pay for cleaning up the nation's worst hazardous waste sites and drawing \$49 billion from reversing a Trump-era pharmaceutical rebate, among other sources.

The final deal could run into political trouble if it doesn't pass muster as fully paid for when the Congressional Budget Office assesses the details. But Portman said the package will be "more than paid for."

House Democrats have their own transportation bill, which includes much more spending to address rail transit, electric vehicles and other strategies to counter climate change.

The chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., called the Senate's bipartisan measure complete "crap," during a private meeting Tuesday according to two Democrats who attended the session and spoke on condition of anonymity to describe it.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi did not commit to supporting the package until she sees the details, but said Wednesday she's "rooting for it."

Pelosi said, "I very much want it to pass."

A recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC found 8 in 10 Americans favor some increased infrastructure spending.

Senators in the bipartisan group have been huddling privately for months. The group includes 10 core negotiators, split evenly between Democrats and Republicans, but has swelled at times to 22.

Transit funding has remained a stubborn dispute, as most Republican senators come from rural states where highways dominate and public transit is scarce, while Democrats view transit as a priority for cities and a key to easing congesting and fighting climate change.

Expanding access to broadband, which has become ever more vital for households during the coronavirus pandemic, sparked a new debate. Republicans pushed back against imposing regulations on internet service providers in a program that helps low-income people pay for service.

Meanwhile, Democrats are readying the broader \$3.5 trillion package that is being considered under budget rules that allow passage with 51 senators in the split Senate, with Vice President Kamala Harris able to break a tie. It would be paid for by increasing the corporate tax rate and the tax rate on Americans earning more than \$400,000 a year.

## **CDC mask guidance met with hostility by leading Republicans**

By JILL COLVIN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — As he rallied conservatives on Wednesday, one of the Republican Party's most prominent rising stars mocked new government recommendations calling for more widespread use of masks to blunt a coronavirus surge.

"Did you not get the CDC's memo?" Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis joked before an almost entirely unmasked audience of activists and lawmakers crammed into an indoor hotel ballroom in Salt Lake City. "I don't see you guys complying."

From Texas to South Dakota, Republican leaders responded with hostility and defiance to updated masking guidance from public health officials, who advise that even fully vaccinated people return to wearing masks indoors if they live in areas with high rates of virus transmission. The backlash reopened the culture war over pandemic restrictions just as efforts to persuade unvaccinated Americans to get shots appeared

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 53 of 88

to be making headway.

Egged on by former President Donald Trump, the response reflects deep resistance among many GOP voters to restrictions aimed at containing a virus they feel poses minimal personal threat. The party is also tapping into growing frustration and confusion over ever-shifting rules and guidance.

But the resistance has real implications for a country desperate to emerge from the pandemic. Beyond vaccinations, there are few tools other than mask-wearing and social distancing to contain the spread of the delta variant, which studies have shown to be far more contagious than the original strain.

Many Republican leaders, however, are blocking preventative measures, potentially making it harder to tame virus outbreaks in conservative communities.

At least 18 Republican-led states have moved to prohibit vaccine passports or to ban public entities from requiring proof of vaccination. And some have prohibited schools from requiring any student or teacher to wear a mask or be vaccinated.

In its announcement, the CDC cited troubling new — thus far unpublished — research that found that fully vaccinated people can spread the delta variant just like the unvaccinated, putting those who haven't received the shots or who have compromised immune systems at heightened risk. The CDC also recommended that all teachers, staff and students wear masks inside school buildings, regardless of vaccination status.

The backlash was swift.

"We won't go back. We won't mask our children," declared Trump, who routinely cast doubt on the value of mask-wearing and rarely wore one in public while he was in office. "Why do Democrats distrust the science?"

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson called the new guidance "disappointing and concerning" and "inconsistent with the overwhelming evidence surrounding the efficacy of the vaccines and their proven results."

He, like others, warned that the measure would undermine efforts to encourage vaccine holdouts to get their shots by casting further doubt on the efficacy of approved vaccines, which have been shown to dramatically decrease the risk of death or hospitalization, despite the occurrence of breakthrough cases.

Last week, White House officials reported that vaccination rates were on the rise in some states where COVID-19 cases were soaring, as more Republican leaders implored their constituents to lay lingering doubts aside and get the shots to protect themselves. That includes Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey, who has pleaded with unvaccinated residents, saying they are the ones "letting us down."

"This self-inflicted setback encourages skepticism and vaccine hesitancy at a time when the goal is to prevent serious illnesses and deaths from COVID-19 through vaccination," Parson tweeted. "This decision only promotes fear & further division among our citizens."

The announcement "will unfortunately only diminish confidence in the vaccine and create more challenges for public health officials □ people who have worked tirelessly to increase vaccination rates," echoed Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, who has banned mask and vaccine mandates in his state.

In his Wednesday speech, DeSantis took particular aim at the CDC's call for kids to wear masks in the classroom.

"It's not healthy for these students to be sitting there all day, 6-year-old kids in kindergarten covered in masks," he said — though there is no evidence that wearing masks is harmful to children older than toddler age.

And in South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem called out the CDC for shifting its position on masking "AGAIN." She said that those who are worried about the virus can get vaccinated, wear a mask or stay home, but that "Changing CDC guidelines don't help ensure the public's trust."

On Capitol Hill, some Republicans were in revolt after the Capitol's attending physician sent a memo informing members that masks would again have to be worn inside the House at all times.

The change set off a round robin of insults, with Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calling Republican House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy "a moron" after McCarthy tweeted, "The threat of bringing masks back is not a decision based on science, but a decision conjured up by liberal government officials

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 54 of 88

who want to continue to live in a perpetual pandemic state.”

The mandate also prompted an angry confrontation, as Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., verbally assailed Rep. Burgess Owens, R-Utah, who exited the House chamber and walked past her without a face covering.

Conservatives also forced a vote to adjourn the chamber in protest to the mandate, which was defeated along mostly party lines.

“We have a crisis at our border, and we’re playing footsie with mask mandates in the people’s House,” railed Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, the motion’s sponsor. “The American people are fed up. They want to go back to life. They want to go back to business. They want to go back to school without their children being forced to wear masks.”

The nation is averaging nearly 62,000 new COVID-19 cases a day, and the vast majority of those hospitalized and dying haven’t been vaccinated. As of Sunday, 69% of American adults had received one vaccine dose, and 60% had been fully vaccinated, according to the CDC.

Last year, early on in the pandemic, public health officials told Americans that masks offered little protection against the virus (and could even increase the risk of infection). The guidance was driven by a lack of knowledge about how the novel virus spread and a desire to save limited mask supplies for medical workers. But the CDC soon changed course and advised Americans to wear masks indoors and outdoors if they were within 6 feet (1.8 meters) of one another.

Then in April of this year, as vaccination rates rose sharply, the agency eased its guidelines, saying fully vaccinated Americans no longer needed to wear masks outdoors unless they were in big crowds of strangers. In May, the guidance was eased further, saying fully vaccinated people could safely stop wearing masks outdoors in crowds and in most indoor settings.

Subsequent CDC guidance said fully vaccinated people no longer needed to wear masks at schools, either. Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House principal deputy press secretary, on Wednesday defended the changes, saying the CDC “did exactly what it was supposed to do.”

“The CDC has to adapt to the virus,” she said, “and unfortunately because not enough Americans have stepped up to get vaccinated, they had to provide new guidance to help save lives.”

## ‘OK not to be OK’: Mental health takes top role at Olympics

By JENNA FRYER AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — For decades, they were told to shake it off or toughen up — to set aside the doubt, or the demons, and focus on the task at hand: winning. Dominating. Getting it done.

For years, Simone Biles was one of the very best at that. Suddenly — to some, shockingly — she decided she wasn’t in the right headspace.

By pulling on her white sweatsuit in the middle of Tuesday night’s Olympic gymnastics meet, and by doing it with a gold medal hanging in the balance, Biles might very well have redefined the mental health discussion that’s been coursing through sports for the past year.

Michael Phelps, winner of a record 23 gold medals and now retired, has long been open about his own mental health struggles. Phelps has said he contemplated suicide after the 2012 Olympics while wracked with depression. Now an analyst for NBC’s swimming coverage, he said watching Biles struggle “broke my heart.”

“Mental health over the last 18 months is something people are talking about,” Phelps said. “We’re human beings. Nobody is perfect. So yes, it is OK not to be OK.”

Biles joins some other high-profile athletes in the Olympic space — overwhelmingly females — who have been talking openly about a topic that had been taboo in sports for seemingly forever.

— Tennis player Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open, never went to Wimbledon and, after her early exit in Tokyo this week, conceded that the Olympic cauldron was a bit too much to handle.

— American sprinter Sha’Carri Richardson made no secret of the issues she faced as she prepared for an Olympic journey that never happened. She said she used marijuana to help mask the pain of her birth mother’s death, to say nothing of the pressure of the 100 meters.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 55 of 88

— Dutch cyclist Tom Dumoulin left training camp in January to clear his head, saying he was finding it “very difficult for me to know how to find my way as Tom Dumoulin the cyclist.” He resumed training in May; on Wednesday, he won a silver medal in the men’s individual time trials.

— Liz Cambage, a WNBA player who competes for Australia, pulled out of the Olympics a week before they opened because of anxiety over entering a controlled COVID bubble in Tokyo that would have kept her friends and family away.

“Relying on daily medication to control my anxiety is not the place I want to be right now. Especially walking into competition on the world’s biggest sporting stage,” she wrote on social media.

Biles, though, took things to a new level — one that now makes it thinkable to do what had been almost unthinkable only 24 hours before. She stepped back, assessed the situation and realized it would not be healthy to keep going.

On Wednesday, she pulled out of the all-around competition to focus on her mental well-being.

“I have to do what’s right for me and focus on my mental health, and not jeopardize my health and well-being,” a tearful Biles said after the Americans won the silver medal in team competition. She said she recognized she was not in the right headspace hours before the competition began.

“It was like fighting all those demons,” she said.

The International Olympic Committee, aware of the struggles young athletes face, increased its mental health resources ahead of the Tokyo Games. Psychologists and psychiatrists are onsite in the Olympic village and established a “Mentally Fit Helpline” as a confidential health support service available before, during and for three months after the Games.

The 24-hour hotline is a free service that offers in more than 70 languages clinical support, structured short-term counseling, practical support and, if needed, guidance to the appropriate IOC reporting mechanisms in the case of harassment and/or abuse.

The IOC-developed Athlete365 website surveyed more than 4,000 athletes in early 2020, and the results led the IOC to shift its tone from sports performance and results to mental health and uplifting the athlete’s voices.

Content was created for various social media platforms to feature current Olympians championing mental health causes. And the Olympic State of Mind series on Olympics.com shares compilations of mental health stories and podcasts.

“Are we doing enough? I hope so. I think so,” IOC spokesman Mark Adams said Wednesday. “But like everyone in the world, we are doing more on this issue.”

Naoko Imoto, a swimmer at the 1996 Atlanta Games, is a consultant on gender equity for the Tokyo Olympic Committee. She said Osaka’s admission in early June about mental-health struggles represented an opening for a discussion largely avoided.

“In Japan, we still don’t talk about mental health,” Imoto said. “I don’t think there’s enough of an understanding on mental health, but I think there are a lot of athletes coming out right now and saying it is common.”

Australian swimmer Jack McLoughlin choked back tears after winning the silver medal in the 400-meter freestyle Sunday, describing how the pressures of training during a pandemic while also pursuing an engineering degree nearly caused him to quit the sport.

“That’s all to my family and friends. They really helped me out, I was really struggling,” McLoughlin said. “I train up to 10, 11 times a week, so to do that when you are not 100% sure you’re actually going to get where you want to be is pretty hard.”

Particularly with the world watching. John Speraw, coach of the U.S. men’s volleyball team and the son of a psychologist, hired a specialist to assist his athletes when he coached at UC Irvine. He was an assistant on two Olympic teams before advancing to be the head coach for the Rio Games. There, he noticed his players were posting on Facebook — during the actual opening ceremony.

“To me, it was the most striking,” he said. “I think we are very conscious of the increased scrutiny and external pressure and expectations that it places on our athletes.”

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 56 of 88

Thriveworks, a counseling, psychology, and psychiatry services with more than 300 locations, found that one in three elite athletes suffer from anxiety and depression. In an analysis of more than 18,000 data points from print, online, broadcast and social media sources covering track and field, swimming, tennis, gymnastics and soccer, 69% of negative mentions were about female athletes compared to 31% about male athletes.

It showed that when the focus is on an individual athlete, coverage becomes less enthusiastic with a 29% negative tone that exemplifies the public pressure and criticism athletes face, said Kim Plourde, a licensed clinical social worker at Thriveworks who works with elite athletes through the Alliance of Social Workers in Sport.

"Female athletes have to manage a different level of expectations from themselves, coaches, other athletes, media, and fans ranging from their physical appearance to their performance," Plourde said.

Jenny Rissveds of Sweden was the youngest women's cross-country mountain biking champion when she won gold in Rio at 22. A year later, two deaths in her family triggered depression she still deals with. Rissveds failed to win a second consecutive gold, finishing 14th in Tokyo, but she was elated to be done with competition.

"I'm just so f---ing happy that it's over," she said. "Not just the race. But all these years, to not have to carry that title any more. I have a name and I hope that I can be Jenny now and not the Olympic champion, because that is a heavy burden.

"I hope that I will be left alone now."

## **EXPLAINER: How Biles' withdrawals impact US gymnastics team**

By The Associated Press undefined

TOKYO (AP) — American gymnast Simone Biles' decision to withdraw from two marquee Olympic competitions to focus on her mental well-being changes the landscape somewhat dramatically for the U.S. gymnastics team in coming days. Here's a look at what that might mean, with the understanding that the situation is still fluid.

**WHAT HAPPENED:** After pulling out of the women's team finals after the vault rotation on Tuesday night, saying she felt she wasn't in the right "headspace," Biles on Wednesday withdrew from Thursday's all-around competition to focus on her mental well-being.

**WHO'LL TAKE BILES' PLACE:** Jade Carey, who finished ninth in qualifying, will take Biles' place in the all-around. Carey initially did not qualify because she was the third-ranking American behind Biles and Sunisa Lee. International Gymnastics Federation rules limit countries to two athletes per event in the finals.

**WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE ALL-AROUND:** The decision opens the door wide open for the all-around, a title that Biles was expected to defend after winning in 2016 at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics. Rebeca Andrade of Brazil finished second to Biles during qualifying, followed by Lee and Russians Angelina Melnikova and Vladislava Urazova. The four were separated by three-tenths of a point on Sunday.

**WHAT'S NEXT FOR BILES:** USA Gymnastics said Biles will be evaluated daily before deciding if she will participate in next week's individual events. Biles qualified for the finals on all four apparatuses, something she didn't even do during her five-medal haul in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

**HOW JADE CAREY GOT HERE:** Carey now finds herself in the final, capping a remarkable journey for the 21-year-old from Phoenix. She spent two years traveling the globe in an effort to pile up enough points on the World Cup circuit to earn an individual nominative spot, meaning she would be in the Olympics but technically not be part of the four-woman U.S. team. Carey posted the second-best score on vault and the third-best on floor during qualifying, earning trips to the event finals in the process. Now she finds herself competing for an all-around medal while replacing the athlete considered the greatest of all-time in the sport.

## **Man pleads guilty to 4 Asian spa killings, sentenced to life**

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 57 of 88

CANTON, Ga. (AP) — A man accused of killing eight people, mostly women of Asian descent, at Atlanta-area massage businesses pleaded guilty to murder Tuesday in four of the killings and was sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison.

Robert Aaron Long, 22, still faces the death penalty in the other deaths, which are being prosecuted in another county. The string of shootings at three businesses in March ignited outrage and fueled fear among Asian Americans, who already faced increased hostility linked to the coronavirus pandemic. Many were particularly upset when authorities suggested Long's crimes weren't racially motivated but born of a sex addiction, which isn't recognized as an official disorder.

Cherokee County prosecutors had planned to seek the death penalty but decided a plea deal would bring swift justice and avoid any lengthy appeals. That's what the victims and their families who they were able to contact wanted, District Attorney Shannon Wallace said.

Bonnie Michels' husband of 24 years, Paul, was the first person killed.

"A part of me died with him that day," she told the judge. "I am shattered."

Elcias Hernandez Ortiz, who was shot in the face, also addressed the court, saying it's been very hard for his family.

"Honestly, this man, why didn't he think before killing so many people? I only want justice," he said through a Spanish translator.

On March 16, Long shot and killed four people, three of them women and two of Asian descent, at Youngs Asian Massage in Cherokee County. A fifth person was wounded. Long then drove to Atlanta, where he shot and killed three women at Gold Spa before crossing the street to Aromatherapy Spa and killing another woman, police said. All of the Atlanta victims were of Asian descent.

In Atlanta, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has said she intends to seek the death penalty. There, Long faces charges of aggravated assault and domestic terrorism in addition to murder.

Wallace reiterated Tuesday that Cherokee County investigators saw no evidence of racial bias. Long walked through the first spa "shooting anyone and everyone he saw" and told detectives he was motivated by a sex addiction.

Investigators interviewed people who knew Long for years, including three of Asian descent, who said they'd never heard him make racist comments, she said. Her team also considered the diversity of the people shot in Cherokee County. They included a Hispanic man and a white man and woman.

Asian American community leaders said Tuesday they were concerned that the shootings continue to be blamed on a sex addiction. Long's crimes were "intended to target Asian people, specifically Asian women," said state Rep. Bee Nguyen, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House and a frequent advocate for women and communities of color.

Wallace said she would have argued at trial that Long was motivated by gender bias, though that wouldn't have extended his sentence.

Prosecutors in Fulton County, where all the victims were women of Asian descent, have said they believe Long was motivated by race and gender. They plan to seek a hate crime sentencing enhancement.

Georgia's new hate crimes law doesn't provide for a stand-alone hate crime. After a conviction on an underlying crime, a jury determines whether it was motivated by bias, which carries an additional penalty.

The American Psychiatric Association doesn't recognize sex addiction in its main reference guide for mental disorders. While some people struggle to control sexual behaviors, it's often linked to recognized disorders or moral views, said David Ley, clinical psychologist and author of "The Myth of Sex Addiction."

Long previously underwent inpatient and outpatient treatment for sex addiction, Wallace said. In fact, it was another patient who gave him the idea to seek sexual services at massage businesses, she said.

Long signed a plea agreement admitting to all charges in Cherokee County, including malice murder, felony murder, attempt to commit murder and aggravated assault. Cherokee County Superior Court Chief Judge Ellen McElyea then handed him four sentences of life without parole plus an additional 35 years.

Those killed in Cherokee County: Michels, 54; Xiaojie "Emily" Tan, 49; Daoyou Feng, 44; and Delaina Yaun, 33. The Atlanta victims were: Suncha Kim, 69; Soon Chung Park, 74; Hyun Jung Grant, 51; and

Yong Ae Yue, 63.

Long said he planned to kill himself that day and went to the massage businesses thinking that paying for sex — which he considered shameful — would push him to do it. But while sitting in his car outside the first spa, he decided to kill the people inside.

After he was caught in south Georgia, Long told detectives he struggled with pornography and sex. He believed he was an addict and felt tremendous guilt when he viewed porn or engaged in sexual acts at massage businesses, Wallace said.

Long blamed the victims for his inability to control his impulses, Wallace said.

Long is scheduled for arraignment next month in Fulton County. His Cherokee County lawyers said in a statement they hope prosecutors there will follow Wallace's example and reach a similar plea agreement.

Wallace said that after the shootings at the two Atlanta spas, Long intended to carry out similar crimes in Florida.

By then, his parents had called authorities after recognizing their son in images from security video that authorities posted online. His parents were already tracking his movements through an application on his phone so they would know if he visited massage businesses, the prosecutor said, and that enabled officers to find him.

## Leftist political novice sworn in as Peru's president

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and MAURICIO MUNOZ Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Pedro Castillo, a leftist political novice who has promised to be a champion of his country's poor, on Wednesday became Peru's new president.

The rural teacher who has never held political office before was sworn in less than two weeks after he was declared the winner of the June 6 runoff election. He is Peru's first president of peasant origin.

In a ceremony in the capital of Lima, Castillo made a commitment "for God, for my family, for my peasant sisters and brothers, teachers, patrolmen, children, youth and women, and for a new Constitution." He then he sang the national anthem, taking off his signature hat and placing it over his heart.

He succeeds President Francisco Sagasti, whom Congress appointed in November to lead the South American nation after weeks of political turmoil.

Castillo, who up until days ago lived with his family in an adobe home deep in the Andes, will face a deeply divided Congress that will make it extremely challenging for him to fulfill his ill-defined campaign promises to aid the poor, who are now estimated to make up about a third of the country's population. His political savviness will be immediately tested, and his ability to reach agreements could even determine if Congress allows him to finish his term.

"The government of Pedro Castillo still maintains us with considerable uncertainty; we still do not have clear his main lines of policy," said Claudia Navas, an analyst with the global firm Control Risks. "However, we foresee that possibly, due to the characteristics of the Peruvian political system and the current general political and economic situation of the country, Castillo will maintain a more pragmatic position than he announced during the campaign."

"The key is to build those consensuses and add strength to the proposals on how he is going to achieve them," she added.

Castillo defeated his opponent, right-wing career politician Keiko Fujimori, by just 44,000 votes. Peru's poor and rural citizens supported Castillo and his slogan "No more poor in a rich country," while the elites favored Fujimori, the daughter of controversial former president Alberto Fujimori. He stunned voters and observers by rising from a pool of 18 candidates and advancing to the runoff, in first place no less.

Castillo's initial proposal to nationalize the nation's mining industry set off alarm bells among business leaders. While that stance has softened, he remains committed to rewriting the constitution that was approved under the regime of Fujimori's father.

Peru is the second largest copper exporter in the world and mining accounts for almost 10% of its GDP and 60% of its exports. Its economy has been crushed by the coronavirus pandemic, increasing the pov-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 59 of 88

erty level and eliminating the gains of a decade.

"I want you to know that the pride and pain of deep Peru runs through my veins. That I, too, am the son of this country founded on the sweat of my ancestors, built on the lack of opportunity of my parents and that despite that, I also saw it resist," Castillo said. "That my life was made in the cold of the early mornings in the field, and that it was also these hands from the countryside that carried and rocked my children when they were little. That the history of this long-silenced Peru is also my history."

In November, Peru had three presidents in a single week after one was impeached by Congress over corruption allegations and protests forced his successor to resign. Lawmakers then appointed Sagasti.

Thousands of small businesses have closed over the past 16 months, and the political uncertainty following the election has led to the withdrawal of millions of dollars from local banks.

Enrique Castellanos, an economics professor at the Peruvian University of the Pacific, told a radio station that Castillo must build trust in the business community.

"Confidence takes time to maintain and it goes away very quickly," he said.

The pandemic has pushed Peru's medical and cemetery infrastructure beyond capacity. It has also deepened people's mistrust of government as it mismanaged the COVID-19 response and a secret vaccination drive for the well-connected erupted into a national scandal.

Castillo has promised COVID-19 vaccines for all Peruvians.

Castillo until recently was a rural schoolteacher in the country's third-poorest district. The son of illiterate peasants, he led a teachers' strike in 2017.

The new president has lived with his wife and two children in an adobe home that he built in rural Chugur more than 20 years ago. On Wednesday, he announced he will not govern from the neo-baroque presidential palace, which he said will become a museum.

That follows a trend among some recent Latin American leaders, who have preached austerity.

In Bolivia, then President Evo Morales ditched the colonial presidential palace and turned it into a museum. But he then was heavily criticized for building a 29-story skyscraper to house offices and his home at a cost of more than \$30 million.

In Mexico, current President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador shunned the presidential compound of Los Pinos and opened it to the public. He moved into the old national palace, where no president had lived since the late 19th century.

Several delegations from other countries traveled to witness Peru's presidential transition. Those attending included U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, who was also a schoolteacher, the King of Spain Felipe VI, and the leaders of Chile, Sebastián Piñera; Colombia, Iván Duque; and Ecuador, Guillermo Lasso.

Duque met with Castillo before the inauguration. Duque said they agreed to continue strengthening the participation of both countries in both the Andean community and the Pacific Alliance and spoke about the binational social agenda that includes health and education issues.

Duque told reporters that rewriting a constitution, like Castillo has proposed, is a "sovereign decision" of each country. But he pointed out that "any constitutional reform process must be the product of a great national consensus, it has to be an opportunity for union and not division."

## FDA allows automatic 'generic' swap for brand-name insulin

By LINDA A. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

U.S. regulators took action Wednesday that will make it easier to get a cheaper, near-copy of a brand-name insulin at the drugstore.

Doctors now have to specifically prescribe what's called a biosimilar or OK substituting it for a more expensive brand-name insulin.

Wednesday's move by the Food and Drug Administration will allow pharmacists to automatically substitute the cheaper version, just as they do with generic pills for other kinds of drugs.

It's the FDA's first approval of an "interchangeable" biosimilar, a near-copy of an injected biologic medicine that's manufactured inside living cells. It could save diabetics and health plans millions of dollars annually and encourage other drugmakers to create more biosimilar medicines. Health data firm IQVIA projects

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 60 of 88

U.S. savings from increasing use of biosimilars from 2020 through 2024 will top \$100 billion.

The FDA agreed that Viatrix Inc.'s Semglee was interchangeable with widely used Lantus, a fast-acting insulin.

Approval of a second such interchangeable biosimilar of a long-acting insulin appears imminent from the same developers, Pittsburgh-based generic giant Viatrix and its partner, India's Biocon.

Mylan N.V., one of two companies that merged to create Viatrix last December, launched Semglee in the U.S. last summer.

Red tape, lengthy patents and pushback from brand-name drugmakers have limited U.S. sales of biosimilars to far below levels in Europe.

"These products are highly similar but much more affordable," said Sean McGowan, head of biosimilars at AmerisourceBergen, a top drug wholesaler.

Only 20 of 29 FDA-approved biosimilars — for cancer and immune disorders like rheumatoid arthritis — are sold in the U.S. so far, he said.

Depending on the pharmacy, Semglee injector pens cost about \$150 to \$190 without insurance for a typical month's supply, compared to \$340 to \$520 for the same supply of brand-name Lantus.

## **New CDC guidelines set off rush to reimpose mask mandates**

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

New guidance from the federal government set off a cascade of mask rules across the nation Wednesday as cities, states, schools and businesses raced to restore mandates and others pushed back against the guidelines at a time when Americans are exhausted and confused over constantly shifting pandemic measures.

Nevada and Kansas City, Missouri, were among the locations that moved swiftly to re-impose indoor mask requirements following Tuesday's announcement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But governors in Arizona, Pennsylvania and South Carolina said they would resist reversing course.

The federal recommendations quickly plunged Americans into another emotionally charged debate over the face coverings meant to curb easy transmission of the deadly coronavirus.

In Florida, a Broward County School Board meeting devolved into a screaming match between irate parents and board members on Tuesday. Some protesters even took to burning face masks outside the building.

In suburban Atlanta, Jamie Reinhold said she would pull her kids from school if the district stuck to the CDC's guidance, which the 52-year-old believes takes the country "backward" and damages confidence in the vaccines.

"If you believe in the masks, go ahead, but don't try to tell me what to do for my child's health and safety and immune system," she said. "It's my child. It's my choice."

And in New Orleans, Lisa Beaudean said she was not convinced mask mandates would inspire the unvaccinated — who account for most new infections — to take the virus seriously and get inoculated.

"I'm very frustrated," the St. Louis woman said as she strolled the French Quarter without a mask. "For the last 18 months, I've done everything I'm supposed to do, and there are no repercussions for those who haven't done what they're supposed to do."

Elsewhere, Ford Motor Co. said it would reinstate mask protocols for all employees and visitors at its Missouri and Florida facilities. The two states are among the hardest hit by the summer surge in which the U.S. is now averaging more than 60,000 new cases a day, driven by the highly contagious delta variant.

Google also postponed a planned Sept. 1 return to the office for most of its more than 130,000 employees until mid-October, following a similar move by Apple. Google said Wednesday that it will also eventually require everyone on staff to be vaccinated, a mandate that President Joe Biden said he's also weighing for federal employees.

Other government leaders, meanwhile, said they will hold off reinstating mask rules for now.

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf said he's not considering imposing a mask mandate in schools or statewide,

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 61 of 88

arguing that such orders were necessary before there was a vaccine.

"People have the ability to make the decision to get a vaccine," the Democrat told a Pittsburgh radio station Tuesday. "If they do, that's the protection."

The CDC's new guidance applies to places with at least 50 new cases per 100,000 people in the last week, which is roughly 60% of all U.S. counties, federal officials said. Nearly all of the South and Southwest is subject to the guidance, but most communities in the Northeast — with the exception of major metro areas like New York City and Boston — are exempt for now, according to the CDC's COVID tracker.

The stark partisan divide over mask wearing set up the potential for a patchwork of regulations within states and counties.

In Florida's Miami-Dade County, Mayor Daniella Levine Cava imposed an indoor mask mandate Wednesday at county facilities.

The Democrat's announcement, which does not apply to businesses or restaurants, comes after Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a new law in May giving the state the power to invalidate local pandemic measures, including mask mandates and limits on business operations.

"We have all come too far. We have all sacrificed too much in this past almost year and a half. We cannot turn back now," Levine Cava said.

In Missouri, the St. Louis County Council voted Tuesday to reverse the county's mask mandate, just a day after it became one of the first reinstated in the country.

But Democratic County Executive Sam Page insisted Wednesday that the mandate remained in effect and blamed the pushback on politics.

On the other side of the state, Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas, a Democrat, reinstated a similar indoor mask mandate for Missouri's largest city.

State Attorney General Eric Schmitt, who is running for the U.S. Senate as a Republican, has sued to block the St. Louis-area mandate and has vowed to do the same for Kansas City's requirement, saying on Twitter that the mandates are "about politics & control, not science."

The CDC's updated guidance was prompted by new data suggesting vaccinated people can pass on the virus in rare cases.

But the agency's director, Rochelle Walensky, stressed that the vaccines are working by preventing greater levels of hospitalization and death. Unvaccinated people account for the vast number of new infections. Two-thirds of the vaccine-eligible population in the U.S. has received at least one dose.

"I know this is not a message America wants to hear," Walensky told CNN on Wednesday. "With prior variants, when people had these rare breakthrough infections, we didn't see the capacity of them to spread the virus to others, but with the delta variant, we now see that you can actually now pass it to somebody else."

In Provincetown, Massachusetts, where officials earlier this week re-imposed an indoor mask requirement following a surge in COVID-19 cases this month, store owner Patrick Patrick says he doesn't mind asking customers to mask up once more.

The owner of Marine Specialties, a long running Army-Navy store, had been leery of the decision to drop nearly all virus safety mandates ahead of the busy summer season. He even tried to impose his own in-store mask mandate before relenting last month.

"If we'd stuck with masks all along, I don't think we'd be having this conversation," Patrick said. "We wore them all last summer, and we didn't have a single case in Provincetown. Now see where we're at."

As of Wednesday, the town had reported more than 800 cases associated with the most recent cluster, which started around the busy July 4th holiday.

The business drop-off has been significant, Patrick said. But he hopes the return of masks helps bring visitors peace of mind.

"I don't see masks as bad for business," he said. "If it gets people back out and feeling safe, it's worth it. We take care of public health and safety, the dollars and cents will take care of themselves."

**Fed's Powell downplays delta variant's threat to the economy**

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 62 of 88

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The spread of the COVID-19 delta variant is raising infections, leading some companies and governments to require vaccinations and raising concerns about the U.S. economic recovery.

But on Wednesday, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell injected a note of reassurance, suggesting that the delta variant poses little threat to the economy, at least so far.

“What we’ve seen is with successive waves of COVID over the past year and some months now,” Powell said at a news conference, “there has tended to be less in the way of economic implications from each wave. We will see whether that is the case with the delta variety, but it’s certainly not an unreasonable expectation.”

Powell spoke after the Fed ended its latest policy meeting in which it signaled, for the first time since the pandemic began to ease, that the economy is moving closer to the “substantial further progress” it wants to see before reducing the \$120 billion in bonds it is buying each month. Those purchases are intended to lower rates on longer-term consumer and business loans to spur more borrowing and spending.

A reduction in the bond buying, which likely won’t start until the end of this year or early next year, would represent the start of a gradual pullback in the Fed’s support for the economy. Only when the bond purchases are completed is the Fed expected to begin considering raising its benchmark interest rate from zero, where it’s been since the pandemic erupted in March last year.

At his news conference, Powell acknowledged that the quickening spread of the highly contagious delta variant was threatening some areas of the nation where vaccinations are low, and he noted that “some forecasts are for them to rise quite significantly.” And he said that as the virus spreads, some consumers might pull back from the spending that has propelled the rapid rebound from the pandemic recession.

“Dining out, traveling, some schools might not reopen,” he said. “We may see economic effects from some of that or it might weigh on the return to the labor market. We don’t have a strong sense of how that will work out, so we’ll be monitoring it carefully.”

But Powell noted that last summer’s wave of infections had inflicted less damage to the economy than many analysts had forecast.

“We’ve kind of learned to live with it, a lot of industries have kind of improvised their way around it,” Powell added. “It seems like we’ve learned to handle this.”

The statement the Fed issued after its latest policy meeting said that ongoing vaccinations were helping to support the economy. But it dropped a sentence it had included after its previous meeting that said those vaccinations have reduced the spread of COVID-19.

The Fed’s latest policy statement comes as the economy is sustaining a strong recovery from the pandemic recession, with solid hiring and spending. That improvement, and a pickup in inflation, are key reasons why Powell and other Fed policymakers are believed to be moving closer toward pulling back their economic support. Consumer prices jumped 5.4% in June from a year ago, the biggest increase in 13 years. And a separate inflation gauge the Fed prefers has risen 3.9% in the past year.

Last month’s inflation surge marked a fourth straight month of unexpectedly large price increases, heightening fears that higher costs will erode the value of recent pay raises and undermine the economic recovery.

But Powell underscored his belief that recent inflation readings reflect price spikes in a narrow range of categories — such as used cars, airline tickets, hotel rooms, and car rentals — that have been distorted by temporary supply shortages resulting from the economy’s swift reopening.

The Fed’s most important inflation measure, Powell stressed, is what it calls “inflation expectations” — what businesses and consumers expect prices to do in the coming months and years. Expectations are important because they can be self-fulfilling: If companies expect their costs to rise, say, 3%, they are likely to raise their own prices by the same amount.

So far, current price increases haven’t raised inflation expectations much, Powell said.

“All the evidence is that it’s not happening,” he said.

While Powell fielded many questions about inflation, he also said that hiring needed to progress further before the Fed would be ready to dial down its support for the economy.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 63 of 88

"Chairman Powell did a very good job of refocusing the discussion on the idea that the Fed is not looking to materially alter its policy until we get at least close to full employment," said Russell Price, chief economist at Ameriprise Financial. "So that what he's telling people there is that, that's still their primary focus."

Among Fed watchers and investors, there is some concern that the central bank will end up responding too late and too aggressively to high inflation by quickly jacking up interest rates and potentially causing another recession. Earlier this month, Republicans in Congress peppered Powell with questions about inflation.

But at his news conference, Powell said that if "we were to see inflation moving up to levels persistently that were above significantly, materially above our goal ... we would use our tools to guide inflation back down" to the Fed's target average inflation of 2% annually.

After a period of broad agreement during the pandemic crisis, the Fed's policymakers appear divided over how soon to begin tapering its bond purchases. Several regional Fed bank presidents support tapering soon, including James Bullard of the St. Louis Fed, Patrick Harker of the Philadelphia Fed and Robert Kaplan of the Dallas Fed.

But Powell has said that the central bank wants to see "substantial further progress" toward its goals of maximum employment and price stability before it would consider reducing the bond purchases. To make up for years of inflation remaining below 2%, the Fed wants inflation to moderately exceed its 2% average inflation target and to show signs of remaining above that level for an unspecified time.

Powell has said the Fed will communicate its intention to taper "well in advance" of doing so. Many economists think that signal will occur in late August or September.

At their two-day meeting that ended Wednesday, Fed officials also discussed the mechanics of paring its bond purchases, including how fast the purchases would be wound down.

The Fed is buying \$80 billion of Treasuries and \$40 billion of mortgage-backed securities each month in an effort to force down loan rates. Some on the Fed's policymaking committee favor tapering the mortgage bond purchases soon, because home prices are soaring and ultra-low loan rates might be overheating demand for homes.

But Powell said he didn't agree, suggesting that both Treasury and mortgage bond purchases tend to have similar effects on mortgage rates and other borrowing costs.

## **Biden to launch vaccine push for millions of federal workers**

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hoping to set a model for employers nationwide, President Joe Biden will announce Thursday that millions of federal workers must show proof they've received a coronavirus vaccine or submit to regular testing and stringent social distancing, masking and travel restrictions.

An individual familiar with the president's plans, who spoke on condition of anonymity to confirm details that had yet to be announced publicly, emphasized that the new guidance is not a vaccine mandate for federal employees and that those who decide not to get vaccinated aren't at risk of being fired.

The new policy amounts to a recognition by the Biden administration that the government — the nation's biggest employer — must do more to boost sluggish vaccination rates, as coronavirus cases and hospitalizations rebound, driven largely by the spread of the more infectious delta variant.

Biden has placed the blame for the resurgence of the virus squarely on the shoulders of those who aren't vaccinated.

"The pandemic we have now is a pandemic of the unvaccinated," Biden said during a visit Wednesday to a truck plant in Pennsylvania, where he urged the unvaccinated to "please, please, please, please" get a shot. A day earlier, he mused that "if those other 100 million people got vaccinated, we'd be in a very different world."

The administration on Wednesday was still reviewing details of the expected guidance, and significant questions about its implementation and scope remained. It was unclear whether the president would issue similar requirements for the military and how federal contractors would be affected. The administra-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 64 of 88

tion is announcing the move now with the hope that it will give agencies enough time to craft their own guidelines and plans for implementation before workers return fully to the office.

The announcement is expected to come as part of broader remarks Thursday that Biden promised would outline "the next steps in our effort to get more Americans vaccinated."

The individual said the conversation around the new vaccine guidance had been in the works for some time and was intended to provide an example for private companies to follow as they get ready for workers to return this fall. But it's just the latest policy shift from the administration during a week of new coronavirus mitigation efforts, as the White House grapples with a surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations nationwide driven by the delta variant and breakthrough infections among vaccinated Americans.

On Monday, the Department of Veterans Affairs became the first federal agency to require vaccinations, for its health workers. And on Tuesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reversed its masking guidelines and said that all Americans living in areas with substantial or high coronavirus transmission rates should wear masks indoors, regardless of their vaccination status.

With the latest CDC data showing that Washington, D.C., is facing substantial rates of transmission, by Wednesday reporters and staff were again masking up at the White House.

The new guidance on vaccinations for federal employees reflects the reality that Biden's national vaccination drive has fallen short of his goals. Public opinion seems to have hardened around the vaccines, with a recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finding that among American adults who have not yet received a vaccine, 35% say they probably will not, and 45% say they definitely will not.

"Doing more of the same just will not work," said Dr. Leana Wen, a former Baltimore health commissioner who's become a leading public health commentator on the pandemic.

"This is the logical next step," Wen continued. "If you want to be going in to work and interacting with other people, then you have to be sure you wouldn't have COVID, and you can do that either by getting vaccinated or by testing."

About 60% of American adults have been fully vaccinated. Biden missed his goal of having 70% of adults get at least one shot by July 4. The latest figure is 69.3%.

Federal workers and contractor employees are dispersed throughout the nation, including many in states where vaccine skepticism runs high. New York University public service professor Paul Light suggested the new guidance from the Biden administration could help boost vaccination rates in states where there's been significant resistance.

"You can't throw a stick without hitting a fed in many parts of the country," he said.

Light noted that the government's influence goes well beyond the people it directly employs. Federal contractors and grant recipients will have to weigh how they'll adjust to vaccination requirements from Washington.

"If the federal government were to say that everybody who works for the government directly or indirectly must be vaccinated, that's a massive footprint," Light said.

He estimated that the federal government directly employs 2.2 million full-time civil servants, plus 1.4 million active-duty military personnel and about 500,000 workers in the U.S. Postal Service. Private contractor employees working on federal jobs number about 5 million, and there are 1.8 million other people employed under federal grants.

While the administration hopes the new guidance will boost vaccination rates, having Biden wade squarely into the middle of the ongoing political debate surrounding vaccines could backfire if it further fuels GOP criticism and distrust of the vaccine among the president's detractors.

The AP-NORC poll found that views on vaccinations divide sharply along party lines, with Republicans far more likely than Democrats to say they have not been vaccinated and definitely or probably won't be, 43% to 10%.

Indeed, South Carolina GOP Rep. Ralph Norman, who has resisted the new mask requirements on Capitol Hill, hinted at the fight to come over the new guidelines.

"To require individuals to provide proof of vaccination would be a massive intrusion on the doctor-patient



relationship and the privacy of the individual," he said in a statement.

The Biden administration may also have to grapple with legal challenges to the latest guidelines.

The federal workplace is governed by layers of rules and regulations, so private employers as well as state and local governments will be looking at the White House vaccination policy to signal how far they can go without triggering resistance from employees or even lawsuits.

But while the Justice Department and the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have both said no federal laws prevent businesses from requiring vaccinations as a condition of employment, litigation is certain to follow workplace mandates, said Sharon Perley Masling, an employment lawyer who leads the COVID-19 task force at Morgan Lewis.

"It's a really challenging issue for employers," Masling said. "We have seen employers explore a whole range of options, from encouraging vaccinations, to incentivizing vaccinations, to mandating vaccinations for new hires, or for everyone."

Among examples from major companies, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines are requiring new employees to show proof of vaccination. Goldman Sachs is requiring its employees to disclose their vaccination status but is not mandating they be vaccinated.

If an employer does set a hard requirement, employees can ask for an exemption for medical or religious reasons under federal civil rights laws.

According to EEOC rules, the employer must provide "reasonable accommodation that does not pose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business." Some accommodations could include masking up at work, social distancing, working a modified shift, regular COVID-19 testing or the option to work remotely, or even offering a reassignment.

## First sign of animal life on Earth may be a sponge fossil

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Canadian geologist may have found the earliest fossil record of animal life on Earth, according to a report published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

Around a billion years ago, a region of northwest Canada now defined by steep mountains was a pre-historic marine environment where the remains of ancient sponges may be preserved in mineral sediment, the paper says.

Geologist Elizabeth Turner discovered the rocks in a remote region of the Northwest Territories accessible only by helicopter, where she has been excavating since the 1980s. Thin sections of rock contain three-dimensional structures that resemble modern sponge skeletons.

"I believe these are ancient sponges — only this type of organism has this type of network of organic filaments," said Joachim Reitner, a geobiologist and expert in sponges at Germany's University of Gottingen, who was not involved in the research.

The dating of adjacent rock layers indicates the samples are about 890 million years old, which would make them about 350 million years older than the oldest undisputed sponge fossils previously found.

"What's most stunning is the timing," said Paco Cardenas, an expert on sponges at Sweden's Uppsala University, who was not involved in the research. "To have discovered sponge fossils from close to 900 million years ago will greatly improve our understanding of early animal evolution."

Many scientists believe the first animal groups included soft sponges or sponge-like creatures that lack muscles and nerves but have other features of simple animals, including cells with differentiated functions and sperm.

To be sure, there's very little scientific consensus or certainty about anything dating back a billion years ago, so other researchers will likely continue to vet and debate Turner's findings.

"I think she's got a pretty strong case. I think this is very worthy of publishing — it puts the evidence out there for other people to consider," said David Bottjer, a paleobiologist at University of Southern California, who was not involved in the research.

Scientists believe life on Earth emerged around 3.7 billion years ago. The earliest animals appeared much

later, but exactly when is still debated.

Until now, the oldest undisputed fossil sponges date to around 540 million years ago, an era called the Cambrian period.

But scientists using a line of reasoning called the molecular clock — where they analyze the rate of genetic mutations to backdate when two species likely diverged — say that available evidence points to sponges emerging much earlier, around a billion years ago.

Yet no supporting physical evidence has yet been found until now.

"This would be the first time that a sponge fossil has been found from before the Cambrian, and not only before, but way before — that's what's most exciting," said Uppsala University's Cardenas, adding that the research seems to confirm the molecular clock estimates.

Fossil evidence is scant before the Cambrian period when animals first developed hard skeletons, exoskeletons and shells, which are more likely to be preserved.

"Those kinds of fossils belong to more complicated animals — obviously there has to be a back history" of simpler animals like sponges emerging first, said the paper's author Turner, who is based at Laurentian University in Ontario.

The dating of 890 million years ago is significant because, if the sponge's identification is confirmed, it shows that the first animals evolved before a time when oxygen in the atmosphere and ocean reached a level scientists once thought was necessary for animal life. Yet recent research shows that some sponges can survive with very little oxygen.

"Everything on Earth has an ancestor. It's always been predicted that the first evidence of animal life would be small and cryptic, a very subtle clue," said Roger Summons, an MIT geobiologist who was not involved in the research.

## Judge finds probable cause to charge Wisconsin cop in death

By SCOTT BAUER and TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A Wisconsin judge on Wednesday found probable cause to charge a police officer in the 2016 slaying of a Black man who was sitting in a parked car, taking the rare step of overruling prosecutors years after they declined to charge the officer.

Milwaukee County Judge Glenn Yamahiro said probable cause existed to charge Joseph Mensah with homicide by negligent use of a weapon in Jay Anderson Jr.'s death. He will appoint a special prosecutor in 60 days, who will then determine whether to file charges.

Yamahiro's decision marks a victory for Anderson's family, who took advantage of a little-used provision in state law to ask the judge for a second look at the case.

Anderson family members who were in the courtroom cried as the judge announced his decision. Their attorney, Kimberly Motley, said the family was overcome with joy, sadness and satisfaction.

"It's bittersweet in a way," Motley said. "You can't just be completely happy about it because Jay Anderson Jr. is not here. But it definitely gives validation to the family's fight for over five years."

Mensah, who is also Black, discovered the 25-year-old Anderson sleeping in his car at 3 a.m. in a park in Wauwatosa, a Milwaukee suburb. Mensah said he shot Anderson after Anderson reached for a gun, but Anderson's family disputes that and the judge on Wednesday said the evidence did not back up Mensah's version of events.

Mensah's attorney Jonathan Cermele criticized the decision and said Yamahiro heard evidence "from one side and one side only."

"We weren't able to be involved, we weren't able to cross-examine or provide witnesses," he said. "The judge made a call on a very limited amount of evidence."

It will be up to the special prosecutor to decide whether to file charges, said Motley, the Anderson family attorney. But she was confident that the evidence and record created by the judge is clear.

"I can't see any lawyer not criminally charging Joseph Mensah," she said.

Anderson was the second of three people Mensah shot to death during a five-year stint with the Wau-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 67 of 88

watosa Police Department. Prosecutors cleared him of criminal wrongdoing in each case.

Anderson's family asked Yamahiro to review that case under an obscure state law that allows judges to directly question witnesses and decide whether probable cause exists to bring charges in what's known as a John Doe proceeding. At least six other states have similar statutory provisions, but attorneys say the process is rarely used in Wisconsin.

The judge said he decided that the single charge against Mensah was warranted based on testimony about the circumstances of the shooting. Mensah should have been aware that pulling his weapon on Anderson created an unreasonable risk of death, Yamahiro said.

Mensah could have taken steps to de-escalate the situation, including waiting for backup that was on the way, the judge said.

Anderson's behavior was consistent with someone who was intoxicated, had been asleep and was trying but having difficulty complying with Mensah's orders, Yamahiro said.

The evidence did not back up Mensah's claims that Anderson was pretending to be asleep or that Anderson lunged for his weapon, the judge said.

The judge also noted problems with the investigation and cited what he said were structural defects with having neighboring law enforcement agencies investigate one another and nearby district attorneys make charging decisions.

Mensah joined the Wauwatosa Police Department in 2015. That year he fatally shot Antonio Gonzales, who identified as Latino and American Indian. Prosecutors said Gonzales refused to drop a sword.

The Anderson shooting came the next year. Then, in 2020, Mensah fatally shot 17-year-old Alvin Cole as Cole fled from police during a disturbance in a mall. Mensah said he shot Cole, who was Black, after he pointed a gun at him. That set off months of protests. Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm's decision not to charge him in that shooting led to more protests in Wauwatosa in October.

Mensah remained under pressure even after being cleared in Cole's death and resigned in November. He collected a \$130,000 severance payment and now works as a Waukesha County deputy, another Milwaukee suburb.

Waukesha County Sheriff Eric Severson, who hired Mensah as a deputy in January, didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Kimberly Motley, the Anderson family's attorney, also represents the Gonzales and Cole families. She said she is considering invoking the John Doe process for them.

## **EXPLAINER: Why masks are again advised for everyone indoors**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wait, we're supposed to wear masks again? Even if we are vaccinated?

For a large part of the U.S., that's the latest advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC this week revisited and revised its guidance for wearing masks indoors to stop the spread of coronavirus.

The change comes two months after the agency eased its mask advice, declaring that fully vaccinated people no longer had to cover up at indoor public places. Since then, the agency also said vaccinated adults and teens no longer needed to wear them at summer camps and schools.

A look at the latest developments:

**WHAT CHANGED?**

CDC officials announced that people who are fully vaccinated should resume wearing masks indoors if they live in areas where the virus is surging — which is most of the country, or more than 60% of U.S. counties. Masks generally aren't needed outdoors.

The agency also said everyone — teachers and students — should go back to wearing masks in schools, whether the virus is surging in your community or not.

The CDC wasn't the first to call for the return of masks. In recent weeks, a number of cities and towns in hot spots have brought back indoor mask rules. The list includes municipalities ranging in size from Los

Angeles to Provincetown, Massachusetts. More places, as well as businesses, took steps to join the list after Tuesday's CDC announcement, including Kansas City and the state of Nevada.

## WHY THE CHANGE?

It's all because of the highly contagious delta version of the virus, the CDC said. That variant is driving surges of COVID-19 in much of the country and now accounts for more than 80% of infections. CDC officials said new information about its spread forced them to reverse course.

The vast majority of new infections in the U.S. continue to be among unvaccinated people. Rarely, some vaccinated people do end up getting infected as well, although the vaccine cushions the blow and generally protects them from severe illness.

Previously, vaccinated people with "breakthrough infections" had low levels of virus and were unlikely to spread the virus much, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said. But new data shows that isn't the case with the delta variant. Vaccinated people "have the potential to spread that virus to others," she said.

## WHAT DIDN'T CHANGE?

The guidance for anyone who hadn't gotten a COVID-19 vaccine stays the same: Masks are recommended indoors, pretty much everywhere.

Everyone — regardless of vaccination or location — should wear a mask while at airports or train stations, or while riding buses, trains or other public transportation.

Hospitals, stores and businesses may require masks, too.

The CDC did not explicitly change its guidance for summer camps, mostly because the season is ending and schools are opening soon.

## WHERE ARE THE HOT SPOTS?

The new guidance is for areas with substantial or high virus spread, as shown on a CDC map. That means at least 50 new cases per 100,000 people in the last week.

New case rates are particularly high in the South and Southwest, according to the CDC tracker. In Arkansas, Louisiana and Florida, every county exceeds the CDC benchmark. And rates are high in all but a few counties in Alabama, Mississippi and Missouri.

## Russian police raid home of investigative journalist

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Police in Russia raided the home of the chief editor of an investigative news site that was recently designated as a "foreign agent," the latest move by authorities to raise the pressure on independent media before the country's September parliamentary election.

The Insider news site chief editor Roman Dobrokhovov tweeted Wednesday that "police are knocking" on his apartment door, and his wife reported the raid to the OVD-Info legal aid group before her phone became unavailable.

A lawyer from another legal aid group, Pravozashchita Otkrytki, headed to Dobrokhovov's apartment. The group said police seized cellphones, laptops and tablets during the raid, as well as Dobrokhovov's international passport. Sergei Yezhov, a journalist with The Insider, said Dobrokhovov was supposed to travel outside of Russia on Wednesday.

Police also raided the home of Dobrokhovov's parents, The Insider said. After the searches, Dobrokhovov was taken to a police precinct for questioning and then released.

He told reporters outside the precinct that The Insider will continue to operate despite the pressure from authorities.

"It will become more difficult to work now. I don't have cell phones, I can't travel and meet my colleagues — many of our investigations are international," Dobrokhovov said. "And, of course, it's serious pressure. But it's clear that The Insider will continue to exist. Investigations will be released even if I am arrested. If they hope to halt the work of the news site, they hope in vain."

Russian opposition supporters, independent journalists and human rights activists have faced increased government pressure ahead of the Sept. 19 vote, which is widely seen as an important part of President

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 69 of 88

Vladimir Putin's efforts to cement his rule before the 2024 presidential election.

The 68-year-old Russian leader, who has been in power for more than two decades, pushed through constitutional changes last year that would potentially allow him to hold onto power until 2036.

In recent months, the government has designated several independent media outlets and journalists as "foreign agents" — a label that implies additional government scrutiny and carries strong pejorative connotations that could discredit the recipients.

The targeted outlets include VTimes and Meduza. VTimes subsequently shut down, citing the loss of advertisers, and Meduza launched a crowd-funding campaign after encountering the same problem.

The Insider was the latest addition to the list. The news outlet, which is registered in Latvia, has worked with the investigative group Bellingcat to investigate high-profile cases, such as the nerve agent poisonings of former Russian spy Sergei Sripal and Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The Russian Justice Ministry acted under a law that is used to designate as foreign agents non-governmental organizations, media outlets and individuals who receive foreign funding and engage in activities loosely described as political.

Another law is used to outlaw groups deemed "undesirable" and makes membership in them a criminal offense. It has been used to ban 41 groups, including opposition groups, foreign NGOs and most recently, the publisher of Proekt, an online investigative media outlet.

The Justice Ministry last week also designated two Proekt journalists and three other reporters as foreign agents.

Russia used the law to levy heavy fines on U.S.-funded broadcaster Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty for failing to identify its material as produced by foreign agents. The broadcaster has asked the European Court of Human Rights to intervene.

According to The Insider, the searches targeting Dobrokhotov may be related to a slander case launched in April following a complaint by a Dutch blogger. The Insider accused Max van der Werff of working with Russian intelligence and military services to spread false information challenging the findings of the official investigation into the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine, which killed all 298 people on board.

The legal aid group said Dobrokhotov was a witness in a criminal case against "unidentified persons" on the charges of slander, launched over a tweet in Dobrokhotov's account that contains "disinformation about the downed Boeing MH-17."

Earlier this week, Russian authorities blocked about 50 websites linked to the imprisoned opposition leader Navalny. The move comes just a month after a court in Moscow outlawed Navalny's political infrastructure — his Foundation for Fighting Corruption and a network of regional offices — as extremist in a ruling that prevents people associated with the groups from seeking public office and exposes them to lengthy prison terms.

Navalny, Putin's fiercest political foe, was arrested in January upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin — an accusation rejected by Russian officials.

In February, the politician was ordered to serve 2½ years in prison for violating a suspended sentence from a 2014 embezzlement conviction that he dismissed as politically motivated.

His arrest and jailing sparked a wave of mass protests across Russia in what appeared to be a major challenge to the Kremlin. The authorities responded with mass arrests of demonstrators and criminal probes against Navalny's closest associates.

On Wednesday, Lyubov Sobol, a top ally of Navalny and one of the few in his team who hasn't left Russia despite being prosecuted on a number of charges, said Russia's state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor demanded that Twitter take down her account.

"What is it, if not the Kremlin's hysteria ahead of the election?" Sobol wrote.

It wasn't immediately clear whether Twitter would comply with the request.

## Little hope for 5 missing workers at German blast site

BERLIN (AP) — Officials said Wednesday they have little hope of finding five missing workers alive, a day after an explosion at an industrial park for chemical companies in western Germany that killed at least two people and injured 31 others.

Tuesday's explosion at the waste management facility of the Chempark site sent a large black cloud of smoke into the air and ignited a blaze that took firefighters almost four hours to extinguish. The industrial park is located in the city of Leverkusen, near Cologne.

"The events of yesterday shocked us all," said Frank Hyldmar, the chief executive of Currenta, which operates the Chempark industrial park.

"At least two people lost their lives," he said. "Five are currently still missing. We no longer have much hope of finding them alive."

He added that of the 31 injured, one person was still in a life-threatening condition.

The cause of the explosion isn't yet known. Police are expected to begin their investigation in the coming days.

Currenta said the blast was linked to storage tanks filled with solvents.

Due to the thick smoke, authorities told residents Tuesday to stay indoors and shut down several major highways for hours. City officials also warned people not to let children play outside, use outside pools or eat fruit and vegetables from their backyards for the next few days.

The environmental authority for the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, where Leverkusen is located, said Wednesday that the explosion's smoke contained dioxin, polychlorinated biphenyl and furan compounds. However, it could not yet say how strong the concentration of these chemicals were, dpa reported.

Currenta said that pollution measurements had so far not detected any elevated levels of hazardous substances in the air.

Leverkusen is home to Bayer, one of Germany's biggest chemical companies and one of the biggest employers in the region. The city has about 163,000 residents, many of whom work for Bayer.

The industrial park is located close to the Rhine River.

## Racism of rioters takes center stage in Jan. 6 hearing

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

It had only been hinted at in previous public examinations of the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection: Scores of rioters attacked police officers not just with makeshift weapons, stun guns and fists, but with racist slurs and accusations of treason.

Four officers, two from the U.S. Capitol Police and two from the D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department, on Tuesday detailed the racism and bigotry they encountered during the violent assault on the Capitol. Their direct, harrowing accounts laid out the hours when the pro-police sentiment of supporters of former President Donald Trump was pushed aside, consumed by the fury of wanting to keep him in the White House.

Capitol Police Officer Harry Dunn told lawmakers about an exchange he had with rioters, who disputed that President Joe Biden defeated Trump in the last presidential election. When Dunn, who is Black, argued with the rioters that he voted for Biden and that his vote should be counted, a crowd began hurling the N-word at him.

"One woman in a pink 'MAGA' (Make America Great Again) shirt yelled, 'You hear that, guys, this n—— voted for Joe Biden!'" said Dunn, who has served more than a dozen years on the Capitol Police force.

"Then the crowd, perhaps around 20 people, joined in, screaming 'Boo! F—— n—— !'" he testified. He said no one had ever called him the N-word while he was in uniform. That night, he sat in the Capitol Rotunda and wept.

Ahead of Tuesday's hearing, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, a member of the panel, said the Capitol and D.C. officers would provide insight into "what it was like to be on the front lines."

However, Dunn was also speaking to the experience of being an African American police officer, who

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 71 of 88

make up 29% of roughly 2,300 officers and civilians serving on the Capitol Police force.

Dunn said another Black male officer told him that, while confronting the rioters on Jan. 6, he was told to "Put your gun down and we'll show you what kind of n—— you really are!"

The panel's chairman, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, pressed Dunn further about how he felt being an African American officer facing down racists and enduring racial slurs in the halls of democracy.

"It's just so disheartening that people like that will attack you just for the color of your skin," Dunn replied. "Once I was able to process it, it hurt. My blood is red. I'm an American citizen. I'm a police officer. I'm a peace officer."

While Black Americans make up roughly 13% of the U.S. population, they were roughly 11% of all police officers in 2016 across a sampling of 18,000 local law enforcement agencies in the U.S., according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Over 71% of officers were white in 2016.

It's this kind of treatment endured by Black men and women in law enforcement that policing experts say makes recruitment and diversity among U.S. police forces challenging. The law enforcement profession has also struggled with its origins in America, dating back to the slave patrols in the early 1700s formed to capture people who escaped slavery and terrorize the enslaved into submission. Although many African Americans have served valiantly on local and federal police forces since the civil rights movement, data shows Black Americans are still arrested in disproportionate numbers and more likely to be fatally shot by police.

Another Capitol Police officer, Sgt. Aquilino Gonell, wiped away tears as he recalled the story of his immigration to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic, only to face fellow Americans who considered him a traitor for defending the Capitol on Jan. 6.

"It was very disappointing," Gonell said. "I saw many officers fighting for their lives against people, rioters (and) citizens, turning against us."

Gonell, an Iraq War veteran, also called out the disparate law enforcement response to the overwhelmingly white crowd of rioters and the response to racial justice protests in 2020 that followed the murder of George Floyd and the police involved deaths of other Black Americans.

"As America and the world watched in horror what was happening to us at the Capitol, we did not receive timely reinforcements and support we needed," he said. "In contrast, during the Black Lives Matter protest last year, U.S. Capitol Police had all the support we needed and more. Why the different response?"

Indeed, law enforcement agencies in dozens of cities last year showed overwhelming force toward BLM demonstrators. Many used chemical dispersants, rubber bullets and hand-to-hand combat with largely peaceful crowds and some unruly vandals and looters. By the end of 2020, police had made more than 14,000 arrests.

In January, as images and video emerged from the attacks on the Capitol, a racist and anti-Semitic element among the rioters became apparent. One man was pictured inside of the Capitol building carrying a Confederate battle flag.

And in the nearly seven months since the attacks, more video investigations revealed several rioters had flashed white supremacist gang signs and "white power" hand signals during the insurrection.

Gonell also called out the hypocrisy he perceived from many of the rioters who profess to support law enforcement — "the thin blue line" — but did not agree with those protesting over Floyd last summer.

"There are some who expressed outrage when someone simply kneeled for social justice during the national anthem," Gonell said. "Where are those same people expressing outrage to condemn the violent attack on law enforcement officers, the U.S. Capitol, and our American democracy?"

"I'm still waiting for that," he said.

## UK journalist sued by Russian billionaire over Putin book

LONDON (AP) — A British journalist and her publisher contested a defamation claim in a London court on Wednesday from billionaire Chelsea Football Club owner Roman Abramovich over a book about the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 72 of 88

rise of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Catherine Belton's book "Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and then Took on the West" charts the rise to wealth and power of former KGB agent Putin and his circle of associates after the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union.

Belton, a former Financial Times Moscow correspondent, and publisher HarperCollins are being sued at the High Court by the Russian-born Abramovich, who says the book's claim that he purchased the Chelsea team in 2003 at Putin's direction is "false and defamatory." Chelsea, which plays in the Premier League, is one of the world's best-known soccer teams.

Abramovich's lawyer, Hugh Tomlinson, said the book gave the impression the purchase was "part of a scheme to corrupt the West ... aimed at building a blockhold in the U.K. for Russian influence."

Andrew Caldecott, a lawyer for Belton and HarperCollins, said readers of the book would conclude "there are grounds to suspect Mr. Abramovich was acting at the Kremlin's direction," rather than that he definitely was. The book also includes a "firm denial" from a person close to Abramovich, he noted.

Free-speech groups have expressed alarm at the case, saying it is too easy for wealthy people to use Britain's courts to silence criticism.

Belton is also being sued for libel by the Russian state-owned energy firm Rosneft. HarperCollins was also facing suits from Russian businessman Mikhail Fridman and Russian banker Petr Aven, but Tomlinson said Wednesday that those claims have been settled.

He said the publisher had "agreed to remove effectively all the material on which the actions are based from future editions of the book" and would apologize for not approaching those two men before publication for comment on statements suggesting they had connections with the KGB early in their careers.

Tomlinson represents Abramovich, Fridman and Aven, but denied at the start of Wednesday's hearing that there was any "coordination" between the claimants. He said he had been hired by the three men "coincidentally and entirely independently."

Tomlinson denied that the Russian defendants' claims were an attack on free speech and journalism, arguing that the book "holds itself out as a serious work of contemporary history, but unfortunately it repeats lazy inaccuracies."

The hearing in front of judge Amanda Tipples is scheduled to last two days.

## Should vaccinated people mask up with COVID-19 cases rising?

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Should vaccinated people mask up with COVID-19 cases rising?

Yes. In places where the virus is surging, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that vaccinated people return to wearing masks in public indoor places.

The CDC recently announced the updated guidance, citing new evidence that vaccinated people who get breakthrough infections could carry enough virus in their noses and throats to infect others.

COVID-19 vaccines greatly reduce the chance of severe illness and death and remain effective against variants, including the now predominant delta variant. But it's still possible to get infected.

Masking could prevent the spread of the virus to children too young for vaccination and people with weak immune systems.

In short, the vaccine protects you. A mask protects others in case you are carrying the virus without knowing it.

You can find out your county's level of coronavirus transmission at the CDC's COVID-19 data tracker website. The CDC recommends indoor masking in areas where transmission is substantial or high. Those areas are marked in orange and red on the site.

The CDC also recommends indoor masks for all teachers, staff, students and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.

## U.S. women's hoops team captures 3-on-3 Olympic gold



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 73 of 88

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Their scrapbooks and trophy cases are filled with memories from Final Fours, national titles, All-America honors and even some impressive showings in the pros.

Now, they have Olympic gold medals to go with all that.

The U.S. team of Stefanie Dolson, Allisha Gray, Kelsey Plum and Jackie Young took an early lead against the team from Russia, then held on for an 18-15 victory Wednesday to win the title in the debut of 3-on-3 basketball at the Olympics.

"In 10 years, we'll look back and say 'Damn, we did that,'" Dolson said. "Hopefully we started something."

Dolson did the honors during the medals ceremony, taking the gold prizes and placing them over her teammates' necks. They stood with hands over hearts during the national anthem.

Their celebration couldn't beat Latvia's, though.

After Karlis Lasmanis drained a shot from behind the arc to close out the men's final, he found himself at the bottom of a four-man dogpile. The game-winner gave his country a 21-18 victory over the Russians and its first medal of the Games.

Bronze medals went to China's women and Serbia's men.

Much as they did in the final, the Americans dominated through most of the five-day tournament. They played nine games and lost only one.

Plum, who became the all-time leading scorer in NCAA history during her four years at Washington, led the way in this event, as well. She scored 55 points over the nine games. In the final, she scored all five of her points early to stake the U.S. to a lead it never relinquished.

"I didn't think this was going to happen," said the guard, who suffered an Achilles injury last year and has been on a long road back. "I didn't think it was in the cards with my Achilles. And for Lou to get COVID and Jackie to come in. So many things. This group kept dealing with it."

"Lou," is Katie Lou Samuelson, whose positive COVID-19 test earlier this month forced a quick shuffling of the roster and opened a spot for Young.

All four players who made it to Tokyo are in the midst of successful WNBA careers. All made it there after college careers that made stops at the Final Four. Dolson played at UConn, Gray at South Carolina and Young was at Notre Dame. Of the four, Plum is the only one who didn't win a national title in college.

The gold medal seems like much more than a consolation prize.

"USA Basketball didn't quit on me," Plum said. "So, this would probably rank the highest so far."

When the U.S. game ended, Plum got in a hug huddle with her teammates, then they made it over to the stands for a visit with IOC President Thomas Bach.

U.S. First Lady Jill Biden was at the Aomi Urban Sports Park for the opener last weekend.

Yes, this foursome is officially part of the see-and-be-seen crowd in Tokyo.

Time will tell if the half-court version of this sport — brought to the Olympic program with the intent of luring a younger audience, and a more diverse collection of countries, into the game — turns into one of the cool kids on the Olympic program. Even with no fans in the stands, they sure are trying hard.

With a DJ spinning records and a cheeky announcer calling play-by-play — "Izzzzzz gooooodddd!" — the players were greeted during pre-game introductions by a Japanese percussion team featuring a 5-foot-5 guy wailing on a massive Taiko drum.

The game? Not nearly as free-flowing as advertised, and the closer teams got to medals, the more things tightened up.

Dolson, the 6-foot-5 forward, took a nasty elbow to the face about two-thirds into the final but recovered quickly. She ended up making four free throws — yes, those exist in this version of the half-court game — and the U.S. scored eight of its 18 points in this game from the line.

On this night, ugly sure felt beautiful. This foursome is now part of history in the 3-on-3 game.

"Everyone knows us for 5-on-5," Dolson said. "I think we started something special with this as well."

**Olympics Latest: Latvia wins gold in men's 3-on-3**

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 74 of 88

TOKYO (AP) — The Latest on the Tokyo Olympics, which are taking place under heavy restrictions after a year's delay because of the coronavirus pandemic:

## MEDAL ALERT

Latvia's Karlis Lasmanis drained a shot from behind the arc to close the game and seal a gold-medal-winning 21-18 victory over the Russians in the debut of 3-on-3 basketball at the Olympics.

Lasmanis spotted up and swished the shot and then was dogpiled by his three Latvian teammates. They will bring home the country's first medal of the Tokyo Games.

## MEDAL ALERT

The U.S. team of Stefanie Dolson, Alisha Gray, Kelsey Plum and Jackie Young won the first women's gold medal in the new Olympic sport of 3-on-3 basketball.

Plum scored all five of her points early to help the Americans take the lead and they held on for an 18-15 win over the team representing the Russian Olympic Committee.

Plum led all scorers in this tournament. She finished with 55 points over the course of the five-day event in which the U.S. played nine games and only lost one.

China beat France 16-14 for the bronze medal and Serbia defeated Belgium 21-10 in the men's third-place game.

## MEDAL ALERT

Japanese teenager Daiki Hashimoto won a gold medal in men's all-around.

The 19-year-old Hashimoto used a thrilling high bar routine during the final rotation to edge Xiao Ruoteng of China and reigning world champion Nikita Nagornyy.

Hashimoto's all-around total of 88.465 points included a 14.933 on high bar. That was good enough for him to surge past Xiao and into the top spot. The gold is the third straight Olympic title for the Japanese gymnast. Kohei Uchimura won in 2012 and 2016.

The win was also a bit of redemption for Hashimoto. He thought his high bar set during the team final lifted Japan to gold but Nagornyy's rock-solid floor exercise did just enough to give the team representing the Russian Olympic Committee the title.

## MEDAL ALERT

Shi Zhiyong of China set a world record and won his second gold medal in weightlifting in the men's 73-kilogram category.

Shi lifted 166 kilograms in the snatch and 198 in the clean and jerk for a total 364kg. That was one kilogram more than his previous record.

Julio Mayora of Venezuela took silver and Rahmat Erwin Abdullah of Indonesia took bronze.

Shi won gold at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games in what was then the 69kg category before the classes were reorganized.

## MEDAL ALERT

Jessica von Bredow-Werndl of Germany has unseated Charlotte Dujardin of Britain for gold in the individual dressage competition.

German teammate Isabell Werth finished second with a score of 89.657%. She trailed Von Bredow-Werndl's 91.732% in her Olympic debut. Dujardin came in third at 88.543% after winning the title in 2012 and 2016.

Von Bredow-Werndl also helped Germany win the team competition Tuesday for the country's ninth title in 10 Olympics. She beat Werth for the best individual score then as well.

Werth earned her equestrian-record 12th medal but again came up short of the podium's top spot. The longtime German rider has five silver medals in the individual competition but only one gold from the the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 75 of 88

1996 Atlanta Games.

A German cycling official has apologized for using a racist slur at the Olympics.

German cycling federation sporting director Patrick Moster was shown on TV broadcasts urging rider Nikias Arndt on to catch other riders on the course with a slur typically used for people of North African or Arab ethnicity. An Algerian rider started ahead of Arndt in the event.

Moster has apologized in comments to German news agency dpa. He says "in the heat of the moment" he had "made the wrong choice of words."

German Olympic committee president Alfons Hörmann welcomed the apology but says he plans to hold further talks with Moster.

## MEDAL ALERT

Lasha Bekauri of Georgia won an Olympic gold medal in judo in the 90-kilogram middleweight division by beating Eduard Trippel of Germany in the final.

The 21-year-old Bekauri capped his impressive rise to judo's elite levels with a waza ari on Trippel early in the final bout at the Budokan. He held on to win the fourth-ever gold medal in judo for Georgia.

Japan failed to win a gold medal in a men's weight category for the first time in Tokyo when Krisztián Tóth of Hungary knocked off Shoichiro Mukai by ippon 2:55 into golden score during their round of 16 bout. The powerhouse Japanese team had won the first four men's gold medals in Tokyo.

Trippel beat Tóth in the quarterfinals and went on to secure his first Olympic medal. Tóth and Davlat Bobonov of Uzbekistan won bronze.

Tennis matches in Tokyo will have later start times beginning Thursday in a move aimed at protecting players amid extreme heat and humidity.

The International Tennis Federation says matches will start at 3 p.m. Matches had been starting at 11 a.m.

Several players struggled with heatstroke on Wednesday.

Daniil Medvedev nearly fainted during his win over Fabio Fognini while Paula Badosa left the court in a wheelchair after retiring from her quarterfinal match against Marketa Vondrousova.

The temperature rose to 88 degrees F (31 degrees C) but the heat index made it feel like 99 degrees F (37 degrees C).

## MEDAL ALERT

South Korea has beaten Italy 45-26 to win the men's team saber fencing final. It's the South Koreans' first gold of the Tokyo Olympics in a sport other than archery.

No. 1-ranked sabre fencer Oh Sanguk carved out a big lead for South Korea with a 5-0 win over Italy's Aldo Montano in the second bout. His teammates Gu Bongil, Kim Junghwan and Kim Junho went on to extend the advantage.

South Korea retained the title it won in 2012. Team saber was off the Olympic program for the last Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

It was South Korea's fourth gold medal in Tokyo. The other three were won in the team archery competitions.

Hungary took its third fencing medal in Tokyo with a 45-40 win over Germany for the bronze medal.

## MEDAL ALERT

Chizuru Arai has won Japan's sixth gold medal in judo at the Tokyo Olympics, beating Austria's Michaela Polleres in the final of the women's 70-kilogram middleweight division.

Arai reached her first Olympic final with three ippon victories, surviving a semifinal bout that lasted nearly 17 minutes against Russian athlete Madina Taimazova. The two-time world champion then claimed gold over Polleres with an early waza ari at the Budokan.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 76 of 88

Arai is just the second Japanese woman to win gold out of five weight categories in Tokyo. The men swept the first four gold medals in Tokyo, but they won't win a fifth after Shoichiro Mukai fell short before the medal rounds.

Japan is still coming away from the first five days in its homegrown martial art with eight medals from 10 weight classes. The final three days of the Olympic tournament include five more opportunities for gold, including the first-ever mixed team competition Saturday.

Taimazova and the Netherlands' Sanne van Dijke won bronze for their first Olympic medals.

Canadian gymnast Ellie Black has withdrawn from the all-around finals.

The International Gymnastics Federation made the announcement on Wednesday. No reason was given for Black's withdrawal.

The 25-year-old Black is competing in her third Olympics. A silver medalist at the 2017 world championships, Black came in 24th during qualifying at the Ariake Gymnastics Centre.

Black will be replaced by Lieke Wevers of The Netherlands in the finals. The decision came hours after reigning Olympic champion Simone Biles took herself out of the all-around competition to focus on her mental health.

The U.S. women will play the Russian athletes for the first gold medal in the new Olympic sport of 3-on-3 hoops.

Kelsey Plum and Alisha Gray each made free throws to give the United States the winning margin in its 18-16 win over France.

Then Russia's Olga Frolkina made a 2-pointer to seal a 21-14 win over China.

The U.S. and teams from the Soviet Union have won every women's 5-on-5 medal since the sport was introduced to the Olympic program in 1976.

Russia's men's team upset top-ranked Serbia 21-10 to earn its spot in the gold-medal game. The team officially known as "ROC" – Russian Olympic Committee – will play Latvia in the final. Latvia beat Belgium 21-8.

Olympics organizers say an additional 16 people accredited for the Tokyo Games have tested positive for COVID, bringing the total to 174 since July 1.

The total includes 20 athletes, though there were no new positive tests among athletes in the cases announced Wednesday. Tens of thousands of people are accredited for the Games.

Tokyo also recorded a record daily high of 3,177 COVID-19 cases Wednesday, up from a previous high of 2,848 on Tuesday.

Judo's governing body has formally warned a coach who slapped a female athlete hard in the face twice to prepare her for an Olympic bout.

German judoka Martyna Trajdos later defended coach Claudiu Pusa from criticism, saying it was her request "to fire me up" before stepping on the mat.

That did not satisfy the International Judo Federation, who issued the warning a day after the incident shocked Olympic viewers.

The IJF said it issued "a serious official warning" for the Germany team coach for "the bad behavior he showed."

Judo "is an educational sport and as such cannot tolerate such behavior," the governing body says.

Trajdos, who lost the bout, later wrote on Instagram that "Looks like this was not hard enough" in reference to the slaps.

Fiji has beaten New Zealand 27-12 to successfully defend the title it won when rugby sevens made its Olympic debut at Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 77 of 88

The gold in Rio was Fiji's first Olympic medal in any sport. Now the Pacific island nation has two. Jerry Tuwai was in the squad five years ago and he led Fiji in its title defense in Tokyo, where they continued their unbeaten streak in Olympic games.

The silver medal was a vast improvement for New Zealand, which missed the podium in 2016 after an upset loss to Japan in its opening game and a quarterfinal loss to Fiji.

All the medals went to the southern hemisphere, with Argentina beating 2016 finalist Britain 17-12 for the bronze.

South Africa, the bronze medalist in Rio, beat the United States 28-7 in the playoff for fifth place.

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Tennis player Novak Djokovic's Golden Slam bid is alive and well.

The top-ranked Serb beat training partner Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain 6-3, 6-1 to reach the quarterfinals at the Tokyo Games.

Djokovic is attempting to become the first man to achieve a Golden Slam by winning all four Grand Slam tournaments and Olympic gold in the same calendar year.

He has already won the Australian and French Opens plus Wimbledon this year. So now he needs the Tokyo Games title and the U.S. Open trophy to complete the unique collection.

Djokovic is scheduled to play again later with Serbian partner Nina Stojanovic against Marcelo Melo and Luisa Stefani of Brazil in the opening round of the mixed doubles competition.

Djokovic's quarterfinal opponent in singles will be Kei Nishikori of Japan.

Nishikori reached his third straight Olympic quarterfinal by beating Ilya Ivashka of Belarus.

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## MEDAL ALERT

Primoz Roglic has capped an incredible month for Slovenian cycling by winning the Olympic time trial.

He added a gold medal to the bronze won by Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar in the road race.

Roglic's closest rival was Dutch time trial specialist Tom Dumoulin, who finished more than a minute behind to win his second consecutive Olympic silver medal. Rohan Dennis of Australia claimed the bronze medal.

The prerace favorite, Italian time trial champ Filippo Ganna, faded over the final kilometers and finished fifth.

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Tennis player Daniil Medvedev has taken exception to a question from a reporter who asked if "Russian athletes are carrying a stigma of cheaters in this Games."

The second-seeded Russian Olympic Committee player responded that for "the first time in my life, I'm not going to answer a question and you should be embarrassed of yourself."

Medvedev then nodded to a Tokyo 2020 staff member to say, "I think you should (ban) him from the Olympic Games or the tennis tournament. I don't want to see him again on my interview."

The fallout from a state-backed doping scandal led to a ban on Russia competing under the country's name at the Tokyo Games and at next year's Beijing Winter Games.

The 335 athletes accredited for Tokyo are officially competing for the Russian Olympic Committee, known as ROC. The word "Russia" is banned from their uniforms.

Medvedev had just played through extreme heat to reach the quarterfinals.

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A second Swiss track team member who was supposed to compete at the Tokyo Olympics has been suspended in a doping case.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport says it reinstated a provisional suspension for Alex Wilson, who was due to compete in the men's 100 and 200 meters.

Wilson tested positive for the anabolic steroid trenbolone in March. The court says he says it was caused by eating contaminated beef in the United States.

World Athletics and the World Anti-Doping Agency intervened with the court to ensure Wilson could not compete in Tokyo after a Swiss tribunal lifted his provisional ban.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 78 of 88

Switzerland's Kariem Hussein, a former European 400-meter hurdles champion, is now serving a nine-month ban after testing positive for a stimulant in a case revealed last week.

## MEDAL ALERT

China has won its third gold medal in diving at the Tokyo Olympics.

Wang Zongyuan and Xie Siyi won men's 3-meter synchronized springboard. They finished with 467.82 points after leading throughout the six-dive contest.

Andrew Capobianco and Michael Hixon of the U.S. earned silver at 444.36. It's the same color medal that Hixon won five years ago in Rio with a different partner.

Germany's Patrick Hausding and Lars Rudiger rallied from sixth to take bronze at 404.73.

China earlier won gold in women's 10-meter synchro and women's 3-meter synchro. The Chinese took silver in men's 10-meter synchro.

The U.S. women's water polo team lost at the Olympics for the first time since 2008, falling 10-9 to Rebecca Parkes and Hungary in group play.

The U.S. was a big favorite to win its third straight gold medal coming into Tokyo, but it was pushed hard by China during a rugged 12-7 victory Monday and then it struggled against Hungary. Even with the loss, it still should be able to advance to the knockout round.

Hungary trailed 9-8 with 2:28 left, but captain Rita Keszthelyi scored from deep and Parkes got the game-winner when she connected on a no-look goal with 45 seconds left. Parkes finished with a team-high three goals.

The U.S. had the ball in the final seconds but turned it over.

It was the United States' first loss at the Olympics since the 2008 final against the Netherlands. It had a draw in London, but it went 6-0 on the way to the title in Rio.

Simone Biles will not defend her Olympic title.

The American gymnastics superstar withdrew from Thursday's all-around competition to focus on her mental well-being.

USA Gymnastics said in a statement that the 24-year-old is opting to not compete. The decision comes a day after Biles removed herself from the team final following one rotation because she felt she wasn't mentally ready.

Jade Carey, who finished ninth in qualifying, will take Biles' place in the all-around. Carey initially did not qualify because she was the third-ranking American behind Biles and Sunisa Lee. International Gymnastics Federation rules limit countries to two athletes per event in the finals.

The organization said Biles will be evaluated daily before deciding if she will participate in next week's individual events. Biles qualified for the finals on all four apparatuses.

Quarantined Olympic skateboarder Candy Jacobs says she's had to take action to be allowed to get fresh air in an isolation hotel in Japan.

The Dutch athlete was removed from the Olympic Village after testing positive for COVID-19 a week ago.

Jacobs says in a video message posted on Instagram that "not having any outside air is so inhuman."

She says she refused to move on her seventh day of quarantine in a room where the window doesn't open.

After more than seven hours, she says, officials agreed she could stand at an open window under supervision for 15 minutes a day.

Jacobs says "having that first breath of outside air was the saddest and best moment in my life."

The 31-year-old skateboarder missed the street event in the sport's Olympic debut.

Jacobs says watching the event on television was "a super-cool distraction" from quarantine.

Two world champions have been knocked out of the Tokyo Olympic boxing tournament in the round of

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 79 of 88

16. That blows open the brackets at men's featherweight and men's light heavyweight.

Irish featherweight Kurt Walker pulled off one of the biggest upsets of the tournament with a 4:1 win over Uzbek world champion Mirazizbek Mirzakhilov.

Two hours later, Russian light heavyweight Imam Khataev surprised Kazakh world champ Bekzad Nurdauletov with a 4:1 victory. The 26-year-old Khataev has nearly a decade of high-level amateur experience, but no victories to compare to this upset.

Walker controlled the first round and hung on at the end to get a 29-28 decision on four of the five judges' cards. Walker wouldn't have been at the Olympics if they had been held on time: His daughter, Layla, was born three months prematurely in May 2020 and required months of hospital care before she emerged healthy.

Nesthy Petecio of the Philippines and Italy's Irma Testa also clinched their nations' first Olympic women's boxing medals by advancing to the semifinals at featherweight.

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The U.S. men's volleyball team has improved to 2-1 in pool play at the Olympics by beating Tunisia 3-1.

The Americans bounced back from a loss to the Russians on Wednesday. They knocked off the lowest-ranked team in their group 25-14, 23-25, 25-14, 25-23.

The victory keeps the U.S. in good position to advance to the quarterfinals as one of the top four teams in Pool B. Tunisia has lost all three matches so far in Tokyo.

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## MEDAL ALERT

Annemiek van Vleuten has roared to an emphatic victory in the women's time trial at the Tokyo Olympics. That gave her a measure of revenge for some miscommunication that may have cost her gold in the road race last weekend.

The Dutch rider led by more than six seconds at the first time check, then pushed it to an astonishing 28 seconds before she put the hammer down to finish in 30 minutes, 13.49 seconds at Fuji International Speedway.

The sixth-from-last rider on the course, van Vleuten was forced to sit on the hot seat for several minutes while those who started after her finished. None of them really had a chance. Marlen Reusser of Switzerland finished more than 56 seconds back to earn the silver medal and van Vleuten's teammate Anna van der Breggen earned bronze.

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International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and Japanese baseball great Sadaharu Oh are attending the opener of the Olympic baseball tournament and were on the field for the ceremonial first pitch in Fukushima.

They were joined by Tokyo Organizing Committee President Seiko Hashimoto and World Baseball Softball Confederation President Riccardo Fraccari as a high school baseball player from the region threw out the first pitch -- a full windup from atop the rubber.

Bach, wearing bright white gloves on both hands, fist bumped the 14-year-old before Team Japan took the field for its game against the Dominican Republic.

It's the only Olympic baseball game being held in Fukushima, which was devastated by an earthquake and an ensuing tsunami and nuclear accident in 2011. The rest of the tournament will be held at Yokohama Baseball Stadium in Tokyo.

Baseball was restored to the Olympic slate this year for the first time since 2008. The sport will be dropped again for the 2024 Games in Paris but is expected to again be played in Los Angeles in 2028.

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## MEDAL ALERT

Britain has won the men's 4x200-meter freestyle relay at the Olympics for the first time since 1908, but just missed a world record.

With a powerhouse group that included the 1-2 finishers in the 200 freestyle, Britain blew away the field in 6 minutes, 58.58 seconds. That was just off the world record set by the Americans (6:58.55) at the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 80 of 88

2009 world championships.

The 200-meter gold medalist, Tom Dean, led off for the British. James Guy and Matthew Richards took the middle legs before 200-meter silver medalist Duncan Scott swam the anchor leg. It was the first British gold in the event since it made its debut at the first London Games.

Russia claimed the silver in 7:01.81, while Australia took the bronze in 7:01.84.

The four-time defending champion Americans finished fourth -- the first time they've failed to win a medal in the event other than the boycotted 1980 Moscow Games.

## MEDAL ALERT

Katie Ledecky has finally collected her first gold medal of the Tokyo Games.

Ledecky has won the 1,500-meter freestyle, which made its Olympic debut for women this year. That helped the American star make up for what has so far been the worst showing of her Olympic career.

About an hour after finishing fifth in the 200-meter freestyle, Ledecky held off teammate Erica Sullivan to win the metric mile in 15 minutes, 37.34 seconds.

Sullivan claimed the silver in 15:41.41, while Germany's Sarah Kohler grabbed the bronze in 15:42.91.

## MEDAL ALERT

Japanese swimmer Yui Ohashi has swept the women's individual medley at the Tokyo Olympics.

Ohashi rallied to win the 200-meter medley, beating Americans Alex Walsh and Kate Douglass. Ohashi had previously won the 400-meter individual medley.

The winning time was 2 minutes, 8.52 seconds. Walsh took the silver in 2:08.65, while the bronze went to Douglass in 2:09.04.

Defending Olympic champion and world record-holder Katinka Hosszu of Hungary finished seventh. She was the oldest swimmer in the final at age 32.

## MEDAL ALERT

China has wrapped a record-setting first day of rowing finals by smashing the world record in women's quadruple sculls and winning gold.

The Chinese boat finished in 6 minutes, 0.13 seconds and shaved nearly two seconds off the previous mark set by the Netherlands in 2014. The race was never close. Poland won silver more than 6 seconds behind the Chinese. Australia won bronze for that country's fourth medal of the day.

Windy conditions produced a strong tailwind for the rowers at Tokyo's Sea Forest Waterway, and new world or Olympic records were set in each of Wednesday's six medal races.

## MEDAL ALERT

Kristof Milak of Hungary has romped to a dominating victory in the men's 200-meter butterfly at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Milak won the the gold by about two body lengths, backing up his status as one of the biggest favorites at the Olympic pool. He touched in 1 minute, 51.25 seconds -- some 2 1/2 seconds ahead of the silver medalist, Japan's Tomoru Honda, who finished in 1:53.73.

The bronze went to Italy's Federico Burdisso in 1:54.45.

South African star Chad le Clos finished fifth. He won the 200 fly at the 2012 London Olympics, upsetting Michael Phelps, but was no match for the Hungarian star.

## MEDAL ALERT

The Netherlands have set a new world record in men's quadruple sculls with a sprint over the final 500 meters to win the gold medal.

Their time of 5 minutes, 32.03 seconds beat the previous mark of 5:32.26 set by Ukraine at the 2014 world championships.

The Dutch boat was fourth after the first 500 meters but had closed to second by the next marker. A



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 81 of 88

late push overtook Great Britain for the lead.

Great Britain then held off a late charge by Australia to win silver. Australia's bronze was the country's third medal of the day after winning gold in men's and women's four.

## MEDAL ALERT

Ariarne Titmus has beaten Katie Ledecky again at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. Ledecky didn't even win a medal -- the first time that's ever happened to her at the Olympics.

Titmus gave the Australian women their third individual swimming gold with a victory in the 200-meter freestyle. Titmus set an Olympic record of 1 minute, 53.50 seconds to make it 2-for-2 against the American star, following up a thrilling victory in the 400m freestyle.

In the longer race, Titmus conserved her energy over the first half of the race, then rallied to pass Ledecky with the second-fastest performance in history. Ledecky wasn't even close in the 200, making the first flip in seventh place and never getting higher than her fifth-place showing at the end. She finished in 1:55.21 -- nearly 2 seconds behind the winner.

Ledecky is facing a grueling morning that also includes the final of the 1,500 free. She's a big favorite for gold in that race, which is new to the women's program this year.

Italy's Federica Pellegrini of Italy finished seventh in her fifth and final Olympics. She won the gold in 2008 and is still the world-record holder.

## MEDAL ALERT

Australia has doubled its haul of Olympic rowing gold medals as the men's four charged to victory moments after the Aussie women claimed their gold.

Australia had bolted to the front by the 500-meter mark and never were challenged for the lead to reach in the finish line as Romania fought a late surge by Italy to claim the silver medal. Australia's time of 5 minutes, 42.76 set a new Olympic record.

Italy won bronze.

## MEDAL ALERT

Australia's women's four set a new Olympic-best time to win the gold medal in windy conditions at Tokyo's Sea Forest Waterway.

The Australian boat led at each marker but had to fight off the Netherlands over the last 50 meters to win in 6 minutes, 15.37 seconds, just .34 seconds ahead of the Dutch boat.

Ireland took bronze more than 5 seconds back.

The windy conditions pushing rowers at the waterpark saw Olympic best times quickly fall as the first three races all saw new standards set.

## MEDAL ALERT

The French team of Hugo Boucheron and Matthieu Androdias has held off a late charge from the Netherlands over the final 50 meters to win the men's double sculls by 0.2 seconds in Olympic record time of 6 minutes, 33 seconds.

China made a strong move out of the start before falling back even with the French and the Netherlands. The Dutch boat of Melvin Twellarr and Stef Broenink briefly held the lead at 1,500 meters.

Boucheron and Androdias quickly reeled in the Dutch with a powerful push that was good enough to hold off a late charge at the finish line.

China Zhiyu Liu and Liang Zhang finished third for bronze.

New U.S. beach volleyball partners Jake Gibb and Tri Bourne will have some more time at the Olympics to get to know one another.

The Americans had never played together before their first match in Tokyo on Sunday. They beat Swit-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 82 of 88

zerland 21-19, 23-21 on Wednesday to improve to 2-0 in the round-robin. They have one more match remaining, against Qatar on Friday night.

Gibb qualified for the Tokyo Games with Taylor Crabb as his partner. But Crabb tested positive for COVID-19 and withdrew, allowing Gibb to replace him. Bourne was on the third-place U.S. team in the qualifying race; each country is limited to a maximum of two spots.

Two wins should be enough to put the Americans in the knockout round. At worst, it would put leave them in a three-way tie for first and give them a tiebreaker match.

## MEDAL ALERT

Romania's Ancuta Bodnar and Simona Radis have won the first rowing gold medal of the Tokyo Games, in women's double sculls.

They bolted from the start and never let up in a dominating performance.

The rowing medal events had been delayed for a day because of bad weather forecasts amid a tropical storm.

Once back on the water, the Romanians were never challenged and led by two boat lengths with just 500 meters to go. Bodnar and Radis are both just 22. Their sprint to victory left the only fight for the silver medal, where New Zealand's Brooke Donohue and Hannah Osborne edged the Dutch boat of Roos de Jong and Lisa Scheenaard.

## 'I can die': Medvedev survives extreme heat at Tokyo Games

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Bent over in exhaustion before serving. Resting on his racket between points. Grasping for a rubber tube blowing cool air next to his seat on changeovers. Two medical timeouts and one visit from a trainer.

Daniil Medvedev was struggling so much with the suffocating heat and humidity at the Ariake Tennis Park on Wednesday that at one point the chair umpire, Carlos Ramos, asked him if he could continue playing.

"I can finish the match but I can die," Medvedev replied. "If I die, are you going to be responsible?"

Afterward, Medvedev said he felt "darkness" in his eyes.

"I didn't know what to do to feel better," the ROC player added. "I was ready to just fall down on the court."

Somehow, the second-seeded Medvedev still pulled out a 6-2, 3-6, 6-2 win over Fabio Fognini of Italy to reach the quarterfinals at the Tokyo Olympics.

Spanish player Paula Badosa was less fortunate. She left the court in a wheelchair after retiring from her quarterfinal match against Marketa Vondrousova because of heatstroke.

Badosa also had to withdraw from a mixed doubles match later with partner Pablo Carreno Busta.

Vondrousova, the Czech player who eliminated Naomi Osaka a day earlier, had won the first set 6-3. She's now in the semifinals and into the medal rounds and will next face fourth-seeded Elina Svitolina of Ukraine. Ninth-seeded Belinda Bencic of Switzerland will play 15th-seeded Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan in the other semifinal match.

After some rain a day earlier, the temperature rose to 88 degrees F (31 degrees C) but the heat index made it feel like a sizzling 99 degrees F (37 degrees C).

The problems the players faced raised questions over why organizers did not grant requests earlier in the tournament from Medvedev and other players — including top-ranked Novak Djokovic — to move all of the tennis matches at the Games to the evening.

As Wednesday's play neared its conclusion, organizers announced that matches would begin at 3 p.m. starting Thursday to make it easier on the players. Matches had been starting at 11 a.m.

Djokovic was fortunate to play later in the day after Center Court was covered by shadows. The Serbian great served nine aces and defeated Spanish training partner Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-3, 6-1 to

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 83 of 88

keep his Golden Slam bid going.

"The conditions are brutal," Djokovic said. "I've played tennis professionally now 20 years and I've never faced this kind of conditions in my entire life on a consecutive daily basis."

Djokovic's quarterfinal opponent will be Kei Nishikori of Japan, who reached his third straight Olympic quarterfinal by beating Ilya Ivashka of Belarus 7-6 (7), 6-0.

Djokovic then won again with Serbian partner Nina Stojanovic in the opening round of the mixed doubles competition. They beat Marcelo Melo and Luisa Stefani of Brazil 6-3, 6-4.

In singles, Djokovic is attempting to become the first man to achieve a Golden Slam by winning all four Grand Slam tournaments and Olympic gold in the same calendar year.

Djokovic has already won the Australian and French Opens plus Wimbledon this year, so now he needs the Tokyo Games title and the U.S. Open trophy to complete the unique collection.

Out on Court 2, third-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece was far from his best in a 2-6, 7-6 (4), 6-2 loss to 14th-seeded Ugo Humbert of France. Also, 12th-seeded Karen Khachanov of ROC eliminated eighth-seeded Diego Schwartzman of Argentina 6-1, 2-6, 6-1.

"It was a battle to see who was capable to resist more. After 10 or 12 groundstrokes we were like 'The Walking Dead,'" Schwartzman said, referring to the popular TV series.

Fourth-seeded Alexander Zverev of Germany also reached the last eight and will play Jeremy Chardy of France with a potential semifinal match against Djokovic looming ahead.

It's been quite a month for Svitolina, who married French player Gael Monfils before flying to Tokyo and beat Camila Giorgi of Italy 6-4, 6-4 on Wednesday. Monfils was sitting courtside cheering on his new bride, having already been eliminated from both the singles and doubles tournaments.

The couple got married on July 16 but have delayed their honeymoon until November, when the tennis season ends.

Svitolina is the highest seeded singles player remaining after top-ranked Ash Barty, No. 2 Osaka and No. 3 Aryna Sabalenka each lost in the earlier rounds.

Barty also lost in doubles with Australian partner Storm Sanders. The top-seeded Czech pair of Barbora Krejčíková and Katerina Siniakova beat them 3-6, 6-4, 10-7.

Bencic defeated Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of ROC 6-0, 3-6, 6-3, while Rybakina beat Gabrine Muguruza of Spain 7-5, 6-1.

In men's doubles, Andy Murray and British partner Joe Salisbury lost to Marin Cilic and Ivan Dodig of Croatia 4-6, 7-6 (2), 10-7. Murray, who was the two-time defending gold medalist in singles, withdrew from that competition because of a right quad strain.

Medvedev received medical treatment and had his chest massaged while leading 5-2 in the opening set but then held his serve in the next game to close it out. He then took another medical timeout while trailing 4-3 in the second.

"I felt like my diaphragm has blocked," Medvedev said. "I couldn't breathe properly. It was the most humid day we had so far — maybe the hottest."

With so much suffering, Medvedev took his time between points, which drew protests from Fognini.

Both players were allowed to leave the court for 10 minutes between the second and third sets with an extreme heat rule in effect.

Medvedev said he took a "cold, freezing shower" during the break but that the sharp change in temperature put his body into shock and caused him to cramp.

After holding for a 5-2 lead in the third, Medvedev received yet more medical treatment when a trainer came out onto the court and massaged his left arm and thigh.

Fognini slammed his racket onto the court in disgust when the match was over, then picked the racket up and placed it in a court-side trash can.

Medvedev — if he's up to it — will next face sixth-seeded Carreno Busta, who beat Dominik Koepfer of Germany 7-6 (7), 6-3.

## Turn off, turn on: Simple step can thwart top phone hackers

By ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — As a member of the secretive Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Angus King has reason to worry about hackers. At a briefing by security staff this year, he said he got some advice on how to help keep his cellphone secure.

Step One: Turn off phone.

Step Two: Turn it back on.

That's it. At a time of widespread digital insecurity it turns out that the oldest and simplest computer fix there is — turning a device off then back on again — can thwart hackers from stealing information from smartphones.

Regularly rebooting phones won't stop the army of cybercriminals or spy-for-hire firms that have sowed chaos and doubt about the ability to keep any information safe and private in our digital lives. But it can make even the most sophisticated hackers work harder to maintain access and steal data from a phone.

"This is all about imposing cost on these malicious actors," said Neal Ziring, technical director of the National Security Agency's cybersecurity directorate.

The NSA issued a "best practices" guide for mobile device security last year in which it recommends rebooting a phone every week as a way to stop hacking.

King, an independent from Maine, says rebooting his phone is now part of his routine.

"I'd say probably once a week, whenever I think of it," he said.

Almost always in arm's reach, rarely turned off and holding huge stores of personal and sensitive data, cellphones have become top targets for hackers looking to steal text messages, contacts and photos, as well as track users' locations and even secretly turn on their video and microphones.

"I always think of phones as like our digital soul," said Patrick Wardle, a security expert and former NSA researcher.

The number of people whose phones are hacked each year is unknowable, but evidence suggests it's significant. A recent investigation into phone hacking by a global media consortium has caused political uproars in France, India, Hungary and elsewhere after researchers found scores of journalists, human rights activists and politicians on a leaked list of what were believed to be potential targets of an Israeli hacker-for-hire company.

The advice to periodically reboot a phone reflects, in part, a change in how top hackers are gaining access to mobile devices and the rise of so-called "zero-click" exploits that work without any user interaction instead of trying to get users to open something that's secretly infected.

"There's been this evolution away from having a target click on a dodgy link," said Bill Marczak, a senior researcher at Citizen Lab, an internet civil rights watchdog at the University of Toronto.

Typically, once hackers gain access to a device or network, they look for ways to persist in the system by installing malicious software to a computer's root file system. But that's become more difficult as phone manufacturers such as Apple and Google have strong security to block malware from core operating systems, Ziring said.

"It's very difficult for an attacker to burrow into that layer in order to gain persistence," he said.

That encourages hackers to opt for "in-memory payloads" that are harder to detect and trace back to whoever sent them. Such hacks can't survive a reboot, but often don't need to since many people rarely turn their phones off.

"Adversaries came to the realization they don't need to persist," Wardle said. "If they could do a one-time pull and exfiltrate all your chat messages and your contact and your passwords, it's almost game over anyways, right?"

A robust market currently exists for hacking tools that can break into phones. Some companies like Zerodium and Crowdfence publicly offer millions of dollars for zero-click exploits.

And hacker-for-hire companies that sell mobile-device hacking services to governments and law enforcement agencies have proliferated in recent years. The most well known is the Israeli-based NSO Group,

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 85 of 88

whose spyware researchers say has been used around the world to break into the phones of human rights activists, journalists, and even members of the Catholic clergy.

NSO Group is the focus of the recent exposés by a media consortium that reported the company's spyware tool Pegasus was used in 37 instances of successful or attempted phone hacks of business executives, human rights activists and others, according to The Washington Post.

The company is also being sued in the U.S. by Facebook for allegedly targeting some 1,400 users of its encrypted messaging service WhatsApp with a zero-click exploit.

NSO Group has said it only sells its spyware to "vetted government agencies" for use against terrorists and major criminals. The company did not respond to a request for comment.

The persistence of NSO's spyware used to be a selling point of the company. Several years ago its U.S.-based subsidiary pitched law enforcement agencies a phone hacking tool that would survive even a factory reset of a phone, according to documents obtained by Vice News.

But Marczak, who has tracked NSO Group's activists closely for years, said it looks like the company first starting using zero-click exploits that forgo persistence around 2019.

He said victims in the WhatsApp case would see an incoming call for a few rings before the spyware was installed. In 2020, Marczak and Citizen Lab exposed another zero-click hack attributed to NSO Group that targeted several journalists at Al Jazeera. In that case, the hackers used Apple's iMessage texting service.

"There was nothing that any of the targets reported seeing on their screen. So that one was both completely invisible as well as not requiring any user interaction," Marczak said.

With such a powerful tool at their disposal, Marczak said rebooting your phone won't do much to stop determined hackers. Once you reboot, they could simply send another zero-click.

"It's sort of just a different model, it's persistence through reinfection," he said.

The NSA's guide also acknowledges that rebooting a phone works only sometimes. The agency's guide for mobile devices has an even simpler piece of advice to really make sure hackers aren't secretly turning on your phone's camera or microphone to record you: don't carry it with you.

## Report: Hate crime laws lack uniformity across the US

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — More than half a century since they were modernized, hate crime laws in the U.S. are inconsistent and provide incomplete methods for addressing bias-motivated violence, according to a new report by advocates for better protections.

The report, first shared with The Associated Press ahead of its Wednesday release, is a comprehensive national review of hate crime laws that shows gaps and variances in the laws. Due to the complexity of hate violence, certain statutes meant to protect racial minorities and marginalized groups are less effective, as a consequence of bias in the criminal justice system, the report says.

The existing laws can even discourage hate crime victims from coming forward, advocates say in the report, which also cites widespread flaws in the collection and reporting of data.

"We really think this is the first report to bring together a state-by-state analysis along so many dimensions ... with a focus on racial justice and criminal justice reform," said Naomi Goldberg, LGBTQ program director for the Movement Advancement Project, which authored the report in partnership with over 15 national civil rights groups.

The coalition of civil rights organizations includes Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC, the National Center for Transgender Equality and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Goldberg described it as an unprecedented collaboration in the advocacy space.

The report includes a foreword by Judy Shepard, president of the Matthew Shepard Foundation, named for her son whose murder in 1998 led to LGBTQ protection in the federal legislation.

"Although we know that hate crime laws are important and have been successful in holding offenders accountable, we also know that they can and should be more impactful," Shepard wrote in the foreword.

The report's release comes after a more-than-yearlong focus on COVID-era hate violence directed at

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 86 of 88

Asian Americans and Asian immigrants, and ahead of the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks, which saw an uptick in anti-Muslim and anti-Sikh attacks.

On Tuesday, a man accused of killing eight people, mostly women of Asian descent, at Atlanta-area massage businesses pleaded guilty to murder in four of the killings. The man received a sentence of life imprisonment. A prosecutor on the case has not linked a hate motivation to the killings.

The FBI said the U.S. reached a 10-year high in reported hate crimes in 2019. Earlier this year, the SPLC said the number of active hate groups in the U.S. declined as far-right extremists migrated further to online networks that are harder to track.

The majority of all U.S. hate crimes are committed by white people, according to available data, and the majority of all hate crimes are motivated by racial or ethnic bias. But data also show that hate crimes reported by state law enforcement to the FBI disproportionately list Black Americans as the perpetrators.

According to the report, in at least 13 states, law enforcement-recorded hate crimes listed Black offenders at a rate roughly 1.6 to 3.6 times greater than the size of the state's Black population.

"These repeated disparities ... show that — despite the fact that people of color are far more likely to be the victims of hate violence — the instances of hate violence that are actually documented by police ... are disproportionately those alleged to have been committed by Black people," the report states.

As racist attacks on Asian Americans and Asian immigrants gained widespread attention in recent months, so did a false perception that Black Americans were the main culprits of such attacks.

"We don't have a true and accurate understanding of what anti-Asian hate during the pandemic has looked like," said Marita Etcubañez, senior director for strategic initiatives at Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC in Washington D.C.

"But we do know that these commonly discussed perceptions that the perpetrators of anti-Asian hate are mainly Black or African American are not accurate," she said.

Etcubañez added that a lack of accurate hate crime statistics is what inspired passage of the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act, as part of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act. Named for Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer, whose hate-motivated killings were prosecuted as hate crimes but not counted in hate statistics, the legislation aims to improve hate crime data collection by law enforcement.

The report on hate crime laws also highlights a growing politicization of such legislation. Following the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and street confrontations between protesters and police in the last several years, conservative lawmakers in a handful of states have either changed or attempted to change hate crime laws by adding police officers as a protected category.

"I think that's a terrible, terrible approach," said SPLC president and CEO Margaret Huang.

"Those laws that are trying to include law enforcement in the category of hate crimes are actually taking away from the definition of hate crimes and the focus on how we prevent these things," she said.

The nation's earliest protections against hate-motivated violence were passed after the Civil War, amid a rise in white supremacist violence against formerly enslaved Africans. Modernization of federal hate crime legislation happened in 1968, and has since expanded to 46 states, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Arkansas, South Carolina and Wyoming are the only states without hate crime statutes.

In the report, advocates say current hate crime laws can be improved by shifting the focus away from strictly criminal punishment for violation of the statutes to allowing for remedies in civil court. They also call for investment in the social safety net to help reduce poverty and vulnerability caused by systemic racism.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 29, the 210th day of 2021. There are 155 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 29, 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, creating NASA.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 87 of 88

On this date:

In 1856, German composer Robert Schumann died in Endenich at age 46.

In 1890, artist Vincent van Gogh, 37, died of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound in Auvers-sur-Oise, France.

In 1914, transcontinental telephone service in the U.S. became operational with the first test conversation between New York and San Francisco. Massachusetts' Cape Cod Canal, offering a shortcut across the base of the peninsula, was officially opened to shipping traffic.

In 1965, The Beatles' second feature film, "Help!," had its world premiere in London.

In 1967, an accidental rocket launch on the deck of the supercarrier USS Forrestal in the Gulf of Tonkin resulted in a fire and explosions that killed 134 servicemen. (Among the survivors was future Arizona senator John McCain, a U.S. Navy lieutenant commander who narrowly escaped with his life.)

In 1968, Pope Paul the Sixth reaffirmed the Roman Catholic Church's stance against artificial methods of birth control.

In 1974, singer Cass Elliot died in a London hotel room at age 32.

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford became the first U.S. president to visit the site of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz in Poland.

In 1980, a state funeral was held in Cairo, Egypt, for the deposed Shah of Iran, who had died two days earlier at age 60.

In 1981, Britain's Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer in a glittering ceremony at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. (The couple divorced in 1996.)

In 1986, a federal jury in New York found that the National Football League had committed an antitrust violation against the rival United States Football League. But in a hollow victory for the U-S-F-L, the jury ordered the N-F-L to pay token damages of only three dollars.

In 1999, a former day trader, apparently upset over stock losses, opened fire in two Atlanta brokerage offices, killing nine people and wounding 13 before shooting himself to death; authorities said Mark O. Barton had also killed his wife and two children.

Ten years ago: Norway began burying the dead, a week after an anti-Muslim extremist killed 77 people in a bombing and shooting rampage. Delaware carried out its first execution since 2005, putting to death Robert Jackson III, who was convicted of killing a woman, Elizabeth Girardi, with an ax during a burglary.

Five years ago: Pope Francis visited the former Nazi death factory at Auschwitz and Birkenau in southern Poland, meeting with concentration camp survivors as well as aging saviors who helped Jews escape certain doom. Former suburban Chicago police officer Drew Peterson was given an additional 40 years in prison for trying to hire someone to kill the prosecutor who put him behind bars for killing his third wife.

One year ago: The body of the late Democratic congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis arrived in Atlanta; people lined the streets as the hearse carrying Lewis' body moved through downtown before a ceremony at the Capitol rotunda, where Lewis was lauded as a warrior and a hero. Both sides declared victory in a political fight over the deployment of federal agents to guard a U.S. courthouse that was targeted during violent protests in Portland, Oregon, after the governor announced that the officers would start to withdraw. The U.S. Energy Information Administration said energy consumption in the United States plummeted to its lowest level in 30 years in the spring as the economy largely shut down. Connie Culp, the recipient of the first partial face transplant in the United States, died at the age of 57, almost a dozen years after the groundbreaking operation.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum-Baker is 89. Actor Robert Fuller is 88. Former Sen. Elizabeth H. Dole is 85. Actor David Warner is 80. Actor Roz Kelly is 79. Rock musician Neal Doughty (REO Speedwagon) is 75. Marilyn Tucker Quayle, wife of former Vice President Dan Quayle, is 72. Actor Mike Starr is 71. Documentary maker Ken Burns is 68. Style guru Tim Gunn is 68. Rock singer-musician Geddy Lee (Rush) is 68. Rock singer Patti Scialfa (Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band) is 68. Actor Kevin Chapman is 59. Actor Alexandra Paul is 58. Actor/comedian Dean Haglund is 56. Country singer Martina McBride is 55. Rock musician Chris Gorman is 54. Actor Rodney Allen Rippy is 53. Actor Tim Omundson

# Groton Daily Independent

**Thursday, July 29, 2021 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 022 ~ 88 of 88**

is 52. Actor Ato Essandoh is 49. Actor Wil Wheaton is 49. R&B singer Wanya Morris (Boyz II Men) is 48. Country singer-songwriter James Otto is 48. Actor Stephen Dorff is 48. Actor Josh Radnor is 47. Hip-hop DJ/music producer Danger Mouse is 44. Actor Rachel Miner is 41. Actor Kaitlyn Black is 38. Actor Matt Prokop is 31. Actor Cait Fairbanks is 28.