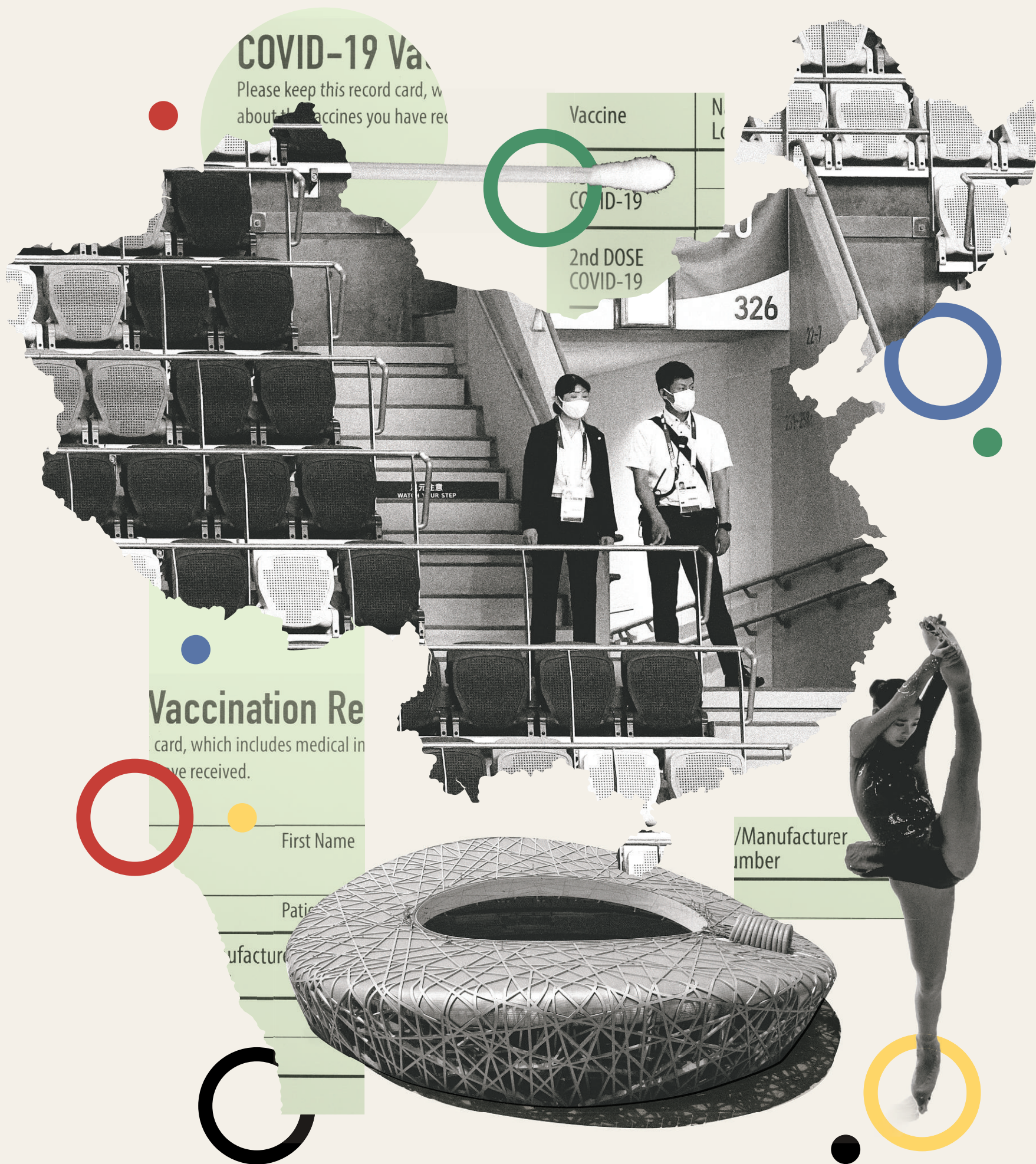


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**SPORTS**

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**BEIJING OLYMPICS**

# Ring in with caution

In order to get to the Beijing Olympics, Tabitha Peterson and her teammates had to pass a pair of high-stakes tests. They handled both with sure hands and steady nerves, making their way to the Winter Games in women's curling by capturing a bronze medal at the world championships and winning the U.S. Olympic trials.

It's been a little harder to control their anxiety over their next big tests. Every day in Beijing, everyone on Team Peterson will have their throats swabbed to check for COVID-19, knowing a positive result could sweep them out of the Olympics and into an isolation facility.

"Since omicron has been spreading like crazy, we've been a little freaked out," said Peterson, of Eagan. "We're just like, 'Oh, my God. Do *not* get it.' It's always in the back of your mind."

Just six months after the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Summer Games, the Olympics are back —

**Athletes, China are at their wariest as COVID again a Games-changer**

Story by RACHEL BLOUNT  
Illustration by BROCK KAPLAN  
Star Tribune

**La Velle E. Neal III:** Minnesotans ready to again shine brightly on Olympic stage. **C2**

**Local Olympians:** Meet the athletes with Minnesota ties competing for the U.S. **C6-7**

**3 days to go:** Competition starts Wednesday.

and not much has changed. COVID is crashing the party again at the Beijing Winter Games, which officially begin with Friday's Opening Ceremony.

As in Tokyo, these Olympics will be a masked-up, locked-down and socially distanced affair. That's just the starting point. With more contagious variants now circulating around the globe, organizers have adopted more stringent COVID protocols for about 3,000 athletes, as well as thousands of staff, volunteers and media.

Beijing organizers have created a "closed loop" encircling all Winter Games venues and accommodations, a virtual Great Wall separating the Olympics from the rest of the city. Getting into the loop requires a vaccination, or for those receiving a limited medical exemption, a three-week quarantine. Staying there means a daily ritual of testing and wearing high-grade masks at all times. See **OLYMPICS** on C9 ▶

## 'He asks why': GM curious, collaborative in building career

Kwesi Adofo-Mensah's analytical background doesn't define swift rise.

By ANDREW KRAMMER  
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By his fifth year in the research department of the San Francisco 49ers, Kwesi Adofo-Mensah had built a reputation for solving

problems and adding value to any conversation.

In 2017, the team needed help. It needed a new general manager and head coach. Executives knew they needed Adofo-Mensah's sharp perspective and collaborative skills in the room with owners and vice presidents.

So while Adofo-Mensah's first big task as the rookie Vikings general manager is

finding his new team's next head coach, he has been in those rooms before.

"He's doing his first coaching search as the head of it, but he's built one that I've found very successful already," said Brian Hampton, the 49ers vice president of football administration.

The 49ers eventually hired Kyle Shanahan, who is coaching his second NFC Championship

Game on Sunday against the Rams. Adofo-Mensah helped keep the search "good and clean," Hampton said.

"Making sure you're asking the same questions of every candidate to be able to compare them on equal footing," Hampton said. "Controlling yourself as to not get too excited about one candidate before another; the background checks, calling

around, keeping us on track."

Adofo-Mensah, 40, is the NFL's first general manager from a primarily analytical background, but that alone doesn't define his unprecedented and meteoric rise. Ten years ago, he was an ex-Wall Street trader pursuing a graduate degree at Stanford and flirting with the idea of chasing his football dreams. See **VIKINGS** on C11 ▶

**Talk with Harbaugh**  
Vikings interview Giants' Graham, gauge Michigan coach's interest. **C11**

**Jim Souhan**  
Vikings should seek a proven leader under center. **C10**

• Mark Craig breaks down conference title games. **C10**  
• Reports of Tom Brady retiring are disputed. **C12**