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SUPER TUESDAY

Biden, Trump are poised for rematch in November

By WILL WEISSERT,
BILL BARROW
AND CHRIS MEGIERIAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and his predecessor, Donald Trump, romped through more than a dozen states on Super Tuesday, all but cementing a November rematch and pushing the former president's last major rival, Nikki Haley, out of the Republican race.

Their victories from coast to coast, including the delegate-rich states of California and Texas, left little doubt about the trajectory of the race. Haley won Vermont, denying Trump a full sweep, but the former president carried other states that might have been favorable to her such as Virginia, Massachusetts and Maine, which have large swaths of moderate voters like those who have backed her in previous primaries.

Haley, who suspended her presidential campaign on Wednesday, didn't endorse the former president in a speech in Charleston, S.C.. Instead, she challenged him to win the support of the moderate Republicans and independent voters who supported her.

"It is now up to Donald Trump to earn the votes of those in our party and beyond it who did not support him. And I hope he does that," she said.

The only contest Biden lost Tuesday was the Democratic caucus in American Samoa, a tiny U.S. territory in the South Pacific Ocean. Biden was defeated by

SEE REMATCH ON PAGE 9



FATIMA SHBAIR/AP

Palestinians search for bodies and survivors in the rubble of a residential building destroyed in an Israeli airstrike Monday in Rafah, Gaza Strip.

Hostage crisis poses dilemma for Israel and offers a path to victory for Hamas

By JOSEPH KRAUSS
Associated Press

Over the last five months, Israel has killed thousands of Hamas fighters, destroyed dozens of their tunnels and wreaked unprecedented destruction on the Gaza Strip.

But it still faces a dilemma that was clear from the start of the war and will ultimately determine its outcome: It can either try to annihilate Hamas, which would mean almost certain death for the estimated 100 hostages still held in Gaza, or it can cut a deal that would allow the militants to claim a historic victory.

Either outcome would be excru-



ODED BALUTY/AP

Israelis attend a rally to demand the release of the hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Tuesday.

ciating for Israelis. Either would likely seal an ignominious end for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's long political career. And either might be seen as acceptable by Hamas, which valorizes martyrdom.

Netanyahu, at least in public, denies there is any such dilemma. He has vowed to destroy Hamas and recover all the hostages, either through rescue missions or cease-fire agreements, saying victory could come "in a matter of weeks."

As long as the war rages, he can avoid early elections that polls strongly suggest would remove

SEE DILEMMA ON PAGE 7

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Delta Airlines to raise checked-baggage fees 17%

Associated Press
SAN FRANCISCO — In case you needed yet another incentive to cram all your travel items into a carry-on, Delta Airlines just boosted the cost of your first checked bag by 17%. The increase adds \$5 to the previous, and not exactly-insignificant, \$30 fee for domestic flights.
Delta is the third major U.S. carrier to hike bag fees in the past several weeks. Its move follows similar increases that American Airlines and United Airlines an-

nounced in February, three days apart; those high fees themselves followed fee hikes by smaller carriers Alaska Airlines and JetBlue Airways. Major U.S. carriers often copy one another's pricing changes, a move that behavior analysts sometimes refer to as herd instinct.
Delta said Tuesday that the first bag checked on a domestic flight will now incur a \$35 fee. The charge for a second bag rose from \$40 to \$45.
Delta last raised bag fees for do-

mestic flights in 2018. The airline said the increase will help it keep up with unspecified rising industry costs. Customers with status perks can still check their first bag for free; those with first class tickets can check two free bags.
Bag fees have become a dependable source of revenue for airlines since American introduced them in 2008, when jet fuel prices were surging. In 2022, the last full year for which statistics are available, U.S. airlines took in \$6.8 billion in checked-bag fees.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates												
Euro costs (March 7)	\$1.06	Switzerland (Franc)	0.8833									
British pound (March 7)	\$1.24	Thailand (Baht)	35.64									
Japanese yen (March 7)	147.00	Turkey (NewLira)	31.7480									
South Korean won (March 7)	1303.00											
Commercial rates												
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3768	<p>(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)</p> <div>INTEREST RATES</div> <table><tr><td>Prime rate</td><td>8.50</td></tr><tr><td>Interest Rates Discount rate</td><td>6.00</td></tr><tr><td>Federal funds market rate</td><td>5.33</td></tr><tr><td>3-month bill</td><td>5.37</td></tr><tr><td>30-year bond</td><td>4.28</td></tr></table>	Prime rate	8.50	Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00	Federal funds market rate	5.33	3-month bill	5.37	30-year bond	4.28
Prime rate	8.50											
Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00											
Federal funds market rate	5.33											
3-month bill	5.37											
30-year bond	4.28											
Britain (Pound)	1.2719											
Canada (Dollar)	1.3535											
China (Yuan)	7.1985											
Denmark (Krone)	6.8489											
Egypt (Pound)	49.4499											
Euro	0.9188											
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8244											
Hungary (Forint)	361.21											
Israel (Shekel)	3.5828											
Japan (Yen)	149.40											
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3076											
Norway (Krone)	10.5314											
Philippines (Peso)	55.78											
Poland (Zloty)	3.95											
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7507											
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3399											
South Korea (Won)	1333.33											

WEATHER OUTLOOK

THURSDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



THURSDAY IN EUROPE



FRIDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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MILITARY

Military hospitals hit with 2 system outages

BY JEREMY STILLWAGNER
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Human error caused an outage that brought Military Health System Genesis — the freshly installed online system at U.S. health care facilities worldwide — to a standstill in late February, according to the Defense Health Agency.

The system-wide temporary blackout on Feb. 26 affected nearly all DHA systems and left patients unable to schedule appointments or tests or communicate with providers.

Pharmacy services through MHS Genesis are still unavailable due to an unrelated cyberattack on an outside service provider, Change Healthcare, that is still unresolved.

Human error caused the 4½-hour-long service interruption on



DOUGLAS STUTZ/U.S. Navy

Until the cyberattack on Change Healthcare is resolved, military pharmacists will accept prescriptions in person at service counters.

Feb. 26, not a technical issue with MHS Genesis, according to an emailed statement from an unidentified DHA spokesperson Friday. All Genesis systems were re-

stored except online access to prescription services.

“The impacted systems included clinical systems such as internet capabilities, access to www.tri-

care.mil and www.health.mil, email, and records,” the message said.

Until the cyberattack on Change Healthcare is resolved, military pharmacists will accept prescriptions in person at service counters.

Change Healthcare is the largest prescription processor in the U.S., and one of the main suppliers of prescription medication to military pharmacies.

The cyberattack by the Blackcat ransomware gang cost the company \$22 million and continues to snarl its payment and billing services, according to numerous media reports.

The Department of Health and Human Services stepped in to assist health care providers affected by the attack and experiencing “an inability to submit claims and receive payments,” according to a

department news release Tuesday.

When it detected the cyberattack, Change Healthcare disconnected its systems to protect patient information, according to an updated news release Tuesday from Tricare, the military health care provider.

Prescription delays for military patients persist because of the Change cyberattack.

“Pharmacy wait times may still be longer than expected due to persisting issues from the [cyberattack],” Master Sgt. Nathan Allen, a spokesman for Yokota’s 374th Air-lift Wing, told Stars and Stripes in an email Feb. 29. “We are grateful for the community’s understanding and patience during this time.”

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VA secretary orders WWII kiss photo to stay at agency facilities

BY LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A tweet on social media about a Department of Veterans Affairs memo banning a famous World War II photo of a sailor kissing a nurse in Times Square went viral Tuesday morning, prompting a swift response from VA Secretary Denis McDonough denying its accuracy.

“Let me be clear: This image is not banned from VA facilities—and we will keep it in VA facilities,” McDonough posted to X, formerly Twitter.

McDonough’s tweet, which included the black-and-white image of an unidentified sailor holding and kissing a woman in a nurse’s uniform when news broke of Japan’s surrender in World War II, garnered more than 116,000 views by 10 a.m.

More so, an X account under the name @EndWokeness had drawn 2 million views by 11 a.m. with the original tweet stating, “The Department of Veterans Affairs just BANNED the V-J Day kiss photo from all department facilities.”

Included with the tweet was a memo from RimaAnn Nelson, the VA assistant secretary for health for operations, that was sent in February to the Veterans Integrated Services Network Directors.

Nelson’s memo had requested the photo be removed and replaced at all VA facilities to support a “respectful, safe and trauma-informed” workplace.

The VA confirmed the validity of the memo Tuesday but said it should not have been issued.

The memo stated, “to foster a more trauma-informed environment that promotes the psychological safety of our employees and the veterans we serve, photographs depicting the ‘V-J Day in Times Square’ should be removed from all Veterans Health Administration facilities.”

The memo asserted the spontaneous kiss was nonconsensual and therefore violated the VA’s “no tolerance” policy against sexual harassment and assault.

“A memo was sent out that should not have been, and it has been rescinded,” said Terrence Hayes, VA

press secretary. “VA is NOT banning this photo from VA facilities.”

Nelson’s memo also ordered the replacement of the photo and detailed the Department of Justice’s definition of sexual assault as “any nonconsensual sexual act.” The memo asserted some employees complained about the photo “as a tacit endorsement of the inappropriate behavior it depicts.”

“The placement of this photo in VA facilities was initially intended to celebrate and commemorate the end of World War II and the triumphant return of U.S. soldiers,” according to the memo. “However, perspectives on historical events and their representations evolve. Recent discussions have highlighted concerns about the nonconsensual nature of the kiss.”

The kerfuffle over the photo comes as the VA manages public fallout and scrutiny over allegations of improper sexual conduct by supervisors within an office set up to promote a harassment-free workplace.

The allegations have been aired at recent congressional hearings



National Archives

The famous photo of the kiss at Times Square in New York on V-J Day, Aug. 14, 1945. There are two similar photos of the same scene, one shot by Alfred Eisenstaedt that originally appeared in Life Magazine. This photo was shot by Navy Lt. Victor Jorgensen and is in the National Archives.

looking into claims of sexual misconduct by supervisors at the VA’s Office of Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion.

The House Veterans’ Affairs

Committee and the VA are conducting investigations of the alleged incidents.

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Marine Commandant Smith returns to full duty following heart attack

BY MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Gen. Eric Smith, commandant of the Marine Corps, returned to full duty Tuesday after suffering a heart attack in October, the service announced.

“Gen. Smith and his family appreciate the full support of Congress, the leadership at the Department of Defense, Depart-

ment of the Navy, the Joint Force and all who extended them their well wishes during his recovery,” the Marine Corps said in a statement.

Smith suffered cardiac arrest on Oct. 29 near his home at the



Smith

Marine Barracks in Washington and was hospitalized for 17 days. He underwent successful surgery on Jan. 8 to repair an aortic valve in his heart, which was the cause of his heart attack. The service said at the time of Smith’s surgery that he was in good condition and would return to full duty following rehabilitation.

The assistant commandant,

Gen. Christopher Mahoney, has been serving as the acting commander of the Marine Corps since Smith’s hospitalization.

At the time of his heart attack, Smith had been performing the duties of commandant and assistant commandant because Mahoney’s nomination was held up by Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala.

Tuberville had blocked hundreds of military promotions and

nominations for months due to his opposition to Pentagon policy paying for troops’ travel for abortions and other reproductive care. Under pressure from lawmakers, Tuberville ended his holds in December, allowing the Senate to confirm more than 435 nominations.

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MILITARY

Army completes \$250M housing effort in S. Korea

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

A new housing tower opened recently on Camp Walker, providing 90 additional units for households serving in Daegu, about 150 miles south of Seoul.

The tower, which includes 60 three-bedroom, 26 four-bedroom and four five-bedroom apartments, is the last of four built for Walker residents, the Army said in a Feb. 29 news release.

The first tower broke ground in 2015; the last in 2020, U.S. Army Garrison Daegu spokesman Phil Molter said by email Tuesday. All four towers cost nearly \$250 million to build.

Walker is part of U.S. Army Garrison Daegu, which includes camps George, Henry and Carroll. The base has a nine-hole golf course along with a commissary and post exchange.

"This fourth tower completes this phase of providing quality, modern

housing for service members and their families in Area IV/USAG Daegu," Molter said.

The apartments come with hardwood floors, laundry rooms and storage areas, according to the release. Five units on the first floor were built to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The towers represent the Army's "commitment and investment in soldier and family quality of life," Brig. Gen. Frederick Crist, head of the 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, said in the release.

Roughly 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea, most of them at Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, about 115 miles north of Walker.

Humphreys opened three family housing towers in 2022. That \$135 million project for 216 households had been in the works since 2017.

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RACHEL NAPOLITAN/U.S. Army

A new housing tower at Camp Walker, South Korea, includes 60 three-bedroom, 26 four-bedroom and four five-bedroom apartments.

Bases to phase out single-use plastic bags

BY KELLY AGEE
Stars and Stripes

U.S. military commissaries will begin phasing out plastic bags at checkout lanes starting March 15 with two stores on Guam, according to the Defense Commissary Agency.

DeCA intends to do away with single-use bags first in locations where state or local bans are already in place, including Hawaii and California, and then move to discontinue their use worldwide, agency spokesman Keith Desbois told Stars and Stripes by email Tuesday.

"We plan to implement a phased approach to eliminate single-use bags that takes into account our patrons' needs and logistical limitations," he wrote.

Andersen Air Force Base and Naval Base Guam will be the first of the 236 commissaries to discontinue their use, Desbois said.

Removing plastic bags from Guam brings DeCA into compliance with a local law that came into effect Jan. 1, 2021. The Guam Environmental Protection Agency enforces the ban on single-use plastic bags with a \$500 fine for the first offense; subsequent violations can cost up to \$10,000.

"The Defense Commissary Agency is committed to complying with applicable local and territorial laws restricting the use of plastic and paper single-use bags," Desbois wrote.

He said DeCA already has a "robust recycling program."

"We do recognize that with any change there are concerns and we will provide additional resources toward education and awareness to ease the transition," Desbois said.

Plastic bags that end up in landfills or the environment take more than 1,000 years to decompose and pose a risk to animals that encounter them, according to the United Nations Environment Program.

Bangladesh became the first country to ban single-use plastic bags back in 2002 and more than 100 nations have a full or partial ban on them, according to a May article in Euroneews.

Desbois said DeCA has yet to gauge reaction from commissary patrons on the change.

At Yokota Air Base, Japan, Tech. Sgt. Gabriel Yumol called the plastic bags at checkout lanes an expendable convenience.

"I get it; we're trying to save the environment," he said outside the store Feb. 29. "I'm OK because I can just grab one of my reusable bags. I have 100 of them in my house that I have never used."

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Army eyes upgrades at Barton Barracks in Bavaria

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — The U.S. Army will spend approximately \$250 million on a suite of improvements at the Ansbach garrison's Barton Barracks, which was once on the chopping block but now is seen as primed for expansion.

The plan calls for renovation of existing structures and construction of new ones to ease the transition of soldiers who arrived last year, Ansbach commander Col. Aaron Dixon said in late February at an annual event.

The 500 troops are from the 7th Engineer Brigade and 1st Battalion, 57th Air Defense Artillery Regiment. Barton Barracks is one of eight installations that make up the garrison, which has grown in importance since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Barton had been scheduled to close under a Pentagon base consolidation plan, but it received a reprieve in August 2021. The Army deemed it "optimal for future growth," Stars and Stripes reported at the time.



DANI JOHNSON/U.S. Army

Contractors erect an expeditionary dining facility for an influx of new troops on Barton Barracks in Ansbach, Germany, on Monday.

"We're making significant strides in infrastructure improvements, ensuring that our facilities meet the evolving needs of our personnel,"

Dixon said, according to a transcript of his remarks at the Evening with Friends.

Only \$4.8 million of the total has been awarded thus far and the majority of the work will be proposed over the next two fiscal years, base spokeswoman Gerlinde Hoyle said Monday. Renovations to a building for unaccompanied housing and two administration buildings are nearly complete.

The work at Barton will include modernization of administration buildings, construction of a new vehicle maintenance facility and two new housing barracks, as well as relocation of civilian services and remodeling of the base fitness center, Hoyle said.

Additional projects proposed for Ansbach include updated family housing, a pedestrian bridge over the B14 highway connecting the Bismarck and Katterbach installations, a community center at Urlas Kaserne and extensive renovations to Storck Barracks in Illesheim, Hoyle said.

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Aviano airman's child found dead at family's off-base home

Stars and Stripes

AVIANO, Italy — The child of an airman was found dead Tuesday morning at the family's off-base residence, according to Aviano Air Base officials and local Italian media.

The base acknowledged the death in a statement to Stars and Stripes on Wednesday but offered no details,

such as where the death occurred, the child's age or if emergency services were called.

Due to the age of the child, "the base school informed parents yesterday evening and discussed with students this morning," Capt. Rachel N. Salpietra, a spokeswoman for the 31st Fighter Wing, said in the statement. "Resources are availa-

ble both at the school and on base should anyone need assistance."

Aviano Middle High School principal Mustapha Kahlouch and Aviano Elementary School principal Andrew Gann informed parents of the death in separate but identical emails Tuesday evening.

"It is with deep sadness that we inform you that a student in the Aviano

community has passed away," the emails said. "We share in the sadness and shock that this tragedy has brought to our community."

The schools' crisis management team is available to provide support to students, staff and parents for as long as it is needed, DODEA spokeswoman Jessica Tackaberry said Wednesday.

MILITARY

US Marines lend littoral prowess to NATO drill

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Marines are bringing their expertise in littoral operations to the High North, where thousands of troops are practicing tactics that would come into play in a crisis, the service's top general in Europe said Wednesday.

The Marine Corps is leading Nordic Response, one of NATO's largest military drills this year. The two-week exercise, which began Sunday, involves 20,000 troops fanned out across Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The exercise will serve as a testing ground over the next two weeks as U.S. and allied forces tin-

ker with tactics so they can fight seamlessly against a "capable opponent," said Maj. Gen. Robert Sofge, commander of the Stuttgart-based Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa.

While Sofge did not single out Russia, Nordic Response is organized around defending allies from a potential attack from the east.

Various other exercises now unfolding in other parts of Europe, collectively referred to as NATO's Steadfast Defender series, also are focused on countering Russia.

U.S. Marines have a long history of operating in Norway and would be tasked with fighting alongside allies as a combined

force should northern Europe come under attack, Sofge said, adding that they "would work hard in the littoral regions."

Nordic Response involves 2,500 Marines and brings together alliance warships and fighter planes.

The II Marine Expeditionary Force is serving as the land component headquarters for Nordic Response, operating out of Bardufoss Air Station in Norway.

In addition to ground troops, the Marines also have dispatched



Sofge

fighter pilots, who will fly the fifth-generation F-35B Lightning II and F/A-18 Hornets.

"Nordic Response stresses that now is the time to get our systems connected ... to ensure we can sense and make sense in a complex battlefield in the harshest of conditions against a capable opponent," Sofge said.

Nordic Response has a new twist this year. Finland is taking part as a NATO member for the first time, having joined the alliance last year in the wake of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which prompted a reversal of decades of Finnish neutrality.

Sweden joined Finland's accession bid but was stonewalled for

two years by Turkey and Hungary. It is likely to be officially declared the alliance's 32nd member during the exercise. Sweden's flag could be raised at NATO headquarters in Brussels any day now, symbolizing the country's standing.

The additions will give NATO two experienced militaries that are well-trained for operating in harsh Arctic conditions, Sofge said.

"NATO was strong before and it's stronger now," he said. "It's better. ... That's what I think has practically changed."

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V Corps handover among Army general officer rotations, promotions

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The U.S. Army this week promoted dozens of general officers, bringing new leadership to numerous overseas and stateside commands.

Among the significant moves announced Monday, Maj. Gen. Charles Costanza, promotable to

lieutenant general, was named the next commander of the V Corps, which oversees soldiers operating up and down NATO's eastern flank in Europe.

Reactivated in 2020, the command operates out of Fort Knox, Ky., and at a forward location in the Polish city of Poznan, where the Army last year established its

first permanent garrison in the country.

Costanza, who most recently served as commander of the 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Ga., will replace current V Corps boss Lt. Gen. John Kolasheski, who has led the headquarters since it was relaunched.

In other Europe moves, Maj.

Gen. Andrew Gainey will depart the 56th Artillery Command at U.S. Army Europe-Africa headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany, to take command of the Vicenza, Italy-based Southern European Task Force-Africa.

Maj. Gen. John Rafferty Jr., the Army's chief of public affairs, will replace Gainey as the head of the

56th Artillery Command.

In the Pacific, Maj. Gen. Charles Lombardo was selected to serve as the commanding general of the 2nd Infantry Division (Combined), Eighth Army, in South Korea.

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MAR 24

10 A.M. – 3 P.M.

ADVANCED RESERVATIONS

Adult 31.⁹⁵

Child 15.⁹⁵ (6-12)

PRICE

Adult 35.⁹⁵

Child 17.⁹⁵ (6-12)

5 and under FREE

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MAY 12

10 A.M. – 3 P.M.

ADVANCED RESERVATIONS

Adult 31.⁹⁵

Child 15.⁹⁵ (6-12)

PRICE

Adult 35.⁹⁵

Child 17.⁹⁵ (6-12)

5 and under FREE

MAR 31

10 A.M. – 3 P.M.

ADVANCED RESERVATIONS

Adult 31.⁹⁵

Child 15.⁹⁵ (6-12)

PRICE

Adult 35.⁹⁵

Child 17.⁹⁵ (6-12)

5 and under FREE

TIME TO GET EGG-CITED

EASTER

SUNDAY BRUNCH

Hopping into Spring & Indulge in a Delicious Easter Brunch Extravaganza

FAMILY FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY EASTER BUNNY / FACE PAINTING & CRAFTS

EASTER EGG & CANDY SCAVENGER HUNT / GAMES & ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS

LIVE MUSIC / FIND THE GOLDEN EGG, WIN A PRIZE

A Very Special Holiday Brunch

Celebrating

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Best DAD I love you

JUN 16

10 A.M. – 3 P.M.

ADVANCED RESERVATIONS

Adult 31.⁹⁵

Child 15.⁹⁵ (6-12)

PRICE

Adult 35.⁹⁵

Child 17.⁹⁵ (6-12)

5 and under FREE



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MILITARY

Houthi attack on ship kills 2 in first fatality

By JON GAMBRELL AND TARA COPP
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A missile attack by Yemen’s Houthi rebels on a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden killed two of its crew members and forced survivors to abandon the vessel on Wednesday, authorities said, the first fatal strike in a campaign of assaults by the group over Israel’s war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The attack on the Barbados-flagged bulk carrier True Confidence further escalates the conflict on a crucial maritime route linking Asia and the Middle East to Europe that has disrupted global shipping.

The Iranian-backed Houthis have launched attacks since November, and the U.S. began an air-strike campaign in January that so far hasn’t halted the rebels’ attacks.

Meanwhile, Iran announced Wednesday that it would confiscate a \$50 million cargo of Kuwaiti crude oil for American energy firm Chevron Corp. aboard a tanker it seized nearly a year earlier.

It marks the latest twist in a yearslong shadow war playing out in the Middle East’s waterways even before the Houthi attacks began.

The attack Wednesday on the True Confidence came after it had been hailed over radio by individ-

uals claiming to be the Yemeni military, officials said. The Houthis have been hailing ships over the radio in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden since launching their attacks, with analysts suspecting the rebels want to seize the vessels.

Two U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity as they didn’t have authorization to speak publicly, said that the anti-ship ballistic missile attack killed two of the crew members on board and wounded six others.

The full extent of the damage to the Liberian-owned ship remained unclear, but the crew abandoned the ship and deployed lifeboats.

A U.S. warship and the Indian navy were on the scene, trying to assist in rescue efforts.

Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, a Houthi military spokesman, claimed the attack in a prerecorded message, saying its missile fire set the vessel ablaze. He said the rebels’ attacks would only stop when the “siege on the Palestinian people in Gaza is lifted.”

The rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea and surrounding waters over the Israel-Hamas war, but up to Wednesday hadn’t killed any crew members. The vessels have included at least one with cargo bound for Iran, the Houthis’ main benefactor, and an aid ship later bound for Houthi-controlled territory.



RAFAEL BRAMBILA-PELAYO/U.S. Marine Corps
U.S. Navy amphibious assault ship USS Bataan transits the Mediterranean Sea, on Feb. 25.

Marine unit and USS Bataan make way out of Mediterranean

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — The Bataan Amphibious Ready Group left the Mediterranean Sea this week after a nearly eight-month deployment that began with Iranian seizures of commercial ships and continued amid the Middle East’s expanding upheaval.

The amphibious assault ship USS Bataan, dock landing ship USS Carter Hall, amphibious transport dock ship USS Mesa Verde and embarked 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit transited the Strait of Gibraltar on Wednesday, Amphibious Squadron 8 announced the same day.

In the coming weeks, the ships will return to Norfolk, Va., according to the statement. The 26th MEU is based at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. The Bataan Amphibious Ready Group departed from Norfolk on July 10.

It was unclear whether the Navy intended to send another similar group or ship into the Mediterranean, which has had a nearly continuous presence of an aircraft

carrier or amphibious ready group since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The Bataan ARG had been in the region since December, helping to maintain a Navy presence in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of the U.S. strategy to keep the Israel-Hamas war from broadening.

In January, the USS Gerald R. Ford returned to Norfolk after an eight-month deployment to the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations, leaving the Bataan ARG on duty.

“Our presence in the eastern Mediterranean was exactly what our nation needed: an integrated Navy and Marine Corps force ready to respond when called upon,” Capt. Martin Robertson, commodore of Amphibious Squadron 8, said in the statement.

While in the Mediterranean, the Bataan ARG participated in several exercises and made multiple port calls, including at least four to Naval Support Activity Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete.

In August, Bataan and Carter

Hall, along with about 3,000 sailors and Marines, arrived in the Middle East as part of a Defense Department push to counter Iranian aggression in the Persian Gulf.

The assignment to the Middle East was prompted by Iran’s continued harassment of commercial ships and attempted seizure of two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman in July. In one of those instances, Iranian forces fired at the tanker.

Meanwhile, Mesa Verde, along with the embarked 26th MEU Bravo Command, operated in the NAVEUR-6th Fleet area of responsibility, taking part in exercises and other operations in the Baltic Sea.

That included a September port call in Riga, Latvia, and participation in a German-led naval exercise with other NATO nations and European Union countries the same month.

The three ships rejoined in December for duty in the Mediterranean.

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US forces participate in 2nd humanitarian airdrop in Gaza

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — American and Jordanian forces on Tuesday conducted a second humanitarian airdrop in northern Gaza as the U.S. considers providing more aid for the Palestinian enclave by sea, defense officials said.

Three U.S. C-130 Hercules cargo planes dropped more than 36,800 meals at about 2:30 p.m. local time, according to U.S. Central Command, which controls U.S. military operations in the Middle East.

“The United States is committed to pulling out every stop to get more aid to those in Gaza who desperately need it,” President Joe Biden said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

This comes after U.S. and Jordanian forces dropped some 38,000 meals in southwest Gaza on Saturday following Biden’s announcement that the U.S. would begin supplying food to starving Gazans after at least



CHRISTIAN SULLIVAN/U.S. Air Force
A U.S. Air Force Airman stands on the ramp of a C-130J Combat King II after airdropping humanitarian aid destined for Gaza on Tuesday.

115 Palestinians were killed and hundreds more wounded Thursday during an attack as they scrambled for aid, according to Gaza’s health ministry, which is run by Hamas militants. Palestinian officials claimed Is-

raeli soldiers opened fire on civilians.

Biden said last week that the U.S. was also looking at the possibility of a maritime corridor to deliver large amounts of aid into Gaza, a small swath of land along the Mediterranean Sea that borders Israel and Egypt.

“Our goal is clear, to establish a comprehensive aid strategy that includes air, land and sea routes to maximize the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza and ensure that aid is distributed to everyone in Gaza who needs it,” State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Monday.

He said the Biden administration was continuing to press Israeli officials to open another border crossing to send aid on the ground for the northern part of Gaza.

Sabrina Singh, the deputy Pentagon press secretary, said Monday that between 30 and 120 trucks carrying aid have been able to enter Gaza daily in the past week, and airdrops served as a supplemental ef-

fort to reach Palestinians.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed, D-R.I., and Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, sent a letter to Biden last week requesting he deploy a hospital ship to Gaza to provide more humanitarian aid. The senators also requested the U.S. work with Israel and Egypt to create maritime logistic routes and allow civilian access to aid.

“We are actively reviewing options for a maritime corridor for humanitarian assistance into Gaza, including potential commercial and contracted options,” Air Force Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon’s top spokesperson, told reporters Tuesday.

Ryder did not have details to provide on the senators’ request.

He also said, at this point, there are no plans to send U.S. forces into Gaza to bolster efforts to distribute aid.

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MIDEAST

Dilemma: Hamas in no hurry to reach a temporary cease-fire

FROM PAGE 1

him from power. But it seems inevitable that at some point a choice will have to be made between the hostages and military victory. Hamas, meanwhile, appears to be in no hurry to reach a temporary cease-fire ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins next week.

Hamas leader Yehya Sinwar, the alleged mastermind of the Oct. 7 attack against Israel, has reason to believe that as long as he holds the hostages, he can eventually end the war on his terms.

Sinwar's bloody gamble

In over two decades spent inside Israeli prisons, Sinwar reportedly learned fluent Hebrew and studied Israeli society, and he identified a chink in the armor of his militarily superior adversary.

He learned that Israel cannot tolerate its people, especially soldiers, being held captive, and will go to extraordinary lengths to bring them home. Sinwar himself was among over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners released in exchange for a single captive soldier in 2011.

For Sinwar, the mass killings on Oct. 7 might have been a horrific sideshow to the main operation, which was to drag large numbers of hostages into a vast labyrinth of tunnels beneath Gaza, where Israel would be unable to rescue them, and where they could serve as human shields for Hamas leaders.

Once that was accomplished, he had a powerful bargaining chip that could be traded for large numbers of Palestinian prisoners, including top leaders serving life sentences, and an end to the Israeli onslaught that Hamas had anticipated.

Israeli officials say the tunnels stretch for hundreds of miles and some are several stories underground, guarded by blast doors and booby traps. Even if Israel locates Hamas leaders, any operation would mean almost certain death for the hostages that likely surround them.

"The objectives are quite contradictory," said Amos Harel, a longtime military correspondent for Israel's Haaretz newspaper. "Of course, you can say it will take a year to defeat Hamas, and we're moving ahead on that, but the problem is that nobody can ensure that the hostages will remain alive."

Israel has successfully rescued three hostages since the start of the war, all of whom were above-ground. Israeli troops killed three hostages by mistake, and Hamas says several others were killed in airstrikes or failed rescue operations. More than 100 hostages were released in a cease-fire deal in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Netanyahu says military pres-

sure will eventually bring about the release of the roughly 100 hostages, and the remains of 30 others, still held by Hamas.

But in candid remarks in January, Gadi Eisenkot, Israel's former top general and a member of Netanyahu's War Cabinet, said anyone suggesting the remaining hostages could be freed without a cease-fire deal was spreading "illusions."

Endgame

Netanyahu's government is un-

der mounting pressure from families of the hostages, who fear time is running out, and the wider public, which views the return of captives as a sacred obligation.

President Joe Biden, Israel's most important ally, is at risk of losing re-election in November, in part because of Democratic divisions over the war.

The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza has sparked worldwide outrage. The war threatens to ignite other fronts across the Middle East.

There's a Hamas proposal on the table in which the hostages come back alive.

It calls for the phased release of all of the captives in return for Israel's gradual withdrawal from Gaza, a long-term cease-fire and reconstruction. Israel would also release hundreds of prisoners, including top Palestinian political leaders and militants convicted of killing civilians.

A rare wartime poll last year found rising support for Hamas, with over 40% of Palestinians in

the occupied West Bank and Gaza backing the group.

That support would only grow if Hamas succeeds in lifting the long-standing blockade on Gaza, said Tahani Mustafa, senior Palestine analyst at the Crisis Group, an international think tank.

"If this is able to bring some serious concessions that can make life just marginally better, then I think not only will this bolster support for Hamas," Tahani said, "but it could also bolster support for armed resistance more broadly."

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PACIFIC

US paratroopers battle humidity at Cobra Gold

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

LOPBURI, Thailand — Sweaty, tired and dehydrated, more than 100 U.S. paratroopers from Alaska sought refuge this week in what little shade they could find on nearly barren farmland in central Thailand.

An hour earlier, the paratroopers of the Army's 11th Airborne Division from Alaska and their Thai counterparts had jumped from a pair of U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemasters.

The airborne jump was part of Cobra Gold, the largest military exercise in mainland Southeast Asia and the longest-running exercise in the world.

Held annually since 1982, this year's drills brought 4,500 U.S. service members together with troops from host nation Thailand and 30 other countries, including Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea. The two-week exercise concludes Thursday.

Some of the U.S. troops made the jump after a 17-hour direct flight from Alaska. Others gathered earlier in the day at U-Tapau, about 250 miles south of the jump zone.

Spc. Ole Cruz, who flew in from U-Tapau, walked away from his landing with a rolled ankle but otherwise unscathed. During his descent, winds pushed him into a tree and then into a truck.

"It's not a common issue, but it happens every once in a while," he

told Stars and Stripes.

Those who flew directly from Alaska began their journey in single-digit, low-humidity sub-Arctic cold; they arrived in Thailand to nearly 100% humidity and temperatures close to 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

"We're highly suspecting heat injuries being the primary injury that we see out here — dehydration, heat exhaustion or just the lack of acclimatization," Staff Sgt. Klay Allen, a medic on the ground, said just before soldiers began jumping. "We've been here for a little over a week, and we're still sweating — it's just overly hot here for us."

Once on the ground, the troops gathered their parachutes and walked to their posts, in some instances a mile from their landing zone. After checking in with their command posts, they took positions and prepared for an M119A3 howitzer live-fire demonstration.

Some paratroopers reported immediately to medical tents to be treated for heat illnesses or minor injuries. Throughout the day, Thai military ambulances drove away with the serious cases.

Most soldiers, however, moved forward with the demonstration. Those assigned to fire the howitzer were routinely rotated out with others waiting in the shade of the few trees in the area.

Wherever they waited in the intense heat, they reminded one another to drink water.

"There's some risk mitigation



PHOTOS BY ALEX WILSON/Stars and Stripes

A Thai paratrooper prepares to land in central Thailand, on Tuesday, during the Cobra Gold exercise.



Thai paratroopers gather their chutes after landing in central Thailand during the Cobra Gold.



U.S. and Thai paratroopers jump from an Air Force C-17 Globemaster during Cobra Gold training.

ence.

"This exercise here helps us build more platoon readiness — making sure that our whole platoon and even our whole battery [is ready]," said Sgt. Stephen Suber, a howitzer gunner.

"It helps the battery really see how ready we are for whatever step the world takes next," he said. "I think this exercise really helps us see what we need to work on and what we can sustain."

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US F-35s make first visit to Brunei bordering South China Sea

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

U.S. Air Force stealth fighters made their first trip Friday to an oil-rich Southeast Asian sultanate that, like its neighbors, is at odds with Beijing over territory in the South China Sea.

"@usairforce lands a fighter aircraft in Brunei for the first time, sharing the F-35 Lightning II with the Royal Brunei Air Force," Pacific Air Forces posted Tuesday on X along with photos of two F-35s at Rimba Air Base.

Brunei, a Muslim-majority monarchy of around 460,000 bordering Malaysia on the island of Borneo, is one of several Association of Southeast Asian Nations members with claims to the South China Sea that overlap those of



ERIC SUMMERS/U.S. Air Force

An Air Force F-35 Lightning II out of Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, visits a base in Rimba, Brunei, on March 1.

China.

Brunei's exclusive economic zone, which extends 200 nautical miles from its coast, overlaps with Beijing's claim to almost the entire South China Sea.

The United Kingdom stations an infantry battalion of Gurkhas supported by Puma helicopters in

the country, according to the British army's official website.

The fifth-generation F-35As that visited Brunei are conventional takeoff and landing versions of the fighter from the Alaska-based 356th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, the U.S. Embassy in Brunei said Monday in a state-

ment posted on its website.

"The Pacific Air Forces unit is in Brunei for a familiarization with the aircraft and to build upon working relationships with the Royal Brunei Air Force," the statement said.

The Brunei air force commander, Brig. Gen. Dato Seri Pahlawan Mohd Sharif bin Dato Paduka Haji Ibrahim, met an F-35A crew and maintenance team, checked out an aircraft and learned about its capabilities, the statement said.

The fighter jets' arrival from Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, coincided with official visits by Jedidiah Royal, U.S. principal deputy assistant secretary of defense, and Maj. Gen. Mark Weber, Air National Guard assistant to the commander of PACAF, the state-

ment said.

The pair are meeting Bruneian officials on securities initiatives and marking the 40th anniversary of U.S.-Brunei diplomatic relations, the statement said.

Brunei could seek to purchase its own F-35s, Paul Buchanan, an American security expert based in New Zealand, said by email Monday.

"Brunei is a security partner tied into the [China] ring-fencing project, so keeping it on-side with shiny object purchases might be good value for dollar even if their actual military worth in the event of conflict may be a secondary consideration," he said.

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NATION

Biden, Trump not slowing; Haley ends run

BY NICHOLAS RICCARDI
AND BRIAN SLODYNSKO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The picture of the presidential race has hardly been cloudy for some time, even if it is one that most voters say they don't want to see.

On not-so-Super Tuesday, there were few surprises. It became ever clearer President Joe Biden was on a path to the Democratic nomination that only some kind of personal catastrophe could alter.

His White House predecessor, Donald Trump is headed to a third Republican nomination, and a rematch against Biden — if Trump can navigate the 91 criminal charges against him and avoid any other calamity. Trump's last major GOP challenger, Nikki Haley, suspended her campaign on Wednesday after being soundly defeated across the country on Super Tuesday.

Enthusiasm for Biden was not the story of Tuesday's contests, with some Democrats even voting "uncommitted" rather than for the incumbent. For Trump, there were cautionary signs even with his string of victories.

Some key takeaways from Super Tuesday:

Haley won her first state of the primary season, Vermont, but that was no cause to talk about momentum. The former U.N. ambassador and South Carolina governor continued her long streak of losing big



VASHA HUNT/AP

Judy Taylor, left, and Donna Foster, prepare signs for the Biden Harris campaign and Democratic U.S. Rep. Terry Sewell, during a primary election, Tuesday, at the Tuscaloosa County Ward 47 Bobby Miller Activity Center in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

to Trump in Republican primaries in every region of the country. Her lone other victory had come in last week's primary in the District of Columbia.

She fell short even in states like Virginia, where the electorate, rich in college-educated suburban voters, played to her strength. Soon came the announcement about her campaign suspension.

Haley didn't endorse Trump during her remarks Wednesday in Charleston, S.C. She challenged him to win the support of the moderate Republicans and independent voters who backed her.

What has been obvious for weeks, is now beyond reasonable

dispute: Biden and Trump are the overwhelming favorites to face each other in November.

They could not be more different in outlook but they seemed to be mirror images of each other during the primary season.

Trump wanted a coronation, but Haley made him fight at least somewhat to win the nomination. She held onto a stubborn chunk of voters, a possible indication that part of the GOP isn't as enthusiastic about Trump as expected.

Biden, on the other hand, faces a lack of Democratic enthusiasm on paper, but not in the primary. Polls show problems for him among some of his party's core de-



CHRIS CARLSON/AP

Republican presidential candidate former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley speaks during a news conference, Wednesday, in Charleston, S.C.

mographics, including younger and Black voters. But Biden, who hasn't faced any significant challengers, has won his primaries by huge margins.

The only possible sign of trouble for him Tuesday was an unusually high number of Democrats voting "uncommitted" in Minnesota in protest of the president's handling of the war in Gaza.

It may be that one or both of these two politicians is more hobbled than it appears — but nonetheless they are the only options.

North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson easily won the state's Republican gubernatorial primary. His incendiary rhetoric —

he's called Hillary Clinton a "heifer" and Michelle Obama a man — ensures a hotly contested general election in the crucial swing state that could spill over into the presidential race.

His brash style earned plaudits from Trump, who on Sunday called Robinson "better than Martin Luther King" while offering his "complete and total endorsement."

But it is also likely to motivate Democrats in the state to turn out in November to support state Attorney General Josh Stein — while raising oodles of advertising dollars to use Robinson's own words against him.

Rematch: Poll revealed most Americans don't think either option has mental acuity

FROM PAGE 1

previously unknown candidate Jason Palmer, 51 votes to 40.

Not enough states will have voted until later this month for Trump or Biden to formally become their parties' presumptive nominees. But the primary's biggest day made their rematch a near-certainty. Both the 81-year-old Biden and the 77-year-old Trump continue to dominate their parties despite facing questions about age and neither having broad popularity across the general electorate.

Haley watched the election results in private. Her campaign said in a statement that the results reflected there were many Republicans "who are expressing deep concerns about Donald Trump."

"Unity is not achieved by simply claiming 'we're united,'" spokesperson Olivia Perez-Cubas said.

Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate, meanwhile, was packed for a victory party. Among those attending were staff and supporters, including the rapper Forgiate Blow and

former North Carolina Rep. Madison Cawthorn. The crowd erupted as Fox News, playing on screens around the ballroom, announced that the former president had won North Carolina's GOP primary.

"They call it Super Tuesday for a reason," Trump told a raucous crowd.

He went on to attack Biden over the U.S.-Mexico border and the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. After beginning the night with victories in Virginia and North Carolina, he wrapped Super Tuesday by winning contests in Alaska and Utah.

Biden didn't give a speech but instead issued a statement warning that Tuesday's results had left Americans with a clear choice and touting his own accomplishments after beating Trump.

"If Donald Trump returns to the White House, all of this progress is at risk," Biden said. "He is driven by grievance and grift, focused on his own revenge and retribution, not the American people."

While much of the focus was on the presidential race, there were

also important down-ballot contests.

The governor's race took shape in North Carolina, where Republican Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson and Democratic Attorney General Josh Stein will face off in a state that both parties are fiercely contesting ahead of November.

In California, Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff and Republican Steve Garvey, a former Los Angeles Dodgers baseball player, advanced to the general election race to fill the Senate seat long held by Dianne Feinstein.

Despite Biden's and Trump's domination of their parties, polls make it clear that the broader electorate does not want this year's general election to be identical to the 2020 race.

A new AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll finds a majority of Americans don't think either Biden or Trump has the necessary mental acuity for the job.

"Both of them failed, in my opinion, to unify this country," said Brian Hadley, 66, of Raleigh, N.C.

Unknown Democrat beats Biden in American Samoa

BY CHRIS MEGERIAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden was sweeping every Democratic contest on Super Tuesday — except for American Samoa.

He fell short there to a previously unknown candidate named Jason Palmer. Out of 91 ballots cast in the territory's caucus, Palmer won 51 and Biden won 40, according to the local party.

"I found out that I had won because my phone started blowing up with friends and campaign staffers texting me," Palmer said in an interview late Tuesday.

Palmer, 52, said he never visited the territory before the caucus.

"I have been campaigning remotely, doing Zoom town halls, talking to people, listening to them about their concerns and what matters to them," he said.

The outcome will hardly derail Biden's march toward his party's nomination. Only six delegates were at stake in the U.S. territory, a tiny collection of islands in the South Pacific with fewer than

50,000 residents. Palmer and Biden each earned three delegates from the race.

On the day before the caucus,



Palmer

Palmer posted on X that "Washington D.C. is long overdue for a president who will be an advocate for American Samoa." His account includes

pictures of young people holding homemade campaign signs.

Palmer is a Baltimore resident who has worked for various businesses and nonprofits, often on issues involving technology and education. He said voters want "someone who is more of the 21st century than Joe Biden" to serve as president.

According to campaign finance records, Palmer has loaned his campaign more than \$500,000 of his own money.

"You can't take the money with you when you die," he said. "But you can change the world while you're here."

NATION

What to watch at Biden's State of the Union

By Chris Megerian
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The State of the Union speech is one of the biggest pieces of political theater every year. It's rooted in a simple requirement in the U.S. Constitution that directs the president to "give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." But in modern times, it's a televised extravaganza where every detail is carefully scrutinized.

Here's how to watch and what to look for during Thursday's address by President Joe Biden.

Where to find it

You can find the State of the Union on all major networks, which will be carrying it live. It will also be streamed online by the White House and The Associated Press. The speech starts at 9 p.m. ET.

Cast of characters

You might notice a new face behind Biden when he starts his speech. Rep. Mike Johnson of Louisiana became the House speaker in October after unhappy Republicans ousted Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California. Rep. Nancy Pelosi had the job before

McCarthy but lost it when Democrats failed to keep the majority in the 2022 midterm elections.

That makes Johnson the third House speaker to sit behind Biden during a State of the Union, reflecting the political instability in Washington and a challenging shift for Biden. House leadership has fallen further under the sway of the chamber's right flank, making it harder for the president to cut deals with the opposing party.

Biden's age

No president gets a free pass on the world's biggest stage, but Biden will be watched more carefully than most because of his age. At 81 years old, he's the oldest commander-in-chief in history, and he would be 86 at the end of a potential second term.

Donald Trump, Biden's Republican predecessor and likely opponent in this year's election, is 77. A majority of U.S. adults doubt either of them have the mental capabilities to serve as president, according to a new survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The State of the Union is a chance for Biden to dispel doubts about whether he's up for the job at an age when most Americans are retired. Any verbal slips or apparent confusion would provide



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP
President Joe Biden delivers his State of the Union speech at the Capitol in Washington, Feb. 7, 2023.

fodder for his opponents.

Policy agenda

Keep your ears open for any new policy proposals. The State of the Union is a chance for presidents to lay out their goals and rally Americans to support their plans.

For example, Biden used a previous speech to discuss his "unity agenda," which included expanded health care benefits for veterans.

The White House hasn't disclosed specific proposals that will be in this year's speech. But he could reference unfinished business from his first term, and he'll likely press for military assistance for Ukraine to reinforce American leadership overseas.

Special guests

There are more than just law-

makers and top officials in the chamber for the speech. Politicians bring guests to the gallery to put a face to whatever issue they want to highlight.

The most high-profile guests are invited by the White House, and often they're recognized during the president's speech. So far the White House has disclosed only one, Kate Cox, a Texas woman who was unable to get an abortion in her home state even though her health was in danger and her fetus had a fatal condition. Democrats are eager to demonstrate how the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade has limited reproductive rights.

Lawmakers will have their own guests too. Johnson and two New York representatives are bringing police officers whose brawl with migrants in Times Square caused a political uproar among Republi-

cans who have blamed Biden for loose border security. Rep. Elise Stefanik, another New York Republican, invited a Border Patrol officer who also serves as a union official.

Republican response

If you're not tired of politics when the State of the Union is over, stay tuned for more. The opposing party traditionally stages its own response to the speech. This year, Republicans chose Sen. Katie Britt of Alabama. At 41 years old, she's the youngest female senator and some party leaders hope she could be a rising star.

But whatever she says, everyone will be waiting to see if Trump has a response of his own. With Trump cruising toward his party's presidential nomination, his remarks would help frame the stakes of the election.

Alabama lawmakers advance legislation to protect IVF providers after embryo ruling

Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Alabama lawmakers facing public pressure to restart in vitro fertilization services in the state advanced legislation to shield providers from the fallout of a court ruling that equated frozen embryos to children.

Committees in the state Senate and House on Tuesday approved identical bills that would protect providers from lawsuits and criminal prosecution for the "damage or death of an embryo" during IVF services. The state's three major IVF providers paused services after the Alabama Supreme Court's ruling last month because of the sweeping liability concerns it raised.

Lawmakers are aiming to give final approval Wednesday and

send the legislation to Gov. Kay Ivey to be signed into law. They have fast-tracked the immunity legislation as a proposed solution to get clinics back open as they weigh whether additional action is needed.

The court ruled that three couples who had frozen embryos destroyed in an accident at a storage facility could pursue wrongful death lawsuits for their "extrauterine children." The ruling, treating an embryo the same as a child or gestating fetus under the wrongful death statute, raised concerns about civil liabilities for clinics.

The court decision received immediate backlash as groups across the country raised concerns about a ruling recognizing embryos as children. Patients in



MICHAEL WYKE/AP
A view inside one of the IVF Cryo One storage containers at the Aspire Houston Fertility Institute on Feb. 27, in Houston.

Alabama shared stories of upcoming embryo transfers being abruptly canceled and their paths to parenthood put in doubt.

Civil lawsuits could be pursued against manufacturers of IVF-related goods, such as the nutrient-rich solutions used to grow embryos, but damages would be capped and criminal prosecution would be forbidden.

Court rules 'stop woke' law in Florida unconstitutional

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — A Florida law pushed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis that limits diversity and race-based discussions in private workplaces is unconstitutional, a federal appeals court has ruled.

A three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Monday upheld a Florida federal judge's August 2022 ruling that the so-called "Stop WOKE" act violates the First Amendment as it applies to businesses and is impermissibly vague.

"By limiting its restrictions to a list of ideas designated as offensive, the Act targets speech based on its content. And by barring only speech that endorses any of those ideas, it penalizes certain viewpoints — the greatest First Amendment sin," Circuit Judge Britt C. Grant wrote for the court.

The governor's office was considering options for an appeal.

The law prohibits teaching or business practices that it says contend members of one ethnic group are inherently racist and should feel guilt for past actions committed by others.

It also bars the notion that a person's status as privileged or oppressed is necessarily determined by their race or gender, or that discrimination is acceptable to achieve diversity.

DeSantis frequently referred to the law during his unsuccessful run for president, with the slogan that Florida was where "woke goes to die."

Other parts of the law involving education have also been challenged but have not been blocked.

The lawsuit was filed by private entities claiming their free speech rights are curtailed.

NATION

Snowmobile-Black Hawk crash begets \$9.5M lawsuit

By MICHAEL CASEY
Associated Press

BOSTON — Jeff Smith was whizzing along on a snowmobile one evening a few years back when something dark appeared in front of him. He hit his brakes but he couldn't avoid clipping the rear tail of a Black Hawk helicopter parked on the trail.

The March 2019 crash almost cost Smith his life and is now the subject of a federal lawsuit by the Massachusetts lawyer. He is demanding \$9.5 million in damages from the government, money he says is needed to cover his medical expenses and lost wages, as well as hold the military responsible for the crash.

"The last five years, there's been surgery, recovery, surgery, recovery," said Smith, who lost the use of his left arm, suffered respiratory issues since the crash, and hasn't been able to work full time. "Honestly, right now, it feels like I'm in a [worse] place than when I first had the surgeries in 2019."

A U.S. District Court judge in Springfield is expected to rule on the lawsuit later this year.

Smith's lawyers in the yearslong court case argue that the crew of the Black Hawk helicopter that flew down from New York's Fort Drum for night training was negligent for parking a camouflaged 64-foot aircraft on a rarely used airfield also used by snowmobilers. Smith also sued the owner of Albert Farms airfield in Worthington, Mass. — accusing them of both giving permission to snowmobilers to use the trail and the Black Hawk crew to land in the same area. He settled with the farm owner for an undisclosed sum.

Smith, 48, argues that the crew didn't do enough to protect him, including failing to warn snowmobilers of the helicopter's presence on the trail, leaving the 14,500-pound aircraft unattended for a brief time and failing to illuminate it. The helicopter landed on an air strip approved by the Federal Aviation Administration and the crew members testified that trainings are often conducted in similar locations. But Smith, who said he had snowmobiled on the trail more than 100 times, said the last time an aircraft used it was decades ago—and never a military aircraft.



JEFFREY SMITH/AP

Jeffrey Smith poses with a snowmobile in March 2018, in Windsor, Mass. Smith has filed a lawsuit against the government to pay nearly \$10 million after he was injured in a crash in 2019 with a parked Black Hawk helicopter.

"Our argument from the beginning has been that it's incompatible to have a helicopter land on an active snowmobile trail," Smith's attorney, Douglas Desjardins, said.

The government has attempted to dismiss the case several times, arguing that it can't be sued under the Federal Tort Claims Act since this involves a policy decision. A spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney's office had no comment.

They also argued that the court lacked jurisdiction and that the crew

wasn't told that they were landing on a snowmobile trail. They also pushed back on claims they could have prevented the accident, saying there was nothing in their policies that required illuminating the helicopter. They also attempted to cast blame on Smith for the accident, claiming he was driving his sled more than 65 mph at the time the crash and that he had taken both prescription drugs and drank two beers before his ride.

In its investigation, the Army concluded the crew wasn't aware they were landing on a snowmobile trail in the crash. It also questioned whether glow stick-like devices known as chem lights would have made a difference.

1st criminal counts filed in smuggling of greenhouse gases

By MAXINE JOSELOW AND BRADY DENNIS
The Washington Post

The nation's southern border has long been a hot spot for illegal smuggling of drugs, weapons and migrants. But what about illicitly transporting greenhouse gases that cause climate change?

A California man was arrested Monday on charges of doing exactly that and is facing the first prosecution under a 2020 U.S. law aimed at phasing out some of the most potent greenhouse gases on the planet.

Federal prosecutors allege that Michael Hart, 58, of San Diego, purchased the gases in Mexico and transported them across the border in the back of his truck, concealed under a tarp and tools. He then allegedly sold them online, including on sites such as Facebook Marketplace and OfferUp.

The 2020 law cracked down on chemicals called hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, that are widely used in air conditioning and refrigeration. The chemicals are considered climate super-pollutants because they can be thousands of times more powerful than carbon dioxide in warming Earth's atmosphere.

According to an unsealed indictment, Hart "communicated with co-conspirators in Mexico to arrange for the purchase of HCFC-22" and other refrigerants, as well as with buyers in California.

The indictment describes how, between June 26 and Dec. 18 of 2022, Hart allegedly worked with others in Tijuana to obtain the refrigerants, transport them across the border and sell them to buyers in the United States. It lists numerous dates on which he allegedly imported or sold the refrigerants.

In response to an inquiry from a customer about the availability of certain refrigerants, Hart sent a message that said, "I can get 15 to 20

tanks per week," according to the indictment.

Hart pleaded not guilty to 13 charges, including conspiracy, during his first appearance in court Monday. The charges carry potential prison sentences ranging from five to 20 years.

A defense attorney representing Hart could not immediately be reached for comment on Tuesday.

"This is the first criminal case for illegal smuggling of HFCs. It won't be the last," David Uhlmann, who leads the Environmental Protection Agency's enforcement office, said in an interview Tuesday.

"We expect there to be many cases along the southern border," he said. "There may be cases along the northern border. And because we may not be able to intercept every illegal shipment, there may be cases in cities and towns across America, until we make it clear that we have a zero-tolerance policy."

Uhlmann added that the EPA would continue working with the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security to maintain an "active presence" at the border and at ports across the country.

Companies initially introduced HFCs as substitutes for chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, which wreaked havoc on the ozone layer and were phased out under a 1987 treaty known as the Montreal Protocol.

But while that effort helped to mitigate damage to the ozone later, HFCs have since become used widely around the world and are hundreds to thousands of times more potent in causing global warming than carbon dioxide.

In 2016, under an international agreement, countries vowed to phase down production and consumption of HFCs by 80 to 85% by the late 2040s.

Retired colonel pleads not guilty to sharing classified info

Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A former Air Force employee and retired Army lieutenant colonel pleaded not guilty Tuesday to charges that he shared classified information about Russia's war with Ukraine on a foreign dating site.

David Franklin Slater was in court in Omaha on Tuesday afternoon — three days after the 63-year-old was arrested. Slater, whose gray hair was closely cropped, briefly answered Magistrate Judge Michael Nelson's questions during the initial hearing.

The federal public defender who represented Slater at the hearing didn't comment about the case, but Nelson ordered Slater to hire his own attorney after reviewing financial information including details of several rental homes Slater owns in Nebraska along with a property in Germany.

The indictment against Slater gives examples of the messages he was responding to in early 2022 from an unindicted co-conspirator who claimed to be a woman living in Ukraine.

Some of the inquiries investiga-

tors found in emails and on the online messaging platform of the dating site were: "Dear, what is shown on the screens in the special room?? It is very interesting." Another one was: "Dave, I hope tomorrow NATO will prepare a very unpleasant 'surprise' for Putin! Will you tell me?"

The messages prosecutors cited in the indictment suggest Slater was sharing some information: "By the way, you were the first to tell me that NATO members are traveling by train and only now (already evening) this was announced on our

news. You are my secret informant love! How were your meetings? Successfully?"

Prosecutors said Slater shared information about military targets on March 28, 2022, and also gave out details about Russian military capabilities on April 13, 2022.

The indictment says that Slater shared classified information between February and April of 2022 while he was attending briefings about the war at the U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base. He worked there from August 2021 to April 2022 after retiring from the

Army at the end of 2020.

Nelson confirmed during the hearing that Slater no longer has any access to classified information, but prosecutors didn't share details of why his employment ended.

Nelson agreed to release Slater on Wednesday on the condition that he surrenders his passport and submits to GPS monitoring and restrictions to remain in Nebraska. He will also be allowed to use only a phone connected to the internet as long as authorities can monitor his activities on it.

EUROPE

Court seeks arrest of 2 Russians over attacks in Ukraine

By MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants Tuesday for two high-ranking Russian military officers on charges linked to attacks on civilian infrastructure in Ukraine that judges said happened “pursuant to a state policy.”

It’s only the second time the global court has publicly announced arrest warrants linked to Russia’s war in Ukraine. In March 2023, the court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine.

On Tuesday, the court announced warrants for Russian Lt. Gen. Sergei Ivanovich Kobylash, who was commander of the Long-Range Aviation of the Aerospace Force at the times of the alleged crimes. Also wanted is Russian Navy Adm. Viktor Nikolayevich Sokolov, who was the commander of the Black Sea Fleet.

They are wanted for the war crime of directing attacks at civilian objects, causing excessive incidental harm to civilians or damage to civilian objects, and the crime against humanity of inhumane acts.

“I have repeatedly emphasized that those responsible for actions that impact innocent civilians or protected objects must know that this conduct is bound by a set of

rules reflected in international humanitarian law,” ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan said in a statement. “All wars have rules. Those rules bind all without exception.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the warrants should serve as a warning to other Russian top brass.

“Every Russian commander who orders strikes against Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure must know that justice will be served. Every perpetrator of such crimes must know that they will be held accountable,” Zelenskyy wrote on X.

Ukrainian Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin welcomed the warrants, saying they were supported by evidence provided by Ukrainian agencies. He called them “another milestone in ensuring justice for all victims and survivors of this war.”

Kostin also applauded the crime against humanity charge, the first by the ICC in its Ukraine investigation. He said the crimes were “committed on a massive scale” far from the front lines and with no military justification.

■ The sound of a large explosion reverberated around the Ukrainian port of Odesa as Zelenskyy and Greece’s prime minister ended a tour of the war-ravaged southern city Wednesday. The Greek prime minister said the delegations were getting into their vehicles when they heard the blast.



MICHAL DYJUK/AP

Polish farmers protest

A police officer stops a protester by a burning coffin during a protest in Warsaw, Poland, on Wednesday. The protest ratchets up pressure on the government as they demand the Poland-Ukraine border closed to food imports and demand changes to European Union climate and agricultural policies. Participants at a farmers’ protest in Warsaw threw paving stones at police and tried to push through barriers around the parliament in the Polish capital, injuring several officers, police said.

Germany: Ukraine missile conversation leak was fluke, not breach in security

By KATE BRADY
The Washington Post

BERLIN — German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius confirmed that the leak by Russian state media of a phone call among senior German military officials was caused by “individual error.”

According to an ongoing investigation, the highly sensitive conference call about deploying German Taurus missiles to Ukraine was leaked because one participant dialed into the Webex call on an unsecure line from Singapore.

The officer had been attending the Singapore Airshow along with other high-ranking military officers from across Europe.

“Our communication systems were not compromised,” Pistorius told journalists in Berlin on Tuesday. “An event like this in this environment is understandably a find for the Russian secret services. And targeted wiretapping operations take place in the hotels used.”

“It must therefore be assumed that access to this conference was

a fluke as part of a broad, scattered approach,” he added.

The 38-minute recording in which Germany’s air force chief and three other officers are heard discussing sending long-range Taurus missiles to Ukraine was published Friday by Margarita Simonyan, editor in chief of Russian state-controlled broadcaster RT.

Whether the missiles could hit a key bridge over the Kerch Strait, which links Russia to the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula, was also discussed.

Russia, China working on moon nuke plant

Bloomberg News

The head of Russia’s space agency said it’s working on plans with China on ways to deliver and install a nuclear power plant on the moon by 2035.

“Today we are seriously considering the project,” Yury Borisov, general director of Roscosmos, said during a Tuesday lecture to students, according to the Interfax

news service.

Borisov said the power plant would need to be built by robots.

In 2021, Russia and China presented a road map for building a scientific station on the moon by the end of 2035. According to a Tass news service report, the plan for the project includes technical lunar rovers for research, a jumping robot and several smart mini-

rovers designed to explore the surface of Earth’s satellite.

Borisov also said Russia was against the deployment of nuclear weapons in space, echoing President Vladimir Putin who earlier denied US allegations about the Kremlin’s plans for such arms.

“Of course, space should be free of nuclear weapons,” Borisov said according to Interfax.

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WORLD

Asian leaders call for South China Sea issues to be resolved

Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Australia's prime minister expressed concerns Wednesday over "unsafe and destabilizing behavior" in the South China Sea, citing the collision between Chinese and Philippine ships the previous day.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's remarks came as his country wrapped up a three-day summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations that failed to explicitly call China out over a series of incidents in the disputed waters.

Instead, ASEAN leaders urged for disputes to be resolved through dialogue rather than threats, a day after Chinese and Philippine coast guard vessels collided near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea and four Filipino crew members were injured in the

confrontations.

Chinese and Philippines officials traded blame for the incident.

The disputed area has been site of several tense skirmishes between Chinese and Philippine coast guard ships last year.

Albanese, who co-chaired the summit with Laos Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, said Tuesday's clash was concerning for Australia.

"It is dangerous and it creates risks of miscalculation, which can then lead to escalation," he said.

Australia had backed the Philippines' push to have the ASEAN declaration adopted at the end of summit cite a 2016 arbitration ruling in The Hague, Netherlands, that invalidated Beijing's vast territorial claims in the South China Sea, which conflict with the claims



HAMISH BLAIR/AP

ASEAN Foreign Ministers react during a photo at Government House during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in Melbourne, Australia, on Wednesday.

of several ASEAN states. China did not accept the ruling.

The Melbourne Declaration, released late Wednesday, did not mention the 2016 ruling. The summit was held in the Australian city to mark 50 years since Australia became the first external ASEAN partner.

The declaration called for peaceful resolution of disputes through legal and diplomatic processes "without resorting to the threat or use of force" in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

"We encourage all countries to avoid any unilateral actions that endanger peace, security and stability in the region," it said.

Albanese said compromises had to be made to find words that ASEAN leaders at the summit could agree on.

"There is a general recognition that we need to make sure that activity in the South China Sea alleviates any tension and doesn't add to it," Albanese said.

South Korea president won't tolerate doc walkouts

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's president vowed Wednesday not to tolerate the prolonged walkouts by thousands of junior doctors, calling them "an illegal collective action" that threatens public health and shakes the country's governing systems.

President Yoon Suk Yeol's government was in the process of suspending the licenses of about 9,000 medical interns and residents over their joint walkouts that have impacted hospitals' capacity to provide care.

The doctors-in-training have been on strike for more than two weeks to protest a government push to admit thousands more new students to medical schools in coming years.

Yoon's government had repeatedly urged the striking doctors to return to work but most of the strikers missed a government-set Feb. 29 deadline for their return.

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Macy's takeover offer up to \$6.6B after rejection

NY NEW YORK — Arkhouse Management and Brigade Capital Management are upping their offer to acquire Macy's in a deal now valued at \$6.6 billion.

The investment firms announced Sunday that they had submitted an all-cash proposal of \$24 for each of the remaining shares in Macy's they don't already own — up from a earlier offer of \$21 per share.

Macy's rejected the previous deal, which was valued at \$5.8 billion, in January. At the time, the retailer said that its board reviewed the investment firms' proposal and not only had concerns about the financing plan, but also felt there was a "lack of compelling value."

In a joint-statement Sunday, Arkhouse managing partners Gavriel Kahane and Jonathon Blackwell said that they "remain frustrated by the delay tactics" from Macy's board and its "continued refusal to engage" — but were still committed to completing the transaction.

Small plane crashes on interstate median; 5 killed

TN NASHVILLE — A single-engine plane crashed near a highway in Nashville, Tenn., just a few miles short of the airport it had tried to reach for an emergency landing, killing five people aboard, authorities said.

The pilot made an emergency call to John C. Tune Airport at about 7:40 p.m. Monday, reported engine trouble and was given clearance to make an emergency landing, Metro Nashville Police Department spokesman Don Aaron said. A short time later the pilot radioed that the aircraft would not reach the airport, he said.

The plane burst into flames when it crashed in a grassy median just off Interstate 40 and behind a Costco on the city's west-side. The crash scene was about 3 miles south of the general aviation airport.

"It appears that everyone on board perished," Aaron said.

Over-the-counter birth control pill heads to stores

DC WASHINGTON — The first over-the-counter birth control pill will be available in U.S. stores later this month, allowing American women and teens to purchase contraceptive medication as easily as they buy aspirin.

Manufacturer Perrigo said Monday it has begun shipping the medication, Opill, to major retailers and pharmacies. A one-month supply will cost about \$20 and a three-month supply will cost around \$50, according to the company's suggested retail price. It will also be sold online.



JACOB BANTA/AP

Dashing through the snow — into work

In this photo provided by Sugar Bowl Resort, employee Devon Phillips points to the door of the marketing office covered to the top by snow at the resort in Norden, Calif., on Monday. A powerful blizzard dumped more than 10 feet of snow on the California ski resort, where the marketing team had to dig a tunnel to get to their office door. The storm closed highways and most lifts at ski resorts over the weekend.

The launch has been closely watched since July, when the Food and Drug Administration said the once-a-day Opill could be sold without a prescription. Ireland-based Perrigo noted there will be no age restrictions on sales, similar to other over-the-counter medications.

Opill is an older class of contraceptive, sometimes called minipills, that contain a single synthetic hormone, progestin, and generally carry fewer side effects than more popular combination estrogen and progestin pills.

Jupiter's moon Europa may have little oxygen

FL CAPE CANAVERAL — New research suggests there's less oxygen on the icy surface of Jupiter's moon Europa than thought — and that could affect what if any life might be lurking in the moon's underground ocean.

Even with little or no oxygen, microbes might still be bustling around in the ocean believed to exist miles beneath Europa's frozen crust. As for what else, "who knows," said NASA scientist Kevin Hand, who was not involved in the study published Monday in Nature Astronomy.

More work is needed to confirm these findings, which are contrary to earlier telescope observations of condensed oxygen in Europa's ice, indicating a higher oxygen

concentration, Hand said.

The new study is based on data collected by NASA's Juno spacecraft during a particularly close flyby of Europa in 2022 — a distance of just 219 miles.

Masked shooters kill 4, injure 3 at outdoor party

CA KING CITY — A group of men in masks opened fire at an outdoor party in central California, killing four people and injuring three others Sunday evening, police said.

Police responded to a reported shooting at about 6 p.m. in King City and found three men with gunshot wounds who were pronounced dead in a front yard, the King City Police Department said in a statement.

Four other people sustained gunshot wounds, including a woman who died after being transported to Mee Memorial Hospital in King City, about 106 miles south of San Jose.

Mayor calls LGBTQ+ leaders' arrest 'concerning'

PA PHILADELPHIA — The arrest of two of Philadelphia's LGBTQ+ leaders by a state trooper during a fraught highway traffic stop is "very concerning," the city's mayor said after a video showing some of what happened circulated on social media.

Celena Morrison leads the city's Office of LGBT Affairs and is a top aide to Mayor Cherelle Parker. Morrison's husband, Darius McLean, runs a community center. Both are Black, while the Pennsylvania state trooper appears to be white.

Both Morrison, 51, and McLean, 35, were detained on obstruction and resisting arrest charges after the 9 a.m. traffic stop.

However, District Attorney Larry Krasner did not immediately file the charges while he investigates.

In the cellphone video posted online, the trooper says he stopped Morrison for tailgating and not having lights on. McLean, chief operating officer of the William Way LGBT Community Center, apparently pulled over in a second vehicle and was arrested after allegedly arguing with the officer.

Ohio to dole out opioid settlement money

OH COLUMBUS — Ohio is ready to begin doling out millions of dollars in opioid settlement money to community and government organizations, an influx eagerly anticipated since the first sums were secured in 2021.

The OneOhio Recovery Foundation, who has been tasked with distributing over \$860 million of settlements reached with drug-makers and pharmaceutical com-

panies for their roles in the national opioid crisis, planned to release its formal request for proposals this week.

Drugmakers, wholesalers, pharmacies and other companies have agreed to settlements over the toll of opioids that are to pay state, local and Native American tribal governments more than \$50 billion. Under the agreements, most of the money is to be used to address the overdose epidemic.

Fans gather to say goodbye to Flaco the owl

NY NEW YORK — Dozens of mournful fans of Flaco the Eurasian eagle-owl gathered in New York City on Sunday to say goodbye to the beloved celebrity creature who became an inspiration and joy to many as he flew around Manhattan after someone let him out of his zoo enclosure.

A memorial featuring speeches, songs and poems was held in the late afternoon in Central Park at what organizers call Flaco's favorite oak tree.

Flaco was found dead on the Upper West Side on Feb. 23 after apparently hitting a building. Testing by zoologists concluded he suffered traumatic impact injuries, but more testing is planned to determine whether he may have been sick.

FACES

From home movie to Oscar nominee

Charming portrait of grandmothers up for best documentary short

By JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Sean Wang's two grandmothers live together. They read the newspaper together. They dance together. They sleep in the same bed and complain about each other's gas. The older of the two, Yi Yan Fuei, is 96. The younger, Chang Li Hua, is 86. They're in-laws but they act more like sisters.

When Wang, their 29-year-old grandson, was getting into filmmaking, one of the first he made was a short where Yi and Chang feed him blueberries. When Sean refuses, they kill him and bury him in the backyard.

Wang kept shooting them in their Bay Area, Calif., home, after he moved in with his mom during the pandemic. They got accustomed to his camera being around. But they never thought it would lead to the Academy Awards.

"Wài Pó and Nai Nai," Wang's deeply charming portrait of his grandmothers, is nominated for best documentary short at the Academy Awards. In it, Wang films Yi and Chang going about their daily lives with bits of playfulness mixed in. They arm wrestle. They play dress-up. They watch "Superbad." But mostly,

"Wài Pó and Nai Nai," which translates as maternal grandmother and paternal grandmother in Mandarin, captures the joy of two spirited ladies in older age.

"When you first asked us to be movie stars, we were like, 'This must be a joke,'" Chang says in an interview by Zoom alongside Yi, with Wang joining from Los Angeles. "But now that we made this movie and it's going to the Oscars, we do kind of feel like movie stars. Now that this whole experience has happened, we do feel a little prettier."

When Oscar nominations were announced Jan. 23, it wasn't Bradley Cooper's or Emma Stone's reactions that went viral. It was the celebration of Yi and Chang, with Wang, his mom and producer Sam Davis standing over them.

In the film, which is streaming on Disney+, Yi and Chang reflect on mortality and the essential things in life. "As long as I have the newspaper, I can live," says Yi in the film, with magnifying glass in hand. Now, they're in the news, themselves.

A prominent news story a few years ago partly inspired Wang to make the movie. During the pandemic, when Asian and Asian-American hate crimes were esca-

lating, he saw his grandmothers as a perfect antidote to the hateful stereotyping that followed COVID-19. At the same time, the short, which premiered last year at SXSW, was meant to essentially just be a simple home movie.

"That's kind of why we made this movie," Wang says. "It's just so we could have this recollection, this time capsule that captures the essence of these two women. Long after they've passed away, we can have some sort of memento to remember what their lives were like."

At the same time that "Wài Pó and Nai Nai" was landing its Oscar nomination, Wang's feature film directorial debut, "Didi," was a sensation at the Sundance Film Festival. "Didi," a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age comedy about a teenage Taiwanese American skater kid growing up in Los Angeles, won the U.S. Dramatic Audience Award and the special jury award for best ensemble cast — a cast that includes Chang as the mother-in-law.

"Surreal and bonkers," Wang says of the twin successes. "To have these spotlights on global platforms for these stories that come from such a deep personal place is bonkers."



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

From left: Yi Yan Fuei, Sean Wang and Zhang Li Hua pose together Feb. 12. Yi and Chang are the stars of "Wài Pó and Nai Nai."

'Sopranos' finale booth sells for \$82K

By WAYNE PARRY
Associated Press

The ice cream parlor booth where Tony Soprano may or may not have been whacked has sold for more than \$82,000.

An anonymous buyer bid \$82,600 Monday night in an online auction for the piece of memorabilia that occupies an outsize role in the lore of the award-winning HBO series — particularly because it was where the New Jersey mob boss was sitting when the series ended by cutting to black, outraging many viewers and claiming a place in TV history.

Ron Stark, co-owner of Holsten's, the northern New Jersey ice cream parlor, candy shop and restaurant where the scene was filmed, won't say a word about who bought it, including whether it was a man or a woman. (That whole code of silence thing.)

Anyway, the story starts with some broken legs — on the tables of the restaurant that opened in 1939, that is. Suffice it to say, things were trending downward.

"Our dining room was in kind of



WAYNE PARRY/AP

Ron Stark, co-owner of Holsten's, the Bloomfield N.J., ice cream parlor and restaurant where the final scene of "The Sopranos" TV series was filmed, sits March 5 at a re-creation of the booth where Tony Soprano may or may not have met his end. The day before, the original booth used in the show was sold in an online auction.

bad shape," Stark said. "It was getting to the point where we didn't think it was safe anymore."

Stark and his co-owner Chris Carley decided to auction off the booth and use the proceeds to pay for a renovation of the dining area.

Interest in the booth has remained high among fans of the show since the final scene aired in 2007. Tony Soprano, played by late actor James Gandolfini, orders a plate of onion rings and puts a coin in the jukebox to play Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" as his wife Carmella and son A.J. join him in the booth.

A guy walks past the table and enters the men's room. A bell rings to signal the entrance of someone walking into the restaurant — and the screen cuts to black, in the infamous ending that had countless viewers fiddling with their TV sets, thinking something had gone wrong.

The actual booth where the scene was filmed was detached on Monday and replaced by a re-creation the same day. On Tuesday, so many media outlets wanted to photograph Stark in the booth that customers had to sit elsewhere during the lunch rush.

Famous 'Pride and Prejudice' wet-shirt scene costume sold

Associated Press

What's arguably the most famous wet shirt in television history sold for 20,000 pounds (\$25,000) on Tuesday.

The white linen garment worn by Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy in the BBC's 1995 TV adaptation of "Pride and Prejudice" was the star item at an auction of film and television costumes. Firth's costume — including boots, moleskin breeches and velvet waistcoat — fetched double its top pre-sale estimate of 10,000 pounds (\$12,700) during a sale at Kerry Taylor Auctions.

The total price is 25,000 pounds (\$32,000) once an auction house fee known as the buyer's premium is added.

The scene in which Firth's brooding heartthrob emerges from a pond, startling soon-to-be true love Elizabeth Bennet (Jennifer Ehle), was once voted the U.K.'s most memorable television moment.

Other items among the 60 lots up for sale include a 1950s' Christian Dior taffeta ball gown worn by Madonna in the 1996 movie "Evita," which sold for 40,000



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AP

A handler arranges Colin Firth's 'wet-shirt' costume from the BBC's 1995 adaptation of "Pride and Prejudice" on Tuesday.

pounds (\$50,000), and Johnny Depp's costume for Ichabod Crane in "Sleepy Hollow," which fetched 24,000 pounds (\$30,000).

Proceeds from the auction will go to the Bright Foundation, an arts education charity.



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Jacqueline Smith

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OPINION

Liberal justices’ rage at ballot decision is incoherent

By JASON WILLOCK
The Washington Post

What, exactly, do the Supreme Court’s liberals want? The high court ruled 9-0 in Trump v. Anderson on Monday that states lack the power under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment to remove former President Donald Trump from ballots for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot. Yet a “concurrence” by the three Democratic-appointed justices lambastes the majority opinion in terms usually reserved for ideologically charged dissents.

Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson accuse the conservatives of deciding “novel constitutional questions to insulate this Court and petitioner” — that is, Trump — “from future controversy.” For daring to quote Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase’s 1869 opinion on the 14th Amendment clause at issue, the liberal justices accuse the majority of “musings ... as inadequately supported as they are gratuitous.”

Their venom is hard to understand except as an expression of the polarization that accompanies all things Trump. After all, *the liberal justices agreed on the outcome*: Colorado can’t use Section 3 — which bars officeholders who “engaged in insurrection” from future office — to exclude presidential candidates. That means Trump must appear on primary ballots and the 2024 presidential election, despite the wishes of some very confident law professors, must be decided by voters.

The liberals’ objection, at least in part, is apparently about what should come next in the event that voters elect Trump. Sotomayor, Kagan and Jackson seem to believe that federal courts might be able to consider Trump’s eligibility *again* in the election’s aftermath or even once he is president. Hence the liberal justices’ complaint that “the majority shuts the door

on other potential means of federal enforcement” of Section 3.

They’re vague on what this means. Perhaps they were moved by an amicus brief that said 14th Amendment challenges to an alleged insurrectionist’s eligibility are not “ripe” until “after Election Day.” If the liberal justices got their way, perhaps, a losing presidential candidate could sue before the inauguration to disqualify the election’s winner. Acts of a new administration might be challengeable under Section 3.

For the conservative justices, the way to enforce Section 3 is by convicting Trump of the crime of insurrection. The liberal justices seem to believe that shouldn’t be necessary. They would stop Colorado from pulling Trump’s name from ballots, but keep Section 3 disqualification hanging over his candidacy and, if there is one, his second administration.

Think about that for a second. The liberal justices say they ruled against Colorado to avoid “a chaotic state-by-state patchwork” in the presidential election. But they want to invite continuous post-election court challenges to “alleged insurrectionists” that would create just as much uncertainty and possibly “nullify the votes of millions,” as the majority puts it. As New York University law professor Rick Pildes noted, if a candidate for president “is going to be disqualified, the time to do that is before the election, not after he has taken office” — certainly if the goal is avoiding chaos!

The liberal justices refer to the Trump disqualification effort as “a sensitive case crying out for judicial restraint.” Yet they would keep alive the prospect of a judicially ordered replacement of a president-elect or president without congressional authorization. That’s an extraordinary role for the courts to play. Even if the concurrence’s vision is a constitutionally defensible interpretation of Section 3,

it hardly reflects a commitment to judicial restraint.

Indeed, the liberal justices’ reasoning leaves open the question of why they even joined the conservatives in ruling against Colorado. They point to “federalism principles,” which counsel against too much state variation in presidential elections. But the Supreme Court could have created uniformity, or tried to, by ruling that Trump is nationally disqualified as a constitutional matter — that Jan. 6 was an insurrection, that Trump engaged in it and that the 14th Amendment forecloses him from holding office. Not one justice went there.

Why? For one, such a ruling would appear illegitimate. And if it would appear illegitimate today, it would certainly appear illegitimate at a later period in the election process. If the courts are going to eliminate a presidential candidate, the public needs confidence that removal is not just based on judicial whim. Hence the majority’s insistence that disqualification follow a tailored process created by Congress.

The liberal justices couldn’t abide the majority opinion, which limits the avenues for disqualification lawsuits against Trump if he wins in November. But neither could they — given the best opportunity they are likely to receive — abide actually opining that the Capitol riot disqualifies Trump.

The campaign to remove Trump from the ballot was going to fail, whether on the liberals’ narrow grounds or the conservatives’ somewhat broader ones. But it seems to have succeeded at exacerbating ideological divisions on the Supreme Court for no good reason. Once again, Trump’s opponents prove as adept at weakening institutions as he is.

Jason Willock is a Washington Post columnist focusing on law, politics and foreign policy.

Soviets vanquished, but NATO still has vital missions

By ARTHUR I. CYR
Special to Stars and Stripes

The European Security Conference, held in Munich in February, highlighted trans-Atlantic cooperation in the face of Russia’s war on Ukraine. Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken addressed the gathering.

Harris underscored the growing importance of Africa, along with the U.S. commitment to world engagement. Also at center stage, Blinken demonstrated broad foreign policy expertise developed over years of government service. Both put to good use the opportunity to emphasize collegiality with allies.

The conference underlines the durability of NATO. The alliance was founded in 1949, to resist expansion of the Soviet Union.

An immediate impetus was Moscow’s 1948 blockade of West Berlin, which was located deep inside the Soviet occupation zone of divided Germany. More broadly, however, the comprehensive Cold War had already begun, reaching beyond divided Berlin in a divided Germany.

Originally envisioned as temporary, pending a comprehensive peace settlement after victory over Nazi Germany, the occupation zones became solidified and endured throughout the Cold War. The end of that conflict followed the people’s dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the reunification of Germany and finally the disintegration in 1991 of the Soviet Union.

Alliances involve tensions and conflicts, inevitably, as officials regularly point out. Recent Republican administrations have been relatively challenging. President Donald Trump was harshly, literally disruptive publicly in constantly vocally pressing Europeans to devote more to defense. President George W. Bush, and in particular Vice President Dick Cheney, pressed to expand NATO right up to Russia’s borders.

The alliance is fundamentally anomalous. An organization founded to oppose Soviet expansion saw that mission end successfully decades ago, yet continues to exist. Cold War victory has resulted in debate about best future roles, not abandonment of the alliance.

Terrorist killers on 9/11 triggered NATO for the first time to defend an ally under attack. French aircraft patrolled North American skies to free our own for attacks in Afghanistan, which became a NATO theater of operations. After 9/11, Munich themes expanded to include cooperation to fight terrorist groups.

The NATO alliance is a cornerstone initiative, dating from the early years of the Cold War, but there are also a range of economic institutions dating from the Marshall Plan of the same period. They include the European Union and such predecessor organizations as the Western Union and the Western European Union, along with the cornerstone European Economic Community. The industrialized nations were concentrated in the Atlantic region, and there were no comparable Asian initiatives immediately after World War II.

That situation has obviously changed dramatically. After 9/11, Japanese warships patrolled the Indian Ocean for the first time since 1945, as part of a collective response under U.N. auspices. The APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) organization is one relatively recent Asian initiative, and still defining a principal role.

NATO was vital to the Cold War victory, and reflects the importance of handling military challenges through alliance structures whenever possible, a basic lesson of World War II.

The Munich conference now possesses an extremely well-established foundation for the next policy moves by North American, European and other participants. In order to succeed, these efforts must transcend traditional regional security organizations.

Promising Asia developments in addition to APEC encompass current rapidly expanding Japan-South Korea security cooperation, growing Australia-India-Japan-United States defense cooperation (known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, QSD, or simply “the Quad”), reemphasis of commitment to defend Taiwan, and others.

NATO provides an example and positive influence for cooperation, but cannot realistically be completely duplicated in the vast Asia-Pacific region. Geography alone negates that. However, precedent can be instructive. As always, U.S. leadership is key.

Arthur I. Cyr is author of “After the Cold War – American Foreign Policy, Europe and Asia.”

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18				19			20	21				
			22					23				
24	25	26			27	28	29				30	31
32					33					34		
35			36	37						38		
		39					40	41				
42	43				44		45			46	47	48
49					50	51			52			
53					54				55			
56					57				58			

- ACROSS
- 1 Actor Connery

5 Wildebeest

8 Pre-weekend yell

12 Fashion magazine

13 Recede

14 Russo of "Ransom"

15 "Not so fast!"

16 Menlo Park monogram

17 Diminutive suffix

18 Mountain chain

20 Musket accessory

22 "Humbug!"

23 Sturgeon product

24 Jittery

27 Type of foam mattress

32 Astronaut

33 Pub pint

34 — Pérignon (French bubbly)

35 Promptly

38 Tournament passes

39 Fall from grace

40 Commotion

42 Harm

45 Sick in bed

49 Part of Q.E.D.

50 Saigon soup

52 Chorus syllables
- 53 Beige

54 Author Fleming

55 Mideast airline

56 Decomposes

57 Smoke, for short

58 Lairs
- 21 Curved line

24 Moody rock genre

25 Dapper fellow

26 Don Adams TV show

28 Day- — paint

29 Fare

30 Low digit

31 German river

36 Gap

37 Chang's brother

38 Seethed

41 Opposite of nyet

42 Antelope's playmate

43 Not pizzicato

44 Grand tale

46 Valley

47 — Bator

48 Buddies

51 Japanese "yes"

Answer to Previous Puzzle

W	A	S	P		F	A	B		S	W	A	B
A	C	A	I		A	P	O		A	A	R	E
I	L	L	G	E	T	B	Y		U	L	N	A
F	U	E	L	S				D	E	C	K	E
				E	T	A	S		R	E	O	
J	E	S	T		M	O	M	A		N	E	E
L	O	W		P	I	N	O	T		B	A	T
O	N	E		A	D	I	N		B	Y	T	E
			A	S	P		C	A	R	R		
S	T	R	I	P	S				M	I	L	A
O	H	S	O			S	T	A	N	D	S	B
B	A	B	U		T	E	X		G	A	B	E
S	T	Y	X		S	A	L		E	T	A	T

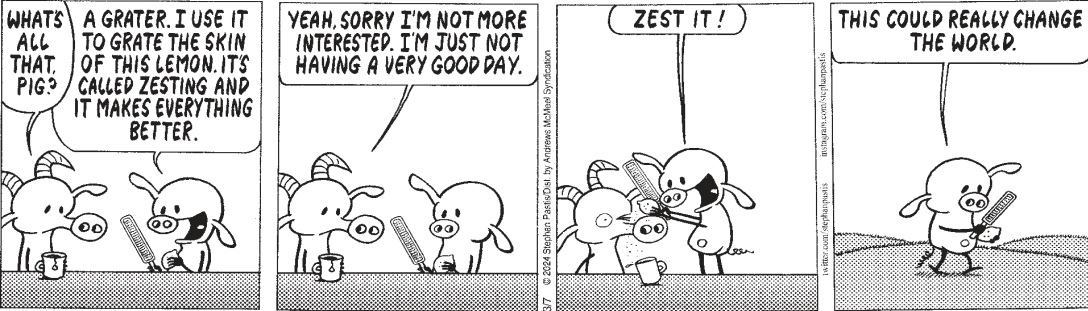
3-7 CRYPTOQUIP

BZM'V VCI VRDZHRJI SZNZ MR
ZCM VRDZMQXKW B XAZ C
LBRLA RN C SCMLQ. SRTBJ XM
HZ MXDZ-LRKVTDXKW?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN WORKERS
IN DELIS ARE MAKING HERO SANDWICHES,
I IMAGINE THEY REALLY MUST BE
SUB-CONSCIOUS.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals C

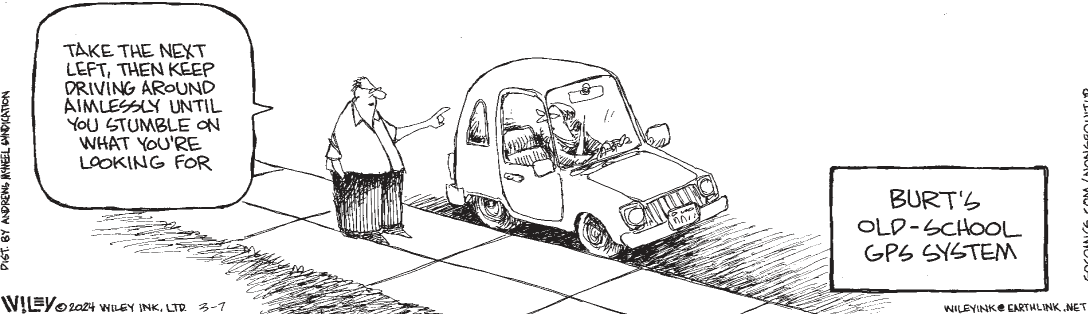
Frazz



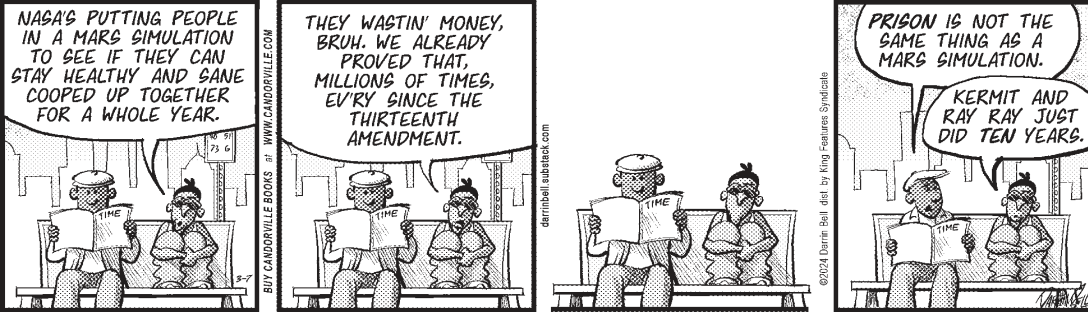
Pearls Before Swine



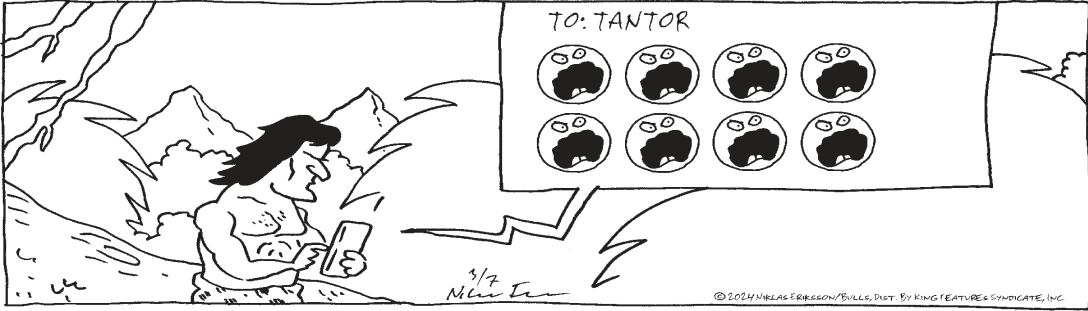
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



SCOREBOARD

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Tuesday's men's scores

EAST
Binghamton 72, UMBC 71
Bryant 83, Albany (NY) 79
Dartmouth 76, Harvard 69
Holy Cross 84, Army 68
Maine 71, Mass.-Lowell 65
Navy 64, Loyola (Md.) 48
Ohio 78, Buffalo 66
Pittsburgh 88, Florida St. 73
Providence 71, Georgetown 58
Vermont 68, New Hampshire 64

SOUTH
Austin Peay 101, North Florida 98, OT
Clemson 90, Syracuse 75
Coastal Carolina 75, Louisiana-Monroe 71

Duquesne 69, VCU 59
Florida 105, Alabama 87
Georgia 69, Mississippi 66
Georgia Tech 70, Wake Forest 69
Jacksonville 67, E. Kentucky 65
Middle Tennessee 69, Liberty 61
North Alabama 77, Lipscomb 75
North Carolina 84, Notre Dame 51
South Florida 85, Tulane 72
Stetson 83, Queens (NC) 71
Virginia Tech 80, Louisville 64

MIDWEST
Auburn 101, Missouri 74
Ball St. 76, Kent St. 69
Bowling Green 73, W. Michigan 65
Cent. Michigan 69, N. Illinois 63
Cleveland St. 85, IUPUI 66
Dayton 100, Saint Louis 83
E. Michigan 61, Akron 60
Fort Wayne 78, Robert Morris 63
Kansas 90, Kansas St. 68
Milwaukee 83, Detroit 79
Purdue 77, Illinois 71
St. John's 104, DePaul 77
Toledo 97, Miami (Ohio) 63

SOUTHWEST
Oklahoma 74, Cincinnati 71, OT
Texas St. 92, Old Dominion 83, OT
Texas Tech 75, Oklahoma St. 58

FAR WEST
Nevada 76, Boise St. 66
UNLV 62, San Diego St. 58
Wyoming 74, Air Force 63

Men's AP Top 25 schedule

Thursday's games
No. 6 Arizona (23-6) at UCLA (14-15)
No. 19 Washington St. (23-7) vs. Washington (16-14)

Friday's games
No. 20 San Diego St. (22-7) vs. Boise St. (21-8)
No. 21 Dayton (22-6) vs. VCU (19-10)

Saturday's games
No. 1 Houston (26-3) vs. No. 7 Kansas (21-8)
No. 3 UConn (26-3) at Providence (18-11)
No. 4 Tennessee (23-6) vs. No. 16 Kentucky (21-8)
No. 5 Marquette (22-7) at Xavier (15-14)
No. 6 Arizona (23-6) at Southern Cal (12-17)
No. 8 Iowa St. (23-6) at Kansas St. (17-12)
No. 9 North Carolina (23-6) at No. 10 Duke (23-6)
No. 11 Auburn (22-7) vs. Georgia (15-14)
No. 12 Creighton (22-8) at Villanova (17-12)
No. 14 Alabama (20-9) vs. Arkansas (14-15)
No. 15 Baylor (21-8) at Texas Tech (20-9)
No. 18 South Carolina (24-5) at Mississippi (19-10)
No. 22 Utah St. (24-5) vs. New Mexico (21-8)
No. 24 Florida (20-9) at Vanderbilt (8-21)
No. 25 South Florida (22-5) at Tulsa (15-14)

Tuesday's women's scores

EAST
Harvard 75, Dartmouth 48

DEALS

Tuesday's transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League
NEW YORK YANKEES — Reassigned INFs Jeter Downs and Caleb Durbin and OFs Spencer Jones and Brandon Lockridge to the minor league camp.
TEXAS RANGERS — Optioned 3B Dustin Harris to Round Rock (PCL)
National League
COLORADO ROCKIES — Agreed to terms with RHPs Angel Chivilli, Noah Davis, Ryan Feltner, Gavin Hollowell, Justin Lawrence, Nick Mears, Juan Mejia, Anthony Molina, Riley Pint and Victor Vodnik, LHP Evan Justice, INFs Adael Amador, Warming Bernabel, Julio Carreras, Elehuris Montero, Ezequiel Tovar, OFs Sean Bouchard, Brenton Doyle, Yanqueli Fernandez and Nolan Jones, INF/OFs Hunter Goodman and Michael Toggia on one-year contracts.
MIAMI MARLINS — Optioned RHP Darren McCaughan to Jacksonville (IL).
ST. LOUIS CARDINALS — Reassigned RHPs Andre Granillo, Tink Hence, Max Rajcic, Victor Santos and Logan Sawyer, LHP Packy Naughton, Cs Leonardo Bernal, Sammy Hernandez and Carlos Linarez and OF Moises Gomez to the minor league camp.
SAN DIEGO PADRES — Agreed to terms with INF/OF Brad Miller on a minor league contract.

BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
BROOKLYN NETS — Recalled F Noah Clowney from the Long Island Nets of the G League.
LOS ANGELES LAKERS — Assigned G Ja-len Hood-Schifino and F Maxwell Lewis to the South Bay Lakers of the G League.
NEW YORK KNICKS — Signed G Shake Milton to a rest-of-season contract.

SOUTH
East Carolina 71, Charlotte 66
Tulsa 61, Tulane 56
Wichita St. 68, UAB 65

SOUTHWEST
North Texas 78, Memphis 66
South Florida 68, SMU 61, OT
UTSA 60, Rice 52

FAR WEST
Colorado St. 64, Boise St. 50
Nevada 82, San Jose St. 65
New Mexico 72, Fresno St. 58
San Diego St. 58, Wyoming 55
UNLV 104, Utah St. 44

Women's conference tournaments

Atlantic 10 Conference
At Glen Allen, Va.
First Round
Wednesday, March 6
La Salle vs. UMass
Dayton vs. St. Bonaventure

Second Round
Thursday, March 7
Loyola Chicago vs. Fordham
Duquesne vs. La Salle-UMass winner
Saint Louis vs. George Washington
Rhode Island vs. Dayton-St. Bonaven-ture winner

Quarterfinals
Friday, March 8
Richmond vs. Loyola Chicago-Fordham winner
George Mason vs. TBD
VCU vs. Saint Louis-George Washington winner

Atlantic Coast Conference
At Greensboro, N.C.
First Round
Wednesday, March 6
Clemson vs. Boston College
Georgia Tech vs. Pittsburgh
Virginia vs. Wake Forest

Second Round
Thursday, March 7
Louisville vs. Clemson-Boston College winner

North Carolina vs. Miami
Duke vs. Georgia Tech-Pittsburgh win-ner
Florida St. vs. Virginia-Wake Forest win-ner

Quarterfinals
Friday, March 8
Notre Dame vs. TBD
Virginia Tech vs. North Carolina-Miami winner
NC State vs. TBD
Syracuse vs. TBD

Atlantic Sun Conference
At Higher-Seeded Schools
First Round
Friday, March 8
Jacksonville vs. Bellarmine Knights
Austin Peay vs. Kennesaw St.

Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 9
Lipscomb vs. E. Kentucky
Florida Gulf Coast vs. Jacksonville-Bel-larmine Knights winner
Stetson vs. Austin Peay-Kennesaw St. winner
Cent. Arkansas vs. North Alabama

Big 12 Conference
At Kansas City, Mo.
First Round
Thursday, March 7
Texas Tech vs. Houston
Cincinnati vs. UCF

Second Round
Friday, March 8
Baylor vs. Texas Tech-Houston winner
Oklahoma St. vs. TCU
Kansas vs. BYU
West Virginia vs. Cincinnati-UCF winner

Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 9

DEALS

FOOTBALL
National Football League
BALTIMORE RAVENS — Placed DT Justin Madubuike under a non-exclusive fran-chise tag.
CAROLINA PANTHERS — . Released TE Hayden Hurst.
CHICAGO BEARS — Placed OLB Brian Burns under a non-exclusive franchise tag
Named Karen B. Murphy executive vice president of stadium development and chief operating officer.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Placed DB Jay-lon Johnson under a non-exclusive fran-chise tag.
DETROIT LIONS — Resigned CB Emma-nuel Moseley to a one-year contract.
HOUSTON TEXANS — Signed TE Dalton Schultz to a three-year contract.
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS — Placed WR Mi-chael Pittman Jr. under a non-exclusive franchise tag. Signed C Jack Anderson to a contract extension.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Released CB Darius Williams, DT Folorunso Fatukasi and S Rayshawn Jenkins. Placed OLB Josh Allen under a non-exclusive franchise tag.
LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Released LB Eric Kendricks.
MIAMI DOLPHINS — Released CB Keion Crossen and LB Jerome Baker. Signed DT Isaiah Mack.
MINNESOTA VIKINGS — Re-signed TE Nick Muse.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Placed S Kyle Dugger under a non-exclusive fran-chise tag.
NEW YORK JETS — Released TE C.J. Uzo-mah.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Released Ss Ja-mal Adams and Quandre Diggs and TE Will Dissly.
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Placed S Antoine Winfield Jr. under a non-exclusive franchise tag. Signed WR Devin Thomp-kins and OL Brandon Walton to one-year

Iowa St. vs. TBD
Oklahoma vs. Oklahoma St.-TCU winner
Texas vs. Kansas-BYU winner
Kansas St. vs. TBD

Big East Conference
At Uncasville, Conn.
First Round
Friday, March 8
Butler vs. Providence
Seton Hall vs. DePaul
Georgetown vs. Xavier

Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 9
UConn vs. Butler-Providence winner
Villanova vs. Marquette
Creighton vs. Seton Hall-DePaul winner
St. John's vs. Georgetown-Xavier winner

Big South Conference
At High Point, N.C.
First Round
Wednesday, March 6
Gardner-Webb vs. UNC-Asheville

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 7
High Point vs. Gardner-Webb-UNC-Ash-eyville winner
Charleston Southern vs. Presbyterian
SC-Upstate vs. Longwood
Radford vs. Winthrop

Big Ten Conference
At Minneapolis, Minn.
First Round
Wednesday, March 6
Purdue vs. Northwestern
Minnesota vs. Rutgers

Second Round
Thursday, March 7
Maryland vs. Illinois
Nebraska vs. Purdue-Northwestern winner

Penn St. vs. Wisconsin
Michigan vs. Minnesota-Rutgers winner

Quarterfinals
Friday, March 8
Ohio St. vs. Maryland-Illinois winner
Michigan St. vs. TBD
Iowa vs. Penn St.-Wisconsin winner
Indiana vs. TBD

Horizon League Conference
At Higher-Seeded Schools
First Round
Tuesday, March 5
Detroit 59, Robert Morris 48
Youngstown St. 73, IUPUI 50
N. Kentucky, 70, Oakland 62

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 7
Wright St. vs. Milwaukee
Green Bay vs. Youngstown St.
Cleveland St. vs. N. Kentucky
Fort Wayne vs. Detroit

Ohio Valley Conference
At Evansville, Ind.
First Round
Wednesday, March 6
Morehead St. vs. Tennessee St.
Tennessee Tech vs. W. Illinois

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 7
E. Illinois vs. Morehead St.-Tennessee St. winner
UT Martin vs. Tennessee Tech-W. Illinois winner

Pac-12 Conference
At Las Vegas, Nev.
First Round
Wednesday, March 6
Colorado vs. Oregon
California vs. Washington St.
Arizona vs. Washington
Utah vs. Arizona St.

Quarterfinals
Thursday, March 7
Oregon St. vs. Colorado-Oregon winner
Stanford vs. California-Washington St. winner

Southern Cal vs. Arizona-Washington winner
UCLA vs. Utah-Arizona St. winner

DEALS

contracts.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League
ANAHEIM DUCKS — Assigned G Alex Sta-lock to San Diego (AHL).
BOSTON BRUINS — Returned C Marc McLaughlin to Providence (AHL) on loan.
CALGARY FLAMES — Claimed D Joel Han-ley off waivers from Dallas.
CAROLINA HURRICANES — Placed LW Max Comtois on waivers.
COLORADO AVALANCHE — Signed F Ivan Ivan to a two-year contract.
EDMONTON OILERS — Placed C Sam Gagner on waivers.
LOS ANGELES KINGS — Loaned G Aaron Dell to Ontario (AHL).
MINNESOTA WILDS — Placed Cs Jake Lucchini and Vinni Lettieri on waivers. Signed D Zach Bogosian to a two-year con-tract extension.
MONTREAL CANADIENS — Activated LW Rafael Harvey-Pinard from injured re-serve.
NEW YORK ISLANDERS — Reinstated RW Hudson Fasching to the active roster from long-term injured reserve.
NEW YORK RANGERS — Assigned RW Alex Belzile to Hartford (AHL).
OTTAWA SENATORS — Recalled C Rourke Chartier from Belleville (AHL) loan.
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Promoted C Joona Koppanen from Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL).
VANCOUVER CANUCKS — Reinstated D Carson Soucy from the long-term injured list. Placed D Guillaume Brisebois on waiv-ers for the purpose of assignment to Ab-botsford (AHL).
VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS — Acquired RW Anthony Mantha from Washington for a 2024 2nd round pick and 2026 4th round pick.
WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Claimed RW Matthew Phillips off waivers from Pitts-

Southeastern Conference
At Higher-Seeded Schools
First Round
Wednesday, March 6
Kentucky vs. Georgia
Florida vs. Missouri

Second Round
Thursday, March 7
Mississippi St. vs. Texas A&M
Tennessee vs. Kentucky-Georgia winner
Auburn vs. Arkansas
Vanderbilt vs. Florida-Missouri winner

Quarterfinals
Friday, March 8
South Carolina vs. Mississippi St.-Texas A&M-winner
Alabama vs. TBD
LSU vs. Auburn-Arkansas winner
Mississippi vs. TBD

Southern Conference
At Asheville, N.C.
First Round
Thursday, March 7
Chattanooga vs. W. Carolina
UNC-Greensboro vs. Furman
Wofford vs. Samford
Mercer vs. ETSU

Semifinals
Friday, March 8
Chattanooga-W. Carolina winner vs. Mercer-ETSU winner
UNC-Greensboro-Furman winner vs. Wofford-Samford winner

Summit League Conference
At Sioux Falls, S.D.
First Round
Friday, March 8
UMKC vs. Omaha

Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 9
N. Dakota St. vs. Denver
S. Dakota St. vs. UMKC-Omaha winner

Sunday, March 10
Oral Roberts vs. North Dakota
South Dakota vs. St. Thomas

Semifinals
Monday, March 11
N. Dakota St.-Denver winner vs. Oral Ro-berts-North Dakota winner
TBD vs. South Dakota-St. Thomas win-ner

Sun Belt Conference
At Pensacola, Fla.
First Round
Tuesday, March 5
Georgia Southern 72, Texas St. 70
Coastal Carolina 79, South Alabama 60

Second Round
Wednesday, March 6
Georgia St. vs. Appalachian St.
Louisiana-Monroe vs. Georgia Southern
Southern Miss. vs. Coastal Carolina
Louisiana-Lafayette vs. Arkansas St.

Quarterfinals
Friday, March 8
Marshall vs. Georgia St.-Appalachian St. winner

Old Dominion vs. TBD
James Madison vs. TBD
Troy vs. Louisiana-Lafayette-Arkansas St. winner

West Coast Conference
At Las Vegas, Nev.
First Round
Thursday, March 7
San Diego vs. Pepperdine

Second Round
Friday, March 8
Pacific vs. San Diego-Pepperdine winner
Saint Mary's (Cal.) vs. Loyola Mary-mout

Quarterfinals
Saturday, March 9
San Francisco vs. TBD
Portland vs. Saint Mary's (Cal.)-Loyola Marymount winner

Semifinals
Monday, March 11
Gonzaga vs. TBD
Santa Clara vs. TBD

PRO HOCKEY

PWHL										
	GP	W	L	OW	OL	Pts	GF	GA		
Montreal	14	6	2	3	3	27	35	30		
Minnesota	16	6	4	3	3	27	35	32		
Toronto	14	6	5	3	0	24	37	33		
Boston	13	4	5	2	2	18	29	33		
Ottawa	15	4	6	0	5	17	37	43		
New York	14	2	6	4	2	16	30	32		

Teams awarded three (3) points for a regulation win, two (2) points for an over-time or shootout win, one (1) point for an overtime or shootout loss, and zero (0) points for a regulation time loss.

Sunday, March 3
Minnesota 2, New York 0

Tuesday's game
Minnesota 4, Ottawa 3, Minnesota wins 4-3 in shootout

Wednesday's games
Montreal at New York
Boston at Toronto

Friday's game
Montreal at Toronto

PRO SOCCER

MLS										
EASTERN CONFERENCE										
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA				
Inter Miami CF	2	0	1	7	8	1				
D.C. United	1	0	1	4	5	3				
CF Montréal	1	0	1	4	2	1				
Charlotte FC	1	0	1	4	2	1				
Columbus	1	0	1	4	2	1				
Cincinnati	1	0	1	4	2	1				
New York	1	0	1	4	2	1				
Toronto FC	1	0	1	4	1	0				
Philadelphia	0	0	2	2	3	3				
Nashville	0	0	2	2	1	1				
Chicago	0	1	1	1	3	4				
Orlando City	0	1	1	1	0	5				
Atlanta	0	1	0	0	0	1				
New England	0	2	0	0	1	4				
NYCFC	0	2	0	0	0	3				

WESTERN CONFERENCE										
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA				
Portland	1	0	1	4	6	3				
LA Galaxy	1	0	1	4	4	2				
St Louis City	1	0	1	4	3	1				
Real Salt Lake	1	1	1	4	4	3				
Minnesota	1	0	1	4	3	2				
FC Dallas	1	1	0	3	3	3				
LAFC	1	1	0	3	2	4				
Sporting KC	0	0	2	2	2	2				
Vancouver	0	0	1	1	1	1				
Houston	0	1	1	1	2	3				
Austin FC	0	1	1	1	1	2				
Seattle	0	1	1	1	1	2				
Colorado	0	1	1	1	2	5				
San Jose	0	2	0	0	2	5				

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday, March 2
Columbus 1, Minnesota 1, tie
Real Salt Lake 3, Los Angeles FC 0
Miami 5, Orlando City 0
Charlotte FC 1, Vancouver 1, tie
Cincinnati 2, Chicago 1
CF Montréal 2, FC Dallas 1
New York 2, Houston 1
Philadelphia 1, Sporting Kansas City 1, tie

St Louis City 2, New York City FC 0
Nashville 1, Colorado 1, tie
D.C. United 2, Portland 2, tie
LA Galaxy 3, San Jose 1
Austin FC 0, Seattle 0, tie

Sunday, March 3
Toronto FC 1, New England 0

Saturday's games
Portland at New York City FC
Charlotte FC at Toronto FC
New England at Atlanta
Chicago at Columbus
FC Dallas at New York
Minnesota at Orlando City
Seattle at Philadelphia
St Louis City at Austin FC
Colorado at Real Salt Lake
Sporting Kansas City at Los Angeles FC
Vancouver at San Jose

NFL/MLB

Spend big or start pinching pennies?

Last year's free-agent frenzy offers hope, caution for teams planning to tap market

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

Teams are set to dole out billions in NFL free-agent contracts in the coming weeks as teams around the league hope that bold moves in March will pay off with wins on the field once the season starts.

But in a league with a sharp aging curve and specific systems that don't suit all players, those dollars spent don't guarantee success.

According to the Spotrac website, NFL teams handed out more than \$3.3 billion in contracts last offseason with nearly half of that money fully guaranteed at signing.

The biggest spenders were far from the biggest winners in the season as signing expensive free agents is typically not the best way to turn around a team.

The six biggest spenders last offseason all missed the postseason, led by Denver committing more than \$250 million in contracts only to miss the playoffs for the eighth straight season after going 8-9 in coach Sean Payton's first season.

Other big spenders such as New Orleans, Atlanta, Chicago, Las Vegas and Carolina also were back home when the playoffs started, while a team such as the Los Angeles Rams got into the postseason after spending only \$10.2 million in free agency.

Green Bay, Baltimore and Dallas were among the other teams that spent less than \$50 million in free agency last offseason and got into the playoffs.

Here's a look at some of the best signings from a year ago, as well as some big misses:

Free-agent bargains

QB Baker Mayfield, Tampa Bay: The Buccaneers viewed last season as a chance to reset the roster after going all-in during Tom Brady's three-year run. Tampa Bay took on more than \$80 million in dead money and went cheap at QB, signing Mayfield to a one-year, \$4 million deal. Mayfield delivered with a career-high 28 TD passes to lead the Bucs to a division title and a playoff win. He earned about \$2.85 million in incentives but was still a bargain.

DE Jadeveon Clowney, Baltimore: The Ravens became the latest team to give Clowney a one-year, prove-it deal when they signed the 2014 No. 1 overall pick in August. Clowney earned just over \$4 million for his one season with incentives after matching his career high with 9½ sacks for the NFL's stingiest defense.

LB Drue Tranquill, Kansas City: The Chiefs added depth at linebacker when they made a low-profile move of signing Tranquill to a one-year, \$3 million deal. He was a key part of a defense that helped carry Kansas City to a Super Bowl title with 4½ sacks and 78 tackles in the regular season and 21 more tackles during the playoff run.

TE Dalton Schultz, Houston: The Texans were looking for a veteran pass catcher to help rookie QB C.J. Stroud and found one in Schultz. Houston signed him to a one-year, \$6.25 million deal and got 59 catches for 635 yards and five TDs in the regular season and another TD in the playoffs from Schultz.

G Isaac Seumalo, Pittsburgh: The Steelers went into last offseason looking to bolster the offensive line and did a good job with the addition of Seumalo,



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Quarterback Baker Mayfield had a turnaround season with Tampa Bay after signing a one-year contract for a bargain-basement price of \$4 million. He guided the Buccaneers to a division title and a playoff win.

who signed a three-year, \$24 million deal. Seumalo allowed no sacks in the season and was the 10th-rated guard in the NFL, according to Pro Football Focus.

Free-agent busts

QB Jimmy Garoppolo, Las Vegas: The Raiders needed a replacement after moving on from Derek Carr and hoped that Garoppolo would be a good fit with his former OC Josh McDaniels as head coach in Las Vegas. But Garoppolo missed much of the offseason recovering from foot surgery after signing a three-year, \$72.75 million contract. He struggled once he got on the field, throwing nine INTs in six starts before being benched. His suspension for performance-enhancing drugs will get the Raiders out of \$11.25 million in guaran-

teed money for the upcoming season.

QB Derek Carr, New Orleans: The Saints' deal for Carr didn't work out a whole lot better for New Orleans. Carr signed a \$150 million, four-year deal with the hopes of leading the Saints to the playoffs in the NFL's weakest division. New Orleans couldn't take advantage as Carr got off to a shaky start to the season and narrowly missed the playoffs.

RT Mike McGlinchey, Denver: The Broncos gave the second-biggest deal in free agency when they signed him to a five-year, \$87.5 million deal. But the same issues that led to San Francisco moving on from its 2018 first-round pick were still evident in Denver. McGlinchey struggled at times in pass protection with his 49 pressures allowed ranking sixth most among all

tackles last season, according to PFF.

WR Allen Lazard, New York Jets: The Jets brought in one of Aaron Rodgers' receivers from Green Bay in hopes that the familiarity would lead to success in New York. But Rodgers lasted only one series and Lazard never lived up to the four-year, \$44 million deal he signed. Lazard had just 23 catches for 311 yards and one TD with just four catches in the final nine games of the season.

WR JuJu Smith-Schuster, New England: The Patriots let Jakobi Meyers leave for Las Vegas in free agency and signed Smith-Schuster to a slightly cheaper deal instead. While Meyers had his third straight season with at least 800 yards, Smith-Schuster had just 29 catches for 260 yards and one TD after signing a three-year, \$27 million deal.

Three big pitchers in question for opening day

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

The news hit one after the other on Tuesday: Three big-name starting pitchers all dealing with injuries that could cause them to miss the beginning of the regular season — and potentially more.

Houston's Justin Verlander, St. Louis' Sonny Gray and Boston's Lucas Giolito are all ailing at spring training.

Verlander will start the season on the injured list after being slowed by inflammation in his pitching shoulder during the off-season. Gray has a hamstring strain sustained Monday. And Giolito reported discomfort in his pitching elbow following last week's start in which he was roughed up.



Verlander



Gray

"We're obviously concerned. Not a good day for us," Boston manager Alex Cora told reporters in Florida.

Verlander is the biggest name of the three, although his situation appears to be more of a delay than a long-term concern. Astros manager Joe Espada said Tuesday the 41-year-old Verlander hasn't suffered any setbacks or soreness following bullpen sessions but needs more time to become game ready.

The three-time Cy Young Award winner is expected to throw in the bullpen again on Friday but has yet to face hitters. A delay to the start of the season could jeopardize his conditional \$35 million option for 2025.

Giolito will have additional exams to determine the severity of his injury, but there's worry it could be a long-term issue.

Giolito signed a \$38.5 million, two-year deal with the Red Sox this offseason. The 29-year-old right-hander is coming off a 2023 season in which he gave up 41 home runs and had a 4.88 ERA for the White Sox, Angels and Guardians.

Gray may be the one of the three that has a chance to make it back for opening day, which he was

slated to start against the Los Angeles Dodgers on March 28.

Gray left his start Monday against Washington after 20 pitches. The Cardinals initially said Gray had tightness in his hamstring, and an MRI revealed the strain.

Following their poorest season since 1995, the Cardinals gave Gray a \$75 million, three-year contract in November to anchor a revamped rotation. Because the strain is mild, all parties are holding out hope Gray can make it back by the opener.

It's not only important right-handers who might not be ready for opening day. Miami lefty Braxton Garrett is behind schedule after dealing with shoulder discomfort early in camp.

Skenes to start in minors

The Pittsburgh Pirates are taking their time with top pitching prospect Paul Skenes.

General manager Ben Cherington said the No. 1 overall pick in last year's draft will begin the season in the minors.

Cherington said there are still boxes the Pirates want Skenes to check before calling him up. Skenes pitched just 6⅔ innings in the minors last summer after being selected by Pittsburgh. The 21-year-old has been impressive in two Grapefruit League appearances, allowing one run on three hits and three strikeouts so far this spring training.

Skenes will remain in major league camp to gain experience.

ROUNDUP

Stars rally from 3 down, win in OT

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Wyatt Johnston had his first career hat trick and the Dallas Stars rallied from three goals down in the third period to beat the San Jose Sharks 7-6 on Roope Hintz’s overtime goal on Tuesday night.

Hintz came off the bench following a long stretch for Dallas in the offensive zone, took a pass from Logan Stankoven in the slot and beat Kaapo Kahkonen.

“A lot of ups and downs,” Johnston said. “Obviously wasn’t a whole lot of fun when we were losing. But it’s a lot of fun when you can come back in a game like that and finish it off.”

Johnston had a five-point night with two assists, Stankoven had two goals and two assists, and Jamie Benn had a goal and three assists to get Dallas off to a good start on a three-game California swing.

“Obviously it’s not the way we wanted to play tonight,” Stankoven said. “You never want to give up six goals, but it’s nice to pop a few in there and I’m just trying to do whatever I can to contribute.”

Anthony Duclair had his third two-goal game since the All-Star break and added two assists to lead the Sharks, who are winless in their last eight games.

Fabian Zetterlund, Ryan Carpenter, Filip Zadina and Mikael Granlund also scored for San Jose. Kahkonen made 33 saves.

The Sharks opened a 6-3 lead early in the third period when Duclair set up Granlund for a goal and seemed to be on the way to an easy win.

But Dallas’ young stars took over with Johnston and Stankoven combining for three goals in a span of less than three minutes to tie the game on Johnston’s third goal with 4:18 remaining.

Stankoven started the frenzy with his second goal, giving the rookie five in six career games.

Oilers 2, Bruins 1 (OT): Leon Draisaitl scored 2:18 into overtime for his second goal of the game, and visiting Edmonton beat Boston for its fifth consecutive victory.

Draisaitl also tied it at 1 with his 31st goal of the season with 1:20 left in the third. He ended the game with a one-timer off a crossing pass from Connor McDavid.

Edmonton limited Boston to five shots in the third period and none in overtime.

Stuart Skinner made 25 saves for the Oilers, and Evan Bouchard had two assists. McDavid also had two assists, extending his point streak to 12 straight games.

The Bruins left the ice to another round of boos after falling to 19-7-6 at home.

Pavel Zacha scored for Boston



Nic Courty/AP

Dallas Stars center Wyatt Johnston is congratulated by teammates after scoring during the second period of Tuesday’s game against the Sharks in San Jose, Calif. Johnston had a hat trick in the game.

4:26 into the third period. Bruins goaltender Linus Ullmark stopped 24 shots.

Canucks 2, Kings 1 (OT): J.T. Miller scored on a power play 1:36 into overtime, and visiting Vancouver beat Los Angeles.

Miller scored from the right faceoff circle on a slap shot for his 31st of the season. Vancouver earned its second straight win and remained on top of the Western Conference.

Elias Pettersson, who signed an eight-year extension with the Canucks on Saturday, scored in the second period. He became the seventh player in franchise history to record at least 30 goals in three straight seasons. Thatcher Demko stopped 23 shots and picked up his NHL-leading 32nd win.

Trevor Moore scored for Los Angeles, and Cam Talbot made 29 saves.

Canadiens 4, Predators 3 (OT): Nick Suzuki scored at 17 seconds of overtime to lead visiting Montreal to the victory over Nashville.

Brendan Gallagher, David Savard and Joshua Roy also scored and Jake Allen made 25 saves for the Canadiens, who snapped a two-game losing streak.

Ryan O’Reilly scored a goal and assisted on two others, Filip Forsberg and Gustav Nyquist each had a goal and an assist and Juuse Saros made 26 saves for Nashville. The Predators had their eight-game winning streak snapped.

Kraken 4, Jets 3: Andre Burakovsky scored a power-play goal with 2:39 remaining in the third period to lift visiting Seattle to a victory over Winnipeg.

Jets forward Mason Appleton had just blocked a shot, but Burakovsky got the puck and fired it over goalie Connor Hellebuyck’s glove.

Jared McCann had a goal and two assists and Justin Schultz and Tomas Tatar also scored for the Kraken.

Joey Daccord made 30 saves for Seattle.

Kyle Connor, Adam Lowry and Nino Niederreiter scored for the Jets. Hellebuyck stopped 20 shots.

Panthers 5, Devils 3: Nick Cousins had two goals and visiting Florida beat New Jersey for its sixth straight win, spoiling the debut of interim coach Travis Green.

Eetu Luostarinen, Evan Rodrigues and Sam Reinhart also scored as the Panthers won for the 12th time in 13 games. Florida leads the NHL with 43 wins and 90 points, and it is 25-4-2 since Dec. 23.

Anthony Stolarz made 22 saves for Florida.

Jack Hughes, Timo Meier and Colin Miller scored for the Devils in their first game since general manager Tom Fitzgerald relieved Lindy Ruff of his coaching duties on Monday. New Jersey goaltender Akira Schmid made 26 saves.

Penguins 5, Blue Jackets 3: Jeff Carter and Reilly Smith scored just over a minute apart midway through the third period and host Pittsburgh beat Columbus to snap a three-game losing streak.

The Blue Jackets had tied it earlier in the period on a short-handed goal by Jack Roslovic before Carter and Smith beat rookie goaltender Jet Greaves to give the Penguins some breathing room.

Evgeni Malkin, Rickard Rakell and Jesse Puljujarvi also scored for Pittsburgh. Johnny Gaudreau and Andrew Peeke also had goals for the Blue Jackets.

The Penguins are 10-0-1 in their last 11 games against Columbus.

Islanders 4, Blues 2: Bo Horvat scored the go-ahead goal early in the third period and host New York won its fourth straight game, topping St. Louis.

Kyle Palmieri, Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Mathew Barzal also scored for the Islanders who moved within four points of the Philadelphia Flyers for the third spot in the Metropolitan Division, which would guarantee them a spot in the playoffs.

Ilya Sorokin finished with 19 saves.

Alexey Toropchenko and Jordan Kyrou scored for the Blues, who had won their last two games. Rookie goaltender Joel Hofer made 29 saves.

Blackhawks 5, Coyotes 2: Nick Foligno scored one of his team’s four power-play goals, and Chicago ended a 22-game road losing streak with a win over Arizona.

Chicago, the NHL’s worst team on the power play, went 4-for-5 with the man advantage for its first road win since Nov. 9 at Tampa Bay.

Seth Jones had two goals for the Blackhawks, including an empty-netter with 28 seconds remaining. Arvid Soderblom stopped 37 shots.

Jason Dickinson and Philipp Kurashev also scored for Chicago, which had dropped seven in a row.

Nick Bjugstad and Michael Carcone scored for Arizona, and Connor Ingram had 27 saves.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference								
Atlantic Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Florida	63	43	16	4	90	211	150	
Boston	64	36	13	15	87	213	177	
Toronto	61	35	18	8	78	225	194	
Detroit	61	33	22	6	72	216	195	
Tampa Bay	63	33	24	6	72	214	213	
Buffalo	62	29	29	4	62	183	187	
Montreal	62	24	28	10	58	177	222	
Ottawa	59	25	31	3	53	195	212	
Metropolitan Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
N.Y. Rangers	62	40	18	4	84	206	172	
Carolina	61	36	19	6	78	201	172	
Philadelphia	63	32	23	8	72	190	186	
N.Y. Islanders	61	27	20	14	68	184	203	
Washington	60	28	23	9	65	160	193	
Pittsburgh	60	28	24	8	64	179	169	
New Jersey	62	30	28	4	64	205	219	
Columbus	62	21	31	10	52	187	228	
Western Conference								
Central Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Dallas	64	38	17	9	85	232	196	
Winnipeg	61	39	17	5	83	190	148	
Colorado	63	38	20	5	81	232	194	
Nashville	63	35	25	3	73	202	194	
St. Louis	62	32	27	3	67	178	191	
Minnesota	62	29	27	6	64	194	208	
Arizona	62	25	32	5	55	182	206	
Chicago	63	16	42	5	37	130	225	
Pacific Division								
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Vancouver	64	40	17	7	87	226	177	
Edmonton	60	38	20	2	78	214	173	
Los Angeles	61	31	19	11	73	189	164	
Vegas	62	33	22	7	73	201	185	
Seattle	62	28	23	11	67	174	176	
Calgary	61	30	26	5	65	191	191	
Anaheim	61	22	36	3	47	162	216	
San Jose	61	15	39	7	37	135	242	
Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.								
Tuesday's games								
Pittsburgh 5, Columbus 3 Florida 5, New Jersey 3 N.Y. Islanders 4, St. Louis 2 Edmonton 2, Boston 1, OT Seattle 4, Winnipeg 3 Montreal 4, Nashville 3, OT Chicago 5, Arizona 2 Vancouver 2, Los Angeles 1, OT Dallas 7, San Jose 6, OT								
Wednesday's games								
Buffalo at Toronto Detroit at Colorado Ottawa at Anaheim								
Thursday's games								
Calgary at Tampa Bay Edmonton at Columbus Montreal at Carolina Philadelphia at Florida St. Louis at New Jersey Toronto at Boston Washington at Pittsburgh Buffalo at Nashville Minnesota at Arizona Vancouver at Vegas N.Y. Islanders at San Jose Ottawa at Los Angeles								
Friday's games								
Detroit at Arizona Minnesota at Colorado Dallas at Anaheim Winnipeg at Seattle								
Saturday's games								
Carolina at New Jersey Edmonton at Buffalo Nashville at Columbus Pittsburgh at Boston Calgary at Florida Chicago at Washington Ottawa at San Jose Philadelphia at Tampa Bay Toronto at Montreal St. Louis at N.Y. Rangers Detroit at Vegas Winnipeg at Vancouver Dallas at Los Angeles								
Scoring leaders								
Through Tuesday								
	GP	G	A	Pts				
Nikita Kucherov, TB	62	38	67	105				
Nathan MacKinnon, COL	63	39	66	105				
Connor McDavid, EDM	58	23	76	99				
David Pastrnak, BOS	64	38	52	90				
Artemi Panarin, NYR	62	35	50	85				
J.T. Miller, VAN	64	31	53	84				
William Nylander, TOR	61	33	50	83				
Leon Draisaitl, EDM	60	32	48	80				

TENNIS/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Slam champ Halep wins appeal on doping case

By GRAHAM DUNBAR
Associated Press

GENEVA — Two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep was cleared for an immediate return to tennis on Tuesday after sports’ highest court accepted she was not entirely at fault for her positive doping test at the 2022 U.S. Open.

On court, the former top-ranked Halep beat Serena Williams in the Wimbledon final of 2019, one year after winning the French Open.



In court, Halep has a legal victory that ends a four-year ban in a case that threatened to be just as career-defining had the verdict gone against her.

Instead, the Court of Arbitration for Sport lifted the allegation of suspected doping cheat from the 32-year-old Romanian whose career has been on hold for more than a year.

Three CAS judges ruled Halep had “on the balance of probabilities” showed her positive test for a banned blood-boosting substance was unintentional and caused by a contaminated supplement.

Halep’s four-year ban was cut to just nine months and, applied retroactively, expired last July.

“I cannot wait to return to the tour,” Halep said in a statement released by her lawyer, Howard Jacobs, who noted she now has a lawsuit against the supplement maker.

She hailed her win against “scandalous accusations” aimed at her and what she called the “seemingly unlimited resources” of tennis authorities which prosecuted her.

The International Tennis Integrity Agency which banned her last year asked CAS to impose an even longer and likely career-ending sanction of up to six years.

Agency chief executive Karen Moorhouse said in a statement they respected the CAS result and the right of athletes to appeal in anti-doping cases.

The CAS judges also awarded Halep \$22,650 toward her legal fees from the ITIA.

Halep has not played since the 2022 U.S. Open, where she tested positive for the banned blood-booster roxadustat. It can help produce more of the natural hormone erythropoietin, or EPO, which has long been a doping product favored by endurance athletes.



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST/AP

Purdue’s Zach Edey, center, and Braden Smith vie for a rebound with Illinois’ Ty Rodgers during the first half Tuesday in Champaign, Ill.

Conference tournaments

Atlantic Sun Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Monday, March 4 Jacksonville 92, Kennesaw St. 86 Queens (NC) 69, Florida Gulf Coast 63 Quarterfinals Tuesday, March 5 Jacksonville 67, E. Kentucky 65 Stetson 83, Queens (NC) 71 Austin Peay 101, North Florida 98, OT North Alabama 77, Lipscomb 75 Semifinals Thursday, March 7 Jacksonville at Stetson North Alabama at Austin Peay Big South Conference At High Point, N.C. First Round Wednesday, March 6 SC-Upstate vs. Radford Quarterfinals Friday, March 8 High Point vs. SC-Upstate-Radford winner Winthrop vs. Longwood UNC-Asheville vs. Charleston Southern Gardner-Webb vs. Presbyterian Coastal Athletic Conference At Washington, D.C. First Round Friday, March 8 NC A&T vs. William & Mary Elon vs. Hampton Second Round Saturday, March 9 Monmouth (NJ) vs. Campbell Towson vs. NC A&T-William & Mary winner Stony Brook vs. Northeastern Delaware vs. Elon-Hampton Horizon League Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Tuesday, March 5 Cleveland St. 85, IUPUI 66 Fort Wayne 78, Robert Morris 63 Milwaukee 83, Detroit 79 Quarterfinals Thursday, March 7 Youngstown St. vs. Cleveland St. Oakland vs. Fort Wayne Wright St. vs. N. Kentucky Green Bay vs. Milwaukee Missouri Valley Conference At St. Louis First Round Thursday, March 7 Murray St. vs. Missouri St. Belmont vs. Valparaiso Illinois St. vs. Evansville S. Illinois vs. UIC Quarterfinals Friday, March 8 Indiana St. vs. Murray St.-Missouri St. winner N. Iowa vs. Belmont-Valparaiso winner Drake vs. Illinois St.-Evansville winner Bradley vs. S. Illinois-UIC winner Northeast Conference At Higher-Seeded Schools First Round Wednesday, March 6 St. Francis (Pa.) at CCSU Fairleigh Dickinson at Le Moyne LIU at Merrimack Wagner at Sacred Heart Ohio Valley Conference At Evansville, Ind. First Round Wednesday, March 6 Tennessee St. vs. Southern Indiana SIU-Edwardsville vs. E. Illinois Quarterfinals Thursday, March 7 W. Illinois vs. Tennessee St.-Southern Indiana winner	Southern Conference At Asheville, N.C. First Round Friday, March 8 Mercer vs. The Citadel ETSU vs. VMI Quarterfinals Saturday, March 9 Samford vs. Mercer-The Citadel winner UNC-Greensboro vs. ETSU-VMI winner Chattanooga vs. Wofford W. Carolina vs. Furman Summit League Conference At Sioux Falls, S.D. First Round Friday, March 8 Oral Roberts vs. South Dakota Quarterfinals Saturday, March 9 S. Dakota St. vs. Oral Roberts-South Dakota winner UMKC vs. Denver Sunday, March 10 St. Thomas vs. N. Dakota St. North Dakota vs. Omaha Sun Belt Conference At Pensacola, Fla. First Round Tuesday, March 5 Coastal Carolina 75, Louisiana-Monroe 71 Texas St. 92, Old Dominion 83 Second Round Thursday, March 7 South Alabama vs. Georgia Southern Louisiana-Lafayette vs. Coastal Carolina Southern Miss. vs. Texas St. Georgia St. vs. Marshall Quarterfinals Saturday, March 9 Appalachian St. vs. South Alabama-Georgia Southern winner Arkansas St. vs. TBD Troy vs. TBD James Madison vs. Georgia St.-Marshall winner West Coast Conference At Las Vegas First Round Thursday, March 7 Pepperdine vs. Pacific Second Round Friday, March 8 San Diego vs. Pepperdine-Pacific winner Portland vs. Loyola Marymount Quarterfinals Saturday, March 9 Santa Clara vs. TBD Sunday, March 10 San Francisco vs. Portland-Loyola Marymount winner Semifinals Monday, March 11 Saint Mary’s (Cal.) vs. TBD Gonzaga vs. TBD
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TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Edey helps rally Purdue at Illinois

Associated Press

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — Zach Edey had 28 points and eight rebounds as No. 3 Purdue rallied in the second half to beat No. 12 Illinois 77-71 on Tuesday night, becoming the first team in 17 years to win consecutive outright Big Ten regular-season championships.

Fletcher Loyer added 16 points for the Boilermakers (27-3, 16-3), who had already clinched at least a share of their second straight conference title with Saturday night’s victory over Michigan State.

The previous Big Ten team to win back-to-back outright regular-season crowns was Ohio State in 2006 and 2007.

Braden Smith had 13 points and six assists for Purdue, which improved to 7-0 against ranked opponents this season. Mason Gillis scored 10 off the bench.

Loyer hit a 3-pointer with 3:08 left that put Purdue ahead for good, 67-66. That started a personal seven-point run that gave the Boilermakers a 71-66 lead with 1:27 to go.

Purdue outscored Illinois 43-31 in the second half and shot 8-for-10 on 3s.

No. 7 North Carolina 84, Notre Dame 51: Armando Bacot played in his record 162nd ACC game and the host Tar Heels claimed at least a share of the regular-season conference title.

Bacot, a fifth-year player who holds North Carolina’s record for career rebounds and double-doubles, finished with 14 points and five rebounds.

RJ Davis added 22 points and six assists for the Tar Heels (24-6, 16-3). Harrison Ingram finished with 11 points and 14 rebounds.

Tae Davis led Notre Dame (12-18, 7-12) with 11 points.

No. 13 Auburn 101, Missouri 74: Johni Broome had 17 points and eight rebounds to lead five players in double figures in visiting Auburn’s win over last-place Missouri.

Chad Baker-Mazara added 15 points and seven boards for Auburn (23-7, 12-5 Southeastern Conference). Jaylin Williams also scored 15 as Auburn matched its season high for points in an SEC game.

Sean East II led Missouri (8-22, 0-17) with 21 points.

No. 14 Kansas 90, Kansas State 68: Kevin McCullar Jr. had 19 points in his Allen Fieldhouse farewell, Hunter Dickinson added 15 points and 20 rebounds, and the Jayhawks snapped a two-game skid.

Nick Timberlake added 18 points and KJ Adams Jr. had 16 for Kansas (22-8, 10-7 Big 12), which beat the Wildcats at home for the 18th straight time and won their 40th in a row on senior night, a run that stretches to the 1983-84 season.

Will McNair had 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Wildcats (17-13, 7-10), but leading scorers Tylor Perry and Cam Carter were shut down. Perry had two points and Carter had three points on 1-for-7 shooting.

Florida 105, No. 16 Alabama 87: Will Richard scored 23 points, Walter Clayton Jr. added 22 and the host Gators beat the Crimson Tide to stay in contention for a top-four seed in the upcoming SEC Tournament.

Florida (21-9, 11-6 SEC) won for the 10th time in 13 games and finished 14-1 at home this season. More important to coach Todd Golden, the Gators moved a step closer to potentially landing a double bye in the league tourney.

Mark Sears led Alabama (20-10, 12-5) with 33 points, including 29 in the second half.

UNLV 62, No. 21 San Diego State 58: Dedan Thomas scored 19 points and made a tiebreaking jumper with 18.6 seconds left to lift the host Runnin’ Rebels over the Aztecs.

It was the fourth win against a ranked team for surging UNLV (19-10, 12-5 Mountain West), which has won 10 of 11 overall.

Elijah Saunders led San Diego State (22-8, 11-6) with 14 points. Jaedon LeDee, who was leading the conference at 20.8 points per game, was held to 12 on 2-for-12 shooting.

No. 24 South Florida 85, Tulane 72: Chris Youngblood had 29 points and five assists as the host Bulls extended their winning streak to 15 games.

Kasean Pryor scored 13 points and Selton Miguel added 12 for South Florida (23-5, 16-1 American Athletic Conference), the conference’s regular-season champion. USF was playing its first home game and second overall as a team ranked in the Top 25 in the program’s half-century history.

No. 25 Dayton 100, Saint Louis 83: Daron Holmes II had 25 points and 13 rebounds, and Koby Brea and Kobe Elvis each hit five 3-pointers as the Flyers snapped a three-game road losing streak.

Dayton (23-6, 13-4 Atlantic 10) made a Chaifetz Arena record 18 3-pointers and matched the school record for 3s, set earlier this season in a win over Oakland.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/NBA



JIMMY GOLEN/AP

A Dartmouth Athletics banner hangs outside Alumni Gymnasium on the Dartmouth University campus in Hanover, N.H., on Tuesday. Dartmouth basketball players officially voted Tuesday to form a union.

Dartmouth players get late milestone with union vote

By RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

For those who have led unsuccessful labor movements involving NCAA athletes, the vote by Dartmouth men's basketball players to unionize felt momentous — even if they are still a long way from forming the first union in college sports.

In a 13-2 vote in a building on the campus in Hanover, N.H., and under supervision of the National Labor Relations Board, players elected to join the Service Employees International Union Local 560 on Tuesday.

"This is definitely a milestone that has been reached. One that we believe should have been reached long ago," said Ramogi Huma, a longtime advocate for college athletes who helped organize a movement to unionize Northwestern football players a decade ago.

As with Dartmouth basketball, a regional ruling by the NLRB cleared the way for a vote by the Northwestern football team to unionize. The votes were impounded, however, and never revealed after the full board in 2015 dismissed the argument that the players were employees of the private Big Ten school.

Rules have changed since, allowing the result of the Dartmouth players' vote to be made public while the school appeals.

"In issuing her decision, the Regional Director made an unprecedented, unwarranted and un-

ported departure from every applicable Supreme Court, federal court and Board precedent and created a new definition of 'employee' in a manner that not only exceeded her authority, but promises to have significant labor and public policy implications," the school wrote in its request for a ruling by the full NLRB board.

The case could also end up in federal court.

"I think this is years away from being settled, but it's going in the right direction," said Huma, a former UCLA football player and executive director of the National College Players Association.

Huma has had no involvement with the Dartmouth basketball players. His group has filed a separate complaint with the NLRB against Southern California, asking that the school's football and basketball players be deemed employees.

"The case that we have at USC is stronger because the athletes there get full scholarships. So the fact that athletes at Dartmouth that don't get scholarships were deemed to be employees, I think it provides strength to our arguments at USC," Huma said.

The NLRB only has jurisdiction over private employers. Dartmouth and USC are private schools, like Northwestern.

The Dartmouth and USC cases could impact the many public schools in the NCAA, including those that compete at the highest

levels of college sports such as Michigan, Alabama, Ohio State, Texas and North Carolina.

The complaint against USC is asking the NLRB to deem those athletes employees of their school, the Pac-12.

"The private athletic conference would be the jurisdictional hook in a joint employer relationship," said Marc Edelman, a law professor at Baruch College in New York.

Jason Stahl is the founder and executive director of the College Football Players Association, a group that has also tried to lead organization movements. The former professor at the University of Minnesota made a presentation to Penn State football players in the summer of 2022 he hoped would lead to an association that would eventually negotiate with the Big Ten Conference over things such as working conditions, health care and maybe even compensation.

Those efforts fizzled out.

Stahl said what is most encouraging about the Dartmouth vote is it appears to have been 100% player-led.

"First time we've seen this. We'll see if it produces a wave," Stahl said. "If Dartmouth basketball players are employees, pretty much all college athletes seem like they're employees and that could produce some really seismic ramifications not just for college athletics, but also for higher education writ large."

Doc: Milwaukee has best defensive rating since break

FROM PAGE 24

ing of it. And that's how you build that faith and that belief, and you get on the same page. I think he's created an environment where everybody understands. Everything is clear. We walk through it 10, 15 times in practice, and then we're able to go out there and execute it because of how it's being delivered to us."

Milwaukee staggered into the All-Star break, going 3-7 in its first 10 games under Rivers, who left his job at ESPN to take over the Bucks after the firing of Adrian Griffin. But the Bucks haven't lost since the break and have moved into second place in the Eastern Conference, behind the Boston Celtics.

Although the Bucks were 30-13 when Griffin was dismissed, their struggles on defense cast doubt on their viability as a title contender. Under Griffin, the Bucks ranked 21st in the league in defensive rating, which measures points allowed per 100 possessions.

They've come a long way over the last few weeks.

Their six-game winning streak included four straight games in which they allowed fewer than 100 points, the first such streak for the Bucks since February 2018. Milwaukee has allowed below 100 points in six of its last 10 games after doing that just once in its first 52 contests.

The Bucks finally gave up more than 100 points Monday against the Clippers while Antetokounmpo was out with left Achilles tendinitis, but they still showed their adaptability by utilizing a zone during their comeback. The Bucks have improved defensively even without three-time All-Star Khris Middleton, who has missed 11 straight games with a sprained left ankle.

Players have said Rivers simplified things and clarified every-

one's assignments on defense.

"Everything is black and white," guard Malik Beasley said. "There's no gray areas. We know what we're doing on back picks. We know what we're doing on pick-and-rolls. We know who's doing what and who's doing this. It's starting to become second nature. When you have a good defensive team like that, that's what happens. Everybody's connected, just like on offense."

Milwaukee also boosted its perimeter defense by acquiring Patrick Beverley, a three-time All-Defensive Team selection. The Bucks already had plenty of defensive firepower in the frontcourt with Antetokounmpo and Brook Lopez, who finished second in last year's Defensive Player of the Year voting.

Rivers believes the Bucks' defense can get even better.

"Our catch-and-shoot defense still has to improve," Rivers said. "Our recognition of bad matchups has to improve. And then at the basket, I think we can be a little more physical if they will allow us to be."

The Bucks face a major test to maintain that No. 2 spot in the East as they enter a difficult portion of their schedule. They opened a four-game California trip Wednesday at Golden State. Nine of their next 10 contests are against teams with winning records.

Milwaukee faced a similarly tough stretch immediately after Rivers' arrival and struggled. The team appears much more prepared for this latest challenge.

"We've simplified a lot of things," Lillard said. "We've, I guess, just bought into some of the schemes. I don't think the guys weren't bought in (before) but I think we're seeing that it's working. We're seeing that it fits for us."



NELL REDMOND/AP

Doc Rivers has rebounded from a slow start to his Bucks tenure, winning his last six games after struggling out of the gate with a 3-7 record.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
x-Boston	48	13	.787	—	
New York	36	26	.581	12½	
Philadelphia	35	26	.574	13	
Brooklyn	25	37	.403	23½	
Toronto	23	39	.371	25½	
Southeast Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Orlando	36	26	.581	—	
Miami	35	26	.574	½	
Atlanta	27	34	.443	8½	
Charlotte	15	47	.242	21	
Washington	9	52	.148	26½	
Central Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Milwaukee	41	21	.661	—	
Cleveland	40	21	.656	½	
Indiana	35	28	.556	6½	
Chicago	29	32	.475	11½	
Detroit	9	52	.148	31½	
Western Conference					
Southwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
New Orleans	37	25	.597	—	
Dallas	34	28	.548	3	
Houston	27	34	.443	9½	
Memphis	21	41	.339	16	
San Antonio	13	49	.210	24	
Northwest Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Minnesota	43	19	.694	—	
Oklahoma City	42	19	.689	½	
Denver	42	20	.677	1	
Utah	28	34	.452	15	
Portland	17	43	.283	25	
Pacific Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
L.A. Clippers	39	21	.650	—	
Phoenix	36	26	.581	4	
Sacramento	34	26	.567	5	
L.A. Lakers	34	29	.540	6½	
Golden State	32	28	.533	7	

x-clinched playoff spot

Monday's games

Memphis 106, Brooklyn 102
Milwaukee 113, L.A. Clippers 106
Minnesota 119, Portland 114
Utah 127, Washington 115
Chicago 113, Sacramento 109
L.A. Lakers 116, Oklahoma City 104

Tuesday's games

Orlando 101, Charlotte 89
New Orleans 139, Toronto 98
Atlanta 116, New York 100
Miami 118, Detroit 110
Cleveland 105, Boston 104
Brooklyn 112, Philadelphia 107
Houston 114, San Antonio 101
Indiana 137, Dallas 120
Phoenix 117, Denver 107, OT

Wednesday's games

Orlando at Washington
Cleveland at Atlanta
L.A. Clippers at Houston
Memphis at Philadelphia
Chicago at Utah
Milwaukee at Golden State
Oklahoma City at Portland
Sacramento at L.A. Lakers

Thursday's games

Brooklyn at Detroit
Minnesota at Indiana
Miami at Dallas
Toronto at Phoenix
Boston at Denver
Chicago at Golden State
San Antonio at Sacramento

Friday's games

Charlotte at Washington
New Orleans at Philadelphia
Minnesota at Cleveland
Orlando at New York
Atlanta at Memphis
Miami at Oklahoma City
Houston at Portland
Milwaukee at L.A. Lakers

Scoring leaders

Through Tuesday

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Doncic, DAL	54	637	386	1869	34.6
Gil.-Alex., OKC	60	658	470	1863	31.1
Antetokoun., MIL	59	679	430	1819	30.8
Mitchell, CLE	47	454	248	1315	28.0
Durant, PHO	55	557	301	1535	27.9
Booker, PHO	50	480	307	1377	27.5
Brunson, NY	57	550	301	1551	27.2
Tatum, BOS	58	532	324	1569	27.1
Curry, GS	57	508	249	1546	27.1
Fox, SAC	52	506	234	1392	26.8

ROUNDUP

Cavs rally to end Celtics' win streak

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — With every one of Dean Wade’s shots that splashed through the net, the Cavaliers got closer to the Celtics and his confidence grew.

“The rim looked like a swimming pool,” he said.

Wade made five 3-pointers and scored 20 points in the fourth quarter, outscoring the Celtics by himself, and Cleveland won a replay review in the final second to stun Boston 105-104 on Tuesday night, ending the NBA’s longest winning streak this season at 11 games.

With NFL star Travis Kelce and his recently retired brother Jason urging on Cleveland’s crowd from courtside seats, the Cavs overcame a 22-point deficit in the final period, the biggest fourth-quarter comeback in franchise history.

“Honestly, when the Kelce brothers started hyping up the crowd, we knew we could do it,” Cavs center Jarrett Allen said.

Cleveland stormed back without All-Star Donovan Mitchell, who missed the game with a knee injury, as well as forward Evan Mobley, who went out with a sprained ankle in the third quarter.

Wade, who finished with a career-high 23 points, came to the rescue with his barrage of 3s in the fourth and a putback dunk with 19.1 seconds left that put the Cavs ahead 105-104.

The Celtics looked for a final shot and All-Star Jayson Tatum, who led Boston with 26 points, appeared to draw a foul on Cleveland’s Darius Garland while shooting a fadeaway jumper with 0.7 seconds left.

The Cavs challenged the call, and following the review, officials said it was Tatum’s leg that caused the contact and not Garland.

“I thought it was great defense,” said Garland, who wasn’t positive the call would go his way. “I knew the leg kick was kind of in play. My shin still kind of hurts from it, so I’m glad that it was overturned.”

Tatum felt Garland made enough contact to warrant free throws.

“I thought I was fouled, but they (refs) didn’t think I got fouled, which was tough because we would have got the tip-in,” he said. “It’s a weird way to end the game.”

Suns 117, Nuggets 107 (OT): Kevin Durant scored 35 points, including eight in overtime, and short-handed Phoenix rebounded to beat host Denver after blowing a 22-point lead in the second half.

After managing just 12 points in the fourth quarter, the Suns scored 15 in OT, led by Durant and Bradley Beal, who had five of his 16 in the extra period.



SUE OGROCKI/AP

Cavaliers forward Dean Wade grabs a rebound in front of Boston Celtics guard Jrue Holiday on Tuesday in Cleveland. Wade scored 20 points in the fourth quarter as the Cavaliers rallied to win, 105-104.

Grayson Allen hit eight 3-pointers and scored 28 points to help the Suns snap a two-game slide.

Jamal Murray had 28 points and Nikola Jokic added 25 points and 16 rebounds, but the Nuggets had their six-game winning streak halted.

Pacers 137, Mavericks 120: Myles Turner scored 20 points, Tyrese Haliburton had 19 points and 11 assists, and visiting Indiana beat Dallas despite Luka Doncic’s fourth consecutive game with a 30-point triple-double.

Doncic had 39 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds. Russell Westbrook is the lone player in NBA history with five straight 30-point triple-doubles, and Oscar Robertson is the only other player with four.

Nine players scored in double figures for the Pacers, including five reserves as Indiana’s bench outscored Dallas’ 69-32.

Bennedict Mathurin had 19 points off the bench for the Pacers. Starting forward Pascal Siakam added 13 points, 13 rebounds and six assists.

Nets 112, 76ers 107: Dennis Schroder and Dorian Finney-Smith each scored 20 points and host Brooklyn beat Philadelphia.

Lonnie Walker IV added 19 points and Nic Claxton had 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Nets, who bounced back quickly

after a poor performance Monday in a 106-102 home loss to Memphis. They took advantage of a short-handed Philadelphia team that was missing both its All-Stars in Tyrese Maxey and Joel Embiid. Maxey was scratched early Tuesday because of a concussion.

Kelly Oubre Jr. scored a season-high 30 points for the 76ers, who had won two straight. Tobias Harris added 18.

Pelicans 139, Raptors 98: Trey Murphy III scored a season-high 34 points, Jonas Valanciunas had 10 points and 10 rebounds against his former team, and visiting New Orleans beat short-handed Toronto.

Murphy matched a career best by making 10 of 14 3-point attempts as the Pelicans handed the Raptors their worst defeat of the season, eclipsing a 38-point drubbing they gave Toronto in New Orleans last month.

Herb Jones scored 17 points, Zion Williamson had 16 and Brandon Ingram had 12. New Orleans has won three of four.

Rockets 114, Spurs 101: Alperen Sengun had a career-high 45 points and a season-best 16 rebounds as host Houston beat San Antonio.

Sengun, who is in his third NBA season, also set a career mark with five steals and had three assists and a block. Jalen Green added 23

points and 10 assists for the Rockets, and Fred VanVleet had 21 points.

Devin Vassell scored 22 points for San Antonio. Rookie Victor Wembanyama had 10 points, 11 rebounds and seven blocks for the Spurs, whose two-game winning streak ended.

Heat 118, Pistons 110: Jimmy Butler scored 15 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter, Bam Adebayo and Duncan Robinson each scored 18 and host Miami beat Detroit.

Terry Rozier scored 17 points, Caleb Martin had 15 points and Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 11 for the Heat, who improved to 11-3 in their last 14 games.

Hawks 116, Knicks 100: Jalen Johnson scored 26 points and visiting Atlanta beat New York, which played without the injured Jalen Brunson.

De’Andre Hunter had 22 points off the bench and Dejounte Murray finished with 21 for the Hawks.

Magic 101, Hornets 89: Paolo Banchero had 22 points, Cole Anthony scored 12 of his 14 points in the second half and surging Orlando beat host Charlotte for its ninth win in 11 games.

Wendell Carter Jr. had 12 points and nine rebounds for the Magic (36-26), who moved 10 games above .500 for the first time since April 18, 2012.

SPORTS



A long time coming
Dartmouth union vote seen as overdue milestone » College basketball, Page 22

NBA

Just what the Doc ordered



Better defense under coach Rivers has had Bucks surging lately

By STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Doc Rivers left broadcasting behind when he took over as the Milwaukee Bucks’ coach at midseason, but he remains as talkative as ever.

That chattiness has helped the Bucks dramatically improve their defense since his arrival in late January. Going into Wednesday, Milwaukee had won six straight games and owned the NBA’s best defensive rating since the All-Star break.

“It’s a lot of talking with Doc,” All-Star guard Damian Lillard said Monday night after the Bucks rallied for a 113-106 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers without injured two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo. “Sometimes we get on the court and we’re supposed to be starting practice, and Doc will talk for 15 minutes straight.”

Lillard detailed the way Rivers will tell players about their responsibilities in certain situations while explaining how their roles fit into the overall defensive scheme.

“Sometimes you need what we want to happen to make sense verbally,” Lillard said. “Then we walk through it, and then you get an understand-

SEE DOC ON PAGE 22



CHARLES REX ARBOGAST, ABOVE, AND NELL REDMOND, RIGHT/AP
Above: Milwaukee Bucks coach Doc Rivers hugs Bobby Portis in the second half against the Bulls on March 1 in Chicago. The Bucks won 113-97 for their fourth consecutive game in which they allowed less than 100 points. Right: Bucks guard Damian Lillard defends Hornets forward Cody Martin during Milwaukee’s 111-99 win on Feb. 29 in Charlotte, N.C.

Stars erase 3-goal deficit, win in overtime » NHL, Page 20

