

Basketball Hall of Famer Jerry West dies at 86

Known as “Mr. Clutch,” high-scoring LA Lakers player was inspiration for NBA logo. **In Sports**

IRS tells people they didn’t pay taxes – but they did

Tax professionals suggest taking these steps in response to erroneous letters. **In Money**

McCarthy wrangles Brat Pack for documentary

USA TODAY

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ALLY SHEEDY, ANDREW MCCARTHY AND DEMI MOORE BY THEO WARGO/GETTY IMAGES FOR TRIBECA FESTIVAL



“St. Elmo’s Fire” actor tracks down most of his co-stars he hadn’t spoken with in decades to talk about the 1980s sensation and their shared history. **In Life**

FAFSA debacle hits some harder

Analysis: Low-income students affected most

Cecilia Garzella and Suhail Bhat
USA TODAY

Students who needed aid the most were among the hardest hit after the Education Department bungled the rollout of the new federal financial aid form, known as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, a new USA TODAY analysis shows.

Delays and technical problems with the form have left many economically disadvantaged students scrambling for financial aid, jeopardizing their college aspirations.

The analysis, which combined FAFSA completion data with school- and district-level demographics information, revealed a sharper decline in processed applications – in which a student’s information was successfully reviewed and sent to colleges for financial aid consideration – among schools with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students compared with their counterparts in high-income schools.



Congressional action in 2020 meant to streamline the FAFSA process, but this year’s rollout of the new financial aid form has been widely criticized.

JENNA WATSON/USA TODAY NETWORK

Congressional action in December 2020 aimed to streamline the FAFSA process by introducing changes like reducing the number of questions and facilitating the electronic transfer of income information from IRS records.

But those efforts backfired.

As soon as the form became available to students on Dec. 30, 2023, reports of outages and delays emerged. Compounding the glitches, the Education Department had already postponed the release of the application from its typical Oct. 1 date, cutting the time students had to submit their applications by three months compared with previous years.

In March, when the FAFSA issues were worse, schools serving the lowest-income students experienced a larger decrease in the number of applications completed. Specifically, there was a 48% drop in processed applications for these schools. Meanwhile, schools with a high-income student body saw only a 34% drop. Nationwide, the overall decrease was 40%.

The 14-point difference between the lowest- and highest-income schools underscores a significant disparity in how many students, and from which backgrounds, ultimately get connected with federal financial aid, experts said.

While economically disadvantaged students are the ones most in need of

See FAFSA, Page 6A

After stray bullet shattered her life, one woman found new purpose



FROM TRAGEDY TO RENEWAL

Phaedra Trethan USA TODAY

PHILADELPHIA – Amanda Parezo knew as soon as the stray bullet struck her spine her life would never be the same. ● An occupational therapist who at the time worked with people who had suffered traumatic brain injuries in North Philadelphia – many of them victims of the city’s long-standing gun violence epidemic – her life changed irrevocably on May 21, 2021: She knew she would be paralyzed.

“I get a little more emotional telling the story this time of year,” she told USA TODAY, though she recounted the experience in a quick, professional way, almost as if she were talking about someone else.

In a way, she is another person: Parezo has since moved to a new, more accessible home, gone through a divorce and found new purpose as a teacher and an activist against gun violence, all the while continuing to go through therapy and navigating life from a wheelchair.

‘All of a sudden ... BANG! BANG! BANG!’

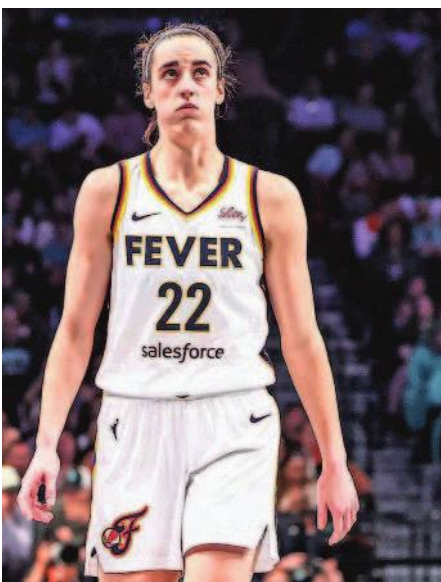
After playing kickball with friends in her neighborhood, she sat on a bench on that May afternoon in 2021. Her then-husband, who had also played, had gone to their home nearby. Shots rang out, a not-unfamiliar sound in a city that saw 551 homicides and more than 3,700 assaults with a gun that year.

“All of a sudden, we heard this

See RENEWAL, Page 2A

Since being struck by a stray bullet in Philadelphia in 2021 and losing the use of her legs, Amanda Parezo, 38, has spoken out against gun violence and fought for greater accessibility for disabled people.

PROVIDED BY JEFFERSON HEALTH/THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY



Debate has swirled since Caitlin Clark was left off the U.S. Olympic team.

WENDELL CRUZ/USA TODAY SPORTS

Culture warriors have recruited a very unwilling Caitlin Clark

Mike Freeman
Columnist
USA TODAY

If you want proof of bad faith, right-wing goofs launching a concerted effort to use Caitlin Clark in their culture war against the WNBA, look no further than noted basketball expert Nikki Haley.

After Clark was left off the Olympic team, Haley tweeted this about the WNBA star: “Let me get this straight: No player on the Olympic team has scored more 3-pointers this year in the WNBA

Death row last meals have long fascinated

Tradition also remains a point of contention

Minnah Arshad and Michael Loria
USA TODAY

Hours before convicted murderer Jamie Mills was executed May 30, he was granted a special last request: What would he like to eat on his final day on Earth?

The man convicted in the beating deaths of an elderly couple in told Alabama prison officials he wanted a seafood buffet of sorts, with three large shrimp, two catfish fillets, three oysters, three onion rings and one stuffed crab.

Mills got that meal before he was taken to the death chamber to die by lethal injection. But the choice of a last meal is no guarantee in U.S. prisons. The age-old tradition is shrouded in controversy, ethical disagreement and even concern over how much the meal may cost taxpayers.

“It seems that we would provide this for somebody who’s going to eat for the very last time. ... At the same time, it does seem very strange.”

Deborah Denno
Fordham University

“Food is a focal point for all of us. It’s a point of enjoyment and pleasure and comfort, and that’s sort of its reputation,” said Deborah Denno, law professor and founding director of the Neuroscience and Law Center at Fordham University.

“It seems that we would provide this for somebody who’s going to eat for the very last time, and that makes us feel better about ourselves. At the same time, it does seem very strange.”

Of the 19 states where capital punishment is legal and practiced, a USA TODAY analysis found 12 allow special last meals – and two of those impose a price limit. Six serve only prison food, no matter what a condemned person asks for – in other words, nothing outside what is in the prison kitchen. Kansas Department of Corrections spokesperson David Thompson said the state’s death row meal policy is “under review” and noted the state has not carried out an execution since 1965.

In April, hours before convicted murderer Brian Dorsey was executed

See LAST MEALS, Page 3A

than Caitlin Clark. And only one woman on the Olympic team has more assists than Clark this WNBA Season. And the US is not going to include her on the Olympic team? I think the Olympic selection committee should be asked do we want the best team to represent our country or not?”

As far as I can tell, Haley has mentioned Clark just once before. Last year when Haley was campaigning in Iowa, she spoke about Clark but called her “Caitlin Collins.”

“We’re excited to see the Lady Hawk-eyes team,” she said. “What a great

See FREEMAN, Page 6A

Cease-fire plan hits stumbling blocks

Blinken: Hamas proposed more changes

John Bacon
USA TODAY

The Hamas response to the latest cease-fire proposal includes some unworkable changes, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday, while a Hamas official said Blinken is “part of the problem, not the solution” to the eighth-month war in Gaza.

Blinken, at a briefing with Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha, said that the proposal sent to Hamas was almost identical to a plan Hamas supported a month ago – and that Israel and the rest of the world is ready to accept it. Blinken said Qatar, Egypt and the U.S. would continue efforts to broker a cease-fire.

“Hamas could have answered with a single word: Yes,” Blinken said. “Instead, Hamas waited nearly two weeks and then proposed more changes, a number of which go beyond positions that it had previously taken and accepted.”

Hamas official Osama Hamdan, speaking to the pan-Arab Al-Araby TV, said the U.S.-backed plan without adjustments would merely allow Israel to regroup its forces before returning to the war. Sheikh Mohammed, however, agreed with Blinken that the proposal is the best way to bridge gaps between Hamas and Israel.

“We are witnessing a shift in this conflict in the recent period, and there is a clear and firm call to end this war,” Sheikh Mohammed said.

The war started on Oct. 7 when Hamas, the group ruling Gaza, killed 1,200 people in Israel, according to Israeli tallies, and took 250 people hostage.

Israel’s military response has killed more than 37,000 people, the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry says, and created a humanitarian crisis with shortages of food, water, fuel and medicine in a territory whose housing and infrastructure is now little more than rubble.

A U.N. report released Wednesday



Members of Hezbollah carry the coffin of a senior field commander of Hezbollah during his funeral in Beirut, Lebanon’s southern suburbs on Wednesday.

MOHAMED AZAKIR/REUTERS

found that Israel and Hamas both committed war crimes early in the Gaza war and that Israel also committed crimes against humanity because of civilian deaths and massive destruction.

The findings, from the U.N. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, were based on interviews with victims and witnesses conducted remotely and during missions to Turkey and Egypt. Israel did not cooperate and dismissed the findings as anti-Israeli bias. Hamas did not immediately respond to the report.

“It is imperative that all those who have committed crimes be held accountable,” said Navi Pillay, chair of the commission. “The only way to stop the recurring cycles of violence, including aggression and retribution by both sides, is to ensure strict adherence to international law.”

Israel-Hezbollah clashes on Lebanese border flare

A barrage of more than 100 rockets pounded northern Israeli towns Wednesday as clashes with Iran-backed Hezbollah heated up, threatening a full-blown expansion of the Gaza war into

Lebanon.

Firefighters in Israel were battling blazes touched off by Hezbollah’s aerial assault that came hours after the death of high-ranking Hezbollah commander Sami Taleb Abdullah. The Israeli military said Abdullah, the most senior Hezbollah leader taken out since the Gaza war began, was killed in an attack by its warplanes on the militant group’s headquarters for southeastern Lebanon.

“Over the years he planned, promoted and carried out many acts of terrorism against the citizens of the State of Israel,” the Israeli military said on social media. Three other militants also were killed in the attack, the post said.

Thousands jammed Beirut streets Wednesday for the funeral of Abdullah, who the Israeli military says has served in leadership roles for almost 20 years.

Hezbollah’s retaliatory barrage primarily targeted an Israeli defense factory, the group said. The attack was among the biggest since the Gaza war began, but the missile strikes have forced thousands of Israelis from their border homes for months.

Hashem Safi al-Din, head of Hezbollah’s Executive Committee, pledged Wednesday to increase attacks on Israel in “intensity, force, quantity and type.”

Israeli leaders have been weighing a plan to launch an offensive into Lebanon. For now the military says it will continue to target Hezbollah commanders blamed for attacks on Israel.

The Israeli military said Wednesday that jets carried out 30 strikes across Gaza over the past 24 hours. Targets included militants and militant-held buildings, rocket launchers, tunnel shafts and other infrastructure.

Elsewhere in the region, U.S. Central Command said it destroyed two anti-ship cruise missile launchers in a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen. The launchers presented an “imminent threat to U.S. and coalition forces and to merchant vessels transiting the region,” the command said in a statement.

Palestinians desperate for food and water, UN agency says

Palestinian civilians in Gaza are facing a daily struggle to find basic necessities like water for drinking, cooking and washing.

“Children and their families are having to use water from unsafe sources that are highly salinated or polluted,” said Catherine Russell, executive director of the U.N. children’s fund UNICEF.

“Without safe water, many more children will die from deprivation and disease in the coming days.”

People have dug wells in bleak areas near the sea where the bombing has pushed them or rely on salty tap water from Gaza’s only aquifer, now contaminated with seawater and sewage.

Meanwhile, the head of the World Health Organization said Wednesday that many people in Gaza were facing “catastrophic hunger and famine-like conditions,” and more than 8,000 children younger than 5 have been diagnosed and treated for acute malnutrition.

“Despite reports of increased delivery of food, there is currently no evidence that those who need it most are receiving sufficient quantity and quality of food,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Contributing: Reuters

Renewal

Continued from Page 1A

BANG! BANG! BANG!” she said, her voice wavering ever so slightly.

But while Parezo and her friends in Philadelphia’s Fishtown neighborhood were used to the sound of distant gunfire, living in a gentrified area near some of the city’s most violent ZIP codes, these shots were close. She saw her friends who were standing hit the ground out of instinct. Sitting between two friends on the bench, she felt a sting in her side.

“My brain, in that split second, connected shooting, bullet. I immediately fell backward on my back because I’d lost complete control of my muscles, sensation. I felt this ‘whoooosh’ from my waist down into my toes.”

Her friends, most of them health care workers like her, rushed to her aid, packing the wound and calling for help. Her husband was with her in the ambulance as she was taken to Temple University Hospital. She was the only one who was injured.

Once she was stabilized, Parezo was moved to an intensive care unit.

“I worked in ICUs,” she said. “I knew exactly what was happening to me.”

After nine days at Temple, she was moved to Magee Rehabilitation (now part of the Jefferson Health system). Two months of intensive physical, occupational, art, music and recreational therapy followed, but Parezo’s recovery has taken more than physical form. And it’s ongoing.

New reality, new community

June has been named National Gun Violence Awareness Month, a sad reminder that gun violence in is an all-too-pervasive part of American life, particularly in cities such as Philadelphia.

According to the nonprofit Brady United, which relies on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality for its data, 327 people are shot each day in the United States, 117 of them fatally. In 2021, the year Parezo was shot, gun deaths in the U.S. had hit a 40-year high.

This year in Philadelphia, there have been 364 nonfatal and 102 fatal shootings as of June 9, according to the City Controller’s Office.

Parezo, 38, never expected to be an advocate against gun violence.

She grew up in Toms River, New Jersey, near the shore, and calls herself “a beach girl.” That first summer spent indoors, learning to make her way in a wheelchair, felt interminable.

Her friends were going to the beach, having fun, doing all the things she once took for granted. Her apartment, so near the playground where she was shot, wasn’t wheelchair-accessible. Her marriage, already fraying before the shooting, unraveled.

Philadelphia is an old city with old streets and sidewalks. Some curb ramps were too steep to climb; cobblestone streets are almost impossible to navigate. Using a wheelchair meant straining muscles in her hands, and she developed carpal tunnel syndrome.

Even ordinary outings brought difficulties: Cocktail hour at a friend’s wedding left her looking up as other guests stood at bar-height tables; bathroom functions are different after spinal injuries; public transportation, she discovered, wasn’t always reliable or accessible.

“It was a lot of changes, and a lot of stress,” she said. She missed her old life but knew it was gone forever.

Instead, she tried to find a new community.

“I leaned into the rehab world,” she said. Her father was able to help her find a place in Philadelphia’s Old City neighborhood that’s accessible.

She acknowledged that, unlike many people with whom she has worked as an

“My brain, in that split second, connected shooting, bullet. I immediately fell backward on my back. ... I worked in ICUs. I knew exactly what was happening to me.”

Amanda Parezo

occupational therapist, she’s had advantages, including a supportive employer who made accommodations for her, a wide support network and access to good health care and rehab.

A voice ‘bigger than she thinks’

Parezo teaches occupational therapy at Jefferson now and coordinates students’ field internships. She brings a unique perspective to the work (and remains a patient at Jefferson Moss-Magee Rehabilitation) and tries to help students understand on a deeper level the physical and mental challenges faced by the people they will someday serve.

She plays sports, including tennis, and recently added actress and motivational speaker to a resume that already includes her work in health care and higher education.

She has shared her story with Everytown For Gun Safety and appeared in ads for the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau to highlight accessibility and diversity in tourism. And she’s raising money on Help Hope Live, a fundraising website that allows people to raise money for medical expenses not covered by insurance to get access to an exoskeleton to help her walk upright.

She also shares the good, the bad and the unexpected of life in a wheelchair on social media, including

Instagram (@amandaparisoh) and TikTok (@amandaotd).

“I want to show people exactly what it looks like to live in a wheelchair and what it feels like to have a spinal injury,” Parezo said. That includes not just a fun night out with friends but also a tearful, exhausted post when she was stuck, alone, in a public transit elevator with no one around to help.

Nikki Walsh, who was a personal trainer before she was paralyzed from the chest down in a car accident, has been Parezo’s peer mentor, a key part of the rehab process, she said.

“When I met Amanda, I fought to be her peer mentor,” said Walsh, who, after years of work, is once again working as a trainer, even creating a fitness app, Wheel With Me Adapt Fit, for disabled people. “They try to match you with someone closer to your injury level, but we’re around the same age, and when we met, we just clicked.”

Walsh respects how Parezo is open and honest about the challenges she faces and doesn’t try to gloss over her experience.

“I love everything she’s doing with her activism and helping raise awareness about accessibility in the city and about gun violence,” she said. “It’s inspiring to me.”

Parezo said mentors are invaluable to people who have gone through trauma like she has, who live the same daily reality.

“I hope I’ve taught her that her voice is bigger than she thinks, and she impacts more people than she thinks,” Walsh said. “She’s taught me to advocate for myself and the fitness community more with her activism for accessibility and (against) gun violence.”

Parezo’s honesty on social media presents a more complete picture of life with a disability, Walsh said.

“Living with a spinal injury is super-hard,” she said. Parezo is “a real, raw, relatable person we need so everyone doesn’t feel like they’re alone.”

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House votes to hold Garland in contempt

Republicans fighting for Biden documents audio

Ken Tran
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – House Republicans voted Wednesday to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress in a dramatic escalation of the GOP’s broader war against the Biden administration’s Justice Department.

The lower chamber voted along party lines, 216-207, to hold Garland in contempt for withholding the audio recording of President Joe Biden’s interview with special counsel Robert Hur over his mishandling of classified documents. Garland is now the third attorney general in U.S. history to be held in contempt.

Rep. David Joyce, R-Ohio, was the only Republican lawmaker to break off from his party colleagues on Wednesday. In a statement after the vote, Joyce said, “As a former prosecutor, I cannot in good conscience support a resolution that would further politicize our judicial system to score political points.”

The resolution includes a referral to the U.S. attorney of the District of Columbia for criminal prosecution, but that will almost certainly not happen. Instead, GOP investigators are expected to enter a drawn-out legal fight with the Justice Department to obtain the recordings.

Still, given Republicans’ razor-thin majority in the House, where the GOP can generally afford to lose only a couple of votes, there was consternation among lawmakers about whether the



Attorney General Merrick Garland has accused GOP lawmakers of improperly targeting the Justice Department. “We will not be intimidated,” he wrote in an op-ed published Tuesday in The Washington Post. ANNA ROSE LAYDEN/REUTERS

contempt effort would pass. The lower chamber was scheduled to hold the vote Wednesday, but Republican leaders had the option to pull the resolution if they lacked the votes so they could avoid an embarrassing public defeat.

Republicans advanced contempt resolutions out of the House Oversight and Judiciary committees last month. Leaders already had held back a full contempt vote after a handful of moderate GOP lawmakers were skeptical about picking another fight with the justice system. Their concerns come as Republicans continue to rail against New York prosecutors after former President Donald Trump was convicted in his New

York hush money trial.

For their part, GOP leaders publicly projected that they could corral their unwieldy conference to pass the resolution.

Tuesday morning, Garland accused Republicans of launching growing attacks against the Justice Department in an op-ed in The Washington Post.

“We will not be intimidated,” Garland wrote. “It is absurd and dangerous that public servants, many of whom risk their lives every day, are being threatened for simply doing their jobs and adhering to the principles that have long guided the Justice Department’s work.”

Republicans, led by House Oversight

Committee Chair James Comer, R-Ky., and House Judiciary Chair Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, have sought Biden’s interview audio for months after Hur’s report characterized the president as a “sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory.”

Comer and Jordan argued the recording is necessary for their impeachment inquiry into the president, but the Justice Department refused to provide it. Officials told Republicans the department has already shared the transcript of the interview, along with other relevant documents from the investigation.

To hand over the audio recordings, the Justice Department argued, risks endangering future investigations if subjects believe their interviews could be released publicly. In a further step to shield the recordings, Biden asserted executive privilege over the audio last month.

The Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel determined the recording falls under executive privilege, and Garland shouldn’t be punished for following the president’s order to keep the recording confidential, according to Carlos Uriarte, an associate attorney general.

Democratic lawmakers have echoed the Justice Department’s sentiments in recent days. Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., the top Democrat on the Oversight Committee, scoffed at the GOP’s argument that the audio could provide new territory for their impeachment inquiry. The investigation has yet to turn up direct evidence supporting accusations Biden abused his public office for his family’s foreign business dealings.

Contributing: Bart Jansen

Last meals

Continued from Page 1A

over the objections of dozens of correctional officers and Missouri’s governor, the state served him two bacon double cheeseburgers, two orders of chicken strips, two large orders of seasoned fries and a pizza with sausage, pepperoni, onion, mushrooms and extra cheese.

Tuesday, Missouri executed death row inmate David Hosier, making his the second execution in the state this year and the seventh in the nation. His last meal consisted of steak, a baked potato, Texas toast, apple pie, milk and orange juice.

The infamous final meal that a condemned prisoner chooses before execution has fascinated the American public and is a source of controversy within the already controversial topic of the death penalty. Some criminal justice advocates say it serves as a final act of compassion before inflicting the most severe punishment, while others argue it is a disgrace to the people forever hurt by their crimes and to taxpayers picking up the tab.

USA TODAY spoke with government officials and experts to find out how the debate has played out in the 19 states where capital punishment is practiced.

Conflicting emotions

How the last-meal ritual originated in the United States has not been confirmed, but some researchers trace it back to historic final feasts, from the famous Last Supper that Christians believe Jesus shared with his apostles before his crucifixion to ancient Greece, where people on death row were fed before their execution out of fear that they would return as hungry ghosts.

In the U.S., experts say the last meal represents the nation’s own ambivalence toward capital punishment, as well as a shared interest about the end of life.

“We’re human beings – we all fear death. It’s something we’re all going to face,” Denno said, noting most people won’t know how or when. “The fact that your last meal is documented in a way that, for the great majority of us, is probably not going to be, is something of fascination.”

The special meal also is a recognition of a person’s humanity before their end, Denno said, and a means to assuage the guilt of bystanders.

Though even the most lavish final feasts ultimately amount to a pittance when compared with the overall cost of convicting and executing a death row prisoner, the idea that taxpayer dollars could be spent on their pleasure is “horrifying to even think about” for the victims, Denno said.

“There are going to be people who look at the death penalty and think that any measure beyond bread and water is too much for somebody who may have killed someone.”

A ‘longing for normalcy’

In the years leading up to their final breath, prisoners on death row often discuss what they will request for their final meal, said Sarah Gerwig, a law professor at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, who as a post-conviction attorney has been visiting people in prison since 1998. The Bureau of Justice Statistics found prisoners executed in 2020 had been on death row for an average of about 19 years.

“The men and women who are in prison are longing for normalcy and their memories of a time that felt more normal when they could have a craving for food and just go get it. That becomes a luxury, and longed-for luxury,” Gerwig told USA TODAY. “A lot of prisoners requested last meals that would have felt like home-cooked meals that they had in their childhood or food that was evocative for them or memorable in meaningful ways.”

Gerwig, who wrote a 2014 paper examining special last meals after Texas abolished the practice, said that prisoners know their requests will be described in news reports and that some take the opportunity to “make a final statement.”

Victor Feguer ordered a single olive with the pit intact for his final meal, symbolizing peace, the Telegraph Herald reported. Tennessee death row inmate Donnie Edward Johnson declined a special meal before his execution in 2019, instead requesting that his supporters donate meals to the homeless.

States have their own rules

A chosen last meal may be a centuries-old tradition, but it’s not a federally protected right. The rules vary by state; some have banished the practice, and others have imposed restrictions after an outcry from lawmakers.

South Dakota allows condemned inmates to “request a last meal from items that are accessible to the facility food service provider,” said Department of Corrections spokesperson Michael Winder.

Charles Rhines, executed in 2019 for the murder of Donnivan Schaeffer, requested fried chicken, cantaloupe, the Norwegian flatbread lefsa, strawberry and cherry yogurt, butter, black licorice, cookies and cream ice cream, root beer and coffee with cream and sugar, Winder said.

Nevada limits inmates to the prison system’s menu, but it doesn’t have to be the meal of the day, a Department of Corrections spokesperson said.

“For your last meal, you can choose anything from that menu,” said spokesperson Teri Vance. “You can mix and match.”

Daryl Mack, the last person executed in the state, requested a fish sandwich, fries and lemon-lime soft drink for his final meal in 2006, according to the Reno Gazette Journal, part of the USA TODAY Network.

In Wyoming, “at the discretion of the

Warden, the condemned inmate may be permitted a last meal of the inmate’s choosing,” said Department of Corrections spokesperson Stephanie Kiger. But they have to choose from food “available to the general population through the correctional facility’s food service department, although adherence to the scheduled menu and/or recommended portion sizes will not be required.”

A hand in your own funeral

The moment of a last meal has symbolic significance for some.

Carey Dean Moore, the last person executed in Nebraska, ordered Pizza Hut, cheesecake and soda – a request he originally made in jest, said the Rev. Robert Bryan, who shared Moore’s final meal in 2018 after coming to know him as his spiritual adviser.

Moore got the pizza and cheesecake and shared the meal with about eight friends and family in an infirmary room at the state penitentiary in Lincoln the night before the execution, said the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America pastor.

“It was a sacred moment, but not a sappy teary-eyed thing,” Bryan said, recalling how Moore asked one person to stop crying.

“It was not that kind of meal for him,” the former prison minister said. “It was, ‘Hey, I’m having a meal with my friends.’ Sort of like being able to participate in your own funeral meal.”

On extravagant example

Texas, which has performed more than one-third of all executions in the U.S. since 1976, famously outlawed special last meals after then-state Sen. John Whitmire expressed outrage over a 2011 death row prisoner’s request.

Kristin Houle Cuellar, executive director of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, said Whitmire was reacting to what was “perceived as a very extravagant meal” requested by Lawrence Brewer, who along with two co-defendants were convicted of torturing and killing a 49-year old disabled Black man in Jasper County in 1998.

Brewer requested for his last meal:

- Two chicken-fried steaks with gravy and sliced onions
- A triple-patty bacon cheeseburger
- A cheese omelet with ground beef, tomatoes, onions, bell peppers and jalapeños
- A bowl of fried okra with ketchup
- One pound of barbecued meat with half a loaf of white bread
- Three fajitas
- A meat lover’s pizza
- One pint of Blue Bell Ice Cream
- A slab of peanut butter fudge with crushed peanuts
- Three root beers

Not long after his execution, amid growing outcry, Texas abolished last meal requests in 2011.

Whitmire, now the mayor of Houston, did not return USA TODAY’s requests for comment.

The worst of the worst

Florida limits its prisoners to \$40 for a last meal, and the food must be purchased locally. Oklahoma has a \$25 limit.

Gilbert Postelle, executed in 2022 for shooting four people to death, had a McDonald’s-style meal, said Oklahoma Department of Corrections spokesperson Kay Thompson. The meal was 20 chicken nuggets with Ranch, BBQ, and honey mustard dipping sauces, two large orders of fries with ketchup, two chicken sandwiches, a caramel frappé and a large cola.

The total for the same meal at an Oklahoma McDonalds in 2024 was about \$27.

The Arizona Department of Corrections has published a list of last meal requests of the 40 prisoners it has executed since 1992.

Maryland abolished the death penalty in 2013. But condemned prisoners before then were given regular prison kitchen meals, the state’s former prison spokesman told USA TODAY.

“The sense was – considering these individuals had all been convicted of heinous murders, in many cases multiple homicides – the state was not going to go out of its way to provide special meals,” said Leonard Sipes, who now runs a website on law enforcement issues.

The former director of public information for the state’s Public Safety department recalled John Thanos saying he enjoyed killing. At one point leading up to his 1994 execution for a murder spree, Sipes said Thanos told him, “Hell, I’d kill you, if I had the opportunity.”

Loved ones of his victims also preferred he get no fancy meal, Sipes said. He recalled being asked, “You’re not giving him anything special for dinner, are you?”

Meals and movies

Some states have given condemned prisoners broad leeway – not just for food but other unusual requests.

Utah granted Ronnie Lee Gardner, in 2010, the last person the state executed, a smorgasbord of food and other requests, according to the Department of Corrections.

But he had the meal two days before the execution to “spend his final 48 hours fasting, aside from an occasional soda,” the document said. Agency spokesperson Karen Tapahe said moving the meal forward to allow for fasting probably was a religious accommodation.

Gardner also spent the last day watching the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy.

“In those final hours, it’s not uncommon for them to watch certain shows, something to bring them some sense of calm,” said Tapahe, with a nod to prison staff.

“They’re pretty accommodating.”

Contributing: Amanda Lee Myers and James Powel

Biden family digests Hunter’s verdict

Conviction may complicate campaign as Trump debate looms

Sarah D. Wire and Phillip M. Bailey
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Hunter Biden’s felony conviction Tuesday could continue to distract President Joe Biden during pivotal weeks of his 2024 reelection bid, with the first presidential debate against former President Donald Trump fast approaching and the president’s son’s second criminal trial coming shortly before Election Day.

Although not a part of his father’s campaign and not on the ballot himself, Hunter Biden’s conviction on three gun-related charges could also complicate Joe Biden’s campaign’s labeling of his opponent, Trump, as a felon who should not return to the Oval Office.



Hunter Biden Hunter Biden, a 54-year-old businessman and attorney, was found guilty of falsely claiming he was not using illegal drugs when he bought a Colt revolver in 2018 and illegally possessing that gun for 11 days after he bought it.

Trump has largely avoided talking about the trial proceedings. In the hours after the verdict, he did not address it on social media, and people in his orbit issued contrasting messages, indicating they hadn’t decided on a strategy for handling the guilty verdict.

Trump and Joe Biden are scheduled to face each other for the first time this year in a presidential debate June 27.

Sentencing normally is 120 days after the jury reaches a verdict, Judge Maryellen Noreika told the president’s son on Tuesday. If that holds true in Hunter Biden’s case, it would mean his family would find out how much time he would serve just days before the election.

The trial in Delaware laid bare graphic details of Hunter Biden’s year-long struggle with addiction, at times causing Biden family members visible anguish in the courtroom.

First lady Jill Biden, who is Hunter’s stepmother, watched much of the testimony along with her daughter Ashley Biden and Hunter Biden’s wife Melissa Cohen Biden. After about three hours of deliberation the jury found Hunter Biden guilty on three counts Tuesday.

Throughout the the proceedings, the White House and Biden’s campaign team refused to discuss the historic occurrence of the child of a sitting president facing felony criminal charges for the first time, which they called an internal family matter.

Within an hour of the verdict, the president issued a statement that expressed his love for Hunter, saying he is “so proud of the man he is today.”

“So many families who have had loved ones battle addiction understand the feeling of pride seeing someone you love come out the other side and be so strong and resilient in recovery,” Joe Biden said.

But ultimately, the president underscored that he must respect the jury’s decision.

“I will accept the outcome of this case and will continue to respect the judicial process as Hunter considers an appeal,” Joe Biden said in his statement.

“Jill and I will always be there for Hunter and the rest of our family with



Throughout Hunter Biden’s trial in Delaware, the White House and President Joe Biden’s campaign team refused to discuss what they call an internal family matter. ELIZABETH FRANTZ/REUTERS

our love and support. Nothing will ever change that.”

The president stayed away from the courthouse and avoided discussing the trial in public, but it has long been apparent that he is extremely protective of his youngest, and only surviving, son.

Joe Biden said halfway through the trial that if convicted, he would not pardon Hunter Biden.

Nonetheless, George W. Bush biographer Bill Minutaglio said the airing of Hunter Biden’s dirty laundry has gone beyond what other president’s children have been subject to, and that must eat at the president.

“I’m sure that he deeply, deeply cares for Hunter, and it must drive him crazy. It really must cause him a lot of sleepless nights to weigh the political calculus versus the personal calculus,” Minutaglio said.

The family put up a united front in the Wilmington courtroom as it has for the unrelated year-and-a-half-long investigation into the Biden family’s business dealings by House Republicans.

What are Republicans saying about Hunter Biden?

GOP officials largely avoided discussing the Delaware case, with some saying Republican voters already were up in arms about Trump’s 34-count felony conviction and they didn’t want to change the topic.

House Republicans’ impeachment inquiry into the president has largely stalled ahead of the election, though Republican leaders wrote to the Justice Department during the trial recommending Biden’s son Hunter and brother James be charged for making false statements to Congress during the investigation.

House Oversight Committee Chairman Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., who has been the face of that impeachment effort, called the verdict “a step toward accountability” but again urged the Justice Department to do its own investigation of Hunter Biden’s overseas business.

During the trial, Trump himself was asked to address the proceedings during an appearance on Fox News, but he instead pivoted to talk about addiction and his brother Fred Trump Jr., who died of complications from alcoholism.

That is noticeably different than how Trump acted in the 2020 contest. The



Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C., speaks to attendees at a Donald Trump rally in North Charleston, S.C. on Feb. 14. She weighed in on the Hunter Biden verdict on Tuesday. SAM WOLFE/REUTERS

former president repeatedly brought up Hunter Biden’s business ties to Ukraine, and mocked his past drug abuse.

The former president’s allies also released multiple reactions after the verdict.

Kash Patel, Trump’s national security adviser, said in a statement that the verdict “is a rare example of constitutional justice, one not where individuals receive biased treatment based on their last name” and “a fleeting moment of justice for all.”

He tried to contrast Hunter Biden’s verdict with Trump’s, saying in this situation the jury got to view all the evidence, a complaint Trump made in his case that the judge would not allow some evidence to be admitted.

Trump campaign press secretary Karoline Leavitt issued an additional statement on Tuesday saying the Hunter Biden trial, “has been nothing more than a distraction” from the “real crimes” being investigated by Congress.

“Crooked Joe Biden’s reign over the Biden Family Criminal Empire is all coming to an end on Nov. 5,” Leavitt said.

During their first presidential debate in 2020, Trump called out Hunter Biden for being administratively discharged from the Navy after testing positive for cocaine.

The specter of Hunter Biden’s legal troubles will likely rise again ahead of Election Day.

He faces a second trial in September in California over his failure to pay taxes for several years.

More than half of Americans said in a Reuters/Ipsos poll last summer that

they believe Hunter Biden received favorable treatment from prosecutors because he is the president’s son. That includes 75% of Republicans, 42% of independents and 33% of Democrats, the survey showed.

Congressional Republicans made similar claims Tuesday.

“Timing is everything. This is the veil of fairness in the Justice System under (the president),” Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C., said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley said on X, “never forget DOJ tried to avoid this trial & verdict by giving Hunter a sweetheart plea deal. Until the judge exposed them.” The gun case went to trial after a plea deal fell apart in July 2023 that could have resolved gun and taxes charges without prison time.

Hunter Biden’s guilty verdict may also muddy waters for Democrats, who as of late have relished in calling Trump a convicted felon. Other progressive allies, however, may use this moment to undercut Trump and Republican claims that there is a two-tiered legal justice system.

Will Hunter Biden’s conviction matter to voters?

Whether any of this will have an impact on the election is up for debate.

Republican thinkers hold varying opinions on how Hunter Biden’s legal woes could play out on the trail, with some suggesting Trump should take a no holds barred approach.

“This takes the gloves off now that these law cases are part of the political system, and it’s perfectly clear now that they ought to be discussing Hunter Biden’s behavior. I do not think this should be left alone,” Jim Gilmore, a former Virginia governor who served in the Trump administration, told USA TODAY.

Polling has shown the president’s son isn’t the top of mind for most voters, but other gauges show Joe Biden’s son is a vulnerability.

An October 2023 AP-NORC poll found 68% of U.S. adults think Joe Biden acted either unethically or illegally in his son’s business dealings. Just 30% said Joe Biden has done nothing wrong regarding Hunter’s business dealings.

Scott Jennings, a Republican strategist, said it could be wise for Trump to mostly steer clear of talking about his son on the campaign trail.

“People already want to fire Biden, and where he’s going to win the race is giving them a reason to rehire him and this has nothing to do with that,” he said.

But Jennings said Hunter Biden’s criminal charges could be used as a Republican jab against Biden when he speaks up for gun control or wealthier Americans paying a higher tax rate.

Liz Mair, a Republican political consultant who worked on former Sen. John McCain’s 2008 presidential bid, said the multiple Trump statements on Tuesday underscore that the presumptive GOP nominee’s team hasn’t figured out how to talk about this yet.

She said Trump won’t be able to resist bringing up Hunter Biden on the trail, but that may not win over pivotal voters.

“The problem is going to be fundamentally that Trump is on the ballot and Hunter isn’t,” she argued.

“People really don’t care about Hunter as a criminal the way they care about Trump as a criminal.”

Brown, Rosen to face off in Nev. Senate race

Mace, Moore win their primaries in S. Carolina

David Morgan
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Republican Sam Brown captured his party’s U.S. Senate nomination in Nevada on Tuesday, setting up a November showdown against Democratic Sen. Jacky Rosen that could impact Republican hopes of winning Senate control.

Brown, a former U.S. Army captain who was badly wounded in a roadside bombing in Afghanistan in 2008, emerged the victor from a crowded field, claiming 57.9% of the vote with 72% of ballots cast, according to The Associated Press.

In the Democratic primary, Rosen won renomination against two challengers by garnering 92.3% of the vote with 73% of ballots counted, The AP projected.

Voters also chose nominees on Tuesday in primary elections in South Carolina, Maine and North Dakota, while a Republican captured a special House election in Ohio.

“Thank you, Nevada! Next stop: November 5th,” Brown said in a post on the social media platform X. He had been backed by Trump and others in the party, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

In South Carolina, U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace overcame a primary election challenge from fellow Republican Catherine Templeton, advancing to a November general election showdown that she is likely to win.

Mace defeated Templeton 56.8% to 29.8% with 95% of the vote counted, according to the Associated Press, despite Templeton’s support from former House Speakers Kevin McCarthy and Newt Gingrich.

“We did it – You, Lowcountry voters did it! A thousand times over – THANK YOU!” Mace said on X.

The two-term South Carolina congresswoman now will face Democrat Michael Moore for a House of Representatives seat that independent analysts describe as solidly Republican. Moore bested Mac Deford 52.9% to 47.1% for the Democratic nomination, with 88% of votes counted.

Mace, 46, who was endorsed by Trump, raised eyebrows among her constituents last year by voting to oust McCarthy as the top Republican in Congress, a move that led to weeks of political chaos.

In another South Carolina primary race, incumbent Republican U.S. Rep. William Timmons narrowly turned back a challenge from state Rep. Adam Morgan by a margin of 51.6% to 48.4%, with 95% of ballots counted. Morgan had been backed by a group of hardline House Republicans.

In Maine, Republican voters chose state Rep. Austin Theriault to challenge Democratic U.S. Rep. Jared Golden in the general election. Golden was

uncontested in the state’s Democratic primary.

A former NASCAR stock car driver endorsed by Trump and House Speaker Mike Johnson, Theriault defeated Republican rival Michael Soboleski 66% to 33.4% with 82% of the vote in.

In Ohio, Republican state Sen. Michael Rulli defeated Democrat Michael Kripchak in a special U.S. House election to serve out the remaining term of former Rep. Bill Johnson, a Republican who left Congress in January.

In North Dakota, U.S. Rep. Kelly Armstrong defeated Lt. Gov. Tammy Miller for the Republican nomination to replace Governor Doug Burgum, who is viewed as a possible Trump running mate.

With 95% of the vote counted, Armstrong defeated Miller 73.2% to 26.8%. Miller had been endorsed by Burgum.

Armstrong now will face Democratic state Sen. Merrill Piepkorn in November. Piepkorn ran uncontested for the Democratic nomination.

2 face murder charges after shooting on Tenn. interstate

**Christopher Cann
and Natalie Neysa Alund**
USA TODAY

Five people, including four children, were in critical condition and two people faced murder charges after a shooting along a West Tennessee interstate late Tuesday.

Officers responded to a shooting that broke out on a stretch of Interstate 240, east of downtown Memphis, just after 5 p.m., according to the Memphis Police Department. When they arrived, police found an empty car riddled with bullet holes.

Meanwhile, the five victims

arrived by a private vehicle at Baptist Memorial Hospital-Memphis in critical condition, police said. The children, ages 2 to 8, and a 30-year-old man were transferred to other hospitals.

Officers identified the suspect vehicle as a 2022 gray Mitsubishi Outlander and issued a citywide call asking officers to look out for the SUV, which had been stolen on June 9, according to the police department. Within minutes, officers spotted the vehicle and tried to stop it but the suspects fled, and a high-speed chase began.

During their getaway attempt, the suspects fired shots

at police.

About 10 miles northwest of the shooting scene, the driver crashed into a ditch, and the two men took off on foot. Police soon had them in custody.

Both men, Lorenzo Watson, 18, and Kendrick Ray, 21, have been charged with multiple counts of attempted first-degree murder, using a firearm during a felony, evading arrest and felony theft, police announced in a social media post Wednesday.

Ray was also wanted on charges of attempted first-degree murder, carjacking, and employment of a firearm during the commission of a dangerous felony.

It was not immediately clear whether Watson or Ray were being represented by private attorneys or the public defender's office.

The Shelby County Public Defender's Office did not return a request for comment.

The afternoon shooting was

one of two violent incidents on the Memphis interstate within 24 hours. At midnight Tuesday, police responded to a shooting on I-240 in which a person in a black Chevrolet Cobalt pointed a handgun at another vehicle and fired multiple times, police said.

The victim's car was struck but the woman not hurt. As she pulled off the interstate, her car stalled and the suspect chased her until she managed to get inside a bystander's car and flee.



A posted sign warns swimmers and surfers to keep out of the water as officials keep the beach closed a day after a shark attack on a swimmer in Del Mar, Calif., this month.

MIKE BLAKE/REUTERS

Shark attack numbers tick up after double Florida attacks

Cybele Mayes-Osterman
USA TODAY

A pair of “exceedingly rare” shark attacks off Florida left multiple people injured last week, but experts say beachgoers shouldn’t be alarmed.

The two attacks on two beaches in the state left three people injured in the span of just 1½ hours on Friday. The first victim, a 45-year-old woman, was swimming past the first sandbar of a beach in Watersound with her husband when the shark attacked. She had part of her left arm amputated and suffered “significant trauma” to her midsection. Watersound is on the Gulf Coast about 120 miles west of Tallahassee.

Two girls ages 15 and 17 were attacked less than 4 miles up the coast in Fort Walton as they swam in waist-deep water with friends. One girl sustained “significant” injuries to her hand and leg, while the other took minor wounds to her foot.

A third attack occurred the same day near the Hawaiian island of Oahu. A 25-year-old woman was taken to a trauma hospital in serious condition after a shark attacked her.

“It’s rare, exceedingly rare, to have three victims in one day,” South Walton Fire District Fire Chief Ryan Crawford said at a news conference Friday.

Experts say attacks rise with more people in water

Shark attacks and fatalities rose last year. But experts say recent numbers are not out of the ordinary.

Researchers at the International Shark Attack File, part of the University of Florida’s Florida Program for Shark Research, confirmed 69 unprovoked bites worldwide, up from the five-year average of 63 attacks. Thirty-six of those – more than half – were in the United States, and 16 of those were in Florida. The attacks killed 10 people, five more than the year before.

So far this year, shark bites have decreased, said Gavin Naylor, head of the research program and manager of the file. “This year has been very, very low, but it’s ticking up now,” he said.

Naylor said that when warm weather brings more people into the water, the chance of attacks increases.

Bait fish, which sharks feed on in the Florida area, also swim close to shore, raising the

risk of a shark encounter, he said. “You have humans swimming in the water and sharks feeding on their normal food source and it’s right in where the people are, and accidents happen,” Naylor said.

Local officials saw the back-to-back attacks as an anomaly.

Mackenzie McClintock, public information officer for the South Walton Fire District, called last week’s incidents “very rare.” The last death from a shark attack in the jurisdiction was in 2005, nearly a decade ago, she said.

“This is not something that we have ever experienced before,” she added. She said 20 to 30 personnel responded to the attacks, including some medical responders that arrived in helicopters.

The two victims with severe injuries have a “fighting chance,” Walton County Sheriff Michael Adkinson said at a news conference Friday.

In a post on CaringBridge, a mother of one of the teenage girls injured in the attack said she and a friend rushed to the beach when she heard the reports of a shark to find her daughter on the ground “lifeless her eyes closed mouth white and pale.”

“The wound on her leg or all that was left of her leg was something out of a movie,” she wrote.

A spokesperson for the family declined to comment further to USA TODAY.

Bull sharks, common to Florida, likely behind attack

McClintock said officials don’t want to speculate on what kind of shark was behind the attack. But Naylor said a bull shark was almost certainly behind it. The species is one of two, along with the tiger shark, that swim close to the Florida shoreline, he said.

He said deputies told him after the attacks that drone footage captured bull sharks swimming close to the shore. Sixty to 70 sharks could swim near the coast every day, he said.

“It’s not unusual. And they mind their own business.”

Better water quality also could contribute to shark attacks, according to shark researchers at the university. For instance, improved water quality around New York could have factored into the first reported shark attack in the New York City area in more than half a century last year.

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Freeman

Continued from Page 1A

coach they have. Caitlin Collins is phenomenal.” Haley was apparently confusing Clark’s name with CNN anchor Kaitlan Collins, who was also left off the Olympic team.

This is what it has been like from conservative and right-wing influencers after Clark didn’t make the Olympics. Lots of fake outrage about something many of them know nothing about. They don’t know the WNBA. They don’t know Caitlin Clark. Or Caitlin Collins. They don’t know basketball. They think a guard is someone you overrun at the Capitol.

What they do know is culture war. And race. The right *loves* talking race while simultaneously saying that’s all *you* do. Sometimes their talk about race or culture is clumsily cloaked. Sometimes it’s blatant.

In this case, with Clark, she is being used by bad actors to fuel the culture

wars they created.

If you think it’s absurd to put Clark and “culture war” in the same sentence, you haven’t been paying attention. Everything is a prop to be used, and she’s no different. We fight over so much, and Clark is just another one of those brawls. It’s a nonsensical fight but it’s a fight. This is why Haley jumped in. She knows it’s a culture war. Why else would she care about who makes an Olympic team?

Clark doesn’t want to fight anyone. She’s just a hooper. But extremists are trying to co-opt her greatness and disfigure it into something grotesque. There is a creepy “we will protect our Caitlin at all costs” vibe, and yes, it’s weird. So weird. So oddly, strangely weird.

It’s also problematic and at times dark. There were numerous right-wing social media posters, some with huge accounts, piecing together collages of photos of part of the selection committee, focusing on the photos of the Black female members. The consensus expressed by these accounts was that Clark was left off because she’s white.

Part of the right-wing reaction is the subtext that Dawn Staley hates Clark, which fits into the phony culture war narrative. Meanwhile, Staley said this recently about the star: “When I think about Caitlin Clark, I do think she’s one of the greatest. Like she’s the greatest of her time. She’s the greatest of her time. I want women’s basketball to grow, and I’m not too shy about saying why it grows. She’s made it grow over the past two years. I’m actually gonna go back to her freshman year when she was killing then when nobody wanted to talk about Caitlin Clark because (UConn player) Paige Bueckers was all of that, deservedly so.

“Caitlin Clark won my Dawn Staley Award her freshman year when everything was about Paige Bueckers. That’s nothing to take away from Paige Bueckers, but it’s everything to say we need to make sure we’re telling the stories of our entire game. Sometimes you have to go against the masses to really cut down and say what’s happening in real time. Caitlin Clark is the sole reason why

viewership has shot through the roof for our game. Sole reason.”

Does that sound like someone who hates Clark?

One of the other things you’ll hear is about marketing and money left on the table by Team USA. But when is the last time any of these people worried about how much money could be made from merch? When is the last time any of them cared about which women should make the Olympic team? The answer is never. Not once.

Race is complicated and thorny. It can be a unifying force but can often be used as a weapon, and that’s what is happening here. Not in every instance but in many of them.

They would not be reacting this way if Clark was a dominant Black player shooting 3-pointers from the logo. There would be no capes. No outrage. Haley wouldn’t be chiming in. She wouldn’t care.

Welcome to the culture war, Caitlin Collins.

Sorry ... Clark.

FAFSA

Continued from Page 1A

financial aid, they have historically had the lowest FAFSA completion rates, said Bill DeBaun, senior director of data and strategic initiatives at the National College Attainment Network, a nonprofit organization that promotes college access and success.

The latest data as of May 24 showed that the disparity has narrowed as the Education Department addressed some of the problems with the form and accelerated application processing in April and May.

The Education Department says more than 10 million FAFSA forms have been submitted to date, and the agency is processing them in one to three days. James Kvaal, the education undersecretary, told USA TODAY last month that any student who still hasn’t submitted the form should complete it as soon as possible.

Nonetheless, the overall rates are still worse than last year, and the disparate impact on low-income students in the initial months of the rollout remains a concern for families, educators and policymakers, especially considering that the path to college education heavily depends on financial aid packages.

The fact that several institutions were unable to make these determinations in March and April would have a “disproportionate impact” on the enrollment numbers of low-income students, said Emmanuel Guillory, senior government relations director at the American Council on Education.

“They need to know, ‘What kind of aid can you offer me because I don’t have the luxury of depending upon family wealth,’” Guillory said, voicing the concerns of low-income students seeking financial aid.

Another concern is whether the FAFSA mishap will further widen the equity gap – essentially reversing progress made in recent years, advocates and experts say.

Last month, the American Council on Education and 35 other higher education groups sent a letter to Congress asking them “to undertake a long-term assessment of the FAFSA delays’ impact on students – particularly low-income students – and institutions.”

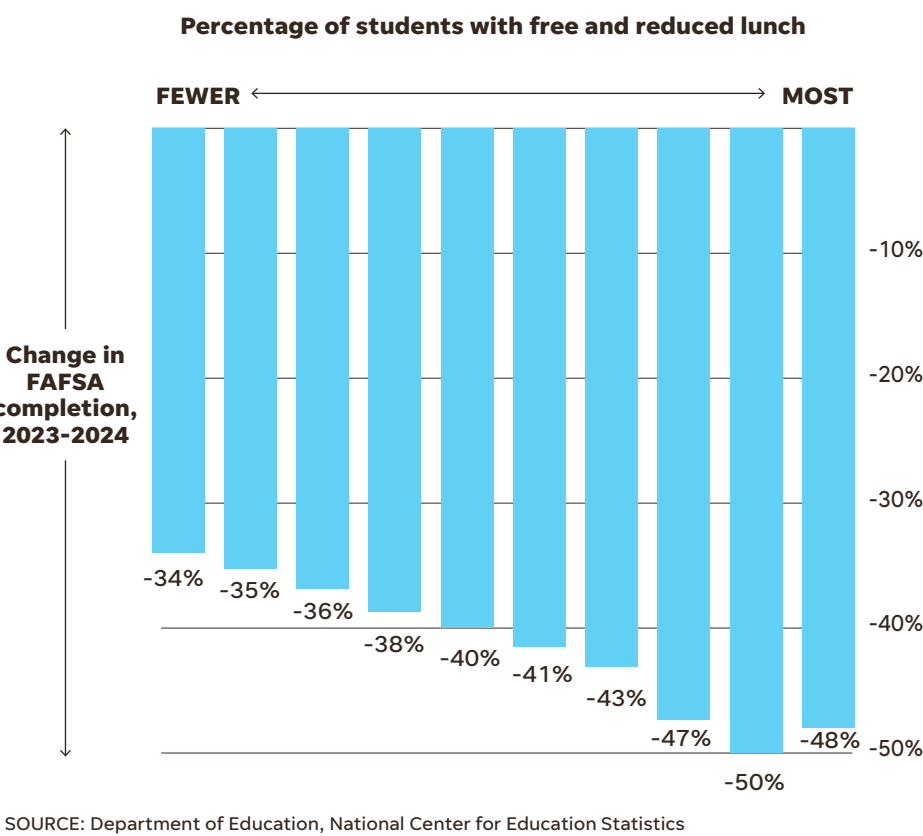
“Everybody’s far behind, but the schools and districts that are furthest behind are lower income,” said Ellie Bruecker, director of research at the Institute for College Access and Success, a nonprofit group that advocates for affordable college education. “They also tend to be serving higher proportions of students of color.”

When USA TODAY compared the lowest-income schools with the highest-income ones, the difference in average completion rates was 13 points this year. Last year, it was 11 points.

“It is perfectly logical to me that they would be further behind because they’re working with fewer resources to try to get caught up,” Bruecker said, referring to low-income schools. “It’s really unfortunate but not unexpected that we would see that pattern because we have not corrected for those resource gaps.”

FAFSA failures hit poorest students hardest

As problems plagued financial aid filings this year, schools with the students most in need of money for college were the most likely to see drops in application completions, as reflected in March.



He started to doubt his future: “Do I even get to go to college?” Johnson said. That nagging question swung back and forth in his head for months.

“I was on pins and needles the whole time because I didn’t think I’d be able to go,” he told USA TODAY.

Johnson first tried submitting his FAFSA in early January, but it took months for the Federal Student Aid office to process his mother’s Social Security number, a common issue reported by applicants. He then had to redo the entire application toward the end of March after submitting it for the wrong school year.

By that time, Johnson was on the edge of forgoing his college plans. “April came around, and I’m like, ‘OK, like I need to make a decision on where I’m going. And FAFSA still ain’t done,’” he said.

His aid offer didn’t arrive until mid-May, and when it came, he said it was “a big relief.”

Johnson is a recent graduate of Augusta Independent School, where his mother works in the cafeteria. His father works at a local mill.

“It has been a long climb out of the deep hole for FAFSA submissions and completions this cycle,” DeBaun said.

At the end of March, the number of completed applications was down about 40% from a year ago, FAFSA completion data showed. The figures have improved since then, but as of May 24, the number of applications completed was still down by more than 14% from the same period last year.

According to federal data, Augusta Independent in Bracken County, Kentucky, serves students from low-income families with over two-thirds of its student body considered economically disadvantaged. As of last week, the Education Department processed 14 applications submitted out of the school’s 19 seniors.

In rural Falmouth, Kentucky, a few dozen miles from Augusta Independent, Pendleton County High School had only half of the applications processed compared to last year.

There are other standouts, too. For example, at Provine High School in Jackson, Mississippi, a majority-Black school, completed applications were down 41%, while across the border in Nashville, Tennessee, Hillwood High

has 70% fewer completions.

Turtle Mountain Community High School in Belcourt, North Dakota, had 68% fewer completions. The school, which serves Indigenous students, has the biggest drop in the state and is among the schools hurt the most nationwide. A majority of the students in these schools are from low-income families.

Once the FAFSA hiccups were fixed, “higher-income districts really got a move on” completing applications, while the climb was steeper for lower-income districts, Bruecker said.

What states are the most behind?

From 2% in Indiana to 22% in Alabama, the drops in FAFSA completions vary across states, but the worst-hit states are the most rural and impoverished, USA TODAY’s analysis found. So far, no state has matched last year’s numbers, with Alabama and Mississippi reporting the steepest declines.

The other laggards are West Virginia, New Mexico, Hawaii, Oklahoma, Florida, Arizona, Maine and Kentucky.

“You traditionally have low-income, very low-income folk, which mainly reside in poor rural areas, since we’re a high rural state, and they’re going to be by far more impacted in more ways than one,” said Aaron Thompson, president of Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

“It was much more of a sprint this year than a marathon,” said Dave Sobush, director of research and policy at the Florida College Access Network, a statewide organization that promotes postsecondary education. The organization estimates that \$363 million in need-based financial aid has been left on the table this year for eligible students in the state.

After this year’s rollout glitches, the organization pivoted its efforts toward helping students apply for summer school aid, Sobush said.

Experts outlined several reasons for the disparities in completion rates among states, pointing primarily to the lack of resources at low-income schools and limited college access in remote areas.

Kim Welch, executive director at GEAR UP Kentucky, explained that the FAFSA process, particularly the new

process, demands hands-on engagement with students and their families.

GEAR UP, a federally funded program designed to support high-poverty students with college aspirations, helped Jesse Johnson, the Augusta Independent student in Kentucky, complete his FAFSA and navigate the glitches.

“When you don’t have staffing resources, or the capacity of your existing staff to support that, it impacts the rate at which our students and families with lower-income backgrounds can navigate the process,” Welch said, adding the process can be especially overwhelming for first-generation college students.

The FAFSA difficulties come amid a nationwide decline in undergraduate enrollment among young Americans over the last decade, which still hasn’t rebounded to pre-pandemic levels.

As USA TODAY previously reported, the FAFSA troubles caused many students to fall through the cracks or opt against college altogether.

“It’s likely we may see a decrease in enrollment. And it’s likely that low-income students may be impacted more than high-income students,” said Guillory, the senior government relations director at the American Council on Education.

Sobush at the Florida College Access Network said that the state’s tight labor market, in which more graduates are choosing work over college, is also lowering college-going rates.

A recent report by the Helios Education Foundation shows that Floridian graduates entering the workforce directly out of high school rose by 10 points between 2010 and 2019. In the same period, overall postsecondary enrollments declined from 64% to 56%.

Review of student aid office

The Federal Student Aid office has faced significant pressure to resolve FAFSA issues, including letters from senators and representatives on education committees. Last month, three dozen higher education associations called the delays “debilitating” in one such letter.

In February, over a dozen U.S. senators, including Charles Grassley and Thom Tillis, sent a letter to Education Secretary Miguel Cardona expressing concerns about the FAFSA rollout’s impact on farm and small business families. They criticized the department for botching the launch and for delaying the release past Oct. 1.

Several more letters were sent to Cardona by the members of Congress in May urging the secretary to resolve FAFSA issues for the next school year. The letter from U.S. representatives from Oregon said: “We continue to hear of significant problems with the application process that threaten to permanently affect the college ambitions of young people.”

Amid the scrutiny, the top Education Department official overseeing FAFSA, Richard Cordray, announced that he will step down by the end of this month.

All this pressure led the Biden administration to commission an independent review of the Federal Student Aid office announced late last month.

Meanwhile, several colleges have extended their deadlines for students to commit to enroll.

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education’s Thompson said the FAFSA delays come amid widespread skepticism about college’s value: “The delays are not just going to affect our low-income families but also many of our working-class families.”

“There is this whole lot of philosophy out there that college is not worth it. So, I would argue that it’s bigger than just whether our low-income families are getting any money,” Thompson said.

Contributing: Zachary Schermele

OPINION

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AN OPINION ROUNDUP FROM OUR COLUMNISTS

What Hunter Biden’s verdict shows

President’s son found guilty.
Hey Trump, is the system still ‘rigged’?



Hunter Biden’s conviction on three federal gun charges is the needle that pops former president and convicted felon Donald Trump’s inflated and ludicrous claims of a rigged American justice system.

The evidence against President Joe Biden’s son, like the evidence against Trump in his hush money case, was strong. And as in Trump’s case in New York City, the prosecutors, the defense attorneys and, most important, the jurors did their jobs in Wilmington, Delaware:

They found the younger Biden guilty of buying a gun he knew he wasn’t supposed to posses while knowingly lying on a federal form, saying he wasn’t addicted to drugs. He’s guilty, he can appeal and the justice system worked as it’s supposed to work.

The system worked in Trump’s case as well, but the Republican Party’s presumptive presidential nominee and his minions have done everything possible to obscure that fact with lies and utter nonsense. Trump continues to rail against the judge in his case, to claim a state prosecution was somehow directed by President Biden – which isn’t how anything works – and to whine endlessly about how he’s being persecuted:

● Throughout Trump’s trial, shameless Republicans showed up to gripe and grouse and run cover for their new-felonious leader. They stood in clusters outside the Manhattan courthouse, all dressed the same to mirror Trump’s suit-clad look, and babbled conspiratorial garbage while casting aspersions on the jurors who were their doing their civic duty.

● None of that happened in Hunter Biden’s trial. The president has expressed support and love for his son, whose struggles with drug addiction are well documented, but he hasn’t protested the case, called the prosecution unjust or done a thing to get in the way of the process.

Democrats didn’t rally to the Biden side or stand like dimwitted lemmings outside the federal courthouse to rail against some make-believe injustice.

● Look at the juxtaposition between Trump’s response to his conviction and President Biden’s response to his son’s conviction.

Trump again called his trial “rigged” and “a hoax,” said the judge is a “devil” and said: “These are bad people. These are, in many cases, I believe, sick people.”

Following Hunter Biden’s conviction, the president said in a statement: “I will accept the outcome of this case and will continue to respect the judicial process as Hunter considers an appeal. Jill and I will always be there for Hunter and the rest of our family with our love and support.”

In Trump’s desperate, spider-filled mind, President Biden has weaponized the Department of Justice against him. Again, Trump’s conviction came in a New York state court, not in federal court, so that assertion lies somewhere between dumb and ignorant.

But now, are Trump and his MAGA Republican toadies actually going to argue that this “weaponized” Justice Department – this supposedly devious arm of the Democratic Party – hauled off and convicted the son of the sitting Democratic president?

Hunter Biden’s conviction is no joke. He could be sentenced up to 25 years in prison.

And, further eviscerating Trump’s the-justice-system-is-rigged fantasies, Biden faces another trial on federal tax charges in September.

Our justice system isn’t rigged. It’s working as it should, holding people accountable regardless of who they happened to be.

Trump will undoubtedly keep saying otherwise, doing untold damage to Americans’ faith in one of the central parts of our democracy.

His farcical claims will undoubtedly continue, and the embarrassing chorus of Republicans behind him will keep echoing the same pathetic bull.

But any person with brains enough to rattle can look at the jury’s verdict in Hunter Biden’s case and see that justice, while it can be imperfect, remained blind in these two high-profile cases.

The difference is one accepts it while the other whines and dissembles like witless fools.

— Rex Huppke

Hunter Biden’s drug problem
is America’s drug problem



Hunter Biden was found guilty on federal charges Tuesday for lying about his drug use on a gun purchase application in 2018, for lying to the gun dealer and for owning the gun. Yet, Hunter Biden’s drug problem is America’s drug problem.

His case reflects the reality of widespread substance abuse in our nation, reinforces harmful behavior through media glamorization of substance use and underscores systemic problems in social services. The case also highlights the need for comprehensive drug reform in the United States:

● According to the Department of Health and Hu-



President Joe Biden talks with his son Hunter Biden upon arriving in New Castle, Del., on Tuesday. Earlier in the day, a jury convicted the younger Biden of federal gun charges, a historic first for the offspring of a sitting president. ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

man Services, more than 45 million Americans ages 12 and older suffer from drug addiction. That’s greater than the populations of New York and Florida combined. Drug availability is widespread across all socioeconomic groups, with prescription drugs, illegal substances and alcohol being readily accessible.

Drug use profoundly affects families, regardless of whether your dad is the president of the United States or an ordinary individual. And just like any family, the Biden family has experienced a range of emotions, including worry, fear, anger and sadness.

President Biden has taken a lot of heat for his son’s actions, but that shouldn’t be the case.

“Hunter Biden’s struggles with drug use and legal issues would likely remain largely undisclosed if he weren’t the son of the president; the scrutiny placed on the Biden family is unprecedented,” Lakesha Cole, founder and principal publicist at Florida-based She PR, told me. “This is as much because attacking political enemies’ family members has become a favorite weapon of political opponents when more direct attacks fail. The goal is to plant enough doubt in people’s minds about Biden’s authenticity to delegitimize him.”

As Cole noted, Hunter Biden’s predicament is a reflection of what tens of millions of families in the United States grapple with. In that sense, his story is not a political story – it’s a mirror of what happens in many families when a loved one’s substance use disorder brings heartache and shame.

● President Biden has a historic opportunity to transform this personal and public tragedy into a moment of national reflection and empathy. If he spoke openly about his family’s addiction journey, he could destigmatize substance use disorders and demonstrate that this crisis knows no boundaries and does not discriminate.

Such a shift from scandal to solidarity would encourage a profound identification with other families experiencing these daily struggles.

The president also could highlight the urgent need for comprehensive addiction treatment and mental health resources in a country where 1 in 6 people ages 12 and older have substance use disorder.

And he could remind the country of his promise to invest in holistic addiction treatment to support families on the path to healing.

● Sharing stories of resilience and recovery while promoting access to effective treatment programs can turn this challenging situation into a catalyst for positive change. This approach humanizes the administration’s efforts, making them more relatable and showing that officials understand and care about the struggles faced by ordinary Americans.

It’s about recognizing the pain, offering hope and working toward solutions that can assist millions of Americans who are battling addiction.

● While Hunter Biden’s drug problem and trial on gun charges received outsized media and public attention, the intersection between drug use and gun ownership has long been a concern. Drug users seek to buy guns for various reasons, including self-protection, intimidation or criminal activities.

In any case, the problem needs to be addressed with policy reform and social action, not ridicule and blame.

I do not believe Hunter Biden or any other American should have access to a gun while under the influence. Substance use can impair judgment and increase the

likelihood of violent behavior, and access to a weapon while under the influence of drugs increases the risk of accidental shootings, domestic violence and community safety threats.

This is not a time to shame Hunter Biden, but an opportunity to create meaningful change in media portrayals, health policies and our own biases toward drug addiction and recovery.

If you or someone you know needs help battling a substance abuse addiction, contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration’s National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

— Marla Bautista

President Biden is in deep trouble,
but not because of his son’s conviction



Wow.

Less than two weeks after former President Trump was found guilty in his New York hush money trial, the country on Tuesday got news of another first: President Biden’s son was convicted of federal gun charges.

Hunter Biden could face years in prison, and still awaits another trial in California later this year on federal tax charges.

Regardless of how one feels about Trump or the Bidens and the fairness of their respective charges and trials, it is noteworthy that both a former president – and presumed Republican presidential nominee – and a sitting president’s son are now both convicted felons in the eyes of the law.

This shroud of scandal would have been shocking at any other time in U.S. history. The past few years, however, have ushered in a new era of American politics where criminal convictions affecting both leading candidates for president in an election year don’t feel all that extraordinary.

That’s partly why, as I’ve written previously, I don’t believe Trump’s conviction will influence the election results in any meaningful way (other than perhaps to boost his support).

Similarly, I don’t see Hunter Biden’s verdict doing anything to sway voters’ perceptions of his father:

● Just as Trump’s supporters were quick to discount his conviction as political persecution, the same will no doubt happen with Hunter. A sympathetic news media has focused on the first son’s drug and alcohol addiction and pinned much of his legal woes on that. (Not surprisingly, so has Hunter Biden.)

As difficult as addiction may be, it does not give anyone a free pass to commit criminal behavior.

● And while it’s true that a former president and a president’s son are not on the same plane, Hunter’s legal problems have always carried the possibility of a connection with his father, given that the younger Biden’s lucrative foreign business dealings revolved around selling access to the Biden name – and possibly Biden himself while he was still vice president.

● Hunter’s alleged international influence-peddling operation has remained off the table in special counsel David Weiss’ investigation, which could pose much more serious risks to the Bidens.

All this raises the question of whether the president’s son has gotten special treatment by the president’s Justice Department. That certainly seemed the case last summer when a sweetheart plea deal negotiated in part by Weiss fell through because of its incredible leniency.

When Attorney General Merrick Garland finally appointed a special counsel in Hunter’s case, legal analysts say he circumvented federal regulations by appointing Weiss since he already was working with the DOJ as a U.S. attorney.

Still, as shady as Hunter’s actions and the Biden family business are, the biggest risk to Biden’s reelection odds remains ... himself:

● The president’s age and mental ability are at the top of voters’ concerns, and for good reason.

At 81, Biden’s mumbles, stumbles and odd behavior in public are a constant reminder of his diminishing abilities.

The Wall Street Journal recently posted a damning, in-depth report on the president’s decline. Honestly, it’s sad. He has no business running for another four-year term.

● Pollster Nate Silver this week pointed to Biden’s all-time low approval rating over the weekend of 37.4%, according to FiveThirtyEight, as a warning that it may well be time for Biden to pull the plug on his campaign.

“Dropping out would be a big risk,” Silver wrote on X. “But there’s some threshold below which continuing to run is a bigger risk.”

“Are we there yet? I don’t know. But it’s more than fair to ask.”

● Biden was so sure Trump would be easy for him to beat. That’s simply not the case.

As startling as the recent criminal convictions of Donald Trump and Hunter Biden have been, they aren’t going to distract voters from questioning whether Joe Biden can keep doing the country’s most important job.

— Ingrid Jacques

Search team says it solved 53-year mystery

Wreckage of jet found on floor of Lake Champlain

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

A search team says they discovered the wreckage of a private jet missing for more than half a century on the floor of Lake Champlain.

For decades authorities believed the plane carrying two crew members and three employees of an Atlanta real estate firm had crashed into the lake as it headed from Burlington, Vermont, to Providence, Rhode Island. In more than a dozen searches since 1971, each one using more sophisticated and newer technology, searchers tried to locate the aircraft, but came up empty.

Now, experts say, the long-suspected fate of the plane and the five people on board has been confirmed.

“The mystery ... is finally known,” Garry Kozak, one of the undersea searchers responsible for the discovery, said in a statement. “Hopefully it will give some closure to the family members who have long sought their loved ones’ resting place.”

Bad weather, missing jet

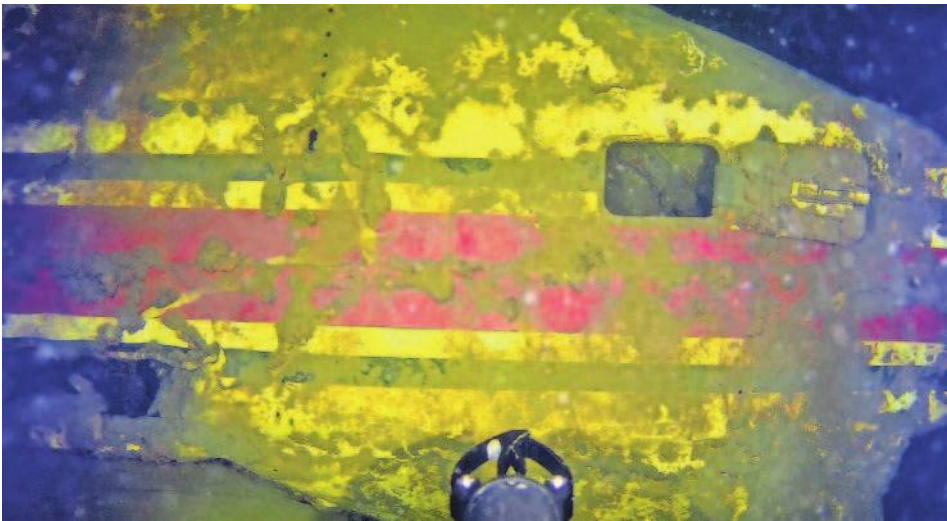
It was a snowy evening in January 1971 when the team from Cousins Properties real estate left Burlington.

After a successful takeoff around 8 p.m. and normal communications between the crew and the control tower, the jet made a turn over Lake Champlain, which at its widest point extends 14 miles and runs up the border of Vermont and New York to Canada, where it meets the Richelieu River in Quebec.

Soon the controller lost all radar contact with the plane, according to Kozak. The controller tried several times to contact the pilot, but no answer came.

No mayday or communication was ever received; officials suspected that the plane had most likely crashed into the lake, though there was no physical evidence at the time.

Immediate searches concentrated on Lake Champlain, with aircraft flying over the surface in hopes of finding the



Wreckage found in the depths of Lake Champlain that experts believe to be a jet that went missing 53 years ago. The private plane vanished after it left Burlington, Vermont, on a snowy evening in late January 1971.

PROVIDED BY GARRY KOZAK & TIM MCDONALD

jet or its passengers, according to Kozak. Authorities were set to bring in a submarine to scour the lake, but temperatures dropped and the lake froze over, suspending searches until the spring.

Months later, after some of the ice melted, debris from the plane was found on Shelburne Point, just southwest of Burlington, according to Kozak. A search team was brought into inspect the area, but after two weeks it came up empty. And so followed days, months and years of unsuccessful searches. Between 1971 and 2014, more than 17 failed attempts were made at finding the jet.

How was the jet found?

Enter Kozak.

The undersea search expert, who has previously assisted in the discovery of sunken ships and crashed planes, was first introduced to the story of the missing jet in the 1980s. Over the decades, he kept up with the searches, but he did not get involved until 2014, when he heard an autonomous underwater vehicle and sonar system scanned the depths of the lake and found nothing.

He was convinced the plane was somewhere in the depths.

Kozak got to work, and soon contact-

ed a pair of researchers who had conducted a sonar scan of the lake. They agreed to share the data with Kozak, which proved helpful as he identified four “suspicious anomalies.”

In 2022, Kozak joined up with two colleagues – Hans Hug and Bruce Stebbins – who agreed to help scour the locations of the anomalies using a remote operated vehicle. Their first dive was unsuccessful. But last July, the men returned to the lake, and, during their second search, discovered what appeared to be the jet. But, while it was an airplane, it wasn’t the one they were looking for. Upon closer inspection, this plane appeared to be military, as indicated by some of the stencils.

Last winter, Kozak went through the sonar data again and picked out one location west of Juniper Island, about 3 miles southwest of Burlington, as a target of interest. On May 19, Kozak and Hug returned to the lake to inspect the area with Hug’s high resolutions sonar system. The search revealed a large debris field “very representative of a jet aircraft crash.”

While there was little doubt that this was the jet – especially considering the size of the debris field – the men wanted photographic evidence. Within a week, a remotely operated vehicle captured a

broken plane fuselage, painted white with red and black accent striping – the same custom paint scheme as the missing jet. Nearby were the remains of two turbine jet engines along with broken wing structure, Kozak said.

“The video and pictures left zero doubt that (the jet) had finally been located and a 53-year-old mystery solved,” Kozak said in a statement.

Families have complicated reaction

But while the mystery of the missing jet has been solved, families of the men who died in the crash are grappling with reopened wounds and new questions.

“To have this found now ... it’s peaceful feeling, at the same time it’s a very sad feeling,” Barbara Nikitas, niece of pilot George Nikita, told The Associated Press.

“We know what happened. We’ve seen a couple of photos. We’re struggling I think with that now.”

Frank Wilder’s father, also Frank Wilder, was on the jet when it went down. The younger Frank Wilder told The Associated Press that while the uncertainty was “distressing,” the plane’s the discovery brings a set of complicated questions.

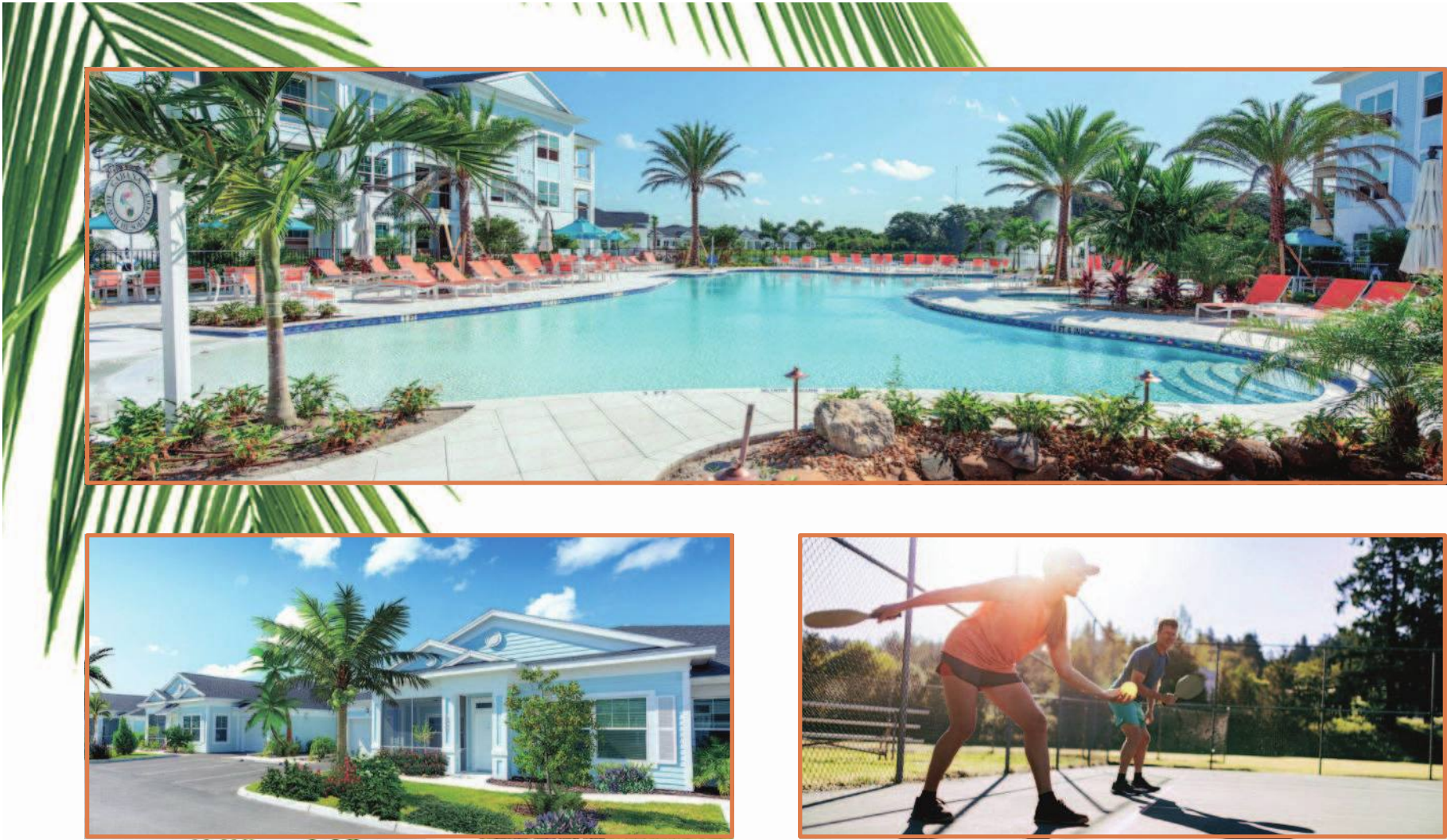
“I’m feeling relieved that I know where the plane is now but unfortunately it’s opening other questions and we have to work on those now,” he told the AP.

NTSB investigates findings

The National Transportation Safety Board said in email that it’s looking over a package of information about the crash it received through the Federal Aviation Administration.

“We will be evaluating the specifics of what was found, and the degree of certainty to which we are able to positively link it back to the wreckage that was located,” said spokesperson Peter C. Knudson.

“Following that, if and when any of that wreckage were recovered, we would determine what level of examination would be appropriate given what is recovered and what condition it is in.”



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JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

J&J TO PAY \$700 MILLION TO SETTLE TALC LAWSUIT

Johnson & Johnson will pay \$700 million to settle a lawsuit by dozens of states that accused the pharmaceutical industry giant of intentionally misleading customers about the safety of its talc-based baby powder, officials announced. J&J sold products with talc for more than 100 years before discontinuing them globally in 2023 after facing thousands of lawsuits. The coalition of 43 attorneys general found Johnson & Johnson failed to disclose that the talc sometimes contained asbestos and that asbestos is harmful and can lead to cancer. The company did not admit guilt as part of the settlement.



ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES

US AIMS AT CHINA TO WIDEN SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA

The United States on Wednesday dramatically broadened sanctions on Russia, including by targeting China-based companies selling semiconductors to Moscow, as part of its effort to undercut the Russian military machine. Among the steps, the U.S. Treasury said it was raising “the risk of secondary sanctions for foreign financial institutions that deal with Russia’s war economy.” “Today’s actions strike at their remaining avenues for international materials and equipment, including their reliance on critical supplies from third countries,” Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said.

WATCHDOG GROUPS SEEK DOJ PROBE OF YOUTUBE

Tech and competition watchdog groups have called on the Justice Department to probe YouTube, saying the video-streaming platform could enable Google and its parent company, Alphabet (GOOGL.O), to dominate home entertainment. In a letter to antitrust chief Jonathan Kanter dated Tuesday, the American Economic Liberties Project, Demand Progress and nine other groups expressed concern about YouTube’s growth and its pre-installation on smartphones and TVs. The groups called on the regulator to investigate YouTube, among the top streaming services in the U.S. “Anyone looking for something to watch can see this space is very competitive,” said a YouTube spokesperson.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADJUSTMENT DIPS TO 3%

The latest estimate of Social Security’s cost-of-living adjustment for 2025 slipped to 3% after the government reported 3.3% inflation in May, new calculations showed Wednesday. The 2025 COLA adjustment eased as inflation moderated after an uptick this year. But it still likely underestimates what seniors need to keep up with inflation, said Mary Johnson, a retired analyst for the nonprofit Senior Citizens League. COLA is based on the “consumer price index for urban wage earners and clerical workers,” or CPI-W. That figure dipped to 3.3% from April’s 3.4% but still outpaced the 3.2% COLA Social Security recipients began receiving in January.



Following a two-day meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee, Fed Chair Jerome Powell explains the decision to leave its key interest rate unchanged at a news conference Wednesday in Washington. BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Fed holds interest rates steady, sees fewer cuts

Forecast scaled back despite slowing inflation

Paul Davidson, Daniel de Visé, Medora Lee, Jim Sargent and Bailey Schulz

USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – The Federal Reserve kept its key interest rate unchanged again Wednesday and scaled back its forecast from three rate cuts to just one this year after an inflation pickup in early 2024.

The outlook will likely disappoint markets that figured the Fed would pencil in two cuts after an encouraging report early Wednesday showed inflation slowing more than expected.

The Fed’s decision leaves its benchmark short-term interest rate at a 23-year high of 5.25% to 5.5%. That means Americans will keep paying higher mortgage, credit card and auto loan rates but will continue to benefit from more generous bank savings

“We see today’s report as progress and building confidence. This is a step in the right direction, but it really is only one reading. We hope we get more like it.”

Jerome Powell
Federal Reserve chairman

yields.

The central bank acknowledged a resumption of at least some gains in its battle to tame the inflation that has bedeviled Americans for three years.

But at a news conference following the two-day meeting, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said, “We want to see more good data to bolster our confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2%,” the central bank’s goal.

Inflation was essentially flat in May,

defying fears of an overheated economy and bolstering the view that a gradual moderation has resumed. Though rent, the chief inflation driver, kept rising, auto insurance, which had been surging, dipped and airline fares fell 3.6%.

A core price measure that excludes volatile food and energy items rose 0.2%, nudging down the annual increase to 3.4% from 3.6% the previous month, according to the consumer price index.

After hitting a 40-year high of 9.1% in mid-2022, annual inflation eased significantly last year. Progress stalled early this year. In April, inflation showed signs of softening again but at a slower pace. Wednesday’s CPI report showed the pullback gathered force last month.

“We see today’s report as progress and building confidence,” Powell said. “This is a step in the right direction, but it really is only one reading.” He added, “We hope we get more like it.”

See **INTEREST RATES**, Page 2B

Feds crack down after Iowa loosens child labor rules

Kevin Baskins

Des Moines Register
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Iowa Restaurant Association in 2023 hailed looser state regulations on teen workers as a boon for its members.

Now it’s warning them to revert to following stricter federal regulations for workers under 16, saying regulators are cracking down and levying heavy fines on establishments found to be out of compliance.

In a June 7 weekly update emailed to its members and obtained by the Des Moines Register, part of the USA TODAY Network, the association warns that the Labor Department “is out in full force across the state. They are taking massive punitive action against Iowa restaurants who are following the new state youth employment hours instead of the federal regulation on hours. THEY DO NOT RECOGNIZE OUR NEW STATE LAW. We are encouraging people to revert to federal work hours for teens under age 16 at this time.”

In March 2023, top Labor Department lawyer Seema Nanda criticized child labor laws that states including Iowa were considering at the time and warned that “the department has and will continue to vigorously enforce child labor protections across the na-

tion.”

Nanda didn’t specifically name Iowa, but Jessica Dunker, president of the Iowa Restaurant Association, on Tuesday accused the Labor Department of targeting the state.

Iowa’s new law is less restrictive than federal regulations on a number of counts. But Dunker said the main target of the enforcement push against the 2023 state rule changes, passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Kim Reynolds, is a provision concerning work hours for 14- and 15-year-olds.

The Iowa law says they may work as late as 9 p.m. on school nights and as late as 11 p.m. during the summer. But federal law specifies they can work only until 7 p.m. during the school year and until 9 p.m. during the summer.

Restaurant association head says rules harm business

Dunker said the Labor Department’s Wage and Hour Division has conducted investigations at several Iowa restaurants and levied “tens of thousands of dollars” against those found to be violating the federal requirements.

“They are literally going to put people out of business for having 10th graders work until 9 p.m.,” she said. “I

See **CRACKDOWN**, Page 2B



Susan Tompor
Columnist
USA TODAY

IRS tells some they didn’t pay taxes. But they did.

Imagine opening a letter from the IRS in early June that says you owe \$6,000 for your federal income taxes for 2023. Except you paid that bill. On time, mind you. And now, the IRS is sending you a notice demanding that you pay up?

One Michigan senior was told just that. Others here and elsewhere are getting this same kind of letter saying they owe, in some cases, thousands of dollars in unpaid income taxes. Except, they wrote the checks and already paid the money.

It’s a massive mess but one that’s only bubbling up in tax circles. As of June 10, the Internal Revenue Service didn’t issue any press releases saying, hey, we sent out a bad batch of letters.

Before you write another check, though, take a step back, do a little research and see if you’re one of many who could be dealing with a big IRS glitch here.

No, it doesn’t seem that the IRS lost the check. Check your bank statement.

See **TOMPOR**, Page 2B

Interest rates

Continued from Page 1B

Forecasting the future

Officials now estimate they'll lower the federal funds rate by a quarter of a percentage point to a range of 5% to 5.25% by year's end, according to their median estimate. That's equivalent to one quarter-point cut, fewer than the three decreases they projected in March. Most economists expected the first cut in September.

Policymakers are divided, though, with eight predicting two cuts this year, seven foreseeing two and four looking for none, suggesting the median could change depending on how inflation evolves in coming months.

Officials expect four rate cuts next year and another four in 2026, more than they previously anticipated. That would lower the key rate to 3.1% by the end of 2026, in line with their March estimate.

Rate cuts lower borrowing costs for consumers, stimulating the economy, and juice the stock market. In recent weeks, Fed officials have said they can be cautious as they weigh lowering rates because inflation is still too high and the economy and job market are performing solidly despite nascent signs of a slowdown.

Since March 2022, the central bank has hiked the federal funds rate 11 times from near zero to corral a pandemic-induced inflation spike. It has left the rate unchanged since last July.

Fed officials estimate that their preferred measure of annual inflation, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index, will fall from 2.7% to 2.6% by December, above the 2.4% they predicted in March.

A core PCE inflation reading that the Fed watches more closely is expected to hold steady at 2.8% by the end of the year, above the prior 2.6% estimate. Both overall inflation and the core measure are projected to fall to 2.3% by the end of 2025.

On Wednesday, the Fed said it expects the economy to grow 2.1% this



A trader works, as a screen broadcasts a news conference by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell following the Fed rate announcement, on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday. BRENDAN MCDERMID/REUTERS

year, similar to its prior estimate. It predicts 2% growth in 2025. The economy grew a sturdy 3.1% in 2023.

The current 4% unemployment rate is projected to end 2024 unchanged, in line with the March forecast, the Fed's median estimate shows.

Average yearly wage growth has tumbled to 4.1% from 5.9% in March 2022 but rose from 4% in April. The Fed wants pay increases to come down to 3.5% to align with its 2% inflation target.

The Fed meets next on July 30-31.

The situation for borrowers

The Fed doesn't set rates on credit cards, mortgages or car loans, but its decisions influence the rates consumers pay.

Even with the Fed on hold, credit card interest rates are still climbing. The average annual percentage rate on a new card in June notched the biggest

monthly increase since November, rising to 24.8%, comparison site LendingTree said.

"The cavalry isn't coming anytime soon, so the best thing you can do is take things into your own hands when it comes to lowering credit card interest rates," said Matt Schulz, LendingTree credit analyst.

Options include getting a credit card with 0% interest on balance transfers and purchases, consolidating debts with a low-interest personal loan, asking your card issuer for a lower rate, seeking credit counseling and shopping around for the lowest rates and best deals.

In housing, the average 30-year fixed mortgage rate was 7.38% on June 7. The average rate was 6.59% on a 15-year fixed-rate mortgage.

"There's a good chance that we're going to need to get used to rates around 7% again, at least until we start getting better economic news," said Jacob

Channel, senior economist at LendingTree. "Unfortunately, this probably means that summer homebuying season is going to be expensive and difficult."

That shouldn't dissuade you from buying a home you love and can afford. "If you spend too much time waiting for the 'perfect' conditions to arise, you could end up letting a lot of good opportunities go to waste," he said.

You can also refinance when rates drop, experts said.

As for auto loans, borrowers' rates there are mostly based on factors like credit background, vehicle price, down payment and the lender's borrowing costs and risks. Fed rate decisions have a smaller effect. Still, these rates are high, too.

In the first three months of the year, the average annual percentage rate was 7.1% for new vehicles and 11.7% for used vehicles, car comparison site Edmunds said.

Crackdown

Continued from Page 1B

mean, if compliance is the actual question, wouldn't you come in and say, 'Hey, look, I know what your state law says, but you need to go back to the federal regulation, and if you do that and we come back in 30 days and you are still doing this, we are going to fine you'? That's not happening.

"They have picked on my board members. They have picked on my award winners. They have picked on people who are small and don't have an attorney at the ready. They are on a tour to prove a point."

Dunker declined to name restaurants that had been inspected and fined or say how many there were, citing what she said is their fear of retaliation and their attempts to negotiate settlements.

Labor Department says child labor enforcement is nationwide

The Labor Department denies singling out Iowa. It confirmed it has taken enforcement action in Iowa but says it is dealing with violations nationwide.

"While we have done several investigations resulting in child labor violations in Iowa, this problem is not unique to the state," it said in a prepared statement. "The same violations are occurring nationwide, and we are doing everything we can to find violators and stop them."

There have been reports of child labor law enforcement actions in Texas, Pennsylvania, California and North Carolina. The department said it is committed to enforcing child labor provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

"Some state child labor laws differ from the federal child labor provisions of the FLSA. Where a state child labor law is less restrictive than the federal law, the federal law applies," the statement said. "Where a state child labor law is more restrictive than the federal law, the state law applies. The law that provides the greater protection to the child is the law that prevails."

It also pointed out that in 2023, it conducted more than 4,500 outreach events involving more than 450,000 participants to ensure businesses understand how to maintain compliance with federal law. The agency also has several online fact sheets, FAQs and videos to help employers, workers and

parents stay in compliance with federal child labor laws.

Law opponent: Labor Department warned it would enforce the law

Like most other Democrats in the Republican-majority Legislature, Iowa state Sen. Nate Boulton of Des Moines opposed the law.

He said the Labor Department had made its position clear last year in response to letters the Democrats sent it about the law.

"They put it plainly in their response to that inquiry to put people on notice ... that this would be the approach, and I think they are following through on their commitment to enforce federal protections on child labor," Boulton said.

He said he was not surprised by the Iowa Restaurant Association's message advising members to adhere to federal regulations, despite the association's earlier support for the changes in state law.

"I think they have the duty to make sure that their members are aware of the law and the consequences of legal violations. I just I wish they would have done that a year ago," he said.

On its website, the Iowa Division of Labor lists the changes that took effect July 1, 2023, regarding the hours 14- and 15-year-olds could work under the new law, but at the bottom of the page it states, "Employers are subject to both state and federal child labor laws and, when there are differences, must follow the law that gives the most protection."

Child labor bill sponsor says crackdown is politically motivated

State Rep. Dave Deyoe, who sponsored the child labor bill in 2023, said some of the changes regarding the number of hours a teenager is allowed to work could help both the workers and the employers.

"Let's say you've got a 15-year-old working at a Dairy Queen, you know, and the Dairy Queen is open until 9 at night, so they had to leave before the store was closed, and that made it very difficult to hire kids that age if they can only work for three or four hours after school," Deyoe said. "This allowed them at least the opportunity to be able to work until later in the evening on a given night."

Deyoe said he believes the federal enforcement push is politically motivated.

Tompor

Continued from Page 1B

The feds could indeed have what you owe. Rather, it seems like there's some sort of glitch at the IRS involving the mailing erroneous notices in 2024.

Tax professionals say they're hearing from plenty of clients in 2024 who are wrongly receiving CP14 notices that spell out what someone owes for taxes. Except, I repeat myself, they wrote the check and already paid their taxes.

One can only imagine the blood that's boiling at some homes.

The IRS did not respond to questions about the letters as of late Tuesday afternoon.

But the issue seems to be one involving some taxpayers who wrote a check to pay what they owed for their federal income taxes. Tax professionals have seen situations where the IRS has sent out a notice before applying the payment, according to the American Institute of CPAs.

In some cases, one CPA said the IRS appeared to be crediting the paper check to the account when the IRS processed the check, not when the check

was mailed as it should have done.

One CPA said the erroneous CP14 letters that some clients received involved situations where the IRS did not apply 2023 estimated tax payments correctly, and in some cases didn't apply the 2023 tax due payment. As a result, the IRS notice incorrectly showed a large tax due, along with penalties and interest.

Naturally, any IRS letters are alarming. Typically, tax professionals say their approach has been to write a polite response letter to the IRS and submit proof of the payments made.

George Smith, a CPA with Andrews Hooper Pavlik in Bloomfield Hills, said he had six clients receive these letters earlier this month and he sent the IRS a response each time. "By letter No. 6, I had a template made up. Insert client's name. Insert letter number, whatever. Change the dollar amounts."

Smith said all of the erroneous IRS letters that he saw were dated June 3 and sent out of an IRS office in Holtsville, New York, on Long Island. "It was weird, they all came in a flurry," Smith said.

One client supposedly owed \$6,000 and another supposedly owed \$1,300 in income taxes. Except, they paid what the IRS said they owed.

These clients also made estimated federal income tax payments throughout 2023 but Smith said the IRS letters he saw only reflected what that IRS said was the remaining balance still due for 2023. So, he believes that the estimated payments made earlier in 2023 were properly credited in those cases.

It's his understanding that the erroneous letters are only being sent to taxpayers who paid their taxes to the IRS via a paper check. Other tax professionals in his office said a few of their clients received similar erroneous letters, too.

He doesn't believe that the problem has cropped up for taxpayers who paid the IRS online or via a direct payment out of their bank accounts.

The taxpayer sees that their check cleared their bank accounts even though the IRS has issued a CP14 notice saying they did not receive the payment. "It's annoying," Smith said. "And it created anxiety for my clients."

He'd suggest that do-it-yourself taxpayers who get these letters respond to the IRS, as well, and include proof of payment. His clients weren't able to get a copy of the canceled check, as the IRS uses an ACH clearing process, so they sent a copy of the bank statement.

The clients mailed the checks on or

before the April 15 deadline. And he says their payments all cleared April 19.

California-based Spidell, which offers tax professionals updates and information, posted an alert on June 7 that indicated that erroneous IRS letters were being mailed out.

"We've received inquiries from numerous tax professionals," Spidell stated, "asking why their clients are receiving CP14 notices indicating a balance due even though the clients can substantiate they timely paid all tax due."

According to Spidell, the "IRS confirmed that there is a nationwide delay in processing payments, resulting in erroneous balance due notices being sent when there is in fact no tax due."

Spidell said the IRS was advising tax professionals and their clients to wait six to eight weeks to see if the problem resolved itself and see if payments were properly credited to accounts.

But if the payments are not posted after that, Spidell said, the tax professional or client will have to provide proof of payment to the IRS to ensure that no penalties are imposed.

Some tax professionals, like Smith, are simply sending out letters and confirmation of those payments now to avoid any potential hassle ahead.

Banana firm hit with \$38.3M in damages

Chiquita found liable in human rights abuse case

Thao Nguyen
USA TODAY

Banana company Chiquita Brands International has been found liable for financing a far-right Colombian paramilitary group and ordered to pay \$38.3 million in damages to the families of eight men killed by the group during the country’s civil war, a federal jury in Florida decided.

The landmark ruling Monday comes after 17 years of legal proceedings, marking the first time the corporate giant has been found liable for similar lawsuits for those victimized by the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), the plaintiffs’ attorneys said.

In 2007, Chiquita pleaded guilty to one count of engaging in transactions with a “specially designated global terrorist” and was ordered to pay a \$25 million fine, the Justice Department said at the time. The company was accused of making illegal payments to the AUC, a paramilitary group known for mass killing, kidnapping civilians and mutilating their corpses.

The case, originally filed by the nonprofit EarthRights International in 2007, was followed by several other cases in 2008, the nonprofit said. A team of law firms across the United States has been representing more than 5,000 Colombians in the proceeding. Trials for additional victims will follow in July, according to attorneys.

Monday’s verdict, which came after a six-week trial and two days of deliberations, also marks the first time a major U.S. corporation was found liable for its role in human rights abuses abroad, attorneys said. The ruling could affect similar litigations that involve such violations.

“This verdict sends a powerful message to corporations everywhere: profiting from human rights abuses will not go unpunished. These families, victimized by armed groups and corporations, asserted their power and prevailed in the judicial process,” Marco Simons, EarthRights International General Counsel and one of the plaintiff’s attorneys, said in a statement.



Chiquita-branded bananas are displayed for sale at a market stall in London. JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

‘Verdict does not bring back the husbands, sons who were killed’

The eight plaintiffs, which include surviving family members of eight men who were murdered by the AUC, alleged that Chiquita paid nearly \$2 million to the violent militant group. The group was also accused of “facilitating shipments of arms, ammunition, and drugs, despite knowing that the AUC was an illegal organization engaged in a reign of terror,” law firm Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll said in a statement.

Attorneys for Chiquita have said the company had made those illegal payments in the late 1990s and early 2000s to protect its Colombian employees from further violence, The Palm Beach Post, part of the USA TODAY Network, reported.

The plaintiffs’ attorneys said Chiquita’s support of the AUC violated both U.S. and Colombian law. During the trial, they argued that the company willingly worked with the AUC to protect its profits and to suppress employee unrest.

On Monday, a federal jury in Florida ruled that Chiquita knowingly provided substantial assistance to the militant group in the form of cash payments or other means of support, to a degree sufficient to create a foreseeable risk of

harm. The eight men were killed by the AUC, Chiquita was unable to prove that its support for the group was a result of impending harm to the company or its employees, the jury said.

“The verdict does not bring back the husbands and sons who were killed, but it sets the record straight and places accountability for funding terrorism where it belongs: at Chiquita’s doorstep,” Agnieszka Fryszman, a lawyer at law firm Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll, said in a statement. Though the plaintiffs’ attorneys celebrated Monday’s verdict, they noted that the broader litigation against Chiquita includes hundreds of other victims – whose “cases may be resolved through additional trials, or an eventual settlement.”

Chiquita’s relationship with the AUC

The AUC is a paramilitary group in Colombia that was active from 1997 to 2006, according to Stanford University’s Mapping Militants Project. The group was a consolidation of multiple self-defense groups in the country that carried out brutal kidnappings and assassinations.

Though the group disbanded in 2006, small groups and individuals have committed attacks while claiming

to be the AUC, the Mapping Militants Project said. The AUC was designated by the U.S. government as a foreign terrorist organization in September 2001 and then as a specially designated global terrorist group the following month, according to the Justice Department.

“These designations made it a federal crime for Chiquita, as a U.S. corporation, to provide money to the AUC,” the Justice Department said in a news release in 2007.

Under Chiquita’s plea agreement, the company was ordered in 2007 to pay a \$25 million criminal fine, implement a compliance and ethics program, and agree to five years’ probation. The Justice Department said that for years – from sometime in 1997 to February 2004 – Chiquita paid AUC in two regions of Colombia where Chiquita had banana-producing operations: Urabá and Santa Marta. The company made these illegal payments through its Colombian subsidiary, known as Banadex, according to the Department of Justice.

Through Banadex, the company paid the AUC nearly every month for about six years and made more than 100 payments that amounted to over \$1.7 million, the Department of Justice said. The company had begun working with the AUC in 1997 after a meeting between the then-leader of the AUC, Carlos Castaño, and a senior executive of Banadex.

“Castaño implied that failure to make the payments could result in physical harm to Banadex personnel and property,” the Justice Department said. “No later than September 2000, Chiquita’s senior executives knew that the corporation was paying the AUC and that the AUC was a violent, paramilitary organization led by Carlos Castaño. Chiquita’s payments to the AUC were reviewed and approved by senior executives of the corporation, including high-ranking officers, directors, and employees.”

The company paid the AUC by check for several years until June 2002, when Chiquita began paying directly and in cash, according to the Justice Department. Some payments were documented in corporate records as “security payments” despite Chiquita never receiving actual security services from the payments.

Contributing: Hannah Phillips, Palm Beach Post; Reuters

How much to tip on your next trip abroad this summer

Zach Wichter
USA TODAY

To tip or not to tip – and how much – is a question on many American travelers’ minds as they venture abroad this summer.

The U.S. is known around the world for its generous tipping culture, but that standard, as much as 20% on some bills in some cities, hasn’t exactly been exported to other locations. In fact, according to Justin Chapman, a travel expert who specializes in safaris at Go2Africa, tipping in some locations in fact may be seen as offensive.

Here are his rules of thumb depending on where you’re visiting this summer.

How much to tip in Europe

It varies from country to country, but in general visitors don’t need to leave a huge tip in most of Europe. In some

countries it’s becoming increasingly common for a 10%-15% service charge to be included in the bills in places like restaurants, while in others, it’s up to the visitor’s discretion.

Chapman said a good rule of thumb for Europe is to leave a little change and round up to the nearest euro on a bill if you’re not sure what to do. The same goes for taxis, bars and coffee shops.

How much to tip in Africa

In most of Africa, Chapman said, a 10%-15% gratuity on restaurant bills is customary, as are tips equivalent to \$10-\$20 per day for staff at your lodging or any tour guides you may do business with.

How much to tip in Central and South America

A 10%-15% tip is customary in most restaurants in Central and South Amer-

ica, but tips are even more important for tour guides, who Chapman said rely heavily on that income. In Colombia, he said, \$10-\$20 per day is appropriate for guides, while \$5-\$10 is all right in most of the rest of the region. Chapman said it’s especially important to tip generously for guides in Brazil.

Taxi drivers across the region don’t necessarily count on tips, but rounding up to the nearest whole currency amount often is appreciated.

How much to tip in Asia

Tipping is not widely expected in Asia, and can be seen as offensive in some countries, particularly in China and Japan. In Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Vietnam, tipping is becoming more common and around 10% is generally seen as an acceptable gratuity there.

In general, Chapman said, it can often be best not to tip in Asia if you’re un-

sure to avoid inadvertently causing offense.

How much to tip in Australia and New Zealand

Tipping isn’t generally expected in Oceania, but Chapman said 5%-10% or rounding up to the nearest Australian or New Zealand dollar can be appreciated, especially in high-end establishments.

Travel tipping advice

If you’re planning to tip but aren’t sure of the etiquette, Chapman said here are some key things to keep in mind:

- Tip in cash whenever possible.
- Consider the cost of living: More expensive areas, or places with high tourist traffic, are more likely to expect higher tips.
- Ask a local if you’re not sure what the regional custom is.

US consumer prices flat in May, defying expectations

REUTERS

WASHINGTON – U.S. consumer prices were unexpectedly unchanged in May amid cheaper gasoline, but inflation likely remains too high for the Federal Reserve to start cutting interest rates before September against the backdrop of a persistently strong labor market.

The unchanged reading in the consumer price index reported by the Labor Department’s Bureau of Labor Statistics on Wednesday followed a 0.3% increase in April.

The CPI has been trending lower since posting solid readings in February and March. Price pressures could continue moderating as major retailers, including Target, slash prices on goods from food to diapers as they seek to lure inflation-weary consumers.

In the 12 months through May, the CPI advanced 3.3% after increasing

3.4% in April.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the CPI edging up 0.1% and gaining 3.4% year-on-year.

Though the annual increase in consumer prices has slowed from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022, inflation continues to run above the U.S. central bank’s 2% target.

Job growth accelerates in May

Job growth accelerated in May and wages picked up, but the unemployment rate increased to 4%, the government reported last week.

Later on Wednesday, Fed officials were expected to leave the central bank’s benchmark overnight interest rate unchanged in the current 5.25%-5.50% range, where it has been since July.

The Fed has raised its policy rate by 525 basis points since March 2022.



Joanne Colombo of Mount Vernon shops for toys for her grandson at Value Drug Family Center in Eastchester, N.Y. The CPI advanced 3.3% after increasing 3.4% in April. SETH HARRISON/USA TODAY NETWORK

Financial markets expect the Fed to start its easing cycle in September, though that conviction is waning. Some economists are leaning toward a rate cut in December, but others are not so sure

that borrowing costs will be lowered this year.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the CPI climbed 0.2% in May after rising 0.3% in April.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Prattville: The evacuation of the Autauga Metro Jail could wind up costing the county budget hundreds of thousands of dollars in unexpected expenses. Sheriff Mark Harrell evacuated the jail Thursday morning due to “environmental” safety concerns. The jail had 168 inmates.

ALASKA Skagway: Police said a man has been arrested in connection to the overdose deaths of two men last year, KHNS reported.

ARIZONA Tucson: The Environmental Protection Agency is demanding the U.S. Air Force and Arizona National Guard take action as concentrations of toxic “forever chemicals” are increasing in the groundwater in a historically contaminated area on Tucson’s south side. The EPA found the pollution came from the nearby military properties and ordered them to clean up the contamination.

ARKANSAS Little Rock: Officials said a black bear has been spotted around Little Rock, KATV reported.

CALIFORNIA Stockton: The Stockton City Council recently approved the use of cameras equipped with artificial intelligence to detect overgrown lawns, vehicles parking on unapproved surfaces, peeling paint, boarded windows, graffiti, and other code violations. The program will be led by code enforcement officials and will use technology from City Detect, an artificial intelligence company based in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

COLORADO Pueblo: Colorado Parks and Wildlife is urging the public to avoid the Arkansas River below the Lake Pueblo State Park dam because of dangerous water surges.

CONNECTICUT Norwich: The St. Vincent de Paul Place and the Greater Norwich Area Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting for the upcoming elevator project.

DELAWARE Dover: Patient safety in Delaware hospitals is once again under scrutiny following the latest report from The Leapfrog Group, a nonprofit that scores hospitals twice a year based on public data and surveys. As in past years, no Delaware hospitals have earned A’s, sinking the First State to the bottom of the overall national rankings.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: The Metropolitan Police Department has launched a new initiative called Operation Ride Right in an effort to enforce the rules of the road amid an influx of moped usage, WUSA reported.

FLORIDA Tallahassee: Florida officials are reviving an old initiative to solve cold cases by distributing thousands of playing cards in jails and prisons hoping it will help “generate new leads and insights from inmates,” the state Attorney General’s Office announced. More than 5,000 decks of playing cards that contain photographs and information about unsolved homicide and missing person cases will be printed and issued to correctional facilities across Florida, law enforcement officials said.

GEORGIA Savannah: The Port of Savannah is developing its first-ever assessment of climate-impacting pollution from operations at what is now one of the nation’s busiest gateways for cargo containers.

HAWAII Honolulu: Utility and power generation company AES Corporation has started operations at Hawaii’s largest solar facility on Maui, electricity provider Hawaiian Electric said.

IDAHO Boise: Boise schools will provide free breakfast for all students in the district starting in the 2024-2025 school year after Boise School District board members approved the new initiative, KTVB reported.

ILLINOIS Cherry: Human remains were discovered at the site of the decommissioned Cherry Mine.

IOWA Fairfax: A newly opened Fairfax facility debuted its brand new turbine blade recycling process, touting it as a more environmentally friendly method of dealing with damaged or outdated turbine blades.

KANSAS Topeka: A federal judge has dismissed Kansas from a lawsuit led by Attorney General Kris Kobach challenging a student debt relief program from President Joe Biden’s administration. U.S. District Judge Daniel Crabtree ruled that Kansas and several other states don’t have standing to sue over the Saving on a Valuable Education Plan.

HIGHLIGHT: INDIANA



A replica Eiffel Tower is erected in Indianapolis to accompany the Olympic swimming trials starting Saturday. KELLY WILKINSON/USA TODAY NETWORK

Indianapolis: The French took more than two years to build the Eiffel Tower. But in just a few weeks this spring, dozens of Indiana residents built their own. A much smaller Eiffel Tower now stands on Georgia Street and South Capitol Avenue, welcoming visitors and attendees to the Olympic swimming trials at Lucas Oil Stadium. This tower is much smaller than the original, measuring seven stories high and weighing a mere 18,000 pounds. As hundreds of swimmers prepared to descend on Indianapolis for the trials that start this weekend, local welders, engineers and sheet-metal suppliers raced to finish a project that some say might have otherwise taken years to complete.

KENTUCKY Louisville: Mixed martial arts fans who descended on downtown Louisville for an Ultimate Fighting Championship event helped set two records. The KFC Yum! Center collected just over \$2.5 million at the gate, making it the highest-grossing UFC Fight Night in the sport’s history, arena management said. The gate revenue was also the highest for any single-day sporting event at the center, which hosts University of Louisville basketball and volleyball games.

LOUISIANA Baton Rouge: The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has declared that new restrictions on Red Drum size and daily catch limits will be enforced starting June 20.

MAINE Kennebunk: Police are investigating multiple incidents of Pride flags being stolen off their poles on Main Street.

MARYLAND Baltimore: The Fort McHenry Federal Channel was restored to its original operational depth nearly three months after the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse.

MASSACHUSETTS Taunton: A school crossing guard was taken into custody after two separate physical altercations on the same day last week.

MICHIGAN Mears: A 12-year-old boy is hospitalized after he was buried under sand at Silver Lake State Park.

MINNESOTA Minneapolis: The first poll of Minnesota voters since Donald Trump was convicted of 34 felonies shows President Joe Biden with a slight lead. A new poll released by KARE11, MPR News and the Minneapolis Star Tribune found a tight race in the North Star State. Despite the fact that no Republican presidential candidate has won Minnesota in more than 50 years, and with Biden handily beating Trump in 2020, an unapproving and apathetic electorate could make 2024 a close election.

MISSISSIPPI Jackson: Some lawmakers in the Mississippi Legislature are upset with the Democratic Party for attempting to boycott the Mississippi State Fair later this year. The Mississippi Democratic Party issued a news release stating it intends to boycott the event, known for providing a large economic impact to Jackson as well as to the state. The party wrote that a recent event held by Agriculture Commissioner Andy Gipson to support former President and now-convicted felon Donald Trump spurred its decision to boycott the festivities.

MISSOURI Springfield: Federal nutrition standards for school meals will change in August 2025, limiting how much added sugar is allowed, but Springfield Public Schools is not waiting a year to alter menus. Missouri’s largest district will voluntarily enact many of the new guidelines for the 2024-25 year with the support of the administration and school board.

MONTANA Bozeman: Billings Clinic Bozeman laid off 15 employees across multiple departments due to financial struggles, KPAX reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: Lincoln Public Schools apologized for discarding old trophies from Lincoln Northeast High School in a dumpster after an uproar from alumni, Lincoln Journal Star reported.

NEVADA Carson City: Nevada’s live entertainment tax continues to exceed revenue projections while sales tax trends short of expectations, economic forecasters were told. Neither revenue stream appears likely to upend the state’s current biennium budget, which in total is humming along a few percentage points above expectations, but economists are pondering the trends as they turn their eyes toward the future, Nevada Current reported.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Exeter: Police are investigating the theft of two high-end vehicles valued at \$50,000 each from Foss Motors, a local automotive dealership that was also targeted by thieves several months ago.

NEW JERSEY New Brunswick: Black children with disabilities are less likely to be put into general classrooms than white children. They are also more likely to drop out of high school and face more suspensions and school-related arrests than kids of other races, according to Rutgers’ Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies. Such disparities drew Black cultural leaders and disability advocates to Rutgers to focus on the barriers they need to work together to overcome.

NEW MEXICO Albuquerque: The state of New Mexico has committed to providing financial assistance and incentives worth \$25.5 million to Rocket Lab as the company works on the expansion of its facility in Albuquerque.

NEW YORK New York: New York’s electric grid will face supply shortfalls if the rate of retiring old fossil-fired power plants continues to quickly outpace the addition of clean new energy supply at the same time demand rises, the state’s grid operator said.

NORTH CAROLINA Morehead: A North Carolina fishing crew is \$1.7 million richer after catching a blue marlin weighing in at 504 pounds at an annual fishing tournament.

NORTH DAKOTA Cass County: Gov. Doug Burgum, Lt. Gov. Tammy Miller and federal, state and local officials celebrated the grand opening of the new Innovation Shop at Grand Farm, KVRN reported.

OHIO Columbus: Law enforcement agencies would be prohibited from imposing ticket or arrest quotas for officers to meet in a specific time period, if a bipartisan bill becomes law.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: The rankings are out for child well-being throughout the U.S., and the numbers for Oklahoma are still abysmal, according to an annual report tracking trends and factors for childhood growth and development. In the latest Kids Count report, Oklahoma ranks 46th overall for child well-being – a position no worse than last year’s but also no better.

OREGON Salem: The state has closed the entire Oregon Coast for razor clam harvesting due to high levels of marine biotoxins. The Oregon Department of Agriculture will continue testing for shellfish toxins at least twice per month, as tides and weather permit.

PENNSYLVANIA Philadelphia: The Delta Air Lines-owned 185,000 barrel-per-day Trainer Refinery in Pennsylvania will shut its major units in September for turnaround work, sources familiar with the matter said.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: The state’s correctional officers union has ramped up its opposition to Gov. Dan McKee’s nomination of Wayne T. Salisbury Jr. as director of the state Department of Corrections, now filing a complaint with the Ethics Commission against Salisbury.

SOUTH CAROLINA Greenville: Greenville County leads South Carolina in highway traffic deaths with Spartanburg County second, according to a new South Carolina Department of Public Safety report. Between January and June 2, Greenville recorded 35 traffic deaths. Spartanburg County followed with 25 deaths.

SOUTH DAKOTA Bath: The South Dakota FFA Foundation has established the Craig and Maure Weinkauff Endowment, with a legacy gift from Craig and Maure Weinkauff to support FFA members. Interest from the endowment will fund the South Dakota FFA Wildlife Production and Management proficiency and other proficiency award areas as funds allow.

TENNESSEE Nashville: The Rev. James Lawson, the man who inspired a generation of nonviolent activists in the earliest days of the Civil Rights Movement and helped organize the push to desegregate lunch counters in Nashville, died on Sunday. He was 95.

TEXAS Uvalde: Families of the victims and survivors of the 2022 mass shooting in Uvalde have sued UPS and FedEx, claiming the shipping companies played a part in the massacre by transporting the rifle and trigger accessories.

UTAH Utah County: A hiker in Utah, whose phone was found with a video of her being swept away, was found dead below a waterfall at Horsetail Falls, the Utah County’s Sheriff’s Office said.

VERMONT Colchester: Evernorth and the Champlain Housing Trust have combined forces to convert three large, brick historic buildings at Fort Ethan Allen into 65 apartments that will be known as the 10th Cavalry Apartments, after the famed Buffalo Soldiers who were housed in the buildings from 1909 to 1913.

VIRGINIA Charles City County: A Virginia sheriff’s deputy died of a medical emergency after stopping a bleeding man on a moped who became combative and said, “People were after him and trying to kill him.”

WASHINGTON Olympia: Most Washington K-12 students failed to meet basic math and reading proficiency standards in recent years, according to a new report. The analysis from the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that in 2022, 66% of Washington fourth graders were not proficient in reading and 72% of eighth graders were not proficient in math, Washington State Standard reported.

WEST VIRGINIA Charleston: Charleston-based chef Paul Smith received the James Beard Best Chef: Southeast award, making him the first West Virginian to receive the title, WV News reported.

WISCONSIN Algoma: Does artificial intelligence have slightly oaky and spicy tones with dry fruit flavors and a silky mouthfeel? Maybe AI is light-bodied with floral notes and tree fruit and citrus flavors? That’s possible at von Stiehl Winery, which is using AI to help decide the flavors and aromas of a groundbreaking new line of grape wines. The Algoma winery’s Artificial Intelligence White V2.0 and Artificial Intelligence Red V2.0 are blended wines that use AI based on feedback from consumers to shape the recipes for these blends.

WYOMING Kemmerer: Nuclear technology company TerraPower broke ground on its Sodium reactor demonstration project, Casper Star-Tribune.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

JERRY WEST 1938-2024

Basketball Hall of Famer dies at 86

USA TODAY staff

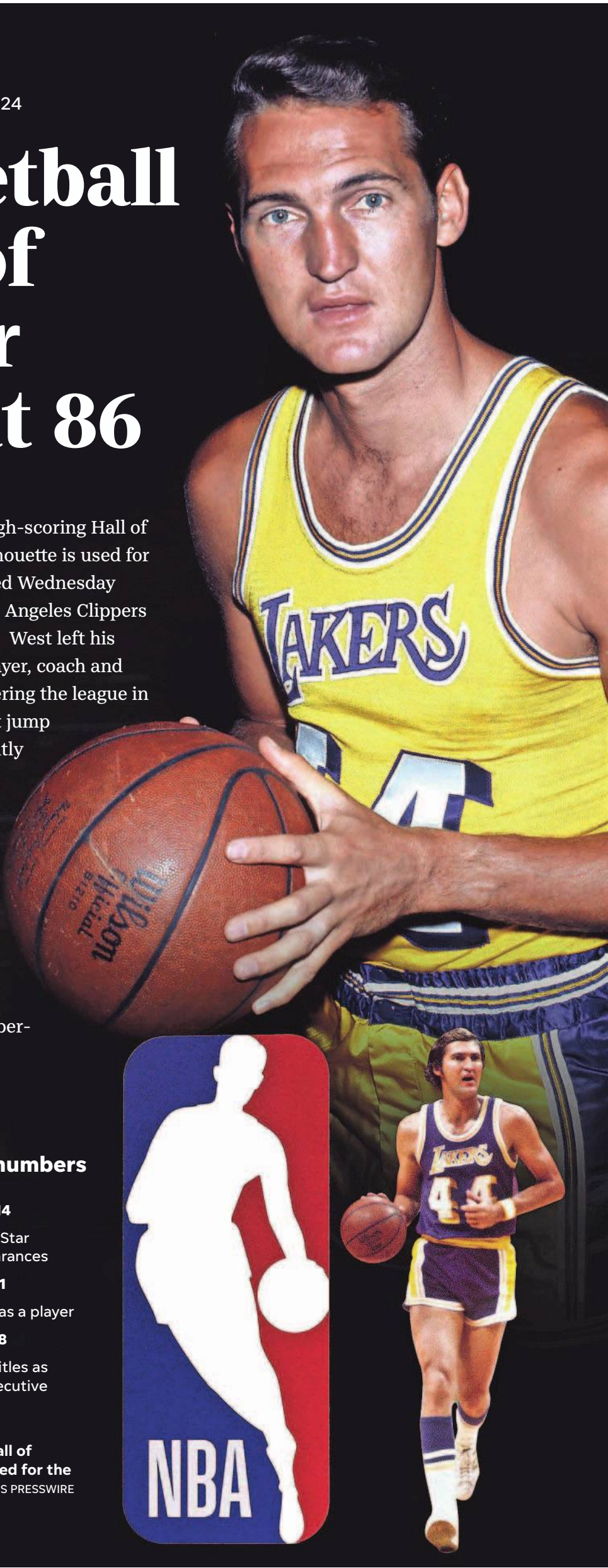
Jerry West, the high-scoring Hall of Famer whose silhouette is used for the NBA logo, died Wednesday morning, the Los Angeles Clippers announced. He was 86. • West left his mark on the NBA as a player, coach and team executive after entering the league in 1960. Known for his great jump shot, West was consistently one of the top scorers in the league every season he played. He led the NBA in 1969 with a 31.2 points-per-game average. He is fourth among retired players with a 27.03 career scoring average, behind Michael Jordan, Wilt Chamberlain and Elgin Baylor.

See WEST, Page 2C

Jerry West by the numbers

25,192	14
career points	All-Star appearances
6,238	1
career assists	NBA title as a player
5,376	8
career rebounds	NBA titles as an executive

Jerry West, the Basketball Hall of Famer whose silhouette is used for the NBA logo, died Wednesday. US PRESSWIRE SPORTS ARCHIVE AND GETTY IMAGES



Schauffele has major but ‘boxes’ to chase

Adam Schupak
Golfweek | USA TODAY NETWORK

PINEHURST, N.C. – Xander Schauffele finally climbed the summit that was Mount Valhalla and claimed his first major championship at the PGA Championship in May. The win catapulted Schauffele to a career high of No. 2 in the Official World Golf Ranking, but the climb to the top of the game continues in earnest on Thursday at the 124th U.S. Open at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club’s No. 2 Course. “All of us are climbing this massive mountain. At the top of the mountain is Scottie Scheffler. I won this today, but I’m still not that close to Scottie Scheffler in the big scheme of things,” Schauffele said after winning the Wanamaker Trophy. “I got one good hook up there in the mountain up on that cliff, and I’m still climbing. I might have a beer up there on that side of the hill there and enjoy this, but it’s not that hard to chase when someone is so far ahead of you.” Schauffele may have had that celebratory beer but he’s saving the real celebration for later this month when he’s back in his native San Diego. He made it clear that there’s more work to do, noting that he’s only checked one box. “Just a lot of unchecked boxes,” he said. Having shed the label of the Best Player Never to Win a Major, the knee-jerk reaction is to say that Schauffele’s breakthrough will open the floodgates. Adam Scott and Justin Rose, who both rose to No. 1 in the world after winning their first major, are still stuck at one and know all too well how tricky winning the second major can be. But NBC golf on-course reporter Jim “Bones” Mackay contends that it’s way easier for a player to win a second major than his first. “It would not surprise me if Xander picks off another major before this year is over, so why not here at the U.S. Open?” Mackay said during a media call ahead of the U.S. Open. Mackay speaks from experience. As Phil Mickelson’s longtime caddie, he watched Mickelson have several close calls, including here at Pinehurst No. 2 in 1999 when he finished second to Payne Stewart. Mickelson didn’t claim his first major until age 34 at the 2004 Masters but went on to win five more to match the career total of Lee Trevino and Nick Faldo. Mackay said one can draw a comparison between Schauffele and Mickelson, although Schauffele, who won in his 28th major start and endured 11 top-10 finishes in major championships since 2017 before his break-

See SCHAUFFELE, Page 2C

Messi says Inter Miami will be his last team

Safid Deen
USA TODAY

As Lionel Messi prepares to lead Argentina in Copa América this month, the thought of retirement is creeping up on the World Cup champion and eight-time Ballon d’Or winner. Messi, who turns 37 on June 24, says Major League Soccer club Inter Miami will be his final team. But he doesn’t have a set retirement date just yet. “I’ve done this all of my life; I love playing ball. I enjoy the training, and the day to day, the games. Yeah, there’s a bit of fear that it’s all ending. It’s always there. It was a difficult step leaving Europe to come here (to Miami),” Messi said in an interview with ESPN Argentina on Wednesday. “The fact we won the World Cup helped, it helped a lot, to see things in another way. But I try not to think about it. I try to enjoy it. I do that more now because I’m aware that there’s not a lot of time left. So, I have a good time with the club, being lucky having good team-

mates and friends at my side. I enjoy my time with the national team, where I also have good friends, too, and a lot. I enjoy those small details that I know I’ll miss when I stop playing.” Asked if Inter Miami would be his last team, Messi replied, “Yes, yes, I think so. Today I think it’s going to be my last club.” Messi and Argentina begin Copa América against Canada on June 20, followed by matches against Chile on June 25 and Peru on June 29. He will also participate in Argentina’s friendly against Guatemala on Friday in the Washington, D.C., area before the tournament begins. It will be Messi’s last Copa América – the next one is in 2028. But Messi has already opened the window of possibly playing in the next World Cup, which will be held in the United States, Mexico and Canada in 2026. “It depends on how I feel, how I am physically and being realistic with myself. And to know if I am up to the task of being able to compete and help the col-



Lionel Messi advances the ball during Argentina’s pre-Copa America tuneup match against Ecuador at Soldier Field on June 9. DANIEL BARTEL/ USA TODAY SPORTS

leagues next to me,” Messi said last week to Infobae.com. “There’s a while left and I don’t know how I’m going to be at that moment.” Messi joined Inter Miami in July 2023, signing a deal with the MLS club

that lasts through the end of the 2025 calendar year. Messi won his crowning achievement at the Qatar World Cup in 2022, which he previously stated would be his last World Cup.

Beyond logo: West’s NBA legacy will last forever



Jeff Zillgitt
Columnist
USA TODAY

Jerry West was driven by losses. The defeats in the NBA Finals gnawed at him.

“Those losses scarred me, scars that remain embedded in my psyche,” West wrote in his autobiography “West by West: My Charmed and Tormented Life.” “After the sixth and final defeat (to the Boston Celtics) in 1969, I wanted to quit basketball in the worst way. ... The main reason I wanted to walk away from basketball was that I honestly didn’t think I could endure any more pain.”

But Jerry West was not a loser. He didn’t stop playing basketball after his and the Los Angeles Lakers’ sixth consecutive Finals loss to the Celtics in the 1960s. He didn’t stop playing when the New York Knicks delivered West his seventh consecutive Finals loss. Of those seven Finals losses, four were seven-game series.

The heartache compounded. But he came back for more. He came back to try to win a championship. And he finally did win in 1972.

West was a force who never left the NBA once he got there – a Hall of Famer as a player, as part of the 1960 U.S. Olympic team and he will go in again later this year as a contributor to the game. He touched generations of teams and players, had a firm understanding and vision of greatness, and teams and players sought West’s input, including LeBron James who talked to West about winning and losing.

West, who died Wednesday at 86 years old, wanted to win – maybe not more than anyone else but as much as anyone else – and the losses he absorbed in the NBA Finals season after season after season fueled his competitive drive.

He never lost that desire to win. Not as a player and not as a front office executive. His imprint as a shooting guard and builder of teams remains visible in today’s NBA.

“He was absolutely my basketball sage: wise, loyal and so much fun,” Clippers owner Steve Ballmer said in a statement. “If you were in his presence,

you felt his competitiveness and his drive. He cared about everything and everyone. From the first day I met Jerry seven years ago, he inspired me with his intellect, honesty and enthusiasm.”

West is remembered not only as an all-time great player (his silhouette is the NBA logo!) and executive, but as the greatest combination of player and front office exec in NBA history and possibly sports history.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver called West “a basketball genius and a defining figure in our league for more than 60 years. He distinguished himself not only as an NBA champion and an All-Star in all 14 of his playing seasons, but also as a consummate competitor who embraced the biggest moments. ...

“Jerry’s four decades with the Lakers also included a successful stint as a head coach and a remarkable run in the front office that cemented his reputation as one of the greatest executives in sports history.”

After his playing days, he tried coaching and spent three seasons on the Lakers’ bench. He became a scout and then the Lakers’ general manager in 1982. Though he inherited a team that won the 1982 title and featured Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar on the court and Pat Riley as coach, West sought roster improvements. He drafted James Worthy and A.C. Green and acquired Mychal Thompson and Byron Scott. The Lakers won titles in 1985, 1987 and 1988.

West wasn’t done after Johnson and Abdul-Jabbar retired. In the 1990s, he traded for Shaquille O’Neal and made a draft-day deal with Charlotte to get Kobe Bryant. And he hired Phil Jackson as coach, and the Lakers won another title in 2000. West left for Memphis in 2000 but the Lakers won titles in 2001 and 2002 – and West’s influence even after he left was undeniable.

He turned Memphis into a winning franchise, going from 28 victories in his first season as general manager to 50 victories in his second. He joined Golden State as an advisor to ownership, and since 2017, he has had a similar role.

West needed the game, and the game needed him, and there will never be anyone like him. He is an NBA original.

No one lost quite like him. And no one won quite like him.



After his playing career, Lakers great Jerry West, seen in 2015, was a coach or front office leader for several teams. KIRBY LEE/USA TODAY SPORTS

West

Continued from Page 1C

But it was in the playoffs where West seemed to play his best. Four times he averaged more than 30 points per game in the postseason, his best being in 1965 when he averaged 40.6.

He still holds the record for highest scoring average for a series when he scored 46.3 points per game against the Baltimore Bullets in the Western Division finals.

As good as he was in the playoffs, those also were the times of his biggest frustrations. West’s Lakers played in the NBA Finals nine times but won just once, in 1972 against the New York Knicks. They fell six times to the Boston Celtics in the 1960s, with three of those losses in seven games.

Probably the most frustrating was the loss to the Celtics in 1969. The Lakers took a 3-2 lead in the series and lost Game 7 at home. West had 42 points in the final game and became the only player to ever win Finals MVP for a losing team.

After the game, Celtics general manager Red Auerbach said, “I want to say that Jerry West was absolutely fantastic. That was one of the greatest exhibitions I ever saw in my life.”

West’s frustrations over those losses never went away. After the Cleveland Cavaliers lost to the Golden State Warriors in Game 1 of the 2016 NBA Finals, West found himself defending LeBron James, who at the time had lost four of the six Finals in which he had played.

“He carried teams on his shoulders. They’ve been in the Finals six straight times. How many times have they been the favorite? None. Zero, OK? Grossly unfair to him,” West told reporters in a response that seemed to be also aimed at defending his own rec-

ord. “It’s hard for me to believe that someone doesn’t recognize his greatness. It’s hard for me to believe.

“This guy does everything. He’s like a Swiss Army knife. He does everything, and he’s competitive as hell and frankly I wish people would leave him alone.”

The one title West did win almost didn’t happen for him. After years of battling through various injuries and continued frustrations about not winning a title, West almost retired. He was glad he didn’t. With Chamberlain and guard Gail Goodrich, the Lakers won an NBA-record 33 games in row during the regular season and finished with a record of 69-13, which stood until broken by the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls’ 72-10 mark.

Even though he might have had one of the worst series of his career, the Lakers won the Finals against the Knicks in five games, avenging a loss from the season before. After all those years, he finally won a championship on a team that had one of the best seasons in NBA history.

When West retired, he was the third-leading scorer in league history. He stayed away from the game for two years before coming back as the Lakers coach in 1976.

In his three years, West’s teams were 145-101, and in his first season the Lakers won the Pacific Division and went to the playoffs for the first time since he retired.

He became the Lakers general manager in 1982, a job he held until 2002. During that time, the Lakers won eight championships.

West took over the Memphis Grizzlies in 2002 and stayed there until 2007. He joined the Golden State Warriors as an advisor in 2011 and took a similar role with the Los Angeles Clippers in 2017.

West finished his playing career with 25,192 points, 6,238 assists and 5,376 rebounds. He made 14 All-Star appearances and 12 All-NBA teams.

Schauffele

Continued from Page 1C

through, didn’t have to wait nearly as long to get the major monkey off his back.

“I just think that Xander is a very, very wise 30-year-old,” Mackay said. “You listen to the comments that he makes in his pre- and post-game time with the press, and I think that it speaks to the headspace that he’s in, and it’s very, very comfortable and solid. ... I think he’s a guy that’s here now for the long term, and I think that he has a chance to run off a few major championships here in very short order.”

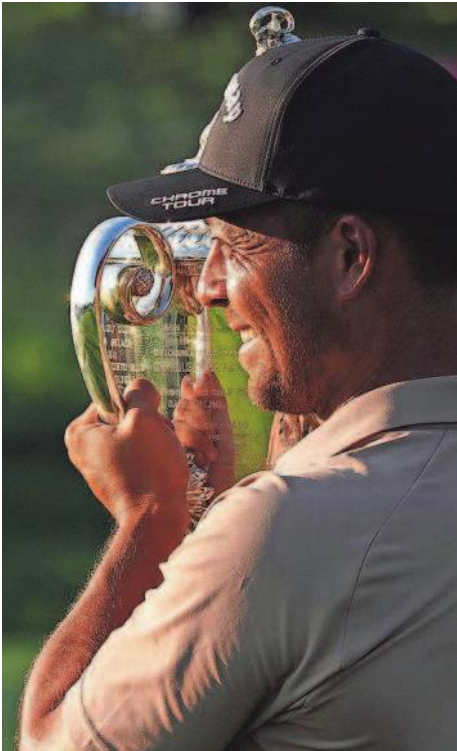
Schauffele’s game tends to translate well to the U.S. Open. In the last seven years, he’s the only player to finish in the top 15 in every single U.S. Open, including a tie for third at Pebble Beach Golf Links in California in 2019. What’s his secret sauce to being in contention so often at his national championship?

“Just what I bring week to week, just a little bit of extra patience,” he said. “You have to ramp that up a little bit more during these weeks. All U.S. Opens, they’re unique in their own way. But they all feel like par is a great score, and you really have to just plot your way around a property.”

Could he pick off another this weekend and go back-to-back? NBC’s Notah Begay III wondered during the same media call last week if the momentum Schauffele gained from his PGA triumph would spur him to greater heights while acknowledging that is often easier said than done.

“Do you find a new mountain to climb?” wondered Golf Channel’s Paul McGinley. “The next couple of months will tell us a lot. It’s not a given he will keep on going.”

Schauffele, the gold medalist in the rescheduled 2021 Tokyo Olympics, said he’s not one to live in the past; he’ll look back with fond memories of the PGA later. He is ready to chase major No. 2 and



Xander Schauffele holds The Wanamaker Trophy after winning the PGA. ADAM CAIRNS/USA TODAY SPORTS

spoke about how the Memorial last week, where as he put it, “par was your friend,” was good prep for this week’s thorough examination in the sand hills of North Carolina. Typically a U.S. Open exposes any weakness in a player’s game. Schauffele knows he’ll need his best stuff, especially playing the first two rounds alongside No. 3 Rory McIlroy and Scottie Scheffler, who remains the player on top of the mountain, in a power-packed threesome (1:14 p.m. EDT Thursday).

“Every week we play, he seems to build a bigger lead and somehow make the mountain even taller for all of us to climb,” Schauffele said of Scheffler. “That’s all he’s been doing, and hats off to him for being so consistent and playing at such a high level for such a long time. I believe I can do it, but it’s going to take some time.”

U.S. Open

Course: Pinehurst (N.C.) Resort & Country Club, Course No. 2 (Par 70; 7,548 yards)

TV: Thursday (EDT): 6:30 a.m.-5 p.m. ET (USA) and 5-8 p.m. (Peacock); Friday: 6:30 a.m.-1 p.m. (Peacock), 1-7 p.m. (NBC) and 7-8 p.m. (Peacock); Saturday: 10 a.m.-noon (USA) and noon- 8 p.m. (NBC); Sunday: 9 a.m.-noon (USA) and noon-7 p.m. (NBC)

Streaming: Various times with featured holes and groups at USOpen.com.

Stat

27 That’s how many players in the field competed in the 2014 U.S. Open when it was last held at Pinehurst No. 2, including seven who finished inside the top 10. Two players in the field – Phil Mickelson and Matt Kuchar – are playing in the U.S. Open at Pinehurst for the fourth time: 1999, 2005, 2014, 2024.

Keep an eye on ...

- Scottie Scheffler. The world No. 1 returned to his winning ways at the Memorial last week, capturing his fifth PGA Tour title of the season. Pinehurst No. 2 makes for a great fit for his ball-striking prowess. If the reigning Masters champion putts well, you have to like his chances to be holding his second major trophy of the year and third of his career.
- Rory McIlroy. He’s been knocking on the door for his second U.S. Open title and first major in nearly 10 years. McIlroy is the only player to finish in the top 10 at the U.S. Open in each of the last five years. The last player to do it six times? Jack Nicklaus from 1977 to 1982.
- Tiger Woods. Anytime he tees it up, we’re keeping an eye on him. He finished T-3 in 1999 and second in 2005 in his two previous U.S. Open appearances at Pinehurst No. 2. His creativity around the greens should serve him well and it likely will come down to how much rust is on the game and if the body can hold up for 72 holes.

Tee times

USA Network hosts the bulk of the coverage on Thursday (6:30 a.m.-5 p.m. EDT) with Peacock handling the tail end of the day (5 p.m.-8 p.m.). The highlight of the afternoon wave is the top three players in the world grouped together: Scottie Scheffler, Xander Schauffele and Rory McIlroy, (1:14). Defending champion Wyndham Clark, reigning British Open champion Brian Harman and reigning U.S. Amateur champion Nick Dunlap (1:25) will also be featured along with the 2020 U.S. Open champ Bryson DeChambeau, Max Homa and Viktor Hovland, who tee off at the same time from the 10th tee.

On Friday, the coverage is split between Peacock (6:30 a.m.-8 p.m.) and NBC (1 p.m.-7 p.m.). The afternoon coverage will center on three-time U.S. Open champ Tiger Woods, 2022 U.S. Open winner Matt Fitzpatrick and Will Zalatoris (1:14), who will be featured along with two-time champ Brooks Koepka, Collin Morikawa and Justin Thomas (1:25) and 2016 champion Dustin Johnson, Ludvig Aberg and Tony Finau (1:36).

FedExCup

Scottie Scheffler earned 700 points in the season-long standings for winning his third PGA Tour Signature event of the season at the Memorial. The FedExCup consists of 38 events – 35 in the regular season and three in the FedExCup playoffs, which culminate Aug. 29-Sept. 1 at the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta. Viktor Hovland is the defending champion.

Points leaders

1. Scottie Scheffler	5,051
2. Xander Schauffele	2,880
3. Rory McIlroy	2,045
4. Collin Morikawa	1,971
5. Wyndham Clark	1,906
6. Sahithi Theegala	1,806
7. Ludvig Aberg	1,785
8. Byeong Hun An	1,620
9. Hideki Matsuyama	1,540
10. Sepp Straka	1,324

Rodgers skipping minicamp is bad optics



Jarrett Bell
Columnist
USA TODAY

Where’s Aaron Rodgers?

The marquee quarterback certainly wasn’t with the bulk of his teammates Tuesday as the New York Jets opened their “mandatory” minicamp. Rodgers was MIA, which tends to happen with the NFL’s offseason events. (Haason Reddick, the superb edge rusher whom the Jets acquired from the Philadelphia Eagles a few months ago, wasn’t at minicamp, either. His unexcused absence was rather conventional. He wants a new contract.)

In the case of Rodgers, though, the absence apparently isn’t about money, health or wellness. It is seemingly about the four-time league MVP putting what Jets coach Robert Saleh described as an “event very important to him” ahead of his team. Evidently, this absence was planned several weeks ago. Rodgers communicated that to Saleh, yet the Jets coach didn’t grant a minicamp pass. No, Saleh was left to do the dirty work of explaining the awkward absence of his team’s most important player without fully revealing the reason.

Bad optics, A-Rod.

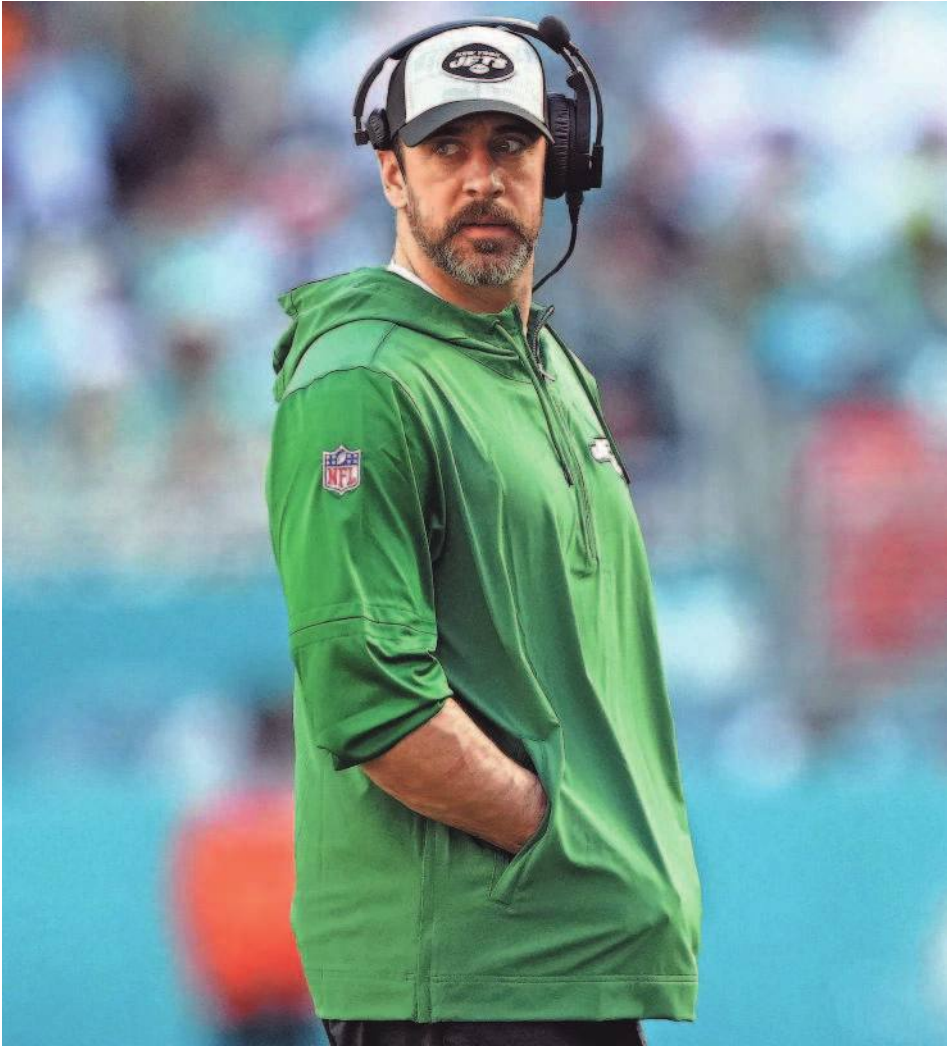
Sure, the conflict may be totally legit. Players are people. Like any of us, they may need to opt out of commitments due to real-life circumstances. It’s just that generally – and especially for the high-profile face of the franchise – there’s some sort of explanation to minimize the distraction.

Yeah, distraction. Even if Saleh, bless him, didn’t dare to label it as that.

“Selfishly, I want our guys here all the time, but when you get to these mandatory things, you make the best decision for yourself,” Saleh told reporters at Jets headquarters in Florham Park, New Jersey.

“Obviously, selfishly, want all of the team here all the time. But he made a decision, and that’s where he went.”

It’s striking that Saleh used the word “selfishly” in addressing the matter. No, coach, it’s not selfish to expect your



Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers walks onto the field during an injury timeout during a game last season against the Dolphins. JASEN VINLOVE/USA TODAY SPORTS

quarterback and team leader to show up at the mandatory minicamp. Rodgers, 40, probably doesn’t really need the practice snaps and skipping all or part of the three-day minicamp won’t make a difference when the Jets open the season with a Monday night showcase at the San Francisco 49ers on Sept. 9. After his 2023 season was ruined after just four snaps by a torn Achilles tendon, Rodgers has progressed well enough with his rehab that he fully participated during the entire three weeks of OTA practices.

Assuming that he’ll be all-in during training camp, this minicamp absence is merely a curious blip. Yet, pending further explanation, it comes off as so, well, selfish.

It’s possible that Rodgers chose to skip minicamp to support long-shot presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who considered asking the quarterback to join the ticket as his vice presidential nominee – which was a very big deal for several days until Rodgers finally squashed the notion. Maybe Rodgers’ minicamp absence is part of the aftershock. RFK Jr. is scheduled to attend a private fundraising reception on Thursday in Glendale, California, and it’s hardly a stretch to think that Rodgers, who has a home in Southern California, might join in to support the cause.

If only Rodgers would address his absence. He was at the team’s facility on Monday for a physical and to participate

in the designated day to collect video and digital images and content of players for use throughout the season. Then he left town. And remember, Rodgers was the guy who declared with a rant in January that the Jets needed to sharpen their focus if they intend to live up to the hype as a serious Super Bowl contender.

“It’s not a half the time thing, it’s not a sometimes thing, it’s not a most of the time thing, it’s an every time thing,” Rodgers said a few months ago. “If you want to be a winning organization and put yourself in position to win championships and be competitive, everything that you do matters – and the (expletive) that has nothing to do with winning needs to get out of the building. So, that’ll be the focus moving forward.”

What a strong statement, the words of a leader setting a standard.

A few weeks after that, however, Rodgers fueled a commotion – which made Saleh and the Jets’ brain trust seem clueless – when he declined to immediately address whether he intended to become RFK Jr.’s running mate. As the buzz intensified, Rodgers could have easily clarified his intentions, as running for vice president would have wiped out his football career, at least until November. Instead of setting the record straight, though, Rodgers opted to let Saleh and the Jets twist in the wind with the possibility. Now that’s selfish.

Is that the stuff that has nothing to do with winning games that needs to be out of the building?

Rodgers can talk all the mess he wants about keeping distractions to a minimum, but it rings hollow when he plays it both ways by fueling them himself. He’s been around long enough as one of the NFL’s best players to recognize what his presence, absence and messaging embody. No, the masses don’t have to agree with his anti-vax stance or understand his darkness retreats. Yet there’s little doubt that, because of his platform, Rodgers generates so much attention linked to so many topics – which is exactly why his absence from the start of minicamp became an instant sideshow.

He knows that. But Rodgers has opted to handle it as he sees fit, that the team’s minicamp is mandatory for the others – even if it adds another distraction to the pile.

Burrow discusses mental toll of injuries

Kelsey Conway
The Cincinnati Enquirer | USA TODAY NETWORK

CINCINNATI – Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow took the podium following the first minicamp practice with an introspective approach.

The 27-year-old has had more time to sit with his thoughts than he’d like in the last four years. Burrow had season-ending surgery on the scapholunate ligament in his right wrist in November. This came after a battle with a nagging calf injury last year in training camp.

The year before that? He had an emergency appendectomy that forced him to miss almost all of training camp. And the year before that? He spent the 2021 preseason recovering from a torn ACL.

He is entering his fifth training camp and has yet to have a preseason that’s ended without a hiccup. When asked if he’s putting added pressure on himself to try to do everything he can to get through training camp fully healthy, Burrow offered an honest response:

“Whenever the injuries start to stack up, your football mortality kind of comes into the back of your mind. So, that’s definitely something I’ve thought about and something I have had to fight through. That is every injury that happens. They stack and you continue to think about how you can get better from those and how you can come back an improved player when maybe you aren’t getting the reps you had because of your injuries. It’s always a challenge, it always is. But I’m built for it.”

Preparing for season

Burrow admitted he’s not invincible. He also accepted responsibility for trying to push through injuries when he should have sat out. When asked specifically how he wished he could have handled his calf injury last year differently, Burrow said that specific injury was the catalyst for his change in mindset.

On the second day of camp last year, Burrow practiced with a compression sleeve on his calf. Right before the end of practice, he was carted off the field after straining that same calf on a non-contact drill. He tried to rush his way back on the field to play before Week 1 with limited practice before ultimately re-tweak-



Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow throws a pass during practice Tuesday at the team training facility in Cincinnati. Burrow is entering his fifth NFL season and has already dealt with a series of injuries. ALBERT CESARE/THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

ing his calf in Week 2 when the Bengals hosted the Baltimore Ravens. He didn’t look like the same quarterback you’ve seen until mid-October. Right as the Bengals, and Burrow, were catching their stride to make a playoff push, Burrow’s wrist injury occurred and his season was over before it ever really started.

This is arguably the most important offseason of Burrow’s career and he’s approaching it as so. The Bengals made a gigantic investment in Burrow when they signed him to a five-year extension worth \$275 million. He understands he needs to be healthy for his team to try to make another Super Bowl run.

“That’s what this offseason has been about for me ... it’s not pushing through some things that I have pushed through in the past. I’ve always prided myself on my mental toughness to be able to push through pain and push through those injuries. That has kind of been my growth

this offseason is taking a step back and understanding my value to the organization and the team.”

Wrist injury recovery

Burrow’s recovery from his wrist injury is still an ongoing process the team is managing. Head coach Zac Taylor admitted he gives Burrow a scheduled off day once a week to ensure he doesn’t try to push too hard in June.

Burrow refrained from giving any detail about where he’s at from a comfort standpoint at this point in time. However, he did say he will be ready to go come training camp and if he had to make an accurate throw in a tight window right now he could. After Thursday’s practice, the Bengals break for six weeks of summer before reporting for training camp at the end of July. Burrow said he has his plan in place for how he’ll approach the

next month. That includes not working too hard this time around. “I’m going to definitely not quite grind as much for this next month and a half,” Burrow said.

Offseason plans

When asked what he plans to do with this free time when not training, Burrow said he plans to travel and is learning how to play the piano through YouTube videos.

He also said he hopes to get together with wide receivers Ja’Marr Chase and Tee Higgins at some point to throw. Expectations will be high for the Bengals after missing the playoffs last year, and that doesn’t scare Burrow, it excites him.

“I have this whole next month laid out. I have how I want to handle my rest days, the weeks I’m going to grind, so we have that all laid out and I’m excited about it.”

Swimming more than fun for Ledecky



Christine Brennan
Columnist
USA TODAY

Katie Ledecky, the greatest female swimmer in history, is known for winning Olympic gold medals in the most impressive fashion. But something few might be aware of is what happens when she comes into the post-race press conference, where she spends quite a bit of time deflecting attention from herself and focusing on her competitors.

So how does a person who would rather talk about others than herself actually write a book – about herself?

“You may have picked up on it that I did deflect a little bit by talking about all the people that have played such an instrumental role in my life,” Ledecky said during a recent interview as she discussed her new memoir, the fabulously titled “Just Add Water,” which was published Tuesday by Simon & Schuster.

“I guess that actually is talking about myself,” she acknowledged, “but I really do feel like I’m the product of all the people around me, the people who have come before me, definitely my grandparents, my parents, my brother, my aunts and uncles, cousins. Really I don’t think I would be the swimmer I am with-



Katie Ledecky won the women’s 800 freestyle final during the Tokyo Olympic Summer Games in 2021.
GRACE HOLLARS/USA TODAY SPORTS

out them. So it was great to be able to reflect on that and share a lot of their stories.”

This is a big week for the 27-year-old Ledecky. In addition to the debut of her first book, she will compete at the U.S. Olympic swimming trials in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis (yes, a pool has been built inside an indoor football stadium) where she is expected to qualify for her fourth U.S. Olympic team in multiple events.

Ledecky will be one of the most-watched athletes at the Paris Games, where she will try to add to her Olympic cache of seven gold medals and three

silvers. While she likely will be favored to win gold in the women’s 800 and 1,500 freestyle events as she did in Tokyo three years ago, she will not go unchallenged as younger swimmers who grew up idolizing her are now some of her top rivals.

But first, she’s dishing out some valuable advice in her new book, which in many ways is the perfect primer for parents and their athletic children.

As she details her childhood at a neighborhood pool in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., she had no aspirations of going to the Olympics. She was swimming just for fun.

“I’ve seen it with teammates that they tell the story of how right when they started swimming, they wrote in a first-grade paper that they wanted to go to the Olympics, or somebody declared that they were going to be an Olympian when they won the 25 free at age 8,” she said.

“That was never me and that was never my family. I loved swimming and I definitely fell in love with it right from the start but I played other sports. I was pretty decent at basketball and soccer and was competitive and loved being active, so I loved all these things I was doing.”

As for swimming, she said, “I watched it on TV but when I watched swimming, I never thought I would be at that level. I thought that that was some

other realm, I thought that’s so far off and it wasn’t really until I started qualifying for these bigger and bigger meets that all of a sudden qualifying for Olympic trials was the next meet and at that point, it came into the picture and I learned how you qualify for the Olympics.”

But, she said, “It wasn’t the goal from a young age. And so I think that is an important message, it’s a message that you don’t have to be great right from the get-go, you don’t even have to have that goal right from the get-go, there are different journeys that everyone takes.”

For anyone looking for tabloid drama or even a hint of scandal, this isn’t the book for you. It’s just the opposite, a delightful escape from our rancorous world to a place where hard work pays off and dreams do come true.

“I feel very fortunate that I have had a very happy life and no major injury or huge setback or abuse or anything in my life that has derailed me from the path that I’ve wanted to take,” Ledecky said. “When I started writing this, I knew it would be a very positive story.

“Having that gold medal, seeing the way that it makes little kids smile, older people smile, it can light up somebody’s face, and so just that impact is something that’s very meaningful to me and if the book can be a small part of adding to that, then that’s great and means a lot to me.”

DeChambeau: ‘Boring golf’ key at Pinehurst

Cameron Jourdan
Golfweek | USA TODAY NETWORK

Bryson DeChambeau is perhaps the most interesting man in professional golf.



The 2020 U.S. Open champion is a social media star, from his TikTok page to his YouTube videos. He also made waves this year when he put 3D-printed irons into his golf bag, something that has led to top-10 finishes in the first two majors of the year.

When it comes to boring, DeChambeau is the polar opposite. He has become a fan favorite again in recent months because of his social presence, a title he didn’t have in the months after his move to LIV Golf. But this week, as he prepared for the U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2, he is preaching boring.

“If I get my irons in a place where I’m hitting it in the middle of the greens and just playing boring golf, that’s the goal for me this week is try to play as boring a golf as possible,” DeChambeau said Tuesday.

But that’s the challenge that Pinehurst No. 2 in North Carolina presents. While it can reward big tee shots, it’s a ball-striker’s course that will penalize shots barely offline, and the putting surfaces are punishing to any shots that aren’t in the correct location.

“Looking forward to a tough test of golf out here. Pinehurst is no joke,” DeChambeau said. “You have to hit it in the middle of the greens. And this is a Boo Weekley quote, but the center of the

green never moves, so I’ll try to focus on that this week.”

DeChambeau has become so popular in part because he goes against the grain and is willing to try things no one else does, and he does it spectacularly. From single-length irons, swinging out of his shoes on drives and tinkering with every little aspect of his swing, he’s not afraid to go out on a limb to gain an advantage while on the course.

However, at a major championship test that’s a bit different than others, don’t expect DeChambeau to swing for the fences on every tee box.

“It stinks hitting a 6-iron off the tee compared to a driver, but sometimes you’ve got to do it and you’ve got to make the right decision for shooting the lowest score out here,” DeChambeau said. “There’s numerous holes like 3, I’d love to go for that green every single day, and I may go for it. I don’t know, you never know with me. Certainly on the tee box if it’s downwind, I’ll give it a go probably.”

DeChambeau finished a shot behind Xander Schauffele at the PGA Championship, finishing at 20 under. It’s more than likely the winning score will be significantly less than that this weekend, but that doesn’t mean DeChambeau won’t entertain the crowds as he has during the first two majors of the year.

“I’m looking forward to a great challenge this week,” DeChambeau said. “It’s a lot of boring golf. It’s definitely different than Valhalla, but I’ll try to do my best to show the crowd some fun drives and some hopefully long-made putts.”

Rory McIlroy, wife reconcile

Cydney Henderson
USA TODAY

Nearly one month after Rory McIlroy filed for divorce from Erica Stoll, the four-time major champion confirmed that he’s reconciled with his wife of seven years after the pair “resolved our differences.”

An attorney representing McIlroy filed a motion to voluntarily dismiss the divorce documents on Tuesday, The Guardian reported. The announcement comes days before the start of the U.S. Open, an event McIlroy last won in 2011.

“There have been rumors about my personal life recently, which is unfortunate,” McIlroy said in a statement to the outlet. “Responding to each rumor is a fool’s game.

“Over the past weeks, Erica and I have realized that our best future was as a family together. Thankfully, we have resolved our differences and look

forward to a new beginning.”

McIlroy and Stoll began dating in 2015 and tied the knot in April 2017 at Ashford Castle in Ireland. They welcomed daughter Poppy Kennedy McIlroy on Aug. 31, 2020, in Jupiter, Florida.

McIlroy, 35, filed divorce documents in Palm Beach County, Florida, on May 13, days ahead of the PGA Championship at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Kentucky, where he finished tied for 12th place at 12-under.

Now, days before the first round of the U.S. Open got underway in North Carolina, McIlroy said he and Stoll have settled their differences and both “look forward to a new beginning.”

The third-ranked golfer in the world has not won a major since 2014. He last won the U.S. Open in 2011 at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland. McIlroy is one of the favorites to win the tournament, according to BetMGM odds.

Contributing: Scooby Axon



Rory McIlroy with his wife, Erica Stoll, and daughter, Poppy Kennedy McIlroy, after a 2021 victory.
JIM DEDMON/
USA TODAY
SPORTS

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<div>NOTICES</div> <div>PUBLIC NOTICE</div> <p>This announcement is neither an offer to purchase nor a solicitation of an offer to sell Shares (as defined below). The Offer (as defined below) is made solely by the Offer to Purchase, dated June 11, 2024, and the related Letter of Transmittal, and any amendments thereto, and is being made to all holders of Shares. Purchaser (as defined below) is not aware of any state where the making of the Offer is prohibited by administrative or judicial action pursuant to any valid state statute. If Purchaser becomes aware of any valid state statute prohibiting the making of the Offer, Purchaser will make a good faith effort to comply with such statute. If, after such good faith effort, Purchaser cannot comply with such state statute, the Offer will not be made to nor will tenders be accepted from or on behalf of the holders of Shares in such state. In any jurisdiction where securities, blue sky or other laws require that the Offer be made by a licensed broker or dealer, the Offer shall be deemed to be made on behalf of Purchaser by one or more registered brokers or dealers licensed under the laws of such jurisdiction.</p> <p>Notice of Offer to Purchase for Cash Up to 2,000,000 Shares of Common Stock of MASCO CORPORATION at \$64.00 Net Per Share by TRC CAPITAL INVESTMENT CORPORATION</p> <p>TRC Capital Investment Corporation, a corporation under the laws of the Province of Ontario, Canada ("Purchaser"), is offering to purchase up to 2,000,000 shares of common stock, \$1.00 par value per share (the "Shares"), of Masco Corporation, a Delaware corporation (the "Company"), at \$64.00 per share, net to the seller in cash, upon the terms and subject to the conditions set forth in the Offer to Purchase, dated June 11, 2024, and in the related Letter of Transmittal (the "Offer"). The offer is not conditioned upon the tender of any minimum number of Shares.</p> <p>THE OFFER, PRORATION PERIOD AND WITHDRAWAL RIGHTS WILL EXPIRE AT 11:59 P.M., NEW YORK CITY TIME, ON JULY 11, 2024, UNLESS THE OFFER IS EXTENDED OR EARLIER TERMINATED.</p> <p>Shares tendered pursuant to the Offer may be withdrawn at any time prior to 11:59 p.m., New York City time, on July 11, 2024, (the "Expiration Date") unless the Offer is extended, and, if not yet accepted for payment by the Purchaser, may also be withdrawn after July 22, 2024. If more than 2,000,000 Shares are validly tendered prior to the Expiration Date and not properly withdrawn, the Purchaser will, upon the terms and subject to the conditions of the Offer, accept for payment and pay for only 2,000,000 Shares on a pro rata basis, with adjustments to avoid purchases of fractional Shares. The information required to be disclosed pursuant to the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, is contained in the Offer to Purchase and is incorporated herein by reference. The Offer to Purchase and the related Letter of Transmittal and other relevant materials will be mailed upon request to record holders of Shares and furnished to brokers, dealers, banks, trust companies and similar persons whose names, or the names of whose nominees, appear on the Company's shareholder list or, if applicable, who are listed as participants in a clearing agency's security position listing, for subsequent transmittal to beneficial owners of Shares. The Offer to Purchase and Letter of Transmittal contain important information which should be read before any decision is made with respect to the Offer. Requests for copies of the Offer to Purchase, the Letter of Transmittal and all other tender offer materials may be directed to the Information Agent, as set forth below, and copies will be furnished promptly. Questions or requests for assistance may be directed to the Information Agent. The Information Agent for the Offer is: CNRA FINANCIAL SERVICES INC. 101 St. Clair Avenue West, Suite 1908, Toronto, Canada M4V 0A2. Call: (416) 861-9446. June 11, 2024</p>	<div>PUBLIC NOTICES</div> <p>Sourcewell, a State of Minnesota local government unit and service cooperative, is requesting proposals for OEM Vehicle Parts and Supplies to result in a contracting solution for use by its Participating Entities.</p> <p>Sourcewell Participating Entities include thousands of governmental, higher education, K-12 education, nonprofit, tribal government, and other public agencies located in the United States and Canada.</p> <p>A full copy of the Request for Proposals can be found on the Sourcewell Procurement Portal https://proportal.sourcewell-mn.gov</p> <p><i>Only proposals submitted through the Sourcewell Procurement Portal will be considered.</i></p> <p>Proposals are due no later than August 1, 2024, at 4:30 p.m. Central Time, and late proposals will not be considered.</p>	<div>CAREERS</div> <div>EMPLOYMENT</div> <p>ASSOCIATE GENERAL DENTIST Opportunity. Full-time. \$700.00 - \$800.00 Daily guarantee or % of Collections (whichever is greater); Earnings expected to be \$150k to \$250k per year plus signing bonus! Ideal candidate will be understanding and patient. Candidate will be given full clinical autonomy. Mentorship is available. Please contact us at RecruitmentServices@henryschein.com. AD CODE: DDSIL3025.</p> <p>MODERN FAMILY DENTAL OFFICE with an amazing team is seeking a full-time general dentist. Our well-established practice is located on the southern Outer Banks of North Carolina in the highly sought-after Crystal Coast area. Email CV and references to Kirsten@crystalcoastdentistry.com. NC state license is required.</p>	<div>TRAVEL</div> <div>CAMPGROUNDS</div> <p>"The Happiest Place in Montana" - Boulder Creek Lodge <i>The Premier Family Vacation Destination</i></p> <p>"The Happiest Place in Montana" - Boulder Creek Lodge in Hall, Montana is the premier family destination vacation location in Southwest Montana. 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FOR THE RECORD

All times ET

MLB

AMERICAN LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
N.Y. Yankees	48	21	.695	—
Baltimore	44	22	.667	2½
Boston	33	34	.493	14
Toronto	33	35	.485	14½
Tampa Bay	32	35	.478	15

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	43	22	.662	—
Kansas City	39	29	.574	5½
Minnesota	35	32	.522	9
Detroit	32	34	.485	11½
Chicago	17	51	.250	27½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	39	30	.565	—
Texas	31	35	.470	6½
Houston	31	37	.456	7½
L.A. Angels	25	41	.379	12½
Oakland	26	43	.377	13

National League
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	46	20	.697	—
Atlanta	35	29	.547	10
Washington	31	35	.470	15
N.Y. Mets	28	37	.431	17½
Miami	23	43	.348	23

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	40	28	.588	—
Pittsburgh	32	34	.485	7
Cincinnati	32	35	.478	7½
Chicago	32	35	.478	7½
St. Louis	31	34	.477	7½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	42	26	.618	—
San Diego	36	35	.507	7½
San Francisco	33	35	.485	9
Arizona	32	35	.478	9½
Colorado	24	43	.358	17½

Tuesday's Games

Baltimore 4, Atlanta 0
Washington 5, Detroit 4
Tampa Bay 5, Chicago Cubs 2
Philadelphia 4, Boston 1
Cleveland 5, Cincinnati 3
Miami 4, N.Y. Mets 2
Colorado 5, Minnesota 4
Pittsburgh 2, St. Louis 1
N.Y. Yankees 10, Kansas City 1
Toronto 3, Milwaukee 0
Arizona 9, L.A. Angels 4
Seattle 4, Chicago White Sox 3
San Diego 4, Oakland 3
Houston 3, San Francisco 1
L.A. Dodgers 15, Texas 2

Wednesday's Games

Minnesota 17, Colorado 9
Milwaukee 5, Toronto 4
Houston at San Francisco
Oakland at San Diego
Atlanta at Baltimore
Washington at Detroit
Chicago Cubs at Tampa Bay
Philadelphia at Boston
Cleveland at Cincinnati
Miami at N.Y. Mets
Pittsburgh at St. Louis
N.Y. Yankees at Kansas City
L.A. Angels at Arizona
Chicago White Sox at Seattle
Texas at L.A. Dodgers

Thursday's Games

Atlanta at Baltimore, 1:05 p.m.
Washington at Detroit, 1:10 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Kansas City, 2:10 p.m.
Pittsburgh at St. Louis, 2:15 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at Tampa Bay, 6:50 p.m.
Philadelphia at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
Miami at N.Y. Mets, 7:10 p.m.
Oakland at Minnesota, 7:40 p.m.
L.A. Angels at Arizona, 9:40 p.m.
Chicago White Sox at Seattle, 9:40 p.m.
Texas at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

Friday's Games

St. Louis at Chicago Cubs, 2:20 p.m.
Miami at Washington, 6:45 p.m.
Philadelphia at Baltimore, 7:05 p.m.
Cleveland at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
San Diego at N.Y. Mets, 7:10 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Atlanta, 7:20 p.m.
Detroit at Houston, 8:10 p.m.
Oakland at Minnesota, 8:10 p.m.
Cincinnati at Milwaukee, 8:10 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Colorado, 8:40 p.m.
Chicago White Sox at Arizona, 9:40 p.m.
Kansas City at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.
Texas at Seattle, 10:10 p.m.
L.A. Angels at San Francisco, 10:15 p.m.

Saturday's Games

Oakland at Minnesota, 2:10 p.m.
St. Louis at Chicago Cubs, 2:20 p.m.
Cleveland at Toronto, 3:07 p.m.
Philadelphia at Baltimore, 4:05 p.m.
Miami at Washington, 4:05 p.m.
L.A. Angels at San Francisco, 4:05 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Atlanta, 4:10 p.m.
Detroit at Houston, 4:10 p.m.
Cincinnati at Milwaukee, 4:10 p.m.
San Diego at N.Y. Mets, 4:10 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Boston, 7:15 p.m.
Texas at Seattle, 7:15 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Colorado, 9:10 p.m.
Kansas City at L.A. Dodgers, 9:10 p.m.
Chicago White Sox at Arizona, 10:10 p.m.

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Connecticut	10	1	.909	—
N.Y. Liberty	11	2	.846	—
Atlanta	5	5	.500	4½
Chicago	4	6	.400	5½
Indiana	3	10	.231	8
Washington	1	12	.077	10

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	9	3	.750	—
Seattle	8	4	.667	1
Phoenix	6	6	.500	3
Las Vegas	5	5	.500	3
L.A. Sparks	4	8	.333	5
Dallas	3	7	.300	5

Tuesday's Games

Washington 87, Atlanta 68
Minnesota 100, Las Vegas 86
Seattle 95, L.A. Sparks 79

Wednesday's Game

Connecticut at Chicago

Thursday's Games

Atlanta at Indiana, 7 p.m.
Seattle at Dallas, 7 p.m.
Las Vegas at Phoenix, 10 p.m.

Friday's Games

Chicago at Washington, 7:30 p.m.
L.A. Sparks at Minnesota, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday's Games

Connecticut at Dallas, 1 p.m.
N.Y. Liberty at Las Vegas, 3 p.m.

Sunday's Games

Chicago at Indiana, noon
Seattle at Phoenix, 3 p.m.
L.A. Sparks at Atlanta, 3 p.m.

SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Inter Miami CF	10	3	5	35	42	27
Cincinnati	10	3	3	33	23	16
N.Y. City FC	9	5	2	29	24	17
N.Y. Red Bulls	8	4	5	29	29	23
Charlotte FC	7	6	4	25	18	18
Toronto FC	7	7	3	24	26	26
Columbus	6	2	6	24	21	13
Philadelphia	4	4	8	20	27	23
Nashville	4	5	7	19	20	22
D.C. United	4	6	7	19	25	31
Orlando City	4	7	5	17	16	24
CF Montreal	4	7	5	17	23	35
Atlanta	4	8	4	16	22	21
Chicago	3	8	6	15	17	29
New England	4	10	1	13	12	27

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Real Salt Lake	9	2	6	33	36	19
Los Angeles FC	9	4	3	30	28	19
Minnesota	8	3	5	29	28	21
L.A. Galaxy	7	3	7	28	31	25
Vancouver	7	5	4	25	24	19
Austin FC	6	6	5	23	21	25
Houston	6	6	4	22	18	18
Colorado	6	7	4	22	29	31
Portland	5	7	6	21	32	32
Seattle	4	7	6	18	20	21
Saint Louis	3	4	9	18	23	25
Sporting KC	3	4	5	14	26	32
FC Dallas	3	8	5	14	18	25
San Jose	3	11	2	11	24	39

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

Friday's Game

Columbus at N.Y. City FC, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday's Games

Real Salt Lake at CF Montreal, 7:30 p.m.
Houston at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.
Chicago at Toronto FC, 7:30 p.m.
Los Angeles FC at Orlando City, 7:30 p.m.
Inter Miami CF at Philadelphia, 7:30 p.m.
Vancouver at New England, 7:30 p.m.
D.C. United at Charlotte FC, 7:30 p.m.
Nashville at N.Y. Red Bulls, 7:30 p.m.
Saint Louis at FC Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
Austin FC at Colorado, 9:30 p.m.
Sporting KC at L.A. Galaxy, 10:30 p.m.
Minnesota at Seattle, 10:30 p.m.
Cincinnati at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

NSWL

Friday's Game

Kansas City vs. Chicago, 8 p.m.

Saturday's Games

Racing Louisville vs. NJ/NY Gotham, 12 p.m.
North Carolina vs. Orlando, 7:30 p.m.
Washington vs. San Diego, 7:30 p.m.
Houston vs. Angel City, 9:30 p.m.

Sunday's Games

Seattle vs. Portland, 4 p.m.
Bay FC vs. Utah, 10 p.m.

NBA

Finals

(Best-of-7; x- if necessary)

Boston Celtics 2, Dallas Mavericks 0

All games on ABC
Game 1: Celtics 107, Mavericks 89
Game 2: Celtics 105, Mavericks 98
Game 3: Celtics vs. Mavericks
Game 4: Friday, June 14, at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
x-Game 5: Mon, June 17, at Boston, 8:30 p.m.
x-Game 6: Thurs, June 20, at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
x-Game 7: Sunday, June 23, at Boston, 8 p.m.

NHL

Stanley Cup Final

(Best-of-7; x- if necessary)

Florida Panthers 2, Edmonton Oilers 0

All starts at 8 p.m. on ABC
Game 1: Panthers 3, Oilers 0
Game 2: Florida 4, Edmonton 1
Game 3: Thursday, June 13, at Edmonton
Game 4: Saturday, June 15, at Edmonton
x-Game 5: Tuesday, June 18, at Florida
x-Game 6: Friday, June 21, at Edmonton
x-Game 7: Monday, June 24, at Florida

DEALS

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Braydon Fisher Traded to Toronto Blue Jays for INF Cavan Biggio. 2B Cavan Biggio Traded for RHP Braydon Fisher.
TORONTO BLUE JAYS — 2B Cavan Biggio Traded to Los Angeles Dodgers for RHP Braydon Fisher. Braydon Fisher Traded for INF Cavan Biggio.
WASHINGTON NATIONALS — 1B Joey Gallo Placed on 10-Day IL. Strained left hamstring. 3B Trey Lipscomb Called Up from Minors.

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NOTICES
LEGAL NOTICE

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY	
In re: SAM ASH MUSIC CORPORATION, et al. Debtors. ¹	Chapter 11 Case No. 24-14727 (SLM) (Jointly Administered)

NOTICE OF BAR DATES FOR SUBMITTING PROOFS OF CLAIM AND CLAIMS UNDER SECTION 503(b)(9) OF THE BANKRUPTCY CODE AGAINST THE DEBTORS
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE That the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey (the "Bankruptcy Court") has entered the *Order (i) Setting Bar Dates for Submitting Proofs of Claim, Including Requests for Payment Under Section 503(b)(9), (ii) Establishing Amended Schedules Bar Date, Rejection Damages Bar Date, and Administrative Claims Bar Date, (iii) Approving the Form, Manner, and Procedures for Filing Proofs of Claim, (iv) Approving Notice Thereof, and (v) Granting Related Relief (the "Bar Date Order")* (Docket No. 201) establishing **5:00 p.m. prevailing Eastern Time on July 10, 2024** (the "General Claims Bar Date"), as the last date for each Person or Entity (including individuals, partnerships, corporations, joint ventures and trusts) to submit proofs of claim (each, a "Proof of Claim") against any of the Debtors listed below (collectively, the "Debtors"). A copy of the Bar Date Order, and any exhibits thereto are available (i) at the Debtors' expense upon request to Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC (the "Notice and Claims Agent"), by calling (888) 991-6919 (Toll Free) for callers or by calling +1 (971) 257-8267 for callers outside the United States, (ii) for no charge by visiting the Debtors' restructuring website at <https://dm.epiq11.com/SamAsh>, or (iii) for a fee via PACER by visiting <http://ecf.nj.uscourts.gov>.
The Bar Date Order requires that all Entities (collectively, the "Claimants") holding or wishing to assert a Claim that arose or is deemed to have arisen prior to **May 8, 2024** (the "Petition Date"), against the Debtors to submit a Proof of Claim so as to be actually received by the Notice and Claims Agent on or before the applicable bar date as set forth below (collectively, the "Bar Dates").

Debtor Name	Last Four Digits of Tax Identification Number	Case Number
Sam Ash Music Corporation	3915	24-14727 (SLM)
Samson Technologies Corp.	4062	24-14738 (SLM)
Sam Ash Megastores, LLC	9955	24-14732 (SLM)
Sam Ash California Megastores, LLC	3598	24-14728 (SLM)
Sam Ash Florida Megastores, LLC	7276	24-14730 (SLM)
Sam Ash Illinois Megastores, LLC	7753	24-14731 (SLM)
Sam Ash Nevada Megastores, LLC	6399	24-14734 (SLM)
Sam Ash New Jersey Megastores, LLC	8788	24-14725 (SLM)
Sam Ash New York Megastores, LLC	7753	24-14736 (SLM)
Sam Ash CT, LLC	5932	24-14729 (SLM)
Sam Ash Music Marketing, LLC	2024	24-14733 (SLM)
Sam Ash Quikship Corp.	7410	24-14737 (SLM)

General Claims Bar Date (Applicable to 503(b)(9) Claims)	All Claimants holding or wishing to assert a Claim must submit a Proof of Claim with respect to such Claim so as to be actually received by the Notice and Claims Agent by July 10, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. prevailing Eastern Time (the "General Claims Bar Date"), including parties asserting Claims pursuant to section 503(b)(9) of the Bankruptcy Code.
Governmental Bar Date	All Governmental Units holding or wishing to assert a Claim against the Debtors arising (or deemed to arise) before the Petition Date (whether secured, unsecured priority or unsecured non-priority) must submit a Proof of Claim so as to be actually received by the Notice and Claims Agent by November 4, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. prevailing Eastern Time (the "Governmental Bar Date").
Amended Schedules Bar Date	In the event the Debtors amend or supplement their schedules of assets and liabilities, and statements of financial affairs (collectively, the "Schedules"), the Debtors shall give notice of any such amendment to the holders of any Claim affected thereby, and such holders shall submit their Claims by the later of (a) the General Claims Bar Date or the Governmental Bar Date , as applicable, and (b) 5:00 p.m., prevailing Eastern Time, on the date that is thirty (30) days from the date on which the Debtors provide notice of the amendment to the Schedules in a manner that affects such person or entity (such later date, the "Amended Schedules Bar Date").
Rejection Damages Bar Date	If you have a Claim arising from the rejection of an executory contract or unexpired lease, you must submit a Proof of Claim based on such rejection on or before the later of (a) the General Claims Bar Date or the Governmental Bar Date , as applicable, and (b) 5:00 p.m., prevailing Eastern Time, on the date that is thirty (30) days following entry of the order approving the Debtors' rejection of the applicable executory contract or unexpired lease (the "Rejection Damages Bar Date"). The Debtors will provide notice of the Rejection Damages Bar Date to the contract or lease counterparty whose contract or lease is being rejected at the time the Debtors reject any executory contract or unexpired lease.
Administrative Claims Bar Date	Establishing the following dates and times as the last date and time for each entity (including individuals, partnerships, corporations, joint ventures, and trusts) to file proofs of claim based on any claim arising from costs and expenses of administration of the estates pursuant to section 503(b), other than section 503(b)(9) or 507(a)(2) of the Bankruptcy Code ("Administrative Claim") against any Debtors (the "Administrative Claims Bar Date," and together with the General Claims Bar Date, the Governmental Bar Date, the Amended Schedules Bar Date, and the Rejection Damages Bar Date, as applicable, the "Bar Date" or "Bar Dates"). For any Administrative Claims arising on or prior to June 28, 2024, establishing July 10, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. prevailing Eastern Time , as the last date and time by which claimants holding such Administrative Claims must file Proofs of Claim. For any Administrative Claims arising after June 28, 2024 , such Claims must be filed by the earlier of: (a) the 15th day of the month following the month in which the Claim arose ² and (b) 14 days following any hearing on a plan of liquidation, structured settlement, or other proposed resolution to these chapter 11 cases.

When and Where to Submit
Each Proof of Claim, including supporting documentation, must be submitted so that the Notice and Claims Agent **actually receives** the Proof of Claim on or before the applicable Bar Date by: (i) electronically using the interface available on the Notice and Claims Agent's website at <https://dm.epiq11.com/SamAsh>, (ii) first-class U.S. Mail, which Proof of Claim must include an *original* signature, at the following address: Sam Ash Music Corp. Claims Processing Center, c/o Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC, P.O. Box 4419, Beaverton, OR 97076-4419, or (iii) overnight mail, or other hand-delivery system, which Proof of Claim must include an *original* signature, at the following address: Sam Ash Music Corp. Claims Processing Center, c/o Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC, 10300 SW Allen Blvd., Beaverton OR 97005.
PROOFS OF CLAIM MUST BE SUBMITTED BY MAIL, BY HAND DELIVERY, OR THROUGH EPIQ'S WEBSITE.
PROOFS OF CLAIM SUBMITTED BY FACSIMILE OR EMAIL WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL NOT BE DEEMED TIMELY SUBMITTED.

Contents of Proofs of Claim. Each Proof of Claim must: (i) be written in English; (ii) be denominated in U.S. Dollars; (iii) conform substantially with the form of Proof of Claim attached as **Exhibit L** to the Bar Date Order (the "**Proof of Claim Form**") as provided by the Debtors or Official Form 410; and (iv) be signed or electronically transmitted through the interface available on the Notice and Claims Agent's website at <https://dm.epiq11.com/SamAsh> by the Claimant or by an authorized agent or legal representative of the Claimant. **Please note** that each Proof of Claim must specify by name and case number the Debtor against which the Claim is submitted by selecting the applicable Debtor at the top of the proposed Proof of Claim Form. A Proof of Claim submitted under Case No. 24-14727 (SLM) or that does not identify a Debtor will be deemed as submitted only against Sam Ash Music Corporation. A Proof of Claim that names a subsidiary Debtor but is submitted under Case No. 24-14727 (SLM) will be treated as having been submitted against the subsidiary Debtor with a notation that a discrepancy in the submission exists.

Section 503(b)(9) Claims. Vendors and suppliers of goods may be entitled to request an administrative priority Claim under section 503(b)(9) of the Bankruptcy Code to the extent they delivered, and the Debtor received, goods within the twenty-day period prior to the Petition Date. The Court has deemed the submission of a Proof of Claim as satisfying the procedural requirements for asserting such a Claim under section 503(b)(9) of the Bankruptcy Code. In addition to the other requirements listed above, any Proof of Claim asserting a 503(b)(9) Claim must (i) include the value of the goods delivered to and received by the Debtors in the twenty days prior to the Petition Date, (ii) attach documentation of the date on which the goods were delivered to and received by the Debtors; (iii) attach any documentation identifying the particular invoices for which the 503(b)(9) Claim is being asserted; (iv) attach documentation of any reclamation demand made against the Debtors under section 546(c) of the Bankruptcy Code (if applicable); and (v) set forth whether any portion of the 503(b)(9) Claim was satisfied by payments made by the Debtors.

Consequences of Failing to Timely Submit Your Proof of Claim. Any Claimant who is required, but fails, to submit a Proof of Claim in accordance with the Bar Date Order on or before the applicable Bar Date shall be forever barred, estopped, and enjoined from asserting such Claim against the Debtors (or submitting a Proof of Claim with respect thereto). In such event, the Debtors' property shall be forever discharged from any and all indebtedness or liability with respect to such Claim, and such holder shall not be permitted to vote to accept or reject any plan of reorganization filed in these chapter 11 cases or participate in any distribution on account of such Claim or receive further notices regarding such Claim.

Reservation of Rights. Nothing contained in this notice is intended to or should be construed as a waiver of the Debtors' right to: (a) dispute, or assert offsets or defenses against, any submitted Proof of Claim or any Claim listed or reflected in the Schedules as to the nature, amount, liability, or classification of such Claims; (b) subsequently designate any scheduled Claim as disputed, contingent, or unliquidated; and (c) otherwise amend or supplement the Schedules.

Additional Information. If you have any questions regarding the Claims process and/or if you wish to obtain a copy of the Bar Date Order (which contains a more detailed description of the requirements for submitting Proofs of Claim), a Proof of Claim form, or related documents, you may do so by visiting the Debtors' restructuring website at <https://dm.epiq11.com/SamAsh> or contacting the Notice and Claims Agent by calling (888) 991-6919 (Toll Free) for callers or by calling +1 (971) 257-8267 for callers outside the United States and/or writing to the following address: Sam Ash Music Corp. Claims Processing Center, c/o Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC, P.O. Box 4419, Beaverton OR 97076-4419 or Sam Ash Music Corp. Claims Processing Center, c/o Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC, 10300 SW Allen Blvd., Beaverton OR 97005.

¹ The Debtors in these chapter 11 cases, along with the last four digits of each debtor's federal tax identification number, are: Sam Ash Music Corporation (3915); Samson Technologies Corp. (4062); Sam Ash Megastores, LLC (9955); Sam Ash California Megastores, LLC (3598); Sam Ash Florida Megastores, LLC (7276); Sam Ash Illinois Megastores, LLC (8966); Sam Ash Nevada Megastores, LLC (6399); Sam Ash New York Megastores, LLC (7753); Sam Ash New Jersey Megastores, LLC (8788); Sam Ash CT, LLC (5932); Sam Ash Music Marketing, LLC (2024); and Sam Ash Quikship Corp. (7410). The location of debtor Sam Ash Music Corporation's principal place of business is 278 Duffy Avenue, P.O. Box 9047, Hicksville, NY 11802.

² Except as otherwise defined herein, all terms specifically defined in title 11 of the United States Code, 11 U.S.C. §§ 101-1532 (the "Bankruptcy Code") shall have those meanings ascribed to them by the Bankruptcy Code. In particular, as used herein: (a) the term "Claim" has the meaning given to it in section 101(5) of the Bankruptcy Code; (b) the term "Entity" (including individuals, partnerships, corporations, joint ventures, and trusts) has the meaning given to it in section 101(15) of the Bankruptcy Code; (c) the term "Governmental Unit" has the meaning given to it in section 101(27) of the Bankruptcy Code; and (d) the term "Person" has the meaning given to it in

Quinn knows 2nd chance may be last

Chris Bumbaca
USA TODAY

ASHBURN, Va. – Before Dan Quinn could consider head coaching job No. 2 in the NFL, he had to address a different number – 360. As in, 360 degrees, an exemplification of the complete self-evaluation he conducted following his firing as head coach of the Atlanta Falcons five games into the 2020 season.

“I wanted to make sure I did a 360 to find what would be some potential blind spots that I did have and – in a good way, of trying to take on too much at times,” the Washington Commanders head coach said during his introductory news conference on Feb. 5. “That’s why for me, if I got another shot, there were a couple things that I wanted to find.”

One was stable ownership. Another was a like-minded executive to head up player personnel. In owner Josh Harris and general manager Adam Peters, respectively, Quinn believes he found both.

While going through his self-evaluation, Quinn realized he spread himself too thin in Atlanta. The various duties that come with being an NFL head coach are time consuming. He needed to be better at delegating. Quinn hired a staff that features two former NFL head coaches in offensive coordinator Kliff Kingsbury and running backs coach/run game coordinator Anthony Lynn as well as a combination of assistants who have been with him for years and those who have not worked with him at all.

“If you were good enough to get the job the first time, OK, think about the second time around – learning from the failures, learning from the people,” Lynn told USA TODAY Sports last week. “Things that you know the second time around, it’s pretty exciting, where we can go with it.”

Dan Quinn ‘a better version’ of himself in second NFL head coaching job

The Falcons and Quinn are forever linked to the worst collapse in Super Bowl history. Quinn, after success as the defensive coordinator of the “Legion of Boom” Seattle Seahawks defenses, led Atlanta to Super Bowl 51 in the 2016 campaign, his second season as head coach. Then 28-3 and the Tom Brady-led New England Patriots comeback happened. The Falcons won a playoff game the next season but went 7-9 in back-to-back years. The bottom fell out the following fall; the Falcons lost their first five games and Quinn was fired on Oct. 11, 2020, along with former Atlanta general manager Thomas Dimitroff.

“It’s lonely, it’s disappointing, it’s depressing, but you don’t want to just

rinse and repeat,” Quinn said. “You want to make sure, ‘How do I take this, change it, and then make sure you get to prove it again?’ And so that was the silver lining in this. I’m a better version of me today than I was three and four or five years ago. And so that’s why I get to prove that.”

Quinn spent the 2021-23 seasons as defensive coordinator of the Dallas Cowboys and overlapped with Commanders center Tyler Biadasz, one of four Cowboys players who followed Quinn to Washington. Even though there wasn’t constant dialogue between the two, and he wasn’t in meetings with the offense, Biadasz saw firsthand the type of coach Quinn is.

“He was always a very supportive coach,” Biadasz told USA TODAY Sports.

In Dallas, Quinn would occasionally eat lunch with the offensive line, Biadasz said. Biadasz became familiar with the schemes of Quinn and Joe Whitt Jr. – who was the defensive pass game coordinator and secondary coach in Dallas before taking the Commanders’ defensive coordinator role this offseason – thanks to constant practice repetitions. During their many one-on-one side conversations, Quinn asked Biadasz about how he prepared to block certain rushes and how he dealt with going up against the premier interior defensive linemen within the NFC East, such as the New York Giants’ Dexter Lawrence or Washington’s Daron Payne.

“To really see him control a team and express himself even more and open up, it’s been great, just him really showing who he is as a person,” Biadasz said. “And he’s real. The biggest thing about him is that he’s real. I think the energy speaks for itself that we have right now, for sure.”

Lynn called Quinn a “relational head coach” who recommended his assistants take the first day they spent with their position rooms to not focus on X’s and O’s and instead familiarize themselves with the players.

“His coaching style, I can see the chemistry of this team, I can see the culture starting to take shape – we’re not there yet,” Lynn said, noting they have a long way to go before the Week 1 match-up against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sept. 8.

‘Positive inertia’ and proving he deserved a second chance

Quinn’s Commanders tenure suffered its first public relations snafu during rookie minicamp in late April when he wore an unlicensed shirt that referenced the team’s former name by featuring its newer logo along with Native American headdress feathers from pre-



New Washington Commanders head coach Dan Quinn speaks with the media prior to an OTA workout at Commanders Park. GEOFF BURKE/USA TODAY SPORTS

vious branding. Although past Washington players viewed it as an embrace of the former nickname, Quinn chalked it up to a “learning” experience.

In April, the Commanders selected Jayden Daniels with the No. 2 overall pick in the 2024 draft. The obvious hope, for Quinn, is that the reigning Heisman Trophy winner will be the franchise quarterback. No team had more cap space (approximately \$90 million) entering the offseason, and Peters and his lieutenants in the revamped front office signed 20 players.

With his first offseason ending this week at the conclusion of mandatory minicamp, Quinn said one thing he has noticed his second time is the work of the players.

“We asked a lot early on to create some standards together,” Quinn said. “I have really been impressed by the skill work they have put in.”

From a coaching staff standpoint, Quinn was pleased to hear from an intern in the Bill Walsh Coaching Fellowship who said that an outsider would have never known that they came together a few months ago.

“That made me feel good knowing that these guys are connected on the field and off because the players see that as well,” Quinn said. “They see a coaching staff that is connected, they’ll feel that same example that applies to the locker room.”

Having those responsibilities and knowing that Quinn is intentionally delegating to his staff has given his assistants a sense of empowerment, tight ends coach David Raih said.

“It brings great energy to all of us because we’re all involved,” Raih told USA TODAY Sports. “He involves everyone, and I’m talking about DQ and (Peters). They involve everyone. So when you walk in the door, you know you’re involved, it’s all hands on deck – and that has such a positive inertia for all of the coaches.”

A former NFL head coach receiving a second chance to lead a team again is fortuitous. A third try is practically unheard of. Quinn knows that applying the wisdom he gained prior to his second go-round can only take him so far.

“You want to run with those lessons,” he said, “and go prove it.”

Barkov practices, will travel with Panthers

REUTERS

Florida Panthers forward Aleksander Barkov was a full participant at practice on Wednesday and will travel with the team to Edmonton.

Panthers coach Paul Maurice said a final decision on his captain’s availability for Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Final on Thursday (8 p.m. EDT, ABC) will happen after the team gets to Edmonton. They were to fly Wednesday.

“Felt better today. Got through skate today as far as I know. He’ll get checked after. Get him on a plane, get him off a plane, get him on the ice and we’ll see where he’s at tomorrow,” Maurice told reporters Wednesday. “He looked good today.”

Barkov received a high hit from Oilers forward Leon Draisaitl midway into the third period of Monday’s game. Barkov sat out the final 9:28 of the Panthers’ 4-1 victory in Sunrise, Florida.

The Panthers hold a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series.

Barkov, 28, was voted the Selke Trophy winner as the best defensive forward in the league this season, marking the second time he has won the award. He also received the honor for the 2020-21 season.

He recorded 80 points (23 goals, 57 assists) in 73 games during the regular season. He has 19 points (six goals, 13 assists) in 19 playoff games.

Oilers’ Sam Carrick fined for slashing Panthers’ Dmitry Kulikov

The NHL fined Oilers forward Sam Carrick \$2,213.54 on Tuesday for slashing Florida’s Dmitry Kulikov in Game 2



Panthers forward Aleksander Barkov left the ice holding his jaw Monday. JIM RASSOL/USA TODAY SPORTS

of the Stanley Cup Final on Monday in Sunrise, Florida.

The incident occurred late in the third period after Kulikov landed a hard hit on Carrick, who retaliated with a slash between the Panthers defenseman’s legs.

Carrick received a two-minute minor penalty and a 10-game misconduct with 1:59 remaining in Florida’s 4-1 win, which gave the Panthers a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven championship series.

Carrick, 32, was acquired by Edmonton from the Anaheim Ducks as part of a three-team trade also involving the Tampa Bay Lightning at the trade deadline. He recorded two goals and three assists in 16 games with the Oilers in the regular season and has one assist in 10 playoff games.

The fine was the maximum allowable under the collective bargaining agreement.



The Blue Jays have traded second baseman Cavan Biggio to the Dodgers. NICK TURCHIARO/USA TODAY SPORTS

Jays trade infielder Cavan Biggio to Dodgers

REUTERS

The Los Angeles Dodgers acquired infielder Cavan Biggio from the Toronto Blue Jays on Wednesday in exchange for right-handed pitching prospect Braydon Fisher.

Toronto designated Biggio for assignment on Friday. Biggio, 29, has struggled this season, batting just .200 with two homers and nine RBIs in 44 games.

The son of Hall of Famer Craig Biggio showed promise as a rookie with 16 homers, 48 RBIs and 14 steals in 100 games in 2019. He finished fifth in American League Rookie of the Year balloting.

But he’s failed to since reach double digits in homers or even had as many as 70 hits in a season.

Biggio started 34 games this season, 23 at second base.

Biggio has a .227 career average with 48 homers and 176 RBIs in 490 games with the Blue Jays.

He joins a Dodgers roster that is currently missing third baseman Max Muncy, who is on the injured list with a strained oblique.

Fisher, 23, was a fourth-round pick in 2018 and has yet to make his major league debut. He is 2-1 with a 5.68 ERA in 15 relief appearances this season between Double-A Tulsa and Triple-A Oklahoma City.

WNBA star duo still have mom guilt

Diggins-Smith, Hamby returned

Lindsay Schnell
USA TODAY

SEATTLE – Skylar Diggins-Smith isn't entirely sure if she's at 100% yet. In fact, the nine-year veteran, a six-time WNBA All-Star and four-time first-team All-WNBA honoree isn't sure what 100% even means or what that feels like after having two children. "I don't know what 100% is for this body. I tell my coaches, this is my third body," Diggins-Smith joked to USA TODAY Sports, a nod to the fact that the 5-foot-9 guard has given birth twice. Diggins-Smith's comeback is rare. In the league's 28-year history, only a handful of women have returned to play after their second pregnancy, including Diggins-Smith, now of the Seattle Storm. Two-time Sixth Woman of the Year Dearica Hamby of the Los Angeles Sparks is another. On Tuesday, those two-time moms met on the floor when Seattle hosted LA.

As female athletes compete later in life, it has become more common for them to pause training to have a family. Some of the biggest names in sports, including Serena Williams and Allyson Felix, have been praised for returning to elite-level competition after giving birth. But those same women have talked openly about how hard it is to come back, and that they weren't sure they could do it twice. When Williams retired in September 2022, she said her decision was at least somewhat motivated by wanting another child.

Hamby, 30, and Diggins-Smith, 33, know that motherhood is challenging no matter how many kids you have. They respect every WNBA mom's ability to juggle on- and off-court responsibilities, especially in a profession that requires tons of travel. They also know that returning to elite shape after giving birth once is hard enough. Doing it twice puts them in a special club.

"Being one of three or four women who have done it, that's pretty freaking crazy," Diggins-Smith said. "Not a lot of people have navigated it, so you don't have many to reach out to and say, 'Hey, how did you do this in our sport?' Every day you learn something new and you've gotta pump the brakes. For me, I'm still learning about this body, still learning to give myself grace."

Diggins-Smith gave birth to her daughter in early 2023 and spent last season on maternity leave. She also missed the 2019 season, then with the Dallas Wings, after giving birth to her son in April 2019 (Diggins-Smith prefers to keep details about her children, including their names and specific birthdays, private). She spoke frankly about the postpartum struggles she had after having her first child and how hard it was to leave him when she needed to head to the gym or get on a plane for a game.

"The things you don't really talk about in coming back is how you navigate those things," said Diggins-Smith, who has been pushing for the league to create an official moms group where parents could help support each other. (The league estimates that 12 of its current 139 players are moms, though it does not distinguish between women who gave birth and women who didn't.)

Balancing motherhood, veganism and playing was 'lot of trial and error'

Taj McWilliams-Franklin knows how Diggins-Smith and Hamby feel. Now the WNBA's player relations and development manager, McWilliams-Franklin played 14 years in the league and is uniquely positioned to understand the challenge in coming back from multiple pregnancies. McWilliams-Franklin, now 53, has four children, ranging in ages from 36 to 2. Her three daughters were all born when she was playing, the first two when she was still in school. When she found out she was pregnant for a third time at 32 – severe stomach discomfort during practice had her worried her appendix was about to burst – she knew immediately she would keep playing if her body allowed it. "When I found out, I was in the best shape of my life," said McWilliams-Franklin, who would bring her daughter to Connecticut Sun practice to watch from her car seat on the sideline. "I wanted to know, how do I get back to that space? I played until I was 3½ months' pregnant because I didn't know before then. But I knew I still wanted to play overseas, still wanted to



Storm guard Skylar Diggins-Smith (4) is one of a few WNBA players who have twice come back from giving birth. JOE TIMMERMAN/THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR



Sparks forward Dearica Hamby has returned to the WNBA after having children twice. Her daughter Amaya, 7, and son Legend, 1, are regulars at games. PROVIDED BY LOS ANGELES SPARKS

play in the W, so I was trying to figure out how can I do that the right way? "When you're 17 or 19 and pregnant, you pop right back into shape. But at 33, oh God, it's harder." Complicating matters for McWilliams-Franklin: She was a vegan long before it was popular, which meant getting enough nutrients to both nurse and get back into shape involved a "lot of trial and error." She figured it out though and played professionally until she was 44. Diggins-Smith also had to remember recovery would not happen overnight. She gained more than 50 pounds when she was pregnant the second time. She pressured herself to drop baby weight almost immediately after having her son. With her daughter, she reminded herself it would take time. She'd already done it once, and she knew she could do it again. Hamby laughed recalling her comeback, because it didn't take long at all. After giving birth to her daughter Amaya in February 2017, Hamby was back on the floor in six weeks. But when she gave birth to son Legend in March 2023, she returned after just three weeks, a bounce-back so quick it made Diggins-Smith shake her head in disbelief. "It was easier the second time around," said Hamby, who labored for just 90 minutes with each child. "I've been fortunate. ... I didn't have compli-

cations during labor and delivery. I've got to thank my mom and grandma, because at least a little bit of it is genetic." 'Mom guilt' haunts WNBA players, too No one's return was perfectly smooth though, particularly for Hamby or Diggins-Smith, who went public with some of their frustrations. After Hamby was traded by the Las Vegas Aces in January 2023, she accused the organization of retaliation for her getting pregnant. The league investigated Hamby's claims and wound up suspending Vegas coach Becky Hammon for two games during the 2023 season; Hammon denied she'd done anything wrong. Meanwhile, Diggins-Smith said last August that the Phoenix Mercury, her former team, had locked her out of the practice facility during her maternity leave. Then-Mercury coach Nikki Blue declined to answer specific questions shortly after Diggins-Smith's accusations, saying only that the team was giving Diggins-Smith space. Diggins-Smith signed with Seattle during 2024 free agency. McWilliams-Franklin had her own heartache. Like many WNBA players, McWilliams-Franklin spent her winter playing overseas to supplement her income. Logistically, it didn't work to bring her daughters with her, so she left

them with family for months at a time. "The mom guilt, I think it's a struggle for every woman no matter what profession they're in," she said. "And back then, we didn't have Skype or FaceTime. I'm 6,000 miles away spending most (of) my paycheck on calls home, constantly checking in. I cried myself to sleep all the time." In her role within the WNBA now, McWilliams-Franklin is determined to help every mom, knowing there is no one-size-fits-all approach. It's remarkable how far the league has come, she said. Charter flights, a new benefit this year, have been hugely helpful for moms eager to get home to their kids or bring them along. Diggins-Smith acknowledged that the league is more accommodating of players who want to have a family now but said it "didn't feel that way when I first came in. And now, it depends on who you play for." Both of Diggins-Smith's pregnancies followed All-WNBA seasons. "Neither team really liked that," she said. In the next CBA, Hamby hopes to see more pregnancy benefits. Now, teams pay the full salary of a player who is on maternity leave, while the league provides a salary cap exception to sign a replacement. But that replacement is never a highly compensated veteran, so if the missing player is on a higher contract, teams typically aren't getting a player of the same caliber. Hamby also thinks the family planning benefits – players can get up to \$60,000 reimbursement for costs directly related to adoption, surrogacy, egg freezing or fertility treatments – should extend to players who have recently retired. "I think they have the right idea," Hamby said. "I think a lot of it is going to come down to, between the league and owners, about how to help protect (pregnant) players."

Still, none of the women have regrets. Diggins-Smith wanted her children to see her play, and Hamby always dreamed of being a young mom. Their kids are staples at practice facilities and on sidelines. They know their journeys can inspire fellow players, too. Diggins-Smith joked that she's asked so many details about her pregnancies "sometimes I feel like I'm teaching a health class." Hamby is always eager to show off videos of her children being born. "I'm in awe of all the moms in our league," McWilliams-Franklin said. "You birth a human and you're able to do miracles things on the court, you deserve an award. All of them are amazing, kicks women. When you have kids and you come back, it's not about the level, it's about the ability to come back. Having a baby and then being able to play in the toughest league in the world? You deserve all the props." Their kids agree. Asked who her favorite player in the WNBA is, 7-year-old Amaya Hamby, who just finished the first grade, paused. "Hmmm," she mused, mentally ticking through her previous favorites like Vegas stars A'ja Wilson and Kelsey Plum. Dearica, embarrassed that she might not make the cut, shook her head and sighed. "Please don't do this," she said to Amaya, laughing. Then Amaya conceded that Mommy is, indeed, her favorite. But she's got a backup, too. "Without you it's (Seattle's) Joyner Holmes," Amaya said, crawling into Dearica's lap and wrapping her arms around Dearica's neck. "But you already know you're the best."

LIFELINE



DAN MACMEDAN/USA TODAY

MAKING WAVES
OPRAH IS RECOVERING

Oprah Winfrey missed out on a “CBS Mornings” chat for her book club after a recent case of gastroenteritis landed the media mogul in the emergency room. “Ms. Winfrey is recovering following a stomach virus,” a representative for Winfrey told USA TODAY in an emailed statement Tuesday. “She is resting and feeling better every day.” The digestive infection is caused by inflammation of the stomach and intestine, according to Cleveland Clinic.



IT’S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO’S CELEBRATING TODAY

Chris Evans is 43. Aaron Taylor-Johnson is 34. Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen are 38.

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY
More: www.sanctuaryworld.co

Aries (March 21-April 19). Capitalize on conversation. Open dialogues offer an ego boost as the sun and Chiron harmonize.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Renewed sense of self-worth? As the sun and Chiron harmonize, intuitive hits encourage you to quit doubting yourself!

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Healing an identity wound? As the sun and Chiron harmonize, your peers regard you as a leader. Their respect restores your confidence.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Cutting your losses? Letting go and moving on is a sign of growth as the sun and Chiron harmonize.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Focused on your future? Release limiting beliefs about your knowledge and abilities as the sun and Chiron harmonize.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Taking back your power? As the sun and Chiron harmonize, your greatest insecurities become your greatest motivation.

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Moving on? As the sun harmonizes with Chiron, focusing on your future allows you to form healthier relationships.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Embrace change! As the sun and Chiron harmonize, you quit allowing familiar stressors to run your life.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Willing to risk exposure? Put your fears of vulnerability to bed.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Asking for the support you need? As the sun and Chiron harmonize, you’re entitled to prioritize your needs.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Tired of toning it down? Break the chains of self-consciousness! As the sun and Chiron harmonize, self-expression is your superpower.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Feeling safe and secure? As the sun and Chiron harmonize, phantom fears of poverty or loss melt away.

STREAMING



Andrew McCarthy works the phones to speak to the Brat Pack for his new Hulu documentary “Brats.” PROVIDED BY ABC NEWS STUDIO

In ‘Brats,’ the Pack comes to terms with its storied past

Bryan Alexander USA TODAY

Andrew McCarthy has come to accept, even love, the Brat Pack. But it’s been a journey. ● For years, the “Pretty In Pink” and “St. Elmo’s Fire” actor bristled at the mention of the unshakable description thrust upon a generation of young rising stars in the 1980s. Yet in his new Hulu documentary “Brats” (streaming Thursday), McCarthy embarks on a journey tracking down other forever-branded members – such stars as Demi Moore, Ally Sheedy, Rob Lowe and Emilio Estevez – to talk Brat Pack. ● “There’s only a handful of us that this all happened to, the only ones who know what it felt like. But we never talked about it,” director McCarthy, 61, tells USA TODAY of his “Brats” discussions with co-stars he hadn’t spoken with in decades. “We have something really profound that happened in our lives, and they were willing to talk to me about it on camera.”

How did McCarthy get the Brat Pack to talk in ‘Brats’?

“Brats” begins with McCarthy reaching out to the Brat Pack by pulling out old contacts, even wrangling Judd Nelson’s phone number from a manager. McCarthy makes the first filmed call to Estevez, who was the subject of a snarky 1985 New York magazine cover story that coined the instantly permanent term Brat Pack.

“I felt that I had lost the narrative of my career overnight,” McCarthy says of the infamous article. The ensemble movie “St. Elmo’s Fire” (starring Estevez, Moore, Sheedy, Lowe and Nelson), released a few weeks later, became the white-hot center of the Brat Pack sensation.

Contrary to the public imagination, the Brat Pack members didn’t hang out, especially after the article came out. And they didn’t keep in touch. McCarthy’s cold calls kicking off “Brats” are raw. Many go to voice-mail.

“When I’m calling somebody, it’s the first time in more than 30 years. But it’s like, ‘Let’s call Emilio,’” McCarthy says. “I wanted the viewers to be on this journey with me. I seem wary and trepidatious at first.”

When McCarthy meets with Estevez, 62, at his Malibu home in “Brats,” it’s their first face-to-face encounter since the premiere of “St. Elmo’s Fire.” The conversation hits on Estevez’s past telling comment

See BRATS, Page 2D



McCarthy reconnects with Demi Moore in “Brats.” He calls her “the Obi-Wan Kenobi of my film,” referring to the Hulu documentary.

TELEVISION PREVIEW

More can be less in Season 2 of ‘Dragon’



Kelly Lawler
Columnist
USA TODAY

The dragons are back, but the fire is still lacking.

HBO’s very blond and very expensive “Game of Thrones” spinoff “House of the Dragon” returns after a two-year break for a second season of incest and infighting. So get ready for dragons, battles, ridiculous misconceptions and a host of petty man-children who can’t get over their own drama. And get ready to be just a bit disappointed all over again.

Season 1 of the much-hyped series arrived to mixed reviews, in part because a series of time jumps led to an scattershot, often dull story arc that really only took off in a fast-paced, “Thrones”-style way in the warmongering season finale. And even that blood-soaked episode lacked enough emotional oomph to back up all its violence.



Olivia Cooke stars as Alicent Hightower and Ewan Mitchell is Aemond Targaryen in “House of the Dragon.” PROVIDED BY THEO WHITEMAN/HBO

So perhaps it was inevitable that in response to such criticism, creators Ryan Condal and George R.R. Martin (author of the “Thrones” books and the “Fire and Ice” prequel/encyclopedia on which “Dragon” is based) would go overboard trying to fix perceived mistakes. If they have conveyed a unifying theme to “Dragon” Season 2 (Sundays, 9 EDT/PDT and streaming on Max, ★★☆☆), it’s certainly a belief that “more is more.” More dragons. More death. More brutality. More twists. More confusion. More plot holes. More waiting around for something interesting to happen.

So yes, there is more good stuff this time (they *finally* have figured out, at least by Episode 4, what to do with those darned dragons), but there is also more bad stuff: Multiple scenes in which common sense and logic has flown out the window, more twists and surprises introduced without context or feeling to back them up and more gratuitous violence that borders on outright indecency. There are too many side quests and not enough stakes to make me care about the battle for the Iron Throne that is meant to be the crux of the series.

So yeah, what’s happening with that battle? When we left our terrible Targaryens, we had two heads of state vying for that pointy chair: Aegon (Tom Glynn-Carney), the petulant child of the late king and Alicent Hightower (Olivia Cooke), who thinks being king means he gets to play with all the cool toys. He is being propped up by his mother, grandfather Otto (Rhys Ifans) and psychopathic brother Aemond (Ewan Mitchell).

Glowing over on an island is Aegon’s older half-sister, Rhaenyra (Emma D’Arcy), who was promised the throne by her late father but has a nasty habit of angering everyone else at court. She’s backed by husband (and uncle!) Daemon (Matt Smith), in-laws/cousins the Velaryons (Eve Best and Steve Toussaint) and her kids

See DRAGON, Page 2D

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USA TODAY

BEST-SELLING BOOKS

BOOKLIST.USATODAY.COM

☒ Rank this week ☐ Rank last week

		TITLE/AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	C
1	12	Eruption: Following Jurassic Park, Michael Crichton Started Another Masterpiece – James Patterson Just Finished It/Crichton, Michael	Little Brown and Company	Thrillers - Suspense	F
2	n/a	Leather & Lark: The Ruinous Love Trilogy/Weaver, Brynne	Zando - Slowburn	Romance - Romantic Comedy	F
3	1	Camino Ghosts/Grisham, John	Doubleday Books	Thrillers - Suspense	F
4	3	The Women/Hannah, Kristin	St. Martin's Press	Women	F
5	2	You Like It Darker: Stories/King, Stephen	Scribner Book Company	Thrillers - Suspense	F
6	n/a	The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the Men Who Keep Us Free/Hegseth, Pete	Broadside Books	American Government	NF
7	n/a	How Leaders Learn: Master the Habits of the World's Most Successful People/Novak, David	Harvard Business Review Press	Personal Success	NF
8	4	A Court of Thorns and Roses/Maas, Sarah J.	Bloomsbury Publishing	Fantasy - Epic	F
9	n/a	The Ashes & the Star-Cursed King: Book 2 of the Nightborn Duet/Broadbent, Carissa	Bramble	Fantasy - Romantic	F
10	7	The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War/Larson, Erik	Crown Publishing Group (NY)	United States - 19th Century	NF
11	27	What This Comedian Said Will Shock You/Maher, Bill	Simon & Schuster	American Govern-ment - General	NF
12	n/a	The Forever Dog Life: 120+ Recipes, Longevity Tips, and New Science for Better Bowls and Healthier Homes/Habib, Rodney	Harper	Dogs - General	NF
13	6	Funny Story/Henry, Emily	Berkley Books	Women	F
14	n/a	The Wren in the Holly Library (Deluxe Limited Edition)/Linde, K. A.	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Fantasy - Romantic	F
15	5	Dog Man: The Scarlet Shedder: A Graphic Novel (Dog Man #12): From the Creator of Captain Underpants/Pilkey, Dav	Graphix	Humorous Stories	F
16	14	This Summer Will Be Different/Fortune, Carley	Berkley Books	Women	F
17	35	James/Everett, Percival	Doubleday Books	Literary	F
18	92	The Measure/Erlick, Nikki	William Morrow & Company	Literary	F
19	18	The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness/Haidt, Jonathan	Penguin Press	Mental Health	NF
20	9	Just for the Summer/Jimenez, Abby	Forever	Humorous - General	F
21	n/a	Everything We Never Said/Harlow, Sloan	G.P. Putnam's Sons	Social Themes - Dating & Sex	F
22	n/a	Off to the Races/Silver, Elsie	Bloom Books	Romance - Contemporary	F
23	22	All Fours/July, Miranda	Riverhead Books	Humorous - General	F
24	19	Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones/Clear, James	Avery Publishing Group	Organizational Behavior	NF
25	17	Fourth Wing/Yarros, Rebecca	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Fantasy - Epic	F

		TITLE/AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	C
26	n/a	The Comfort of Ghosts/Winspear, Jacqueline	Soho Crime	Mystery & Detective - Women Sleuths	F
27	n/a	Summer Romance/Monaghan, Annabel	G.P. Putnam's Sons	Women	F
28	21	The Housemaid/McFadden, Freida	Grand Central Publishing	Psychological	F
29	30	Iron Flame/Yarros, Rebecca	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Fantasy - Epic	F
30	n/a	My Hero Academia, Vol. 38/Horikoshi, Kohei	Viz Media	Manga - Media Tie in	F
31	31	Happy Place/Henry, Emily	Berkley Books	Women	F
32	24	A Court of Mist and Fury/Maas, Sarah J.	Bloomsbury Publishing	Fantasy - Epic	F
33	25	Bluey: Daddy Putdown/Penguin Young Readers Licenses	Penguin Young Readers Licenses	Holidays & Celebrations	F
34	28	Butcher & Blackbird: The Ruinous Love Trilogy/Weaver, Brynne	Zando	Romance - Romantic Comedy	F
35	32	Twisted Love/Huang, Ana	Bloom Books	Romance - New Adult	F
36	26	If He Had Been With Me/Nowlin, Laura	Sourcebooks Fire	Social Themes - Dating & Sex	F
37	16	Haunting Adeline/Carlton, H D	Hailey Carlton	Romance - Contemporary	F
38	119	The Paris Novel/Reichl, Ruth	Random House	Literary	F
39	33	It Ends With Us/Hoover, Colleen	Atria Books	Women	F
40	n/a	Kaiju No. 8, Vol. 10/Matsumoto, Naoya	Viz Media	Humorous	F
41	49	A Court of Wings and Ruin/Maas, Sarah J.	Bloomsbury Publishing	Fantasy - Epic	F
42	n/a	Roswell Johnson Saves the World!/Colfer, Chris	Little, Brown Books	Action & Adventure - General	F
43	n/a	Bluey 5-Minute Stories: 6 Stories in 1 Book? Hooray!/Penguin Young Readers Licenses	Penguin Young Readers Licenses	Social Themes - Friendship	F
44	23	Powerless/Roberts, Lauren	Simon & Schuster	Social Themes - Class Differences	F
45	n/a	Apostles of Mercy/Ellis, Lindsay	St. Martin's Press	Thrillers - General	F
46	53	Lies and Weddings/Kwan, Kevin	Doubleday Books	Women	F
47	39	Icebreaker/Grace, Hannah	Atria Books	Romance - Contemporary	F
48	55	Long Island/Toibin, Colm	Scribner Book Company	Literary	F
49	50	Throne of Glass/Maas, Sarah J.	Bloomsbury Publishing	Action & Adventure - General	F
50	77	The One and Only Family/Applegate, Katherine	HarperCollins	Social Themes - New Experience	F

WHAT AMERICA’S READING® The book list appears every Thursday. You also can find it at booklist.usatoday.com. Each week, USA TODAY collects sales data from booksellers representing a variety of outlets: bookstore chains, independent bookstores, mass merchandisers and online retailers. Using that data, we determine the 150 top-selling titles of the week.



Judd Nelson, from left, Emilio Estevez, Ally Sheedy, Molly Ringwald and Anthony Michael Hall in John Hughes’ “The Breakfast Club.” The actors are considered part of the Brat Pack. PROVIDED BY UNIVERSAL PICTURES HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Brats

Continued from Page 1D

that “Brat Pack will be on my tombstone” (he still believes it and accepts it). The “Young Guns” actor also reveals that he avoided starring in movies with McCarthy and the others because they were “kryptonite to each other.”

“Emilio was particularly poignant,” McCarthy says of the discussion before the two hugged it out.

In successive conversations with Lowe, Sheedy and Moore (whom he calls “the Obi-Wan Kenobi of my film”), McCarthy explores the confusing Brat Pack past and the long, often painful road to appreciating their shared history.

“Everybody started at the same point: Everybody hated it when it happened. And then over time, everyone’s evolution toward it has been different,” McCarthy says. “But we never talked about it because the minute it happened, those relationships scattered and those ensemble movies stopped. No one wanted to be in a movie together. So the very naming of the Brat Pack ended the Brat Pack, in a certain way.”

Are Molly Ringwald and Judd Nelson in ‘Brats’?

John Hughes’ 1985 film “The Breakfast Club” is a cornerstone of the Brat Pack library, with a cast that includes



Sheedy, left, Andrew McCarthy and Demi Moore at the “Brats” premiere in New York. THEO WARGO/GETTY IMAGES

Estevez, Sheedy, Nelson and Molly Ringwald. The latter two stars ultimately did not sit down for “Brats” interviews.

“We asked Judd, we asked Molly,” McCarthy says. “It didn’t work out.”

There’s a recurring “Brats” theme of McCarthy wrangling Nelson – talking to him on the phone, leaving messages, and traveling to Los Angeles to find that Nelson is out of town.

“Then eventually, finally, (Nelson) said, ‘You know what? I don’t feel like doing it.’ Which is fine,” says McCarthy, who points out that Nelson and Ringwald appear in “Brats” through “really insightful” archival interviews.

The vintage footage of the actors being probed about the derivative term during interviews are painful to watch.

“For like the first two months, the Brat Pack is brought up all the time. And

we’re reacting to it, often twitching and cringing,” McCarthy says. “Clearly, everybody’s publicist said ‘No Brat Pack questions.’ So then everybody’s asking about it without using the two words. Which is really awkward because, clearly, that was forbidden. But that didn’t work either.”

Through the “Brats” interviews, which include pop-culture social scientist Malcolm Gladwell, McCarthy furthers his appreciation of why fans looked to these stars during the youth-movie explosion the Brat Pack ignited.

“The public realized very quickly, ‘This is awesome. These guys represent us,’” McCarthy says. “So they understood something we didn’t at the beginning.”

People are still talking about the Brat Pack 39 years after the article, sharing memories with McCarthy on the streets of New York City, where he resides. He accepts these talks with a grateful state of mind.

“This film is all of us being like, ‘What the heck was all that?’ to ‘Wow, that was a beautiful thing.’ We are the avatars of a generation’s youth. I wouldn’t trade this for the world. But if you told me that 30 years ago, I would have said that you were crazy.”

Like Estevez, McCarthy is sure the Brat Pack will follow him beyond this life.

“If there is an obituary, that will be in the first sentence. Fair play. The beauty of it is that now I’m cool with that. It’s like, ‘I’ll take that.’”

Dragon

Continued from Page 1D

(whom everyone knows are bastards but have to pretend otherwise).

There are a few dozen other characters that you may or may not remember, and it would take more time to explain them than the show spends reintroducing them. They’re all angry and either fighting a dumb war or on the verge of one. The writers (and the marketing team) would like to boil it down to a simple conflict of “green vs. black.” That’s green for Aegon and Alicent, black for and Rhaenyra and Daemon, and bloody death for everyone else.

In the first four episodes made available for review, these disparate characters mix to create something bad, but also fine, and maybe sometimes good. Smith is completely wasted, puttering and pouting about. The battles are better, and (finally) adequately lit. But the plot twists are based on logical fallacies and require too much suspension of disbelief. Some things are far too easy – assassins creep into castles unchallenged, dragons fly across vast expanses of land in the blink of an eye – and some things are far too convoluted. Who’s fighting? Where? Why? Who is loyal to whom, or is it all just arbitrary? How many sons does Alicent have? And is Cooke really only two years older than the actor who plays her son?

At times, it’s hard not to be absolutely furious at this show. The writers consistently pick the less interesting, less challenging storytelling choice. There is so much lost potential in every boring decision and lackluster line reading. When so much time, energy and money is invested in a series such as “Dragon,” when there is so much labor from so many actors and crew members, the finished product has to be worth all this effort. When I see dragons battling in the sky, their riders had better have as much glory, magnetism and power as those CGI beasts. So far, these bickering Targaryens can’t measure up to the great heroes and villains of the best days of “Thrones.”

Let’s hope the rest of the season can reach a climax that thrills and shocks the audience. But if it collapses under the weight of hype again, this “House” will forever remain a hollow one.



Producer Lauren Welteroth and Actor Benjamin Shepherd for Clean Origin
Photography Steven Gomillion

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INSIDE
Immigrant rights groups sue to block Biden asylum ban at border. **5NN**

Fed waits for clear signal

Powell sees only one 2024 cut despite inflation progress



Howard Schneider and Ann Saphir
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The Federal Reserve held interest rates steady on Wednesday and pushed out the start of rate cuts to perhaps as late as December as policymakers sketched out their view of an economy that remains virtually unchanged across its major dimensions for years to come.

With growth and unemployment lodged at levels better than the U.S. central bank considers sustainable in the long run, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said policymakers were content to leave rates where they are until the economy sends a clear signal that something else is needed – through

Benign inflation could support stock market

Signs of falling U.S. inflation on Wednesday and growing hopes for interest rate cuts from the Federal Reserve could be a positive signal for large swaths of the stock market that have languished in a rally led by Big Tech.

Some investors believe expectations of cooling inflation and looser monetary policy could boost areas of the market that have been hurt by higher rates, including shares of small caps and financial companies. That could ease worries about the risks of a market rally that has been concentrated in a cluster of giant tech stocks.

If Wednesday’s CPI report is the start of improved data that raises chances of rate cuts, “that can bring the whole yield curve lower, benefiting some of the areas that have been sensitive to the upside in yields,” said Angelo Kourkafas, senior investment strategist at Edward Jones.

Reuters

either a more convincing decline in price pressures or a jump in the unemployment rate.

So far, Powell noted in a press conference after the end of a two-day policy meeting, inflation had fallen without a major blow to the economy, and he said there was no reason to think that can’t go on.

“These dynamics can continue as long as they continue,” Powell said. “We’ve got a good strong labor market. We think we’ve been making progress toward the price stability goal. We’re asking ... is our policy stance about right? And we think yes, it’s about right.”

See **ECONOMY**, Page **4NN**

Above: Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell arrives to speaks at a press conference in Washington on Wednesday. BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

WAR IN MIDDLE EAST



A Palestinian woman stands amid the rubble of a damaged building in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on Wednesday. MAHMOUD ISSA/REUTERS

Gaza cease-fire plan hangs in the balance

Daphne Psaledakis, Emma Farge and Nidal al-Mughrabi
REUTERS

DOHA/GENEVA/CAIRO – U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that Hamas had proposed numerous changes, some unworkable, to a U.S.-backed proposal for a cease-fire with Israel in Gaza, but that mediators were determined to close the gaps.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan denied the Palestinian Islamist group had put forward new ideas. Speaking to pan-Arab Al-Araby TV, he reiterated Hamas’ stance that it was Is-

rael that was rejecting proposals and accused the U.S. administration of going along with its close ally.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said many of Hamas’ proposed changes were minor “and not unanticipated” while others differed more substantially from what was outlined in a U.N. Security Council resolution on Monday backing the plan put forward by President Joe Biden.

“Our aim is to bring this process to a conclusion. Our view is that the time for haggling is over,” Sullivan told

See **GAZA**, Page **8NN**

Attorney general held in contempt by House GOP

Audio recordings in Hur’s interview of Biden sought

Makini Brice
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives voted on Wednesday to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt for refusing to turn over audio recordings of a special counsel interview with Democratic President Joe Biden.

The measure passed 216-207 on a party-line basis with one Republican joining Democrats in voting no.

The Department of Justice has already turned over a transcript of the interview, which set off a political firestorm in February when Special Counsel Robert Hur released a report describing Biden, 81, as a “well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory.”

The White House has asserted that the recordings are covered by executive privilege, and a vote by the House to hold Garland in contempt would put the Justice Department in the awkward position of having to decide whether to prosecute its own leader.

It is not required to take up the charges.

“It is deeply disappointing that this House of Representatives has turned a serious congressional authority into a partisan weapon,” Garland said in a statement. “Today’s vote disregards the constitutional separation of powers, the Justice Department’s need to



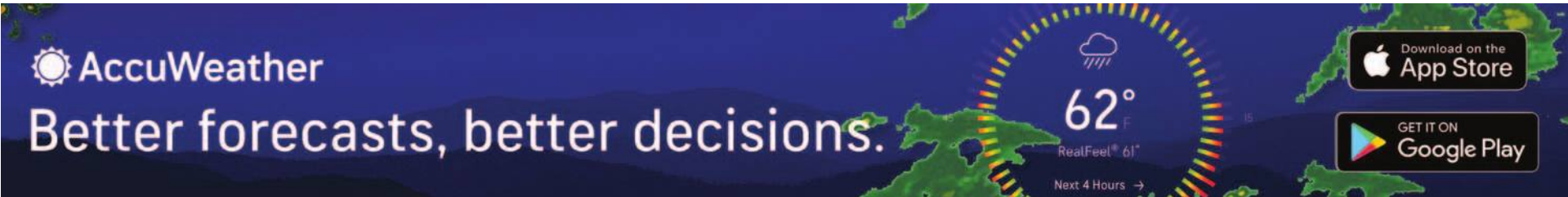
The White House says that a vote to hold Merrick Garland in contempt would put the Justice Department in the awkward position of having to decide whether to prosecute its own leader. ANNA ROSE LAYDEN/REUTERS FILE

Attorney General Merrick Garland has repeatedly accused House Republicans of impugning the Justice Department’s integrity.

protect its investigations, and the substantial amount of information we have provided to the Committees.”

Garland is the third attorney general to be held in contempt of Congress, following Democratic President Barack Obama’s attorney general Eric Holder

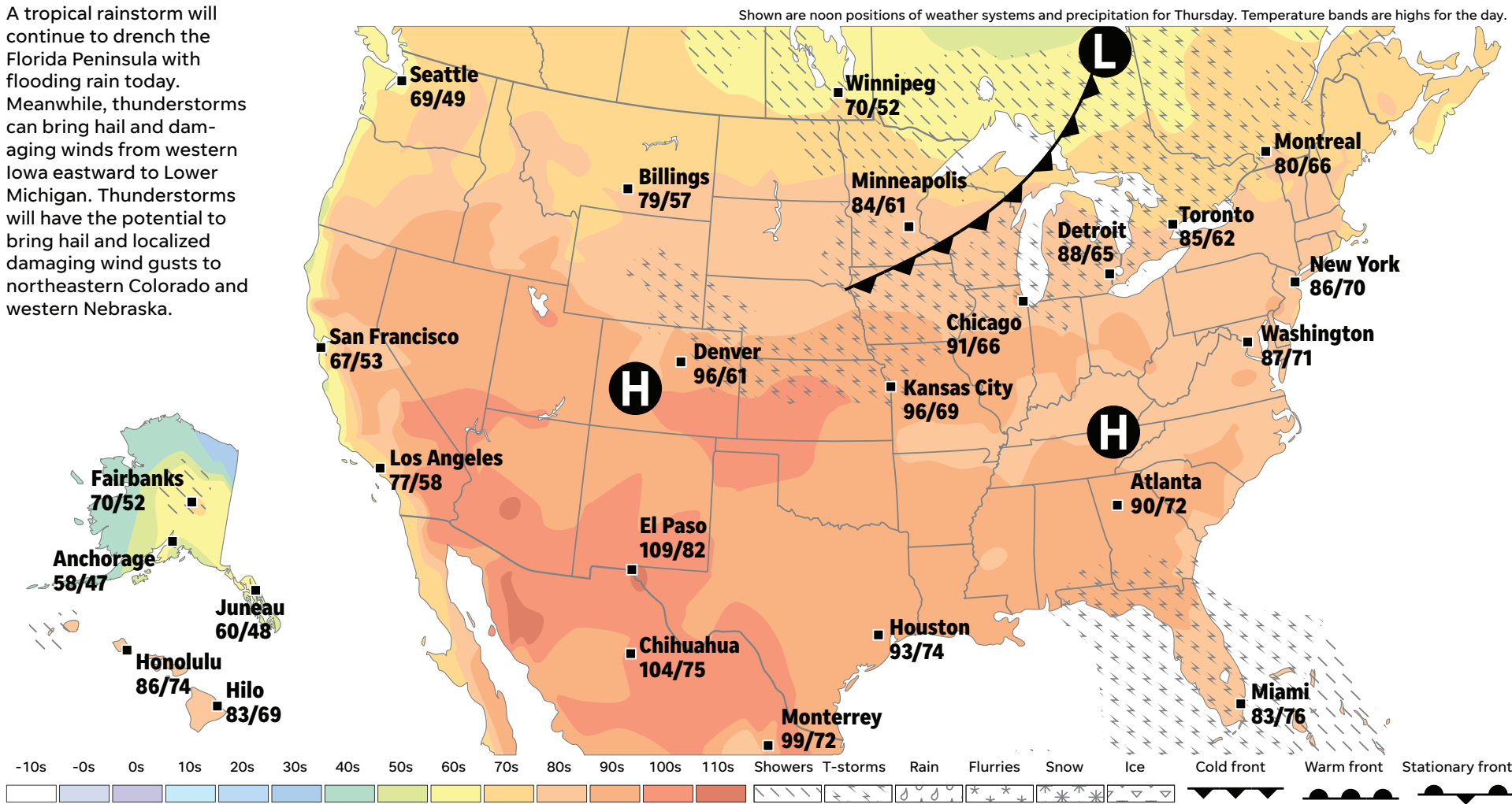
See **GARLAND**, Page **5NN**



NATIONAL SUMMARY

A tropical rainstorm will continue to drench the Florida Peninsula with flooding rain today. Meanwhile, thunderstorms can bring hail and damaging winds from western Iowa eastward to Lower Michigan. Thunderstorms will have the potential to bring hail and localized damaging wind gusts to northeastern Colorado and western Nebraska.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.



WEDNESDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)
High: 110 at Phoenix, AZ
Low: 32 at Prineville, OR
Precip: 9.10" at Fort Lauderdale, FL

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)
High: 120 at Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia
Low: 17 at Jungfrau Mountain, Switzerland
Precip: 9.10" at Fort Lauderdale, USA

TODAY IN HISTORY

On June 13, 1985, unseasonably cool air moved into the eastern United States, causing record lows from Illinois and Ohio to Arkansas and Alabama.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: What kind of tree is struck by lightning more often than other trees?

NATIONAL CITIES THURSDAY

	High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality
Aberdeen, SD	87/52/c	43	Evansville, IN	90/69/s	90	Levittown, PA	91/67/s	71	● Rochester, NY	87/66/pc	56
Abilene, TX	97/74/s	64	Fall River, MA	80/64/s	44	● Lincoln, IL	94/68/pc	67	● Rockford, IL	87/60/t	59
Accomac, VA	82/65/s	65	Farmington, NM	99/66/s	65	Louisville, KY	91/69/s	101	Ruidoso, NM	91/65/pc	78
● Adrian, MI	89/65/t	74	Fayetteville, NC	91/64/s	69	Lubbock, TX	99/70/s	63	Salem, OR	80/48/s	36
Akron, OH	86/66/pc	81	Fond du Lac, WI	85/56/t	50	Manitowoc, WI	82/57/t	74	● Salina, KS	103/70/t	53
Alamogordo, NM	104/75/s	80	● Fort Myers, FL	88/76/t	31	● Mansfield, OH	87/66/pc	76	● Salinas, CA	67/53/pc	51
Alexandria, VA	88/68/s	65	Fort Smith, AR	94/69/s	67	Marshall, NC	84/59/s	63	Salisbury, MD	86/63/s	68
Alliance, OH	86/66/pc	83	Framingham, MA	86/63/s	39	Marshfield, WI	78/54/pc	41	San Angelo, TX	100/74/s	57
● Amarillo, TX	101/69/s	59	● Freeport, IL	86/59/t	53	Massillon, OH	89/67/pc	79	● Sarasota, FL	89/77/t	35
● Ames, IA	90/58/t	65	● Fremont, OH	90/68/pc	77	McLean, VA	89/68/s	61	● Savannah, GA	89/70/c	55
Anderson, SC	90/66/pc	70	Fort Collins, CO	95/60/pc	84	● Melbourne, FL	88/71/t	36	Sheboygan, WI	82/56/t	78
Appleton, WI	82/57/t	52	Gadsden, AL	91/65/s	72	Memphis, TN	90/69/s	74	Shelby, NC	88/63/pc	69
Asheville, NC	84/62/s	64	● Gainesville, FL	93/70/t	45	Middletown, NY	85/62/s	47	Sherman, TX	93/68/s	76
● Ashland, OH	86/67/pc	76	● Galesburg, IL	93/60/t	56	Milford, MA	84/62/s	38	Shreveport, LA	94/66/s	69
Athens, GA	89/66/pc	69	Gastonia, NC	89/63/pc	69	● Milwaukee, WI	88/63/t	77	Silver City, NM	101/68/s	78
Augusta, GA	92/64/s	75	Glen Rose, TX	93/70/pc	65	● Monroe, MI	87/66/t	76	Sioux Falls, SD	83/56/t	48
Austin, TX	95/71/pc	38	Gonzales, LA	95/69/s	81	Monroe, LA	92/65/s	77	Somerset, NJ	84/59/s	70
Bartlesville, OK	94/70/s	62	Great Falls, MT	77/49/s	53	Montgomery, AL	94/73/s	69	Somerville, NJ	89/63/s	61
● Battle Creek, MI	86/63/t	65	Green Bay, WI	84/58/t	53	● Muncie, IN	92/68/s	86	● South Bend, IN	89/62/t	71
Bedford, IN	88/66/s	80	Greenville, SC	89/66/s	73	Murfreesboro, TN	91/64/s	66	Spartanburg, SC	87/64/s	71
Binghamton, NY	82/63/pc	52	Hackensack, NJ	89/68/s	54	● Naples, FL	87/76/t	30	● Springfield, IL	94/68/pc	72
● Bluffton, SC	86/72/pc	51	Hagerstown, MD	90/65/s	66	Nashville, TN	93/66/s	66	Springfield, MO	90/69/s	73
Bremerton, WA	72/43/pc	32	Hattiesburg, MS	94/66/s	72	Neptune, NJ	82/68/s	58	● St. Augustine, FL	88/74/t	53
Brockton, MA	84/64/s	44	Henderson, KY	88/67/s	83	New Bedford, MA	79/62/s	42	St. Cloud, MN	84/56/pc	52
Brownwood, TX	95/70/pc	58	Hendersonville, NC	84/62/s	64	New Bern, NC	86/68/s	60	St. George, UT	105/74/s	51
● Burlington, IA	93/61/t	56	Herkimer, NY	86/64/pc	42	New Philadelphia, OH	91/64/pc	78	Staunton, VA	87/57/s	65
Burlington, NC	88/61/s	67	● Hillsdale, MI	86/62/t	68	Newark, OH	87/63/s	82	Stevens Point, WI	82/54/pc	41
● Burlington, VT	83/65/pc	26	● Holland, MI	73/61/t	80	Newton, NJ	87/64/s	54	Stockton, CA	91/55/s	73
Cambridge, OH	88/63/s	76	Hornell, NY	86/63/pc	55	New York, NY	86/70/s	57	Stroudsburg, PA	87/62/s	64
● Camdenton, MO	91/70/pc	69	Houma, LA	94/74/s	73	Norwich, CT	82/63/s	47	● Stuart, FL	86/74/t	42
● Canandaigua, NY	86/66/pc	53	● Howell, MI	85/62/t	65	● Ocala, FL	94/72/t	43	● Sturgis, MI	86/63/t	68
Canton, OH	87/67/pc	81	● Hutchinson, KS	103/68/t	51	Oklahoma City, OK	93/70/s	60	Tallahassee, FL	97/73/t	54
Carlsbad, NM	105/73/s	92	Hyannis, MA	77/62/s	41	Opelousas, LA	91/64/s	72	Thibodaux, LA	94/73/s	76
Chambersburg, PA	91/65/s	68	● Indianapolis, IN	90/68/s	83	Oshkosh, WI	84/58/t	46	● Topeka, KS	98/70/t	60
Cherry Hill, NJ	90/68/s	72	● Iowa City, IA	91/59/t	55	● Palm Beach, FL	84/77/t	48	Tuscaloosa, AL	93/67/s	71
Cincinnati, OH	88/67/s	92	Ithaca, NY	86/62/pc	52	Palm Springs, CA	107/75/s	60	Utica, NY	85/62/s	44
Clarksville, TN	89/61/s	71	Jackson, MS	90/66/s	75	Panama City, FL	91/77/t	70	Ventura, CA	67/56/c	42
● Coldwater, MI	86/62/t	67	Jackson, TN	89/59/s	70	● Pekin, IL	94/66/t	64	● Victorville, CA	92/57/s	64
Columbus, OH	89/67/s	86	● Jacksonville, FL	92/71/t	47	Pensacola, FL	94/76/t	78	Vineland, NJ	88/65/s	73
Corning, NY	87/59/pc	52	Jacksonville, NC	85/68/s	63	● Peoria, IL	94/65/t	65	Visalia, CA	97/62/s	74
Corpus Christi, TX	97/77/t	45	● Kent, OH	85/67/pc	84	Petersburg, VA	89/62/s	60	Washington, DC	87/71/s	69
● Daytona Beach, FL	89/73/t	46	● Kewanee, IL	91/60/t	53	Phoenix, AZ	108/84/s	77	Watertown, SD	81/54/t	43
Deming, NM	107/72/s	83	Keyser, WV	90/59/s	72	● Port Huron, MI	85/59/t	76	Wausau, WI	81/56/pc	46
DeRidder, LA	92/66/s	71	Kinston, NC	88/64/s	64	Portsmouth, NH	82/65/pc	34	Waynesboro, PA	91/66/s	69
● Des Moines, IA	90/62/t	68	Knoxville, TN	90/67/s	67	Poughkeepsie, NY	88/65/s	47	White Plains, NY	85/66/s	54
● Detroit, MI	88/65/t	79	● Lafayette, IN	91/65/s	75	Providence, RI	81/64/s	46	Wichita Falls, TX	95/71/s	64
Devils Lake, ND	72/54/pc	34	Lafayette, LA	93/69/s	79	Pueblo, CO	103/62/s	58	Wilmington, DE	86/66/s	72
Dover, NH	82/62/c	32	● Lakeland, FL	91/73/t	42	● Quincy, MA	85/65/s	47	Wilmington, NC	85/69/s	62
El Paso, TX	109/82/s	102	● Lansing, MI	85/62/t	67	Redding, CA	97/65/s	49	Wisconsin Rapids, WI	82/55/pc	41
Elmira, NY	88/58/pc	53	Las Cruces, NM	109/74/s	91	Reno, NV	97/61/s	63	● Wooster, OH	85/66/pc	80
● Erie, PA	85/66/pc	79	Lebanon, PA	89/63/s	68	● Ravenna, OH	86/66/pc	83	Worcester, MA	83/64/s	41
Eugene, OR	77/44/s	35	● Leesburg, FL	91/74/t	43	Richmond, IN	91/67/s	88	York, PA	90/66/s	73

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Thursday High/low/W	Friday High/low/W		Thursday High/low/W	Friday High/low/W		Thursday High/low/W	Friday High/low/W		Thursday High/low/W	Friday High/low/W
● Acapulco	87/76/t	88/76/t	Cape Town	67/47/pc	65/48/pc	La Paz	62/29/pc	62/28/s	● San Jose	81/68/t	81/68/r
Addis Ababa	74/55/r	76/55/sh	Caracas	91/77/t	91/77/t	Lagos	88/77/t	84/75/r	● San Salvador	82/70/r	84/71/t
Algiers	82/59/s	90/73/s	Casablanca	79/65/pc	80/65/pc	Lima	68/60/pc	69/62/pc	● Santiago	55/45/r	60/38/r
Amman	104/78/s	104/80/s	● Colombo	88/82/t	87/81/r	Lisbon	76/59/s	76/58/pc	Sao Paulo	81/60/s	82/61/s
Amsterdam	64/55/c	66/55/c	Copenhagen	60/52/sh	64/57/c	● London	62/55/r	66/50/pc	● Sarajevo	75/56/sh	78/52/sh
Ankara	97/64/c	93/62/pc	Damascus	108/73/pc	109/73/s	Madrid	83/55/s	88/59/s	Shanghai	88/72/c	87/72/c
● Asuncion	90/76/c	94/78/pc	● Dublin	64/50/r	60/46/r	● Manila	93/81/t	92/80/t	● Singapore	90/79/t	90/80/t
Athens	99/74/pc	94/74/pc	Geneva	71/53/pc	67/57/sh	● Mexico City	86/59/pc	85/60/pc	Stockholm	57/44/c	63/47/sh
● Auckland	62/57/pc	63/52/sh	● Guatemala City	77/65/t	76/65/t	Milan	75/59/s	76/63/sh	Sydney	62/51/c	61/54/r
Baghdad	113/87/pc	116/88/pc	Hanoi	101/85/pc	99/82/pc	Mombasa	88/71/pc	88/71/pc	Taipei	94/78/t	96/79/t
Bangkok	97/82/pc	98/81/t	Harare	74/41/s	72/40/s	Montevideo	80/61/c	67/51/r	● Tegucigalpa	81/69/t	84/69/t
● Beijing	96/72/c	94/67/s	● Havana	86/77/t	84/75/t	● Montreal	80/66/t	77/52/t	Tehran	94/73/c	92/71/pc
Beirut	91/79/s	91/81/s	Helsinki	58/50/s	60/49/c	Moscow	69/56/sh	73/56/pc	Tokyo	83/71/pc	87/71/s
Belgrade	74/56/t	76/56/pc	● Hong Kong	91/83/t	91/81/t	Nairobi	77/55/s	77/50/s	● Toronto	85/62/t	76/54/pc
Berlin	65/48/pc	71/55/c	Jakarta	89/77/t	90/76/t	New Delhi	113/91/pc	109/90/s	● Tunis	84/65/pc	85/68/s
Bogota	68/50/r	68/51/c	Jerusalem	99/75/s	100/75/s	● Panama City	88/76/t	86/76/t	Vancouver	66/51/pc	64/49/sh
Brussels	65/55/pc	67/54/r	Johannesburg	66/42/s	67/44/s	Paris	69/54/c	71/54/r	Vienna	66/48/pc	72/52/c
● Bucharest	92/64/pc	81/58/t	Kabul	89/63/s	88/62/c	Port-au-Prince	98/74/pc	98/75/pc	Warsaw	68/50/r	69/53/c
Budapest	70/52/c	75/53/pc	Khartoum	106/83/s	106/84/s	Rio de Janeiro	81/68/s	84/70/s	Yerevan	84/60/s	84/61/s
Buenos Aires	76/61/c	66/54/r	Kyiv	71/58/c	71/58/t	Riyadh	112/84/pc	110/84/s	Zagreb	65/47/c	75/52/pc
● Cairo	105/80/s	110/82/s	Kingston	92/81/c	91/82/pc	Rome	77/57/s	77/56/s	Zurich	70/49/pc	68/53/pc

● Denotes possible travel delays Thursday

Weather(W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.



RUSSIA

Eye of the beholder

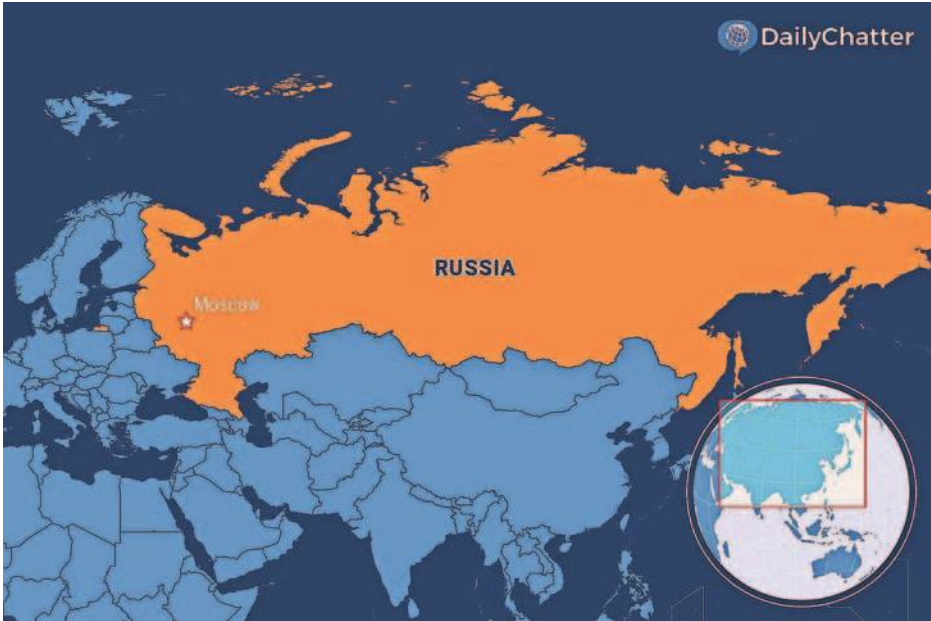
Russian-American historian Yuri Felshtinsky recently told Times Radio that Russian elites are in a “state of panic” over Russia’s massive losses in the war against Ukraine. In order to maintain their control over the country, however, Felshtinsky said, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his domestic allies have worked hard to make sure residents of Moscow, the country’s capital and its most important city by far, have yet to suffer any privations due to the war.

Bars, nightclubs and restaurants continue to operate like normal in the city, reported Agence France-Presse. And the losses here are minimal – soldiers conscripted to fight in the war tend to come from Russia’s poorer regions, or other countries. On May 9, when Russia held celebrations commemorating the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, wounded soldiers did not march in the parade on Red Square.

YouTube channels like Window to Moscow appear to corroborate this state of affairs, though they are not news organizations whose accuracy can be verified. On the other hand, Bloomberg notes that the data belies this image, making it seem as if these YouTube channels protest too much, as they present idyllic images of a magnificent city to fool audiences into thinking nothing is wrong in Russia.

Russian officials have certainly launched other efforts – and laws – to make sure their interpretation of reality and history eclipses any critical views of their rule. “The situation now in Russia is similar to Nineteen Eighty-Four,” librarian Alexandra Karsava said in an interview with the BBC, referring to George Orwell’s classic 1948 novel about a dystopian dictatorship. “Total control by the government, the state and the security structures.”

Putin has purged the country’s universities of liberal-minded critics who



might cast shade on his invasion of Ukraine, suppression of human rights and civil liberties, and corrupt government and economic system that benefits his friends while impoverishing his constituents. Instead, reported the Washington Post, he has mandated that higher education institutions promote patriotism, reject Western influences, and punish faculty and students who might speak out against his rule.

However, while life in Moscow and elsewhere away from the front is outwardly pleasant, an undercurrent of fear and uncertainty – as well as shuttered stores and compulsory optimism about Russia’s future – exists in the capital, contended Le Monde.

Maybe ordinary Russians understand how the war in Ukraine has resulted in devastating losses that will likely harm their country for generations to come, wrote World Politics Review, even if they manage to defeat, occupy and annex Ukraine.

Or maybe they feel the panic that Felshtinsky described. Still, as Russian data analyst Alexandra, 32, awaiting her dessert at a trendy restaurant in Moscow, said, “Even during the Second World War, women continued to put on makeup and buy lipstick,” adding, “This shows that we should continue living ... We go out and have a good time.”

MALAWI

National mourning

Malawian Vice President Saulos Chilima, a potential candidate for next year’s general elections, died in a plane crash this week, Bloomberg reported Tuesday.

Chilima and nine others were flying from the capital Lilongwe to the northern city of Mzuzu on Monday to participate in the funeral of a former minister. Air traffic controllers instructed the plane to head back to the capital because of bad weather. Contact was lost, prompting authorities to begin a search operation, the Guardian noted.

On Tuesday, President Lazarus Chakwera confirmed that “everyone in the plane perished” and expressed condolences to the victims’ families.

Chilima had been serving as Malawi’s vice president since 2014 when then-President Peter Mutharika picked him as his running mate.

Chilima was popular among Malawi’s youth and was projected to become an important power broker in the 2025 elections, with neither the ruling Malawi Congress Party nor its rival, the Democratic Progressive Party, expected to secure a majority.

DISCOVERIES

The missing sarcophagi

In 2009, archaeologists Ayman Daramany and Kevin Cahail discovered a fragment of a granite sarcophagus beneath the floor of a Coptic monastery in Abydos, an ancient city in central Egypt. After intensive study, they realized that the sarcophagus bore the cartouche of the High Priest of Amun, Menkheperre, of the 21st dynasty – who existed around 1000 BC.

But they also found that it had belonged to someone else before, seeing that the stone had been carved on over and over again, masking previous inscriptions. They believed it must have belonged to a royal because the fragment was inscribed with the Book of Gates, an ancient funerary text only found on royal tombs.

A few years later, French Egyptologist Frédéric Payraudeau examined the carvings and found another cartouche with an inscription in hieroglyphics of a royal name, Ramesses II, a pharaoh of the 19th dynasty who ruled Egypt and beyond between ca. 1279 and 1213 BC.

His discovery not only solved the mystery of the sarcophagus fragment but an even older mystery, too: What happened to the multiple sarcophagi of Ramesses II?

Payraudeau’s findings proved that sarcophagi in the Valley of the Kings were often looted – explaining the broken state of the granite sarcophagus – and reused, according to a joint statement from Sorbonne University and France’s National Center for Scientific Research.

In 1881, Ramesses II’s mummy and coffin were found in a “secret” hiding place in Deir el-Bahari, a temple complex outside Luxor, according to the Egypt Museum. Initially, the pharaoh was buried in a now-lost gold coffin that was placed inside an alabaster sarcophagus – found destroyed in his tomb by looters – inside the granite sarcophagus.

Protests erupt as Armenia, Azerbaijan near peace treaty

Felix Light
REUTERS

TBILISI, Georgia – Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Wednesday that a peace treaty with Azerbaijan was close to completion, but that his country would not accept Baku’s demands that it change its constitution.

After Pashinyan made the comments, clashes broke out between police and demonstrators, the latest in a series of protests denouncing his policies, including the handing back of ruined villages to Azerbaijan, and demanding his resignation.

Reports and video footage from Yerevan showed police firing stun grenades at protesters massed around parliament. Protesters then moved on to the government building and later dispersed.

Police officials, quoted by Russian news agencies, said 17 officers were injured. The Interior Ministry said 79 civilians were hurt and 98 detained.

Azatutyun, the Armenian service of U.S.-funded Radio Liberty, said the protest leader, Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, told the gathering he had demanded to see Pashinyan to discuss “the terms of his peaceful departure.”

Armenian news site CivilNet quoted Pashinyan as saying that the text of the proposed treaty with Azerbaijan was “quite mature” and that it could be signed after “adjustments.”

Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have repeatedly stated their intention to sign a peace deal to end one of the former Soviet Union’s longest-running conflicts, which broke out between the two sides over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh in the late 1980s.

In September 2023, Azerbaijan retook control of Karabakh, ending the region’s de facto independence from Baku that it had won in the early 1990s, and prompting virtually its entire ethnic Armenian population to flee to Armenia.



Russian service members attend a base-closing ceremony in the course of peacekeeping troops’ withdrawal from the territory of Karabakh and other nearby areas, in Khojaly, Azerbaijan, last month.

AZIZ KARIMOV/REUTERS FILE



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said he felt Russia failed to live up to its commitments.

EVGENIA NOVOZHENINA/POOL/REUTERS FILE

The two sides have since been negotiating a peace treaty and demarcating their 625-mile shared border, which is closed and heavily militarized. After months of stalled negotiations, Armenia last month returned four Azerbaijani villages it had held since the early 1990s, clearing a major hurdle in the talks.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has demanded that Armenia change its constitution to remove an indirect reference to Karabakh independence before inking a peace deal.

CivilNet cited Pashinyan as saying on Wednesday that the insistence on constitutional amendments represented an attempt at “torpedoing” the peace process, even as he said that the deal’s prospects remained good.

Russian peacekeeping troops who were deployed in Karabakh after a 44-day war between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2020 completed their full withdrawal on Wednesday, Azerbaijan’s defense ministry said.

UN draft resolution demands halt to siege of Sudanese city

REUTERS

UNITED NATIONS – The United Nations Security Council is likely to vote Thursday on a British-drafted resolution that demands a halt to the siege of al-Fashir in Sudan’s North Darfur region by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, diplomats said on Wednesday.

The draft text, seen by Reuters, also calls for an immediate halt to the fighting and for deescalation in and around the city and the withdrawal of all fighters that threaten the safety and security of civilians.

Britain has asked for the draft to be voted on by the 15-member council on Thursday afternoon. A resolution needs at least nine votes in favor and no vetoes by Russia, China, the United States, Britain or France to be adopted.

War erupted in Sudan in April last year between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, creating the world’s largest displacement crisis.

Al-Fashir is the last major city in the vast, western Darfur region not under control of the RSF. The RSF and its allies swept through four other Darfur state capitals last year and were blamed for a campaign of ethnically driven killings against non-Arab groups and other abuses in West Darfur.

Top U.N. officials warned the Security Council in April that some 800,000 people in al-Fashir were in “extreme and immediate danger” as worsening violence advances and threatens to “unleash bloody intercommunal strife throughout Darfur.”

The draft Security Council resolution “demands that all parties to the conflict ensure the protection of civilians, including by allowing civilians wishing to move within and out of Al-Fashir to safer areas to do so.”

It also calls on countries “to refrain from external interference which seeks to foment conflict and instability and instead to support efforts for a durable peace and reminds all parties to the conflict and member states who facilitate the transfers of arms and military material to Darfur of their obligations to comply with the arms embar-



Sudanese refugee Fatma Ibrahim, who fled the violence in the city of Nyala, South Darfur, holds her twin babies Jana and Janat at a health center where they were being treated for severe malnourishment at a camp in South Darfur on Feb. 18.

HANDOUT VIA REUTERS FILE

go measures.”

The U.S. says the warring parties have committed war crimes and the RSF and allied militias have also committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. The U.N. says that nearly 25 million people – half of Sudan’s population – need aid and some 8 million have fled their homes and hunger is rising.

Between 10,000 and 15,000 people were killed in one city alone in Sudan’s West Darfur region last year in ethnic violence by the RSF and allied Arab militia, according to a U.N. sanctions monitors report, seen by Reuters in January.

The draft text to be voted on by the Security Council “calls on the parties to the conflict to seek an immediate cessation of hostilities, leading to a sustainable resolution to the conflict, through dialogue.”

FAA to keep increased oversight of Boeing

David Shepardson
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The head of the Federal Aviation Administration will tell the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee on Thursday that the agency will maintain its increased on-site presence at Boeing and its supplier Spirit AeroSystems “for the foreseeable future.”

FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker will tell senators the agency’s decision to boost inspections after the Jan. 5 Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 MAX 9 in-flight emergency is now permanent, according to a copy of his written testimony seen by Reuters. Whitaker will say the FAA has added “additional inspections at critical points of the production process.”

Whitaker will also say that, following lessons from the Jan. 5 incident, “the FAA changed its oversight approach and those changes are permanent. We have now supplemented our audits with more active, in-person oversight ... the ‘audit plus inspection’ approach.”

Boeing did not immediately comment.



Boeing delivered a comprehensive quality improvement plan to the FAA in May.
PETER CZIBORRA/REUTERS FILE

On May 30, Boeing delivered a comprehensive quality improvement plan to the FAA after Whitaker in late February gave Boeing 90 days to develop a comprehensive plan to address “systemic quality-control issues.”

Whitaker said in his testimony “there must be a shift in the company’s safety culture in order to holistically address its systemic quality assurance and production issues.” He added the FAA wants “to make sure Boeing implements the necessary changes and has the right tools in place to sustain those changes in the long term.”

Whitaker said Boeing committed to boosting employee training, encouraging employees to speak up without fear of reprisal, boosting supplier oversight and “increasing quality oversight at every step of the production process.”

Whitaker said FAA “aviation safety inspectors will also monitor each of Boeing’s sub-teams tasked with implementing the key focus areas of the plan.”

Whitaker in February barred Boeing from boosting production of its best-selling plane after a door panel blew out during the Jan. 5 flight. He said last month he did not expect Boeing to win approval to increase production of the MAX “in the next few months.”

Whitaker also said Boeing had agreed to bring “state-of-the-art technology to Boeing tool and parts management.”

FINANCIAL MARKETS

S&P 500, Nasdaq hit record highs after CPI data flat

Caroline Valetkevitch
REUTERS

NEW YORK – The S&P 500 and Nasdaq posted record closing highs for a third straight day on Wednesday after inflation data came in softer than expected but the indexes ended off the day’s highs as the Federal Reserve projected only one interest rate cut this year.

The Fed’s March projections included three quarter-percentage-point reductions. The U.S. central bank, in a statement at the end of its June 11-12 meeting, also said it left its policy rate unchanged, as expected.

Stocks were choppy following the news and press conference with Fed Chair Jerome Powell, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq paring gains late and the Dow finishing near flat.

Stocks opened higher after the Labor Department reported that the U.S. Consumer Price Index was unexpectedly unchanged in May due to cheaper gasoline.

“The CPI number was certainly cooler than estimates and drove optimism to start the day but that was only half of today’s menu,” said Michael James, managing director of equity trading at Wedbush Securities in Los Angeles.

James said he would have expected the market to end weaker after the Fed’s update, noting that “the commentary was hawkish and rate cut (expectations) were trimmed from three to one.”

Oracle shares jumped 13.3%, lifting the market, after the software provider forecast double-digit revenue in fiscal 2025 after the bell on Tuesday.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 35.21 points, or 0.09%, to 38,712.21. The S&P 500 rose 45.71 points, or 0.85%, to 5,421.03 and the Nasdaq Composite advanced 264.89 points, or 1.53%, to 17,608.44.

Just after the CPI report, traders boosted bets for a Fed rate cut by September and another by December.

Apple’s shares climbed 2.9%, extending Tuesday’s strong gains, and the company briefly once again became the world’s most valuable, dethroning Microsoft from the top spot.

Volume on U.S. exchanges was 11.80 billion shares, compared with the 12.74 billion average for the full session over the last 20 trading days.

Advancing issues outnumbered decliners on the NYSE by a 2.86-to-1 ratio; on Nasdaq, a 1.78-to-1 ratio favored advancers.

The S&P 500 posted 39 new 52-week highs and two new lows; the Nasdaq Composite recorded 99 new highs and 80 new lows.

Economy

Continued from Page 1NN

The result is the Fed accepting a slow expected decline in inflation back toward its 2% target, with the central bank’s preferred inflation measure – the personal consumption expenditures price index – virtually unchanged at the end of this year from its current level and the number of rate cuts held to a single quarter-percentage-point reduction.

Those rate reductions are projected to gather pace next year, with Powell deferring on the timing.

“We don’t make decisions about future meetings until we get there,” he said. “Really, it’s going to be not just the inflation readings. It’s going to be the totality of the data, what’s happening in the labor market, what’s happening with the balance of risks, what’s happening with the forecasts, what’s happening with growth. You’re looking at all of that.”

Inflation data published hours before the release of the policy statement and updated projections showed the consumer price index rose not at all on a month-to-month basis in May, causing some analysts to argue the latest projections were already “stale.”

Powell’s characterization of the inflation projections as “kind of conservative” indicated the Fed chief was “keeping the door very much open to a September cut” if inflation continues to weaken, said Krishna Guha, vice chairman of Evercore ISI.

Investors in contracts tied to the Fed’s benchmark interest rate largely kept bets intact that the central bank would approve quarter-percentage-point reductions in September and December.

Powell himself said the decision about the rate path was a “close call” for many policymakers, and that to some degree the Fed had merely traded an earlier start to rate reductions this year by tacking an additional anticipated cut onto 2025.

Still, he called the decision to start policy easing “consequential,” and the drop in expectations for this year completes a broad swing in sentiment from just six months ago when policymakers in their December 2023 forecasts envisioned an imminent kickoff to three years of steady rate reductions.

Under the current projections, absent a surprise in upcoming inflation or jobs data, the cuts would likely not



Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell announced that a key lending rate was left unchanged on Wednesday and penciled in just one rate cut this year, down from the three expected in March. BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

begin until December, moving the Fed’s decision out of the Nov. 5 presidential election cycle.

Higher neutral rate

The policy statement issued on Wednesday combined an acknowledgment of “modest further progress” on inflation in recent months with a restatement of language that rate reductions won’t be appropriate until officials have “gained greater confidence” that price pressures will continue to ease.

The PCE price index increased at a 2.7% annual rate in April; the median projected by policymakers for the end of the year is 2.6%, with a full return to the 2% target in 2026.

The weak CPI number for May was “only one reading,” Powell said. “When we are (more confident), then we can look at loosening policy.”

The S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite stock indices closed sharply higher on the day, while the U.S. dollar and yields on U.S. Treasuries fell.

“The market cares more than the economy does about whether there are

The new Fed projections show the economy is still expected to grow at a slightly above-trend 2.1% this year despite a sluggish first quarter.

two cuts this year or only one,” said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management. “The Fed is basically rearranging the rate-cut deck chairs” from 2024 to 2025.

The new Fed projections show the economy is still expected to grow at a slightly above-trend 2.1% this year despite a sluggish first quarter, and the unemployment rate will remain at its current 4% through the year.

“Recent indicators suggest that economic activity has continued to expand at a solid pace. Job gains have remained strong, and the unemployment rate has remained low,” the Fed said in a statement that was approved unanimously.

Along with trimming the number of rate cuts expected this year, the new rate projections raised the long-run “neutral” rate needed to keep inflation in check while maintaining steady growth to 2.8% from 2.6%.

The long-run rate has now moved up more than a quarter of percentage point over the Fed’s last two sets of projections, a possible sign officials feel inflation will be harder to tame in the future.

Powell said the increase in the long-run rate did not necessarily influence officials’ short-run projections for the benchmark interest rate, but noted they were still mulling just how restrictive monetary policy had become.

The Fed raised rates aggressively in 2022 and 2023 to curb inflation that had surged to a 40-year high in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We’re making policy with the economy that we have, with the distortions that we have,” Powell said. “The question of how restrictive this policy has become is one that everyone’s asking ... I think the evidence is pretty clear. This policy is restrictive and is having the effect we would hope for.”

Lawsuit filed against Biden asylum ban

Ted Hesson
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – U.S. immigrant rights groups sued the Biden administration on Wednesday over a new policy that bars most migrants caught crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally from claiming asylum.

The groups, led by the American Civil Liberties Union, argued restrictions implemented last week violated U.S. asylum law and that Biden failed to follow proper regulatory procedure. The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Washington, D.C.

Biden, a Democrat seeking another term in Nov. 5 elections, has grappled with millions of people caught illegally crossing the southwest border during his presidency. Immigration is a top election issue and Biden's Republican challenger, former President Donald Trump, has vowed to crack down aggressively if he wins another term in the White House.

Biden has toughened his stance in recent months, backing a bipartisan Senate bill that would surge resources to the border and expand enforcement capacity. The new ban mirrors Trump-era policies that sought to deny migrants access to asylum at the border and utilizes the same legal authority as Trump's travel bans blocking people from majority-Muslim nations and elsewhere.

Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, said the Biden administration "lacks unilateral authority" to override laws created by Congress, citing previous legal decisions related to Trump-era policies.

Migrants caught crossing illegally can be quickly deported or turned back to Mexico under the Biden measure. The ban included exceptions for unaccompanied children, people who face serious medical or safety threats and vic-



Migrants from Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico walk to a staging area after they were detained in Havana, Texas, on Tuesday. ADREES LATIF/REUTERS

tims of trafficking. Key operational questions remain unclear, including how the U.S. would quickly deport migrants from countries that are far away or have frosty relations with the U.S. and whether Mexico will accept more non-Mexico migrants apprehended by U.S. authorities.

The number of migrants caught illegally crossing the border dropped by 20% late last week, which one senior

U.S. border official said signaled "possible early success" deterring illegal immigration.

White House spokesperson Angelo Fernandez Hernandez defended the asylum ban, saying it was necessary because "border encounters remain too high" and Republican lawmakers have blocked Biden-backed legislation.

In the lawsuit filed on Wednesday, the immigrant rights groups also target-

ed a part of the Biden asylum ban that requires migrants to express a fear being returned to their home countries before being able to seek humanitarian protection rather than have U.S. authorities ask about it.

The groups said people who recently crossed the border "may be hungry, exhausted, ill, or traumatized after fleeing persecution in their home countries and danger in Mexico."

Poll: Voters unfazed by Hunter Biden trial

Jason Lange
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Most U.S. voters followed the criminal trial of President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden and the vast majority say his conviction won't affect their vote in the Nov. 5 election, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll that closed on Tuesday.

Some 67% of registered voters in the two-day poll said they had heard at least a fair amount about the trial of Hunter Biden, who on Tuesday was convicted on charges of lying about his drug use to buy a gun. But 80% said the verdict, which marks the first time the child of a sitting president has been convicted of a crime, will have no bearing on their likelihood to vote for Joe Biden, who is seeking reelection in November.

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's conviction last month on charges of trying to cover up a hush money payment to porn star Stormy Daniels carried somewhat more weight in voters' minds, with just 61% saying it would have no impact on their decision.

Independent registered voters, whose support both Biden and Trump are fighting for, lined up with the broader population, with 4 in 5 saying Hunter Biden's guilty verdict would not influence their vote and 3 in 5 saying Trump's guilty verdict would not influence their vote.

Overall, 16% of registered voters said Hunter Biden's conviction would make them less likely to vote for his father, and 4% said it would make them more likely to do so.

Some 24% of registered voters said Trump's conviction would make them less likely to vote for him, while 14% said it would make them more likely to do so.

The online poll surveyed 930 registered voters nationwide and had a margin of error of about 3 percentage points.



Hunter Biden, his wife, Melissa Cohen Biden, and their son, Beau, walk from Marine One in New Castle, Del., on Tuesday. ANNA ROSE LAYDEN/REUTERS

Just over half of voters polled – or 57% – said the president's son should be imprisoned for his crimes.

Trump and Biden have been neck-and-neck in national public opinion polls, with Trump ahead in several of the battleground states that could decide November's contest.

Trump is due to be sentenced in July and faces potential time in prison. The judge in Hunter Biden's case has yet to set a sentencing date, but has outlined a timeframe that would place sentencing no later than about a month before the presidential election.

Just over half of voters polled – or 57% – said the president's son should be imprisoned for his crimes. That was higher than the 46% in a prior Reuters/Ipsos who said Trump should go to prison for his crimes.

Potentially fueling those views, voters in the latest poll were more likely to say Biden received a fair trial, with 65% of them saying so, compared to 48% who said Trump's trial was conducted fairly.

President gathers endorsements from 3 seniors groups

Andrea Shalal
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Three groups representing older Americans on Wednesday endorsed Democrat Joe Biden for a second term as president as his campaign works to expand existing support among seniors, a bloc that could help offset softer backing among other voters.

The National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare, which defied a 38-year tradition of avoiding endorsements to back Biden in 2020, Social Security Works PAC and the bipartisan National United Committee to Protect Pensions all said they would back Biden in 2024.

The endorsements, which had not been previously reported, follow the January endorsement of Biden by the 4.4-million member Alliance for Retired Americans.

Max Richtman, president of the NCPSSM, said Biden had worked to protect seniors' earned benefits and the group did not trust Donald Trump to safeguard Social Security and Medicare.

Biden's campaign manager, Julie Chavez Rodriguez, said the groups represented tens of millions of seniors, who would organize, mobilize, and activate their peers ahead of the U.S. presidential election this November.

"With today's endorsements, we will be stronger and more prepared than ever to mobilize seniors across the country, to remind voters of how dangerous Trump and his policies are and to make him a loser again this November."

The campaign on Tuesday launched Seniors for Biden-Harris, a grassroots program to energize voters 65 and up with more than a dozen events from bingo nights to pickleball tournaments



President Joe Biden's campaign manager, Julie Chavez Rodriguez, said the senior groups would organize, mobilize, and activate their peers ahead of the U.S. presidential election this November. MARCO BELLO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

to appearances by senior administration officials.

Older Americans could play a key role in the election, given that they vote at higher levels than any other group and account for nearly 10 million voters in key election battleground states, including Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, Arizona and Nevada.

Seniors generally vote majority Republican, but their growing support for Biden, 81, the oldest person to serve as president, could be good news for the Democrat, whose approval rating fell to its lowest level in almost two years in May.

Americans 65 and older numbered nearly 56 million in the 2020 census, or just under 17% of the U.S. population. Trump won voters of that age by 7 percentage points in 2016, but Biden narrowed the gap to 5 points in 2020, and now has a narrow lead, according to an April NBC News poll.

Garland

Continued from Page 1NN

and Republican President Donald Trump's Bill Barr. The Justice Department did not pursue charges in either case.

"Transcripts alone are not sufficient evidence of the state of the president's

memory," House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan said as debate opened.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, the senior Democrat on the panel, countered that Republicans were on a "single-minded quest to follow every right-wing conspiracy theory in the vain hope that it might lead to some evidence of wrongdoing."

Hur, who had investigated Biden af-

ter classified documents dating to his time as vice president from 2009-2017 were found improperly stored in his home and office, declined to prosecute the president, saying it was both because he had cooperated with the probe and because he would present a sympathetic face to a jury.

Biden's rival in the Nov. 5 election, Trump, has been criminally charged for mishandling classified documents after

his 2017-2021 term in the White House. Unlike Biden, Trump refused requests to return the documents.

Congressional Democrats allege that Republicans want the audio to use in campaign ads for Trump.

Garland has repeatedly accused House Republicans of impugning the Justice Department's integrity and pushing false narratives that could put career civil servants in danger.

US expands sanctions against Russia

Chips sent via China targeted

Arshad Mohammed, David Lawder and Karen Freifeld
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The United States on Wednesday dramatically broadened sanctions on Russia, including by targeting China-based companies selling semiconductors to Moscow, as part of its effort to undercut the Russian military machine waging war on Ukraine.

Among the steps, the U.S. Treasury said it was raising “the risk of secondary sanctions for foreign financial institutions that deal with Russia’s war economy,” effectively threatening them with losing access to the U.S. financial system.

It also said it was moving to restrict the Russian military industrial base’s ability to exploit certain U.S. software and information technology services and, with the State Department, targeting more than 300 individuals and entities in Russia and beyond, including in Asia, Europe and Africa.

Separately, the Commerce Department said it was targeting shell companies in Hong Kong for diverting semiconductors to Russia, taking steps that would affect nearly \$100 million of high-priority items for Moscow including such chips.

It will also expand its lists of items Russia cannot import from other nations to cover not just U.S.-origin products but U.S.-branded goods, meaning those made with U.S. intellectual property or technology, a senior Commerce official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

U.S.-made chips and other technology have been found in a wide array of Russian equipment, from drones to radios, missiles and armored vehicles, recovered from the battlefield, Ukrainian officials say.

After seizing Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbor in 2022, triggering a host of new U.S. economic sanctions on Moscow. While many analysts do not expect U.S. and other nations’ sanctions to materially change Russian President Vladimir Putin’s calculus, they believe they will both make it harder for Moscow to wage war and, over time, weaken Russia’s economy.



Ukrainian supporters rally outside the White House moments before President Joe Biden addressed the nation after Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. JARRAD HENDERSON/USA TODAY

“Today’s actions strike at their remaining avenues for international materials and equipment, including their reliance on critical supplies from third countries,” Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement.



Yellen

The Treasury also said it was imposing sanctions on key parts of Russia’s financial infrastructure, including the Moscow Exchange, which operates Russia’s largest public markets for equity, fixed income, foreign exchange and other products.

MOEX and its related subsidiaries have facilitated sanctions evasion by obscuring the identities of parties engaged in such transactions, a senior Treasury official told reporters. By sanctioning them, the official said, the U.S. would force greater transparency on cross-border transactions, making it harder to evade sanctions.

MOEX, in a statement rushed out within an hour of the U.S. moves on Wednesday, a public holiday in Russia, said the new sanctions had forced an immediate suspension of trading in dollars and euros on its leading financial marketplace.

The news came as President Joe Biden departed for a summit in southern Italy with leaders from other Group of Seven democracies: Britain, Canada,

France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States. One of the G7 leaders’ priorities is boosting support for Ukraine, now in the third year of resisting Russia’s invasion, and disarming the Russian war machine.

Peter Harrell, who served as White House senior director for international economics in 2021 and 2022, described the latest sanctions as a “paradigm shift,” partly because they expose foreign banks to the risk of being cut off from the U.S. financial system if they deal with key large Russian banks.

The Treasury accomplished this by increasing to 4,500 the universe of Russian companies and individuals who could trigger such sanctions from about 1,200, the senior Treasury official said.

“For the first time, the U.S. is shifting towards something that begins to look like ... an effort to set up a global financial embargo on Russia,” Harrell said.

“The message here is really one to banks in China and Turkey and the UAE and elsewhere outside of the G7 they face sanctions for continuing to engage in transactions with the big Russian banks and other sanctioned Russian banks,” he added, saying this would likely spark a “major retreat” by those banks from Russia.

“That financial pullback, in turn, is probably going ... to complicate the flow of goods from countries that are continuing to trade with Russia,” he said.

NATO to take over coordination of arms deliveries to Ukraine

BRUSSELS – NATO is set to take over the coordination of arms deliveries to Ukraine from the U.S., the alliance’s chief said on Wednesday, in a bid to safeguard the military aid mechanism as NATO-skeptic Donald Trump bids for a second term as U.S. president.

“I expect that ministers will approve a plan for NATO to lead the coordination of security assistance and training to Ukraine,” Jens Stoltenberg told reporters on the eve of a two-day meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels.

Hours before, Hungary had given up its resistance to the Ukraine support package NATO aims to agree at its Washington summit in July, comprising a financial pledge and the transfer to NATO of the coordination of arms supplies and training.

During a visit by Stoltenberg to Budapest, Prime Minister Viktor Orban said his country would not block NATO decisions on providing support for Ukraine but had agreed that it would not be involved.

He added he had received assurances from Stoltenberg that Hungary would not have to provide funding for Ukraine or send personnel there.

Hungary has been at odds with other NATO countries over Orban’s continued cultivation of close ties to Russia and refusal to send arms to Ukraine, with Budapest’s foreign minister last month labeling plans to help the war-torn nation a “crazy mission.”

Stoltenberg had proposed that NATO take on coordination of international military aid for Ukraine, giving the alliance a more direct role in the war against Russia’s invasion while stopping well short of committing its own forces.

The move is widely seen as an effort to provide a degree of “Trump-proofing” by putting coordination under a NATO umbrella.

Reuters

Study: Huge emissions result from invasion

War in Ukraine causing environmental damage

Max Hunder
REUTERS

KYIV, Ukraine – Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has directly caused or paved the way to the emission of 175 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, a joint report said on Thursday.

The report, published by Ukraine’s environment ministry and climate NGOs, said their estimate included both emissions that had been released and those that would be produced during repair work following the destruction caused by the February 2020 invasion.

It laid out some of the main carbon-emitting activities caused by fighting.

“Billions of liters of fuel used by military vehicles, (more than 2 million acres) of fields and forests set ablaze, hundreds of oil and gas structures blown up and vast amounts of steel and cement used to fortify hundreds of miles of front lines,” it said.

The 175 million tons estimate was the equivalent to the annual emissions produced by 90 million cars, or the whole of the Netherlands in a year, it said.

The war launched by Moscow has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions, but it has also caused vast environmental damage as two armies engage in the biggest European land war in 80 years.

The report, which seeks to quantify the war’s carbon footprint, was put together in cooperation by Ukraine’s environment ministry and climate researchers from Ukraine and other countries.

The report used a measure called the Social Cost of Carbon to calculate the approximate financial cost of the additional emissions.

“The total climate damage that the Russian Federation has caused after 24 months of the war amounts to more than USD 32 billion,” it said.

The report said that the war emissions could be divided approximately into three thirds: military activity, the



A Ukrainian serviceman from an anti-drone mobile air defense unit waits for Russian kamikaze drones in Kherson region, Ukraine, on Tuesday. IVAN ANTYPENKO/REUTERS

Among the world’s biggest consumers of fuel, militaries worldwide account for 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, a 2022 estimate said.

steel and concrete needed to rebuild damaged infrastructure, and the final third being made up of several disparate factors including fires and movement of people.

“In the early months of the war, the majority of the emissions were caused by the large scale destruction of civilian infrastructure requiring a large post-war reconstruction effort,” the report said. “Now, after two years of war, the largest share of emissions originate

from a combination of warfare, landscape fires and the damage to energy infrastructure.”

Military activity was responsible for 51.6 million tons of CO2 equivalent emissions, the report said. The majority of that number, 35.2 million tons of CO2 equivalent, was caused by the Russian military’s fuel consumption, with a further 9.4 million tons from the Ukrainian military’s use of fuel.

Among the world’s biggest consumers of fuel, militaries worldwide account for 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to a 2022 estimate, opens new tab by international experts.

According to the report, the war has significantly increased the frequency of

landscape fires in the affected areas.

It said more than 2 million acres of land had been scorched by 27,000 war-related fires, causing the equivalent atmospheric damage of 23 million tons of CO2. The report also calculated that the closure of airspace over Ukraine and some parts of Russia, as well as the restrictions on certain carriers’ use of Russia’s airspace, have created just over 24 million tons of CO2 of additional emissions.

“Restrictions or caution has largely cleared the skies above some (7 million square miles) of Ukraine and Russia, adding hours to journeys between Europe and Asia that consume additional fuel,” it said.

Oklahoma court rejects case by race massacre survivors

Reparations were sought over ‘Black Wall Street’ violence

Nate Raymond
REUTERS

Oklahoma’s highest court on Wednesday dismissed a lawsuit by the last two known living survivors of the Tulsa race massacre in 1921 seeking reparations for the violence and destruction that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Black people.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court upheld a judge’s decision last year to dismiss the case, saying the state’s public nuisance law could not be relied upon to address the lingering consequences of “unjust, violent, and tragic moments of our history.”

It is estimated that as many as 300 people, most of them Black, died on May 31, 1921, when a large white mob overwhelmed Tulsa’s Greenwood neighborhood, a wealthy community nicknamed “Black Wall Street.”

Lawyers for Lessie Benningfield Randle, 109, and Viola Fletcher, 110, argued the city of Tulsa and others through the massacre created a public nuisance of racial disparities, economic inequalities and trauma that needed to be abated.

They alongside a third massacre survivor who died while the case was pending, Fletcher’s brother Hughes Van Ellis, contended the effects of the massacre continue to be felt today and that the city and others should be forced to compensate victims, replace buildings and return land to the Black community.

But Justice Dustin Rowe wrote that while the “plaintiffs’ grievances are legitimate, they do not fall within the scope of our state’s public nuisance statute,” which was limited to problems involving criminal or property-based conflicts.

“The continuing blight alleged within



Viola Fletcher’s lawyers argued the city of Tulsa and others through the massacre created a public nuisance of racial disparities, economic inequalities and trauma that needed to be abated. CARLOS BARRIA/REUTERS FILE

the Greenwood community born out of the massacre implicates generational-societal inequities that can only be resolved by policymakers – not the courts,” wrote Rowe, an appointee of Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt.

Seven other justices joined Rowe’s opinion, while a ninth, Justice James Edmondson, partially dissented.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

The Greenwood area had a population of over 10,000 Black residents at the time when racial segregation was strict and the Ku Klux Klan had strong

membership in Oklahoma.

The massacre began after a white woman told police a Black man had grabbed her arm in an elevator in a downtown commercial building, according to an account by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Police arrested the man, whom the Tulsa Tribune then reported had tried to assault the woman. White residents surrounded the courthouse, demanding the man be handed over. A white man tried to disarm a Black World War I veteran and a shot rang out, touching off violence in which 35 blocks of Greenwood were destroyed.

US health care spending rises to \$4.8T

Increase outpaces GDP

Ahmed Abouleenein
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Health care spending in the U.S. is projected to have risen 7.5% in 2023 to \$4.8 trillion, federal data showed on Wednesday, outpacing the projected annual gross domestic product growth rate of 6.1%.

Spending on Medicaid and private health insurance drove the growth, with the insured share of the population surging to a historic high of 93%, data from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services showed. The number of insured individuals largely grew due to record high enrollment in Medicaid, with 91.2 million people being covered under the federal and state health program for the poor in 2023.

Medicare spending is projected to have grown by 8.4% to over \$1 trillion and Medicaid by 5.7% to \$852 billion. Spending on private health insurance is projected to have grown by 1.1% to \$1.4 trillion.

National health spending is expected to grow by 5.2% in 2024, though Medicaid enrollment is set to decline by 11.2% when over 10 million people lose coverage now that pandemic response measures guaranteeing continuous enrollment have expired.

The estimated health care spending per person in the U.S. stood at about \$14,423 in 2023 and \$15,074 in 2024.

National health spending is expected to grow by 5.2% in 2024, though Medicaid enrollment is set to decline by 11.2% when over 10 million people lose coverage now that pandemic response measures guaranteeing continuous enrollment have expired. An estimated further 2 million will lose coverage in 2025.

Spending is set to grow an average of 5.6% a year between 2023 and 2032, outpacing the projected annual gross domestic product growth rate of 4.3% during the same period.

The rise will lead to an increase in the health spending share of growth do-

mestic product to 19.7% by 2032 from 17.3% in 2022, the data showed.

Spending in the Medicare program for people over the age of 65 and the disabled is set to initially grow during the coming decade partially due to measures in President Joe Biden’s signature Inflation Reduction Act which among other provisions introduced a \$2,000 annual cap on out-of-pocket spending.

It will gradually fall over the following years when the effects of other provisions kick in, such as drug prices negotiated by Medicare with pharmaceutical companies that are set to apply starting 2026, and the tying of drug price increases to inflation which already started in 2023.

IN BRIEF

Democrat could become first transgender member of House

Democrat Sarah McBride could be elected the first transgender member of the U.S. House of Representatives in the Nov. 5 election, after her primary rival in deeply Democratic Delaware dropped out of the race on Wednesday.

A member of the Delaware state Assembly, McBride now faces a clear field in the Sept. 10 primary after Eugene Young, former director of the Delaware State Housing Authority, ended his candidacy. Other candidates have until July 8 to enter the race.

McBride praised Young for having run a positive campaign on social media platform X, saying, “I know the story of Eugene’s contributions to our state is only just beginning.”

Success in November would mark a major milestone in the acceptance of transgender people in American culture, even as battles over transgender rights have become a partisan flash point in a deeply divided nation.

Whoever becomes the Democratic nominee will be heavily favored to win in Delaware.

Ariz. man accused of trafficking guns to ‘incite a race war’

An Arizona man has been indicted on four counts of gun-trafficking crimes after federal prosecutors said an undercover sting operation revealed that he planned to kill Black people in a mass shooting to “incite a race war,” according to the indictment.

A grand jury indicted Mark Adams Prieto, 58, on Tuesday on charges of gun trafficking, transferring a gun for use in a hate crime and possession of an unregistered gun.

Prieto was driving east on a New Mexico highway when he was stopped and arrested on May 14 with seven guns in his vehicle, according to the U.S. attorney’s office for the Arizona district.

He had earlier told an FBI undercover agent posing as a racist gun enthusiast that he planned to drive to Atlanta, Georgia, for reconnaissance of possible venues to attack, which he wanted to carry out before the presidential election in November, according to the indictment.

He faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison if convicted on the most serious charge.

Senate confirms 2 for Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

The U.S. Senate on Wednesday confirmed David Rosner, a Democrat, and Lindsay See, a Republican, as members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The tally on Rosner, currently an aide with the U.S. Senate energy committee, was 68 to 26 in the 100-member Senate. His term is set to run through June 30, 2027.

The vote on See was 83 to 12. See, the solicitor general of West Virginia, was recommended by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Her term expires June 30, 2028.

The FERC, which has a maximum of five members, regulates the power grid, liquefied natural gas projects and interstate transportation of oil and natural gas.

Fire in Kuwait building kills at least 49 foreign workers

At least 49 people were killed in Kuwait on Wednesday after a fire broke out in a building housing foreign workers, with Kuwait’s deputy prime minister accusing property owners of committing violations that contribute toward such incidents.

The nationalities of those who died were not immediately disclosed by authorities. India’s ambassador visited hospitals where workers were being treated for injuries sustained in the fire.

At one hospital, more than 30 Indian citizens were admitted, the embassy wrote on social media, adding that at least 47 workers had received treatment in hospitals. Several Indians, including from the state of Kerala, were reported to have died in the fire, according to a letter written by Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan to India’s foreign minister that was shared with the press.

Visiting the site, Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah said “the greed of real estate owners is what leads to these matters.” It was not immediately clear if any violations had taken place at the building or what they were.

Reuters

Companies work to find bird flu vaccine for cows

Leah Douglas
REUTERS

Twenty-four companies are working to develop an avian flu vaccine for cattle, as the virus spreads among U.S. dairy herds, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told Reuters on Wednesday.

Bird flu has infected 90 dairy herds across 12 states since late March, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Three dairy farm workers also have been infected with the virus, two in Michigan and one in Texas.

A vaccine could curb the risk of bird flu spreading to new species and lessen potential economic losses for dairy farmers, but may take years to develop.

Animal health care company Zoetis said it started development of a vaccine for dairy cattle this spring. Merck Animal Health said it is evaluating technologies and strategies that would allow for timely responses to emerging diseases, including bird flu in cattle.

In addition to the two dozen companies working at varying stages of vac-



The USDA is conducting its own preliminary research into a vaccine at its laboratory in Ames, Iowa, according to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. LEAH MILLIS/REUTERS FILE

cine development, the USDA is conducting its own preliminary research into a vaccine at its laboratory in Ames, Iowa, Vilsack said in an interview.

The agency is looking for a vaccine candidate to test for efficacy, he said.

“That could happen tomorrow, or it could take six months, or it could take a year,” Vilsack said.

The agency’s other efforts on bird flu include research into potential respiratory spread of the virus between cows and providing support to farmers to increase biosecurity on farms.

While wild birds were a major vector for bringing bird flu to poultry farms, the main risks to spread on dairy farms appear to be the movement of people and equipment, he said.

“For dairy cows, it isn’t about migratory birds, it’s about cows moving, it’s about people, vehicles and equipment that may have virus they don’t even realize that they’re carrying,” he said. “That’s why the biosecurity becomes just incredibly, incredibly important.”

A pilot program for bulk milk testing will be rolled out “in the very near future,” Vilsack said. The program is meant to expand testing for the virus while enabling healthy herds to move across state lines without negative tests from each cow.

Michigan and Idaho are among states that have expressed interest in the program, Vilsack said.

Hard experience aided channel reopening

David Shepardson
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – This week’s reopening of Baltimore’s main shipping channel – less than three months after the Key Bridge collapse – was due to expertise gained from a COVID-era task force, a highway overpass collapse and the 2021 infrastructure law, government officials said.

The deadly March 26 collision of the cargo ship Dali into the Francis Scott Key Bridge had paralyzed a major transportation artery for the U.S. Northeast.

Within hours, President Joe Biden directed aides to get the channel reopened, the bridge rebuilt and vowed the federal government would cover the full costs. His administration has previously faced criticism for its initial response to the 2023 derailment of a train in Ohio.

Federal officials said on Monday that full access to the channel had been restored after the removal of 50,000 tons of debris. On Wednesday, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore and other officials were holding a press event to mark its reopening.

After the collapse, the Coast Guard quickly established a Unified Command to coordinate search, recovery and response efforts. It oversaw more than 1,500 individual responders that involved 56 federal, state and local agencies along with 500 specialists operating a fleet of boats to remove steel and concrete debris and address shipping impacts.

“I think that one of the most important things we did was establishing the



The deadly March 26 collision of the cargo ship Dali into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore paralyzed a major transportation artery for the Northeast. SAUL LOEB/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

unified command,” White House deputy chief of staff Natalie Quillian told Reuters.

“So there was clear command and control of what is a very complex operational challenge across stakeholders from federal and state government and the private sector.”

For example, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which oversees the federal navigation channel, was able to tap the U.S. Navy Supervisor of Salvage for the massive operation.

“That’s exactly the power of the unified command,” said Col. Estee Pincha-

sin, Baltimore district commander for the Corps of Engineers, which by early April had set an ambitious timetable for reopening the channel.

A council created by Biden in 2021 to address COVID-related supply chain shortages was convened shortly after the bridge collapse and federal agencies opened specialized offices to monitor supply chain issues.

“We developed these protocols during the first year of the pandemic,” said White House National Economic Council director Lael Brainard. “This very intensive sprint that we immediately acti-

vate to basically troubleshoot and share information.”

Brainard also cited lessons learned from the June 2023 collapse of an Interstate 95 overpass in Philadelphia that was quickly reopened.

“The I-95 collapse was such a rapid response that we had a sense of, ‘OK we know what to do,’” he said.

Brainard and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg led a call to ensure business, labor and port operators had the “same information to help them rapidly develop workaround plans.”

Both cited the \$1 trillion infrastructure law that has dramatically boosted spending on bridges and other projects as having given the administration know-how and “muscle memory” to tackle big challenges.

Buttigieg’s office approved \$60 million in emergency funds for Maryland to rebuild and remove debris, while the U.S. Army Corps and Coast Guard said on Tuesday they have spent nearly \$100 million on the bridge response and debris removal.

Buttigieg also repurposed a grant so more cargo area could be established and waived hours of service limits for impacted trucking.

“When the president of the United States says that every part of this administration should do everything you can think of within the limits of law – we can actually move quite quickly,” Buttigieg told Reuters.

A replacement bridge will cost an estimated \$1.7 billion-\$1.9 billion and federal officials are working to speed environmental approvals. Maryland hopes it will be completed by late 2028.

Gaza

Continued from Page 1NN

reporters.

Hamas also wants written guarantees from the U.S. on the cease-fire plan, two Egyptian security sources told Reuters.

Late on Wednesday, Hamas issued a statement stressing its “positivity” in the negotiations and urging the U.S. to pressure Israel to accept an agreement leading to a permanent cease-fire in Gaza as well as full withdrawal from the enclave, reconstruction and release of Palestinian prisoners.

The Palestinian group said that while U.S. officials have said Israel has accepted a cease-fire proposal outlined by Biden on May 31, “we have not heard any Israeli official confirm this acceptance.”

Biden’s proposal envisages a truce and a phased release of Israeli hostages in Gaza in exchange for Palestinians jailed in Israel, ultimately leading to a permanent end to the war.

At a news conference with Qatar’s prime minister in Doha, Blinken said some of the counter-proposals from Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, had sought to amend terms that it had accepted in previous talks.

Months of talks

Negotiators from the U.S., Egypt and Qatar have tried for months to mediate a cease-fire in the conflict – which has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and devastated the heavily populated enclave – and free the hostages, more than 100 of whom are believed to remain captive in Gaza.

“Hamas could have answered with a single word: Yes,” Blinken said. “Instead, Hamas waited nearly two weeks and then proposed more changes, a number of which go beyond positions that it had previously taken and accepted.”

In its late Wednesday statement, Hamas said it had expressed its readiness to cooperate while Israel did not. Blinken’s stance was “a continuation of the American policy complicit in the brutal genocide against our Palestinian people.”

The group said the U.S. was providing political and military cover for Israel to press ahead with its assault on Gaza.

The U.S. has said Israel has accepted its proposal, but Israel has not publicly stated this. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly said Israel will not commit to ending its campaign before Hamas is eliminated.

Major powers are intensifying efforts to defuse the conflict in part to prevent it spiraling into a wider Middle East war, with a dangerous flashpoint being the escalating hostilities along the Lebanese-Israeli border.

On Wednesday, Hezbollah fired the most rockets it has launched at Israel in a single day since cross-border hostilities broke out eight months ago, as part of its retaliation for an Israeli strike which killed a senior Hezbollah field



Displaced Palestinians walk past destroyed buildings in al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on Wednesday. EYAD BABA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



An aircraft releases flame retardant to extinguish fires caused by rockets launched from southern Lebanon, which landed on the outskirts of Safed, Israel, on Wednesday. JALAA MAREY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

commander.

The Israeli strike in the south Lebanon village of Jouaiyya late on Tuesday killed three Hezbollah fighters alongside the senior field commander Taleb Abdallah, also known as Abu Taleb, Israel and three security sources in Lebanon said.

The fighting in Gaza began on Oct. 7 when militants led by Hamas burst across the border and killed 1,200 Israelis and took more than 250 hostage, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel’s air and ground war since then has killed more than 37,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s health minis-

try, displaced most of Gaza’s population of 2.3 million and devastated housing and infrastructure.

The head of the World Health Organization said on Wednesday many people in Gaza were facing “catastrophic hunger and famine-like conditions,” with over 8,000 children under 5 years old diagnosed and treated for acute malnutrition.

A U.N. inquiry found that both Israel and Hamas had committed war crimes early in the Gaza war, and that Israel’s actions also constituted crimes against humanity because of the immense civilian losses.

Israel continues assaults in Gaza

As diplomats sought a cease-fire deal, Israel continued assaults in central and southern Gaza that are among the bloodiest of the war.

Israeli forces stepped up air and tank bombardment on Wednesday night in Rafah and central Gaza, residents said. An Israeli airstrike on a house in Al-Nuseirat refugee camp killed three people, medics said.

Residents earlier said Israeli forces pounded areas across Gaza on Wednesday as tanks advanced toward northern Rafah, which skirts the Egyptian border.

Palestinian health officials said six people were killed in an airstrike on Gaza City in the north, and one man had been killed by a tank shell in Rafah.

Houthis say they targeted ship

Meanwhile, Iran-allied Houthi militants on Wednesday took responsibility for small watercraft and missile attacks that left a Greek-owned cargo ship taking on water and in need of rescue near Yemen’s Red Sea port of Hodeidah.

“The impact of the (unmanned surface vessel) caused severe flooding and damage to the engine room,” U.S. Central Command said of the attack, which was the Houthis’ first to use a boat successfully as a weapon.

The Houthis control Yemen’s capital and most populous areas. They have attacked shipping in the Red Sea region since November in solidarity with the Palestinians in the war between Israel and Hamas. They have sunk one ship, seized another vessel and killed three seafarers in another attack.

SPORTS

EXTRA

STANLEY CUP FINAL

Oilers seek offensive spark for Game 3

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

If the pressure is on the Edmonton Oilers, they are doing everything possible to alleviate those feelings in anticipation of Thursday’s Stanley Cup Final home clash with the Florida Panthers.

Down 2-0 to the Panthers in the best-of-seven series, the Oilers are well aware Game 3 will swing their fortunes greatly in either direction. Even so, the plan of attack is to simply remain calm and hit the ice.

“There’s nothing to be tight about,” Edmonton forward Zach Hyman said after Wednesday’s practice. “We’re in a great series here. I thought we played one really good game and they played a good game. We’re down two, but we haven’t lost on home ice. That’s the key; go out and take care of business at home. Win one game, that’s it.”

The Oilers have shown plenty of mettle since starting the regular season with only two wins in their first dozen games, but lately the high-octane squad has been stymied. Florida goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky delivered a brilliant shutout performance in the opener and followed that with a 4-1 victory in Game 2.

Edmonton desperately needs a spark to ignite its attack, which has even been blanked on seven power-play opportunities.

“We usually solve penalty kills, and I would expect us to figure this one out, too,” Oilers captain Connor McDavid said.

See GAME 3, Page 3NS



Edmonton Oilers forward Zach Hyman (18) tries to control the puck in Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final. SAM NAVARRO/USA TODAY SPORTS

NBA FINALS CELTICS 106, MAVERICKS 99



Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum, left, and guard Jaylen Brown celebrate after defeating the Mavericks in Game 3 of the NBA Finals on Wednesday at American Airlines Center in Dallas. PETER CASEY/USA TODAY SPORTS

TAKING COMMAND

Tatum, Brown help Celtics hold off desperate Mavericks, go up 3-0 in Finals

Drew Davison
FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

DALLAS – The Boston Celtics, one win away from sweeping the NBA Finals, insist they won’t get overconfident.

They only need to look back at the fourth quarter of Game 3 to see how dangerous the Dallas Mavericks can be.

Jayson Tatum poured in 31 points and Jaylen Brown supplied 30 as the Celtics held off a late rally by the Mavericks for a 106-99 victory on Wednesday.

“We are not relaxing or anything like that,” Tatum said. “You know, not even focusing on winning or Friday or whatever. However long it takes, that’s our motto. However long it takes, that’s what it’s going to take. Nobody is not trying to relax at all.”

Tatum bounced back on Wednesday after totaling just 34 points in Games 1 and 2. Brown added eight rebounds and eight assists for Boston, which also got 16 points from Derrick White. Big man

Kristaps Porzingis (lower leg) didn’t play after getting injured in the third quarter of Game 2.

Like Tatum, Kyrie Irving made up for a lackluster showing in each of the first two games of the series, and he paced the Mavericks with a game-high 35 points. Luka Doncic went for 27 points, six boards and six assists, but he dealt a critical blow to Dallas’ comeback hopes by fouling out with 4:12 left in the game.

See CELTICS, Page 2NS



Scottie Scheffler chips up onto the second green during a practice round for the U.S. Open on Wednesday at Pinehurst No. 2. KATIE GOODALE/USA TODAY SPORTS

GOLF US OPEN

Pinehurst conditions ‘no joke’ for hopefuls

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Scottie Scheffler has conquered just about everything in sight as the world’s No. 1 golfer.

This week there’s a different type of assignment as he attempts to build on his stellar season at the U.S. Open at famed Pinehurst No. 2.

“It’s extremely challenging,” Scheffler said. “I don’t really think they have to do too much to trick it up with the way the greens are if they want the scores to be high. So it should be a good test and a fun week.”

The first round begins Thursday, where long rounds in some sun-splashed heat are expected in Pinehurst, N.C. As much as the course offers certain potential pitfalls, this could be an endurance test.

Scheffler, who’s coming off Sunday’s

victory in the Memorial Tournament, has the attention of golfers and spectators. He has won five times on the PGA Tour since the beginning of March.

“To play this well for this amount of time, (it has) been a couple years where he’s for sure the guy to beat every week,” said Webb Simpson, the 2012 U.S. Open champion. “It’s fun to watch. I don’t see any reason that he’s going to slow down anytime soon.”

Scheffler said patience will be important. That might hold true as well for Wyndham Clark, who’s the defending champion at a major for the first time.

“I’m trying to gain some momentum for the rest of the season,” Clark said. “I know that maybe sounds like low expectations for the week, but honestly I’d love to just gain some momentum.”

See US OPEN, Page 6NS

BASKETBALL

WNBA SUN 83, SKY 75

Sun fend off Sky, run their record to 11-1

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Alyssa Thomas scored 20 points and Brionna Jones netted 18 as the visiting Connecticut Sun held off the pesky Chicago Sky 83-75 on Wednesday night.

Thomas also added seven rebounds, six steals and four assists for the Sun (11-1), who are 2-0 since falling at home to New York on Saturday. DeWanna Bonner added 16 points and Tyasha Harris 13 as Connecticut forced the Sky into 17 turnovers.

Chicago (4-7) battled back from a 13-point hole in the fourth quarter to get within four on Diamond DeShields’ 3-pointer with 28.2 seconds remaining.

However, the Sky, who got a season-high 20 points to go with 10 boards from rookie Angel Reese, couldn’t get closer. Kamilla Cardoso, Marina Mabrey and Chennedy Carter each scored 10 for the Sky.

The Sun led 60-55 at the end of the third quarter, and then scored the first eight points of the fourth. Four different players scored during that surge, highlighted by easy buckets from Bonner and Thomas.

Connecticut, 4-0 on the road, led 40-38 at the half, then scored seven of the first nine points in the third quarter.



Connecticut Sun forward Alyssa Thomas brings the ball up court against the Sky on Wednesday in Chicago. KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI/USA TODAY

JERRY WEST 1938-2024

Legend was part of 9 NBA titles

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Jerry West, a Hall of Fame player, executive and the inspiration for the silhouette NBA logo, died on Wednesday morning. He was 86.

West won nine NBA championships as a player, scout, coach, executive and consultant during a storied career that spanned eight decades. Nicknamed “Mr. Clutch,” West was an All-Star during each season of his 14-year playing career with the Los Angeles Lakers, helping the club win the title in 1971-72.

West was named the MVP for the 1969 NBA Finals despite playing on a losing team. He scored 42 points in Game 7, but the Lakers fell to the rival Boston Celtics.



Clippers special consultant Jerry West watches a Feb. 25 game against the Sacramento Kings in Los Angeles. West died Wednesday. KIRBY LEE/USA TODAY

A 12-time All-NBA selection, West found much more success after retiring from a career on the court.

He helped the “Showtime” Lakers win five titles in the 1980s and oversaw the formation of the Shaquille O’Neal-Kobe Bryant tandem. In a rebirth of the franchise’s glory days, the All-NBA duo led the Lakers to three straight titles (2000-02).

West became an adviser for the Los Angeles Clippers in 2017, and the club reached the Western Conference finals for the first time in franchise history in 2021. He was a two-time executive of the year.

“Jerry West was a basketball genius and a defining figure in our league for more than 60 years,” NBA commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement. “He distinguished himself not only as an NBA champion and an All-Star in all 14 of his playing seasons, but also as a consummate competitor who embraced the biggest moments. He was the league’s first Finals MVP and made rising to the occasion his signature quality, earning him the nickname ‘Mr. Clutch.’

“Jerry’s four decades with the Lakers also included a successful stint as a head coach and a remarkable run in the front office that cemented his reputation as one of the greatest executives in sports history. He helped build eight championship teams during his tenure in the NBA – a legacy of achievement that mirrors his on-court excellence.

And he will be enshrined this October into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame as a contributor, becoming the first person ever inducted as both a player and a contributor.”

The Clippers and team owner Steve Ballmer also issued statements.

“Today, the world has lost an icon and a national treasure, as beloved in the hollows of West Virginia as he was in the hills of Los Angeles and all points in between,” the team statement said. “The Clippers have lost a mentor, a confidant, and a friend. We are simultaneously devastated and honored to have witnessed the last chapter of Jerry West’s legendary career. To the end, he was a fierce competitor, a giving teammate, and a lot of fun. His passion for the game was without parallel. His wisdom, his generosity and his humor are forever sewn into the fabric of the franchise. He gave his heart to everything and everyone he touched. Our deepest condolences go out to the West family and the entire basketball community, united under one logo.”

“This is a hard day. I am honored to call Jerry a confidant, an advisor and a friend,” Ballmer said. “Connie, my wife, called him my ‘basketball dad.’ He was absolutely my basketball sage: wise,

loyal and so much fun. If you were in his presence, you felt his competitiveness and his drive. He cared about everything and everyone. From the first day I met Jerry seven years ago, he inspired me with his intellect, honesty and enthusiasm. He never stopped. I spent a lot of time with him, some of the best times of my life. He always lent an ear, and he always had a quip. He always left me laughing. I will miss him.”

West was the third player in NBA history to eclipse 25,000 and was part of the league’s 75th anniversary team. He averaged 27.0 points, 6.7 assists and 5.8 rebounds in 932 career games.

“Will truly miss our convos my dear friend!” Lakers superstar LeBron James wrote on X, formerly Twitter. “My thoughts and prayers goes out to your wonderful family! Forever love Jerry! Rest in Paradise my guy!”

A two-time All-American at West Virginia, he guided the Mountaineers to the 1959 NCAA championship game. He was named the Final Four Most Outstanding Player despite West Virginia falling to California in the final.

He went into the Hall of Fame as a player in 1980 and again 30 years later as a member of the 1960 U.S. Olympic Team.

Celtics

Continued from Page 1

The Mavericks challenged the foul on Doncic, but the call stood, forcing him from the game. Doncic picked up four of his six fouls in the fourth quarter.

“We couldn’t play physical,” he said. “I don’t want to say nothing. You know, six fouls in the NBA Finals, basically I’m like this (motions with palms out). C’mon, man. Better than that.”

It looked as if the game were over when White drilled a 3-pointer with 11:07 left in the fourth quarter to put the Celtics up 91-70.

But Dallas then took over, rattling off 28 of the next 37 points to get within 100-98 on a Dereck Lively II dunk with 1:20 to go.

“You were going to expect a run from them because they had a 19-point (third) quarter,” Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. “And just by the type of shots they take alone, you knew they were going to make some kind of run. Some of those came at the expense of our offense.

“I thought we missed a couple reads that changed coverages and they changed matchups on like three or four straight possessions and we missed the read to get the right shot.”

Brown made sure Boston never let the Mavericks draw even, though, as his mid-range jumper at the top of the key increased the lead to four points with 1:01 remaining. P.J. Washington and Irving both missed 3-point attempts down the stretch before two free throws from White and two more from Tatum put the finishing touches on the victory.

Doncic’s layup had the Mavericks within 71-65 with 5:11 left in the third quarter. The Celtics answered with a 7-0 spurt and later took an 85-70 lead into the fourth.

After Dallas led by as many as 13 in the opening 12 minutes, neither team led by more than four as the lead changed six times in the second quarter. The first half ended with the Mavericks clinging to a 51-50 edge behind 20 points from Irving.

Boston outshot Dallas 46.3 percent to 44.2 percent for the game. The Celtics



Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum, left, and forward Sam Hauser, right, reach for the ball against Mavericks center Dereck Lively II during Gasme 3 of the NBA Finals on Wednesday in Dallas. PETER CASEY/USA TODAY SPORTS

also improved to 7-0 on the road in the playoffs while running their overall winning streak to 10 games.

The Mavericks will need a historic effort to overcome their Finals deficit. Teams leading NBA series 3-0 are 156-0.

“It’s not over till it’s over,” Doncic said. “We just got to believe. Like I always say, it’s first to four. We’re going to stay together.”

Boston 106, Dallas 99	
BOSTON (106)	
Horford 3-6 0-0 8, Hauser 3-4 0-0 9, Tillman 1-1 0-0 3, Pritchard 0-4 0-0 0. Totals 38-82 13-14 106	
DALLAS (99)	
Gafford 3-3 0-0 6, Lively II 5-6 1-111, Green 1-2 0-0 3, Hardaway Jr. 0-5 0-0 0, Kleber 0-2 0-0 0, Hardy 0-1 0-0 0, Exum 1-1 0-0 2. Totals 38-86 14-16 99	
BOS	30 20 35 21 - 106
DAL	31 20 19 29 - 99
3-Point Goals: Boston 17-46 (White 4-9, Tatum 4-13, Hauser 3-4, Horford 2-5, Brown 2-9, Tillman 1-1, Holiday 1-3, Pritchard 0-2), Dallas 9-25 (Irving 4-6, Washington 3-6, Green 1-1, Doncic 1-7, Jones Jr. 0-1, Kleber 0-1, Hardaway Jr. 0-3). Fouled Out: Dallas (Doncic). Rebounds: Boston 35 (Brown 8), Dallas 43 (Lively II 13). Assists: Boston 26 (Brown 8), Dallas 15 (Doncic 6). Total Fouls: Boston 19, Dallas 17. A: 0 (19,200)	



Mavericks guard Kyrie Irving (11) shoots against Boston Celtics guards Derrick White (9) and Jaylen Brown on Wednesday in Dallas. JEROME MIRON/USA TODAY SPORTS

NFL

NOTEBOOK

Darnold favored to enter Vikings camp as QB1

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Veteran Sam Darnold likely will be the No. 1 quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings when training camp opens next month, head coach Kevin O’Connell told reporters Wednesday.

“We haven’t had to put out a depth chart or anything like that, but I would say Sam would be the guy I would look to,” O’Connell said.

However, Darnold shouldn’t start snapping up tickets to give to family and friends for the season opener on Sept. 8 against the New York Giants in East Rutherford, N.J. Rookie J.J. McCarthy, selected No. 10 overall in April’s NFL draft, could have something to say about that.

O’Connell also addressed the quarterback hierarchy in two interviews this week. On Tuesday, he told “Mad Dog Sports Radio” that there will be a QB competition.

“At the quarterback position, look, we’re really excited about Sam,” O’Connell said. “Really kept a close eye on his quarterback journey and not all quarterback journeys are the same. Although the position tends to catch a lot of eyes and a lot of different coverage from a standpoint of what a guy is and isn’t – wins and losses and all those things – but ... circumstances and environment that those guys are in play a lot to do with it and play a lot into it.”

The New York Jets selected Darnold No. 3 overall in the 2018 draft and gave up on him after three seasons, sending him to the Carolina Panthers in a trade before the 2021 season for three draft picks, the highest a second-rounder. After two seasons in Carolina, he signed as a free agent with the San Francisco 49ers and backed up Brock Purdy in 2023.

He has played under five different head coaches in six seasons.

“Sam’s had a heck of a quarterback journey. I think he’s learned a lot along the way and I’m really excited about the time in his career in which we’re getting



Quarterback Sam Darnold throws during Minnesota Vikings mandatory minicamp on June 4 in Eagan, Minn. ADAM BETTCHER/GETTY IMAGES

him in our building,” O’Connell said on “Mad Dog Sports Radio.”

“I feel strongly about his ability to continue his, even at this point in his career, continue his development and what can he become within playing quarterback in our offense with the type of players we have around him, all well knowing that we’re going to have a competitive environment with J.J. McCarthy, with Nick Mullens and Jaren Hall.”

Darnold, who turned 27 last week, has a 21-35 record as a starter, completing 59.7 percent of his passes for 12,064 yards with 63 touchdowns and 56 interceptions.

McCarthy, 21, led Michigan to a national championship in January, but NFL scouts reportedly thought he could benefit from at least one season on the bench, learning and watching.

Speaking Monday on “The Rich Eisen Show,” O’Connell implied McCarthy is going to have to wow the coaching staff to overtake Darnold for the Week 1 start.

“We do have a plan for J.J. – a long-term plan. We see him as our quarterback of the future, and when that ultimately starts, with him taking game reps under center, will really be about that process of getting there and demonstrating that he’s got total comfort in the system,” O’Connell said.

“So then, the natural learning environment that is playing quarterback in the NFL ... we want to make sure it’s the right time and J.J. feels 100 percent confident that he can not only go in and have success but then also, when adversity does hit, is he attacking it the right way from a foundation that hopefully we’ve built up over a long time.”

Jets coach, QB Rodgers ‘on the exact same page’

New York Jets head coach Robert Saleh downplayed the notion of a rift with Aaron Rodgers after the star quarterback’s unexcused absence from the

team’s mandatory minicamp.

“Aaron and I are on the exact same page,” Saleh said Wednesday before the final practice session. “There’s no issue between Aaron or his teammates, for that matter.

“We addressed it yesterday. It’s more of an issue for everyone outside the building than it is inside. That’s about it.”

Rodgers, 40, has been at the team facility for most of the spring. Rodgers, who told Saleh that he had a prior commitment, joined edge rusher Haason Reddick in failing to show on Tuesday.

“Selfishly, I want all our guys here all the time, but when you get to these mandatory things, you make the best decision for yourself,” Saleh said. “Obviously, selfishly I want all of them here all the time, but he made a decision and that’s what he went with.”

A four-time NFL MVP, Rodgers followed a celebrated tenure with the Green Bay Packers by playing just four snaps before suffering an Achilles injury during his debut with the Jets on Sept. 11, 2023.

Rodgers passed for 59,055 yards, 475 touchdowns and 105 interceptions in 230 games (223 starts) for the Packers from 2005-22, compiling a record of 147-75-1.

Agents: Giants signing former Jaguars CB Herndon

The New York Giants are signing veteran cornerback Tre Herndon, his agents said Wednesday.

Herndon, 28, participated in a minicamp tryout with the Giants Tuesday.

David Canter and Ness Mugarabi of GSE Worldwide confirmed the transaction with NFL Network.

Herndon recorded 46 tackles and nine passes defended in 16 games (four starts) with Jacksonville in 2023.

He had three interceptions and 243 tackles in 83 games (34 starts) with the Jaguars since signing as an undrafted free agent in 2018.

STANLEY CUP FINAL

Game 3

Continued from Page 1

On the injury front, Edmonton coach Kris Knoblauch said defenseman Darnell Nurse, who had only three shifts in the final 50-plus minutes last game after being on the receiving end of a hard check, is expected to play. The Oilers intend to return veteran forward Corey Perry to the lineup, with the likely candidate to come out being Evander Kane, who has been hampered by an undisclosed ailment.

Speaking of injuries, the Panthers appear to have avoided a serious issue, with captain Aleksander Barkov well enough to practice on Wednesday. Barkov, who is not only a scoring star but considered the league’s best defensive center, missed the final half of the third period last game after being hit in the head by Edmonton’s Leon Draisaitl.

“Felt better today,” coach Paul Maurice said. “Got through skate today as far as I know. He’ll get checked after. Get him on a plane, get him off a plane, get him on the ice, and we’ll see where he’s at tomorrow. He looked good today.”

Fellow forward Vladimir Tarasenko did not practice due to “a minor thing” Maurice said, nor did defenseman Aaron Ekblad and forward Eetu Luostarinen, but all are expected to play.

Therefore, it appears the Panthers will have all hands on deck as they attempt to take a stranglehold on the series. In finals history, 49 of the 54 teams to previously win the first two games of the series have gone on to win the Stanley Cup.

“We’re feeling confident in our game,” Luostarinen said. “Up 2-0 is a good spot, but we know there’s still a lot of work to do. It’s going to be hard to play there. Their home crowd is going to be loud, too.”

In Edmonton’s favor is that 11 of the last 14 teams to face a 2-0 deficit in the finals have won Game 3, including the Panthers last year, although they eventually dropped the series to the Vegas Golden Knights in five games.

The Panthers, who have surrendered two or fewer goals in all five games of their current winning streak.



Florida Panthers forward Aleksander Barkov missed the final half of the third period of Game 2 on Monday after being hit in the head by Edmonton’s Leon Draisaitl. JIM RASSOL/USA TODAY SPORTS

MLB

WEDNESDAY’S ROUNDUP

Correa’s 5 hits help Twins shred Rockies

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Carlos Correa had a career-high five hits and Carlos Santana ripped a bases-clearing double, powering the Minnesota Twins to a 17-9 victory over the Colorado Rockies on Wednesday afternoon in Minneapolis.

Royce Lewis and Willi Castro each homered to highlight their respective three-hit performances for Minnesota, which banged out a season-high 24 hits.

Jose Miranda and Christian Vazquez each belted a two-run double, and Santana and Kyle Farmer each added an RBI single as part of a seven-run eighth inning. Farmer also had an RBI single in a five-run first inning for the Twins, who saw every member of their starting lineup notch at least one hit and one RBI.

Pablo Lopez (6-6) benefited from Minnesota’s early offensive explosion to improve to 4-0 in five career starts against the Rockies. He allowed two runs on five hits and struck out five in five innings.

Colorado’s Ryan McMahon launched a solo homer for the second consecutive day, and Brenton Doyle and Jacob Stallings each had two hits and two RBIs. A two-run error by shortstop Correa and a double-play grounder trimmed Minnesota’s lead 10-8 in the eighth before the Twins’ late uprising sent the Rockies to their ninth loss in 12 games.

Padres 5, Athletics 4

Jackson Merrill’s second homer of the game came with one out in the bottom of the ninth inning and lifted San Diego over visiting Oakland.

Merrill got a first-pitch slider down and in from Oakland closer Mason Miller (1-1) and cracked it into the seats in right field. It was his fifth homer of the year.

Robert Suarez (4-0) got the win after pitching a scoreless ninth inning, his second victory in less than 24 hours. The result marked the first time this year that the Padres swept a series in six attempts.

Donovan Solano also belted two homers for San Diego, wiping out the A’s 4-2 lead in the bottom of the eighth when he drilled a two-run shot to center off Lucas Erceg.

It was Solano’s third homer of the year and scored Fernando Tatis Jr., who drew a one-out walk.

Tatis went 0-for-3, ending his career-high hitting streak at 17 games.

Brewers 5, Blue Jays 4

Milwaukee surged ahead with a five-run sixth inning, then squashed a ninth-inning comeback rally by visiting Toronto to win and capture the three-game series.

Toronto’s Ernie Clement started the ninth with a leadoff double and Spencer Horwitz brought him home with a RBI single to cut into the deficit.

Down 5-2, Toronto threatened with two runners on base and no outs, forcing the Brewers to turn to closer Trevor Megill.

A Bo Bichette RBI infield single and a sacrifice fly RBI from Alejandro Kirk off Megill moved the score to 5-4. With runners at the corners, Blue Jays pinch-hitter Vladimir Guerrero Jr. flied out to center for the final out, giving Megill his 11th save of the season.

After being held scoreless through the first five innings of the game, Milwaukee scored all five runs with two outs in the bottom of the sixth.

Giants 5, Astros 3

Austin Slater had three hits and drove in two runs out of the leadoff spot, Logan Webb outpitched Framber Valdez, and San Francisco wrapped up a series win over visiting Houston.

After two low-scoring affairs that resulted in a split, the Giants got their bats going against Valdez, against whom they had totaled just four runs in two previous head-to-heads. This time, they roughed him up for five runs in just four innings, taking a 5-1 lead they massaged to the finish.

Slater contributed a bunt single and a run scored to a two-run third, then provided the highlight to a three-run fourth with a two-RBI double. Brett Wisely also doubled in the inning.

Valdez (5-4) was pulled at inning’s end, charged with five runs on eight hits. He walked one and struck out one.

Webb (6-5) took a 5-1 lead into the sixth before Yordan Alvarez cut the Houston deficit in half with a two-run home run, his 14th of the season. It also scored Alex Bregman, who had singled.



The Minnesota Twins’ Carlos Correa hits an RBI single against the Colorado Rockies in the fourth inning of Wednesday’s game in Minneapolis.

BRUCE KLUCKHOHN/USA TODAY SPORTS

Orioles 4, Braves 2

Colton Cowser hit a two-run home run to break an eighth-inning tie as host Baltimore beat slumping Atlanta.

Cowser’s eighth home run of the season, and his first since May 26, matched a two-run homer by Atlanta’s Matt Olson in the top of the inning as the Orioles pushed their winning streak to six games.

Olson’s 10th home run of the season came off Baltimore reliever Keegan Akin and tied the game at 2-2.

Akin (2-0) ended up as the winning pitcher, allowing two hits over 1⅓ innings, before Craig Kimbrel pitched the ninth for his 16th save. Cedric Mullins had two hits and a run for the Orioles, who have won 16 of their last 20 games.

Joe Jimenez (1-2) took the loss after giving up Cowser’s blast.

Red Sox 8, Phillies 6

Enmanuel Valdez and David Hamilton each drove in two runs as Boston stormed back for a win over visiting Philadelphia in the second of a three-game series.

The Red Sox totaled 13 hits and climbed out from a 4-0 deficit by scoring in each of the three middle innings, highlighted by a five-run fifth.

Jarren Duran went 3-for-5 with an RBI and run scored, while Rafael Devers (triple) and Hamilton (home run) each added two hits to help Boston even the series.

Philadelphia managed only three hits against five Boston relievers, including winner Cam Booser (1-2) who immediately followed starter Nick Pivetta.

The Phillies’ Nick Castellanos and Bryce Harper were both 2-for-4, and Bryson Stott had two RBIs.

Nationals 7, Tigers 5

CJ Abrams homered and drove in two runs and visiting Washington extended its winning streak to a season-high five games with a victory over Detroit.

Washington’s Jesse Winker reached base four times, scoring a run and driving in another. Nationals starter Jake Irvin (5-5) gave up one run on six hits and a walk in six innings while notching five strikeouts. Kyle Finnegan yielded a run in the ninth inning but earned his 19th save.

Gio Urshela had a two-run double for the Tigers, while Matt Vierling and Riley Greene hit solo homers.

Detroit starter Reese Olson (1-8) gave up five runs, four earned, and 10 hits in 5⅓ innings. He fanned three and walked two.

Vierling led off the bottom of the first inning with his eighth homer of the season.

Cubs 4, Rays 3

Cody Bellinger stroked a go-ahead three-run homer as Chicago evened its three-game series with Tampa Bay, edging the Rays in St. Petersburg, Fla.

With two outs in the seventh and the Cubs trailing 2-1, Bellinger won a lefty-lefty matchup by launching a slider from Garrett Cleavinger (4-1) for his

ninth homer of the season.

Bellinger, who finished 2-for-5, bashed Cleavinger’s cutter 407 feet to right center for a 4-2 advantage that stood up as Chicago moved to 2-4 on its seven-game road trip. The finale comes Thursday.

Tyson Miller (1-0), who came on with two on and two outs in the fourth for the Cubs, retired all four batters he faced, while Hector Neris allowed a solo homer to Jose Caballero in the ninth but notched his 10th save.

Seiya Suzuki was 2-for-3 with a homer and Michael Busch had two hits as the Cubs totaled nine.

Reds 4, Guardians 2

Jeimer Candelario homered twice and drove in all four runs while starter Nick Lodolo was supported by a pair of key defensive plays to help Cincinnati beat visiting Cleveland.

With the victory, Cincinnati earned a split of the two-game set.

Candelario finished 3-for-4 in front of 42,427 fans, the most to ever attend a Monday-Thursday game at Great American Ball Park. Lodolo (7-2) was on the verge of leaving the game after the top of the sixth as the potential loser before the Reds rallied for three runs in the home half of the frame.

Alexis Diaz pitched a perfect ninth for his 14th save in 16 chances.

Cincinnati was aided by a pair of outstanding plays in the field. After tying the game at 1-1 in the third, the Guardians were threatening to take the lead with two outs and the bases loaded.

Mets 10, Marlins 4

Harrison Bader, Starling Marte and Francisco Lindor homered for host New York, which never trailed in a win over Miami.

Tyrone Taylor tied a career high with four hits while Bader, Marte and Francisco Alvarez each finished with two RBIs for the Mets, who have won seven of the past 11 games. The four-hit game for Taylor was his second, joining a 4-for-5 effort for the Milwaukee Brewers against the Detroit Tigers on Sept. 9, 2020.

Dane Myers, Emmanuel Rivera, Bryan De La Cruz and Jazz Chisholm Jr. all had an RBI for the Marlins, who lost for the seventh time in nine games.

The teams will play the rubber game of the three-game series on Thursday.

Bader, who batted second Wednesday for the first time this season, opened the scoring in the first inning with a two-run homer off Braxton Garrett (2-2).

Yankees 11, Royals 5

Jose Trevino, Giancarlo Stanton and Gleyber Torres hit multi-run homers as visiting New York beat Kansas City for its fourth straight win.

The Yankees quickly loaded the bases against Royals opener Dan Altavilla with two singles and a walk. With one out, Alex Verdugo smacked a bad-hop single past first baseman Vinnie Pasquantino, scoring two.

Anthony Rizzo’s sacrifice fly brought

in a run ahead of Trevino’s three-run homer into the left field bullpen as New York took a 6-0 lead before the Royals ever came to bat.

Altavilla (0-1) retired one of six batters faced, allowing five runs on three hits and two walks before giving way to Daniel Lynch IV with one out and the bases loaded.

In the fifth, Stanton connected for his 17th homer, a two-run shot 449 feet to left for an 8-0 lead.

Cardinals 4, Pirates 2

Nolan Arenado went 3-for-4 with a double and an RBI, and host St. Louis held on for a win over Pittsburgh.

Dylan Carlson, Masyn Winn and Brendan Donovan added one RBI apiece for St. Louis. The Cardinals evened the series at one win apiece with the rubber match set for Thursday afternoon.

Henry Davis hit a solo homer for Pittsburgh. Michael A. Taylor drove in the Pirates’ other run.

Cardinals right-hander Sonny Gray (8-4) held the Pirates to one run on four hits in seven innings. He walked one and struck out nine.

Pirates left-hander Bailey Falter (3-4) allowed three runs on eight hits in four innings. He walked one and struck out five.

Mariners 2, White Sox 1, 10 innings

Pinch-hitter Mitch Haniger singled home the winning run in the bottom of the 10th inning as Seattle defeated visiting Chicago.

Haniger’s hit to right field scored Luke Raley, the automatic runner. Raley had homered in the seventh inning to break a scoreless tie.

White Sox pinch hitter Luis Robert Jr. lined the first pitch from Mariners reliever Mike Baumann in the ninth inning just over the left field wall to tie the score at 1-1.

Mariners reliever Trent Thornton (3-1) pitched a scoreless 10th for the victory. Chicago’s Steven Wilson (1-3) took the loss.

The Mariners, who have won four in a row, will try for a sweep of the four-game series Thursday. The White Sox have dropped four straight and 18 of their past 20 games.

Angels 8, Diamondbacks 3

Jose Soriano pitched eight-plus solid innings and Zach Neto and Jo Adell each homered as Los Angeles rolled to a victory over Arizona in Phoenix.

Soriano (4-5) induced the Diamondbacks to hit into four double plays and recorded 16 outs on grounders in the longest outing of his major league career. His shutout attempt was broken up in the eighth inning by Christian Walker’s solo homer.

Soriano gave up two runs and five hits with two walks and five strikeouts in 97 pitches. He exited after Geraldo Perdomo’s infield hit to start the ninth – a liner right at Soriano that he got his glove on.

Matt Moore allowed a two-run homer to Ketel Marte – his 14th of the season – before finishing the ninth for Los Angeles.

Adell hit a three-run blast, Neto had three hits and two RBIs and Nolan Schanuel also had three hits for the Angels, who won for the fifth time in their past eight games.

Rangers 3, Dodgers 2

Corey Seager hit a three-run home run in his return from a four-game absence and visiting Texas held on for a victory against Los Angeles.

Seager, in his first regular-season game at Los Angeles since leaving the Dodgers via free agency after the 2021 season, had been hobbled by a left hamstring strain.

Jon Gray, Jacob Latz (2-1) and Jose Leclerc each pitched multiple innings for the Rangers, who won for just the third time in their past eight games.

Rangers right-hander Kirby Yates put two runners on in the ninth and the Dodgers’ Jason Heyward hit a line drive toward the gap in right-center. Will Smith scored but Andy Pages was thrown out at home for the final out. Yates recorded his ninth save.

Shohei Ohtani hit a first-inning home run for the Dodgers. Walker Buehler (1-4) gave up three runs (two earned) over five innings with two strikeouts and one walk. Buehler has just one win in seven starts since returning from a nearly two-year absence after his second Tommy John surgery.

MLB

WEDNESDAY'S BOX SCORES

Minnesota 17, Colorado 9												
COL.....	100	101	231	-	9	12	1					
MIN.....	500	302	07x	-	17	24	2					

Colorado	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Blackmon dh	5	1	1	0	0	2	.257
Doyle cf	4	1	2	2	0	0	.265
d-Jones ph	1	0	0	0	1	0	.000
Tovar ss	3	1	1	1	0	0	.293
c-Trejo ph	1	1	1	0	0	0	.146
McMahon 3b	3	2	2	1	1	0	.267
b-Goodman ph	1	0	0	0	1	0	.156
Stallings c	5	1	2	2	0	1	.295
Toglia rf	4	1	1	0	1	2	.159
Cave lf	4	0	0	1	0	2	.238
Montero 1b	3	0	0	0	1	0	.203
Amador 2b	4	1	1	0	0	1	.143
Totals	38	9	12	7	3	8	
Minnesota	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Margot rf	3	2	2	1	1	0	.238
a-Kepler ph-rf	1	0	0	0	1	0	.250
Correa ss	6	3	5	1	0	0	.290
Lewis dh	5	3	3	2	0	0	.367
Miranda 3b	5	1	2	2	0	0	.273
Buxton cf	4	1	1	0	1	0	.230
Santana 1b	5	2	3	4	0	0	.230
Farmer 2b	5	1	3	2	0	1	.192
Castro lf	5	2	3	1	1	0	.260
Vazquez c	5	1	2	2	0	0	.189
Totals	44	17	24	17	2	4	

a-struck out for Margot in 8th. b-struck out for McMahon in 9th. c-singled for Tovar in 9th. d-struck out for Doyle in 9th. **E:** Amador, Vazquez, Correa. **2B:** Blackmon (14), Tovar (21), McMahon (13), Stallings (2) (6), Cave (3), Margot (6), Lewis (2), Miranda (2) (12), Santana (9), Vazquez (2) (5). **HR:** McMahon (12), Lewis (5), Castro (5). **RBI:** Doyle (2) (19), Tovar (32), McMahon (36), Stallings (2) (17), Cave (7), Margot (13), Kepler (23), Correa (28), Lewis (2) (8), Miranda (2) (23), Buxton (19), Santana (4) (33), Farmer (2) (12), Castro (18), Vazquez (2) (11). **CS:** Farmer (3). **SB:** Doyle (18), Margot (4). **SF:** Tovar, Kepler. **Runners left in scoring position:** Colorado 5 (Blackmon, Stallings, Toglia, Montero, Amador), Minnesota 4 (Correa, Miranda, Buxton, Vazquez). **RISP:** Colorado 2 for 12, Minnesota 11 for 17. **GIDP:** Amador, Lewis. **DP:** Colorado 1, Minnesota 1.

Colorado	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Gomber L, 1-4	3.0	11	8	8	1	2	72	4.26
Molina	2.0	2	0	0	0	26	6.93	
Chivilli	1.0	2	2	2	0	0	15	10.38
Hartlieb	1.0	2	0	0	0	14	3.00	
Mears	0.1	4	5	5	1	128	7.31	
Rogers	0.2	3	2	2	0	19	6.93	
Minnesota	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Lopez W, 6-6	5.0	5	2	2	0	5	91	5.33
Alcala	1.0	1	1	1	0	0	10	2.25
Okert	1.0	3	2	2	0	18	3.27	
Thielbar	0.0	1	3	1	2	0	22	8.04
Duran H, 4	1.0	0	0	0	1	16	4.08	
Jackson	1.0	2	1	1	0	32	6.94	

Gomber pitched to 3 batters in the 4th. Thielbar pitched to 4 batters in the 8th. **Inherited runners:** Molina 1-0, Rogers 2-0, Duran 2-1. **Umpires:** HP-Jimenez, 1B-Ortiz, 2B-Marquez, 3B-Barrett. T: 3:08. A: 18,875 (38,544).

Milwaukee 5, Toronto 4							
TOR.....	100	000	00x	-	4	7	1
MIL.....	000	005	00x	-	5	11	0
Toronto	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Horwitz 1b	4	1	2	1	0	1	.389
Schneider lf	4	2	2	1	0	1	.229
Bichette ss	4	0	1	1	0	0	.240
Vogelbach dh	1	0	0	0	1	0	.186
c-Jansen ph-dh	1	0	0	0	1	0	.262
Springer lf	4	0	0	0	2	1	.198
Kirk c	3	0	0	1	0	1	.211
Varsho cf	2	0	0	0	2	2	.217
a-Turner ph	1	0	0	0	0	2	.232
Kiermaier cf	0	0	0	0	0	200	
b-Guerrero Jr, ph	1	0	0	0	0	.281	
Kiner-Falefa 2b	3	0	0	0	1	0	.266
Clement 3b	3	1	2	0	0	0	.243
Totals	31	4	7	4	2	8	
Milwaukee	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Turung 2b	5	1	1	0	0	0	.294
Contreras c	5	1	1	1	0	1	.305
Yelich dh	4	1	3	1	1	1	.325
Adames ss	4	1	1	2	1	0	.246
Felix rf	3	0	2	0	1	1	.259
Baers 1b	4	0	1	0	1	0	.209
Chourio lf	4	0	2	0	1	2	.222
Dunn 3b	2	0	0	0	1	1	.221
Perkins cf	3	1	0	0	1	2	.255
Totals	34	5	11	4	5	8	

a-lined out for Varsho in 8th. b-lined out for Kiermaier in 9th. c-popped out for Vogelbach in 7th. **E:** Kirk. **2B:** Clement (6). **HR:** Schneider (8), Adames (11). **RBI:** Horwitz (2), Schneider (32), Bichette (28), Kirk (16), Contreras (47), Yelich (30), Adames (2) (47). **SB:** Turung (24), Contreras (5), Yelich (12), Perkins (8). **SF:** Kirk. **S:** Dunn. **Runners left in scoring position:** Toronto 1 (Guerrero Jr.), Milwaukee 6 (Turung 3, Baers 3). **RISP:** Toronto 2 for 4, Milwaukee 2 for 8. **GIDP:** Springer. **DP:** Milwaukee 1.

Toronto	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Bassitt	5.0	5	0	0	4	5100	3.56	
Pop L, 0-1 BS, 1	0.2	2	3	3	1	0	13	5.40
Mayza	0.1	3	2	2	0	18	4.45	
Richards	1.0	0	0	0	0	36	3.31	
Little	1.0	1	0	0	0	8	6.48	
Milwaukee	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Myers W, 3-2	6.0	3	1	1	1	4	666	3.76
Hudson	1.0	0	0	0	0	14	1.00	
Miller	0.1	3	3	3	2	18	4.45	
Megill S, 11	1.0	1	0	0	1	115	1.89	

Milner pitched to 3 batters in the 9th.

Inherited runners: Maya 1-0, Megill 2-0.

WP: Megill. **Umpires:** HP-Valentine, 1B-De Jesus, 2B-Johnson, 3B-Wolcott. T: 2:37. A: 30 444 (41 700).

Milner pitched to 3 batters in the 9th. **Inherited runners:** Mayza 1-0, Megill 2-0. **WP:** Megill. **Umpires:** HP-Valentine, 1B-De Jesus, 2B-Johnson, 3B-Wolcott. T: 2:37. A: 30,444 (41,700).

	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
San Francisco	5	1	3	2	1	0	.212
Slater lf	4	0	0	1	0	1	.305
Ramos cf	3	0	0	1	1	1	.236
Flores 1b	3	0	0	1	1	1	.236
Chapman 3b	4	0	1	1	1	0	.279
Bailey c	4	0	1	0	1	0	.217
Soler dh	2	1	2	0	2	0	.317
Wissly ss	4	1	2	0	1	0	.235
Estrada 2b	4	0	0	0	1	0	.216
Yastrzemski rf	2	2	2	1	0	1	.235
Totals	32	5	10	5	3	7	

E. Bregman. **2B:** Alvarez (16), Chapman (18), Wisely (3). **HR:** Alvarez (14). **RBIs:** Alvarez 2 (35), Pena (26), Slater (2). **4:** Ramos (24), Flores (22), Chapman (29). **SB:** Slater (2). **5F:** Ramos, Flores. **Runners left in scoring position:** Houston 1 (Caratini), San Francisco 5 (Flores 2, Bailey, Estrada 2). **RISP:** Houston 1 for 3, San Francisco 2 for 10. **GIDP:** Alvarez, Abreu, Estrada. **DP:** Houston 1, San Francisco 2.

E: Bregman. **2B:** Alvarez (16), Chapman (18), Wisely (3). **HR:** Alvarez (14). **RBI:** Alvarez (2) (35), Pena (26), Slater (2) (4), Ramos (24), Flores (22), Chapman (29). **SB:** Slater (2). **SF:** Ramos, Flores. **Runners left in scoring position:** Houston 1 (Caratini), San Francisco 5 (Flores 2, Bailey, Estrada 2). **RISP:** Houston 1 for 3, San Francisco 2 for 10. **GIDP:** Alvarez, Abreu, Estrada. **DP:** Houston 1, San Francisco 2.

Houston	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Valdez L, 5-4	4.0	8	5	5	1	1	59	3.99
Martinez	2.0	1	0	0	1	1	36	1.98
Dubil	1.0	1	0	0	1	5	37	5.00
San Francisco	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Webb W, 6-5	6.0	7	3	3	0	5	83	3.02
Walker H, 13	1.0	1	0	0	0	0	7	2.55
Rogers H, 12	1.0	1	0	0	0	10	245	
Doval S, 12	1.0	0	0	0	0	1	9	3.62

HBP: Yastrzemski. **Balk:** Martinez (2). **Umpires:** HP-Hoye, 1B-Drake, 2B-Reyburn, 3B-Lipke. T: 2:07. A: 34,506 (41,331).

Oakland	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	NP	ERA
OAK.....	000	003	010	-	4	10	1	
SD.....	010	010	021	-	5	6	0	
Oakland	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Toro 3b	5	0	0	0	0	2		.263
Bleday dh	4	1	2	0	1	2		.242
Andujar lf	5	1	2	0	1	0		.323
Soderstrom 1b	4	1	1	1	1	2		.242
Langeliers c	4	0	0	0	1	0		.202
Brown rf	3	1	1	1	1	2		.195
Cameron cf	3	0	0	0	1	1		.184
Gelof 2b	4	0	2	1	0	2		.194
Schuemann ss	4	0	0	0	4	0		.246
Totals	37	4	10	4	4	18		
San Diego	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Ariague 1b	4	0	1	0	0	0		.326
Tatis Jr, rf	0	3	1	0	0	1		.280
Machado dh	4	0	0	0	0	0		.252
Solano 3b	4	2	2	3	0	2		.313
Cronenworth 2b	3	0	0	0	0			.263
Kim ss	4	0	0	0	0			.222
Merrill cf	4	2	2	2	0			.279
Campano c	3	0	0	0	0			.231
Azocar lf	2	0	0	0	1			.217
a-Higashioka ph	1	0	0	0	0			.185
Peralta lf	0	0	0	0	0			.242
Totals	32	5	6	5	2	10		

a-was announced for Azocar in 7th. **E:** Toro. **2B:** Gelof (7). **HR:** Solano (2), Merrill (2) (5). **RBI:** Soderstrom (9), Langeliers (31), Brown (14), Gelof (14), Solano (3) (10), Merrill (2) (26). **Runners left in scoring position:** Oakland 5 (Toro 3, Langeliers, Gelof), San Diego 1 (Campano). **RISP:** Oakland 3 for 14.

Oakland	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
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The Padres's Jackson Merrill gets doused after hitting a walk-off home run against the Oakland Athletics on Wednesday at Petco Park in San Diego. ORLANDO RAMIREZ/USA TODAY SPORTS

Harris	5.0	4	2	2	1	5	83	2.49
Jimenez H, 3	1.1	0	0	0	0	3	23	3.05
McFarland H, 8	1.0	0	0	0	0	1	12	3.67
Erceg BS, 3	0.2	1	2	2	1	1	15	3.57
Miller	0.1	1	1	1	0	0	7	2.40

King pitched to 2 batters in the 6th. Peralta pitched to 4 batters in the 6th. **Inherited runners:** Peralta 2-0, Kolek 3-3. **WP:** Matsui. **Umpires:** HP-Hanahan, 1B-Lentz, 2B-Barksdale, 3B-Ripperger. A: 35,688.

Baltimore 4, Atlanta 2							
ATL.....	000	000	020	-	2	7	1
BAL.....	002	000	02x	-	4	9	1
Atlanta	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Harris lf	4	0	1	0	1	2	.248
Albies 2b	4	1	1	0	0	0	.259
Ozuna dh	4	0	2	0	2	0	.230
Olson 1b	3	1	2	2	0	0	.246
Riley 3b	4	0	1	0	1	0	.225
Duvall lf	4	0	0	0	0	.169	
Murphy c	4	0	0	0	1	.119	
Anderson rf	2	0	0	0	2	.000	
a-Kelenic ph-rf	2	0	0	0	2	.258	
Arcia ss	4	0	0	0	0	.228	
Totals	35	2	7	2	0	8	
Baltimore	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.
Henderson ss	4	0	1	0	0	0	.273
Rutschman c	3	0	0	0	1	2	.298
Mountcastle 1b	3	1	1	0	1	0	.277
O'Hearn rf	3	0	0	0	0	.282	
Cowser rf	1	1	2	0	0	.234	
Santander dh	1	0	1	0	3	.225	
Hays lf	4	0	1	0	1	.235	
Urias 3b	4	0	1	0	0	.231	
Ulinas cf	3	1	2	0	0	.182	
Mateo 2b	3	1	1	0	1	.2	
Totals	32	4	9	4	2	6	

GOLFTHISWEEK

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PGA TOUR

Can anyone stop Scheffler?

It's almost time for the 2024 U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2 — the third men's major championship of the year — and the best players in the world are getting in their final practice rounds before it gets real Thursday morning. World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler — fresh off a win at the Memorial Tournament — is the overwhelming betting favorite to hoist the hardware in North Carolina. In majors this season, Scheffler slipped on the green jacket once again back in April, and the only thing that stopped him at Valhalla was an early-morning arrest. PGA Championship winner Xander Schauffele hasn't finished outside the top 10 in his last five U.S. Open appearances and comes in as the second betting favorite, followed by Rory McIlroy — runner-up to Wyndham Clark at Los Angeles Country Club in 2023.

Who to watch

Rory McIlroy: We refuse to miss out on Rory's fifth major title, so he's going back on the card. Despite his C game, McIlroy grabbed a share of 15th last week at Jack's Place. He's played well in the U.S. Open since missing the cut at Shinnecock in 2018: T-9 (2019, Pebble Beach), T-8 (2020, Winged Foot), T-7 (2021, Torrey Pines), T-5 (2022, The Country Club) and 2nd (2023, Los Angeles Country Club). Pinehurst No. 2 is for the bombers, and not many players on Earth can do that better than the Northern Irishman. To win, he has to clean up the iron play.

Ludvig Aberg: The Swede superstar is always in the mix. Since tying for 25th at the Arnold Palmer Invitational, Aberg has finished 8th, T-14, 2nd (Masters), T-10, MC (PGA Championship) and T-5 in his last six starts. Aberg is ranked 12th on Tour in Strokes Gained: Tee to Green and third in Total Driving, two stats that will come in handy around Pinehurst No. 2. It's a question of when, not if, Aberg will win a major championship.

Tommy Fleetwood: He has played some great golf since the start of April. He tied for seventh at the Valero Texas Open and third at the Masters, and has finished T-26 or better in his last four starts. The Englishman has shown he's never out of a tournament throughout his U.S. Open career.

Will Zalatoris: Zalatoris thrives on tough golf courses. For example: T-2 at the Genesis, T-4 at the Arnold Palmer and T-9 at the Masters.

— Riley Hamel

LPGA TOUR

Hataoka could miss out on Olympics

Nasa Hataoka's gut-wrenching disqualification from the ShopRite LPGA Classic didn't just cost her a paycheck and chance at a title. It could cost the Japanese star a spot in the Paris Olympics, too.

The ordeal began on during the first round on Friday, when Hataoka arrived at her final hole of the day, the par-5 ninth, at 6 under. After hitting her second shot into the tall fescue right of the green, at least a dozen people got involved in the search for Hataoka's ball.

Eventually, Hataoka later noted, it was a cameraman who found the ball, and she called over a rules official to go about taking an unplayable lie.

Golf Channel's Tom Abbott, who was involved in the search, noted his concerns on air about the search having potentially taken more than three minutes, which is the maximum amount of time players can spend looking for their ball, according to Rule 18.2. Hataoka proceeded to get up and down for par, draining a 15-footer for 65 over the Bay Course at Seaview Resort. It wasn't until the next day that Hataoka was informed that she'd been disqualified from the ShopRite after LPGA officials reviewed videotape footage.

Because Hataoka's ball was deemed lost after three minutes expired, she played her fourth shot from the wrong place (near the green). Hataoka should've instead gone back to where she hit her second shot. It is unclear why a rules official monitoring the broadcast in real-time didn't step in.

— Beth Ann Nichols



Nasa Hataoka hits a tee shot during the U.S. Women's Open golf tournament.

JOHN JONES/USA TODAY SPORTS

COLLEGE

Golfweek players of the year

The 2023-24 college golf season is complete, which means it's time to continue handing out post-season awards.

A pair of veteran teams took home the trophies from Omni La Costa in Carlsbad, California, where the championships were contested for a first time of a three-year deal.

However, when it comes to the Player of the Year conversation, there are two who played their way to the top, and they've been selected as the Golfweek 2024 Players of the Year.

Golfweek selects men's and women's All-America teams and honorable mention selections, as well as Players of the Year and Coaches of the Year.

Here's a look at Golfweek's 2024 Players of the Year.

Women's Player of the Year: Ingrid Lindblad, LSU. No surprise here. Ingrid Lindblad capped her college career in spectacular fashion, finishing with four victories as a fifth-year. She won 15 times individually in her five college years at LSU, an SEC record, topping the old mark of 13 set by Stacy Lewis (2005-08). She was also named winner of the 2024 Annika Award and helped the Tigers reach match play at the NCAA Championship for the first time in school history.

Men's Player of the Year: Jackson Koivun, Auburn. The stellar freshman had a season for the ages. He's likely to sweep all the major awards after already corralling the Haskins and Hogan (Nicklaus and Mickelson to come) and guided the Tigers to their first NCAA Championship. What more can you ask of a freshman?

— Cameron Jourdan



Tiger Woods plays his shot from the seventh fairway during a practice round for the U.S. Open on Tuesday at Pinehurst No. 2. KATIE GOODALE/USA TODAY SPORTS

US Open

Continued from Page 1

Tiger Woods last won the U.S. Open in 2008 at Torrey Pines in California. Just contending this week would be a significant step considering he hasn't played in the tournament since 2020.

"I feel like I have the strength to be able to do it," Woods said. "It's just a matter of doing it."

In two previous U.S. Open outings in Pinehurst, Woods tied for third place in 1999 and was the runner-up in 2005.

This is the fourth time the U.S. Open will be contested in Pinehurst. After Payne Stewart's memorable victory in 1999, international golfers have won — New Zealand's Michael Campbell in 2005 and Germany's Martin Kaymer in 2014.

A repeat won't come easy for Kaymer.

"I feel like this week is quite difficult to get it in that circle around the hole, that 8- to 10-foot circle," Kaymer said. "That was the key, I think, to my success."

Kaymer will tee off at 1:47 p.m. Thursday — or more than seven hours after the day's first group.

The greens could be getting as much attention as any of the golfers in the early rounds.

"If they get any firmer and faster, the greens, they'd be borderline," Clark said. "They already are borderline."

Woods said the course setup, not to mention the switch from bentgrass to Bermuda greens in advance of the 2014 tournament, makes Pinehurst No. 2 a different type of challenge. He hadn't been on the grounds since 2005.

"The grain is going to play a big part of it," Woods said. "The last few days playing practice rounds, we've putted off a lot of greens. It depends how severe the USGA wants to make this and how close they want to get us up to those sides."

Bryson DeChambeau, the 2020 U.S. Open winner, will be playing Pinehurst No. 2 for the first time as a professional. So that might mean a more conservative and calculated approach for one of golf's big hitters.

"Pinehurst is no joke," DeChambeau said. "It's a lot of boring golf, but I'll try to do my best to show the crowd some fun drives and some hopefully long made putts."

This week's tournament means plenty to the entrants, particularly North Carolinians such as Simpson. He needed to advance through a qualifier last week to make the field this time.

"This is a golf course that I feel like I know really well," Simpson said. "I feel comfortable on it. I just didn't want to miss the U.S. Open in my backyard."

The tournament will be without Spain's Jon Rahm, who withdrew Tuesday. The tournament's 2021 champion was in Pinehurst before concluding that a foot/toe ailment was too severe to allow him to compete.

USGA CEO: LIV pathway into US Open 'feasible'

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

USGA CEO Mike Whan can envision a future when LIV Golf players have a pathway to entry into the U.S. Open, but he also doesn't view it as a pressing need.

A dozen LIV golfers will tee it up at Pinehurst No. 2 this week, and it was set to be 13 before Jon Rahm had to withdraw due to a foot injury.

Five earned automatic spots as former U.S. Open champions, two more were exempt for having won a major in the previous five years, and two others are in the field via other exemptions. The remaining four went through various qualifiers to play their way into the field.

That last quartet is why Whan doesn't see a critical need to provide a pathway for LIV players to earn exemptions through their performance in the Saudi-backed league.

"First, let's start with the obvious. About half this field is filled open, and I think we had 35 players from LIV that were exempted right into final qualifying," Whan said during the USGA press conference in Pinehurst, N.C., on Wednesday. "So, if they really wanted to be here, they could go play 36 holes and qualify. And some did, to their credit."

That would include Dean Burmester, Eugenio Chacarra, Sergio Garcia and David Puig.

The ongoing discussions between PGA Tour Enterprises and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund that provides the financial backing for LIV Golf has been front and center leading up to yet another major this week. Whan said that while a future pathway for players into the U.S. Open via their performance for LIV is "feasible," the USGA is taking a wait-and-see approach while the negotiations play out.

"We've always felt like for the last maybe year and a half that we're always three months away from kind of understanding what the new structure is going to look like," Whan said. "So before we kind of react, what is LIV going to be, what's the PGA Tour? So, we always



USGA CEO Mike Whan addresses the media during a news conference on Wednesday in Pinehurst, N.C.

JOHN DAVID MERCER/USA TODAY SPORTS

kind of felt like we're just about to know that answer, so let's figure that out.

"I think the reason we're being more vocal about looking at that for next year is maybe this is the new world order, and if that's the case, we wanted to take a look at that."

The topic of a pathway to the U.S. Open continues to simmer as LIV players tumble down the Official World Golf Ranking. With LIV events not qualifying for OWGR points, the league's highest-ranked player in this week's field after Rahm's withdrawal is Tyrrell Hatton at No. 20.

Both Rahm and Hatton joined LIV Golf in December, so their OWGR will continue to tumble. Bryson DeChambeau, one of the league's first signings, is at No. 38 thanks to a pair of top-10 finishes in the year's first two majors. But other former major champions such as Cameron Smith (No. 72), Patrick Reed (74) and Dustin Johnson (374) have continued their freefall.

As the current state of professional golf stands, more and more LIV players will need to go through qualifying to play their way into future U.S. Opens.

"We're not a closed door," Whan said. "If you want to be here — you've got to want to be here, but if you want to be here, there's certainly a way to get here."

TENNIS ROUNDUP

Defending champ Tiafoe reaches Stuttgart quarters

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Defending champion Frances Tiafoe moved to the quarterfinals of the Boss Open at Stuttgart, Germany, on Wednesday with a 7-5, 7-6 (5) win against Yannick Hanfmann of Germany.

Tiafoe, the fourth seed, needed one hour and 55 minutes to win the match, in which he saved all 11 break points on the grass courts.

In the quarterfinals, he'll take on sixth-seeded Jack Draper of Great Britain, a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 winner over Marcos Giron.

Another quarterfinal will feature fifth-seeded Lorenzo Musetti of Italy, who rallied from a set down to defeat German Dominik Koepfer 6-7 (9), 7-6 (5), 6-3, against Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan, the third seed. Bublik fired 18 aces on his way to beating Hamad Medjedovic 6-1, 7-6 (4) of Serbia.

Libema Open

No. 3 seed Ugo Humbert of France topped compatriot Arthur Fils 6-3, 7-6 (1) to move to the quarterfinal at 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

Fellow Frenchman Adrian Mannarino fell to Gijs Brouwer on the Netherlands, making him the second Dutchman to advance to the quarters. Joining him is sixth-seeded Tallon Griekspoor, who defeated Mackenzie McDonald 6-3, 7-6 (5).

The match between Russian Karen Khachanov, the fourth seed, and Aleksandar Vukic of Australia was suspended because of darkness. They were tied at one set each entering the third set.

Osaka reaches Dutch quarterfinals

Japan's Naomi Osaka will meet Canada's Bianca Andreescu in the Libema Open quarterfinals in the Netherlands.

Osaka defeated Dutch hopeful Suzan Lamens 6-2, 6-2 and Andreescu ousted No. 6 seed Yue Yuan of China 6-4, 6-4 in second-round action in 's-Hertogenbosch.



Katie Boulter plays against Rebecca Marino in a Round of 16 match at the Rothsay Open on Wednesday.

ANDREW BOYERS/ACTION IMAGES VIA REUTERS

Osaka needed just 54 minutes to reach her first grass-court semifinal since 2018. She fired nine aces and never faced a break point.

Andreescu saved five of six break points against Yuan and weathered a rain delay to win in 1 hour and 21 minutes.

Also Wednesday, No. 2 seed Liudmila Samsonova of Russia beat Belgium's Alison Van Uytvanck 6-1, 6-3. Belgium's Greet Minnen eliminated No. 7 Donna Vekic of Croatia 6-1, 0-6, 7-5, and No. 5 Veronika Kudermetova of Russia defeated China's Zhuoxuan Bai 7-5, 6-1.

Rothsay Open

No. 3 seed Katie Boulter of Great Britain moved into the quarterfinals in Nottingham, England, with a 6-4, 6-3 win against Canada's Rebecca Marino.

Boulter converted four of her five break chances while taking advantage of seven double faults by Marino.

Sixth-seeded Karolina Pliskova eliminated the United Kingdom's Heather Watson 6-4, 6-4. Australia's Kimberly Birrell was a 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-0 winner against Italy's Lucrezia Stefanini. France's Diane Parry defeated Australia's Daria Saville 6-4, 6-1.

SOCCER USMNT 1, BRAZIL 1



U.S. midfielder Christian Pulisic (10) celebrates after scoring a goal against Brazil on Wednesday in Orlando.

NATHAN RAY SEEBECK/USA TODAY SPORTS

Pulisic's 1st-half goal lifts US to draw against Brazil

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Christian Pulisic scored and Matt Turner made 11 saves as the U.S. men's national team rebounded for its first-ever draw against Brazil, 1-1 in Orlando on Wednesday in the final tune-up before Copa America.

Rodrygo scored in the 17th minute before Pulisic equalized in the 26th.

Allison made six saves for Brazil.

Brazil owns a 18-1-1 record vs. the U.S. with its only loss coming on Feb. 10, 1998. The Americans' 12-match winless streak in the series is the squad's current longest drought against any opponent.

Despite the draw, the result and the performance were both positive for the U.S. team after it was humbled 5-1 by Colombia on Saturday in Landover, Md.

The United States begins Copa America Group C play against Bolivia on June 23 in Arlington, Texas.

There were numerous chances in the second half beginning with Brazilian 17-year-old Endrick in the 70th minute testing Turner five minutes after entering the match. Weston McKennie led the counter and fed Pulisic for a left-

footed shot that Allison deflected away with an extended left arm.

Turner was equally strong in the 74th minute, making a save with hi left hand on an angled shot by Rodrygo.

Allison kept the match even with an outstanding point-blank stop of an attempt by Brenden Aaronson in 83rd minute.

A frenetic start led to Brazil's gifted opening goal. A goal kick by Turner was intercepted by Raphinha, catching the U.S. out of position. Raphinha passed to Rodrygo on the left side of the box, and Turner got his left arm on Rodrygo's shot but was unable to stop it.

It was a similar outcome to the numerous unforced errors against Colombia.

Pulisic responded with his 29th career international goal. He drew a free kick after being fouled a yard outside the penalty area by Joao Gomes. Pulisic ripped a low drive between the wall to the left corner of the net.

The U.S. showed its intent from the start when Yunus Musah rocketed a shot off the crossbar, the ball ricocheting off the back of Allison but somehow staying out of the goal.

SCOREBOARD



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MLB

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
N.Y. Yankees	49	21	.700	—
Baltimore	45	22	.672	2½
Boston	34	34	.500	14
Toronto	33	35	.485	15
Tampa Bay	32	36	.471	16
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	43	23	.652	—
Kansas City	39	30	.565	½
Minnesota	36	32	.529	8
Detroit	32	35	.478	11½
Chicago	17	52	.246	27½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	40	30	.571	—
Texas	32	35	.478	6½
Houston	31	38	.449	8½

L.A. Angels	26	41	.388	12½
Oakland	26	44	.371	14

National League

East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	46	21	.687	—
Atlanta	35	30	.538	10
Washington	32	35	.478	14
N.Y. Mets	29	37	.439	16½
Miami	23	44	.343	23
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	40	28	.588	—
Cincinnati	33	35	.485	7
Chicago	33	35	.485	7
St. Louis	32	34	.485	7
Pittsburgh	32	35	.478	7½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	42	27	.609	—
San Diego	37	35	.514	6½
San Francisco	34	35	.493	8
Arizona	32	36	.471	9½
Colorado	24	44	.353	17½

Wednesday's Scores

Minnesota 17, Colorado 9
Milwaukee 5, Toronto 4
San Francisco 5, Houston 3
San Diego 5, Oakland 4
Baltimore 4, Atlanta 2
Washington 7, Detroit 5
Chicago Cubs 4, Tampa Bay 3
Boston 8, Philadelphia 6
Cincinnati 4, Cleveland 2
N.Y. Mets 10, Miami 4
St. Louis 4, Pittsburgh 2
N.Y. Yankees 11, Kansas City 5
L.A. Angels 8, Arizona 3
Seattle 2, Chicago White Sox 1
Texas 3, L.A. Dodgers 2

Thursday's Games

Atlanta (Lopez 3-2) at Baltimore (Irvin 6-2), 1:05 p.m.
Washington (Gore 5-5) at Detroit (Mize 1-4), 1:10 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees (Cortes 3-5) at Kansas City (Marsh 5-3), 2:10 p.m.
Pittsburgh (Keller 8-3) at St. Louis (Lynn 2-3), 2:15 p.m.
Chicago Cubs (Steele 0-3) at Tampa Bay (Bradley 1-4), 2:20 p.m.
Philadelphia (Nola 8-2) at Boston (Houck 6-5), 7:10 p.m.
Miami (TBD) at N.Y. Mets (Severino 4-2), 7:10 p.m.
Oakland (Medina 0-1) at Minnesota (Ryan 4-5), 7:40 p.m.
L.A. Angels (Canning 2-6) at Arizona (Pfaadt 5-5), 9:40 p.m.
Chicago White Sox (TBD) at Seattle (Castillo 5-7), 9:40 p.m.
Texas (Lorenzen 3-3) at L.A. Dodgers (Yamamoto 6-2), 10:10 p.m.

Friday's Games

St. Louis (Gibson 4-2) at Chicago Cubs (TBD), 2:20 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees (Gil 8-1) at Boston (Criswell 3-3), 6:30 p.m.
Miami (TBD) at Washington (Gore 5-5), 6:45 p.m.
Philadelphia (Suarez 10-1) at Baltimore (Bradish 2-0), 7:05 p.m.
Pittsburgh (Allen 6-3) at Toronto (Gausman 5-4), 7:07 p.m.
San Diego (Waldron 4-5) at N.Y. Mets (Manaea 3-3), 7:10 p.m.
Tampa Bay (Littell 2-4) at Atlanta (Sale 8-2), 7:20 p.m.
Detroit (Skubal 8-1) at Houston (Brown 2-5), 8:10 p.m.
Oakland (Spence 4-3) at Minnesota (Woods Richardson 2-1), 8:10 p.m.
Cincinnati (Greene 4-2) at Milwaukee (Peralta 4-3), 8:10 p.m.
Pittsburgh (TBD) at Colorado (Feltner 1-5), 8:40 p.m.
Chicago White Sox (Flexen 2-5) at Arizona (Nelson 3-5), 9:40 p.m.
Kansas City (Ragans 4-4) at L.A. Dodgers (Stone 7-2), 10:10 p.m.
Texas (Heaney 2-7) at Seattle (Kirby 5-5), 10:10 p.m.
L.A. Angels (Anderson 5-6) at San

Francisco (TBD), 10:15 p.m.

Leaders

American League
Batting Average — Witt Jr., Kansas City .321; Soto, New York .316; Judge, New York .309; Rutschman, Baltimore .301; Perez, Kansas City .296; Altuve, Houston .295; Pena, Houston .292; Alvarez, Houston .290; Paredes, Tampa Bay .287; Smith, Texas .286.
Home Runs — Judge, New York 25; Henderson, Baltimore 21; Tucker, Houston 19; Ramirez, Cleveland 18; Naylor, Cleveland 17; Soto, New York 17; Stanton, New York 16; Santander, Baltimore 14; Seager, Texas 13; Devers, Boston 13.

RBI — Judge, New York 62; Ramirez, Cleveland 62; Soto, New York 53; Naylor, Cleveland 50; Rutschman, Baltimore 49; Witt Jr., Kansas City 48; Henderson, Baltimore 46; Pasquantino, Kansas City 43; Perez, Kansas City 42; Raleigh, Seattle 42.
Stolen Bases — Caballero, Tampa Bay 22; Witt Jr., Kansas City 19; Renfijo, Los Angeles 17; Garcia, Kansas City 16; Rodriguez, Seattle 16; Duran, Boston 15; Blanco, Kansas City 14; Mullins, Baltimore 13; Hamilton, Boston 13; Volpe, New York 12.

Wins — Rodon, New York 9; Lugo, Kansas City 9; Gil, New York 8; Skubal, Detroit 8; Burnes, Baltimore 7; Rodriguez, Baltimore 7; Stroman, New York 6; Lively, Cleveland 6; Bassitt, Toronto 6; Irvin, Baltimore 6.
ERA — Houck, Boston 1.91; Skubal, Detroit 1.92; Gil, New York 2.04; Burnes, Baltimore 2.08; Lugo, Kansas City 2.36; Anderson, Los Angeles 2.63; Blanco, Houston 2.67; Stroman, New York 2.82; Rodon, New York 2.93; Berrios, Toronto 2.93.

Strikeouts — Crochet, Chicago 103; Ragans, Kansas City 98; Skubal, Detroit 96; Flaherty, Detroit 94; Gil, New York 90; Castillo, Seattle 85; Ryan, Seattle 85; Houck, Boston 84; Gilbert, Seattle 84; Burnes, Baltimore 82.

Saves — Clase, Cleveland 20; Holmes, New York 19; Kimbrel, Baltimore 15; Foley, Detroit 12; Munoz, Seattle 12; McArthur, Kansas City 12; Miller, Oakland 12; Estevez, Los Angeles 10; Duran, Minnesota 10; Jansen, Boston 9.

National League
Batting Average — Arraez, San Diego .327; Profar, San Diego .324; Ozuna, Atlanta .316; Ohtani, Los Angeles .312; Betts, Los Angeles .309; Contreras, Milwaukee .307; Winn, St. Louis .305; Diaz, Colorado .303; Freeman, Los Angeles .297; Smith, Los Angeles .296.

Home Runs — Ozuna, Atlanta 18; Hernandez, Los Angeles 17; Ohtani, Los Angeles 16; Harper, Philadelphia 15; Gorman, St. Louis 15; Alonso, New York 14; Marte, Arizona 13; Schwarber, Philadelphia 13; Tatis Jr., San Diego 13; Morel, Chicago 13.

RBI — Ozuna, Atlanta 55; Bohm, Philadelphia 51; Hernandez, Los Angeles 50; Contreras, Milwaukee 46; Harper, Philadelphia 45; Profar, San Diego 45; Adames, Milwaukee 45; Cronenworth, San Diego 45; Ohtani, Los Angeles 43; Smith, Los Angeles 42.

Stolen Bases — De La Cruz, Cincinnati 34; Turrar, Milwaukee 23; Stott, Philadelphia 18; Doyle, Colorado 17; Young, Washington 17; Acuna Jr., Atlanta 16; Ohtani, Los Angeles 15; Thomas, Washington 15; Kim, San Diego 14; Rojas, Philadelphia 14.

Wins — Suarez, Philadelphia 10; Sale, Atlanta 8; Wheeler, Philadelphia 8; Nola, Philadelphia 8; Keller, Pittsburgh 8; Gray, St. Louis 7; Stone, Los Angeles 7; Paxton, Los Angeles 6; Neris, Chicago 6; Glasnow, Los Angeles 6.

ERA — Suarez, Philadelphia 1.81; Imanaga, Chicago 1.96; Wheeler, Philadelphia 2.16; Sanchez, Philadelphia 2.71; Assad, Chicago 2.74; Nola, Philadelphia 2.77;

Webb, San Francisco 2.92; Yamamoto, Los Angeles 3.00; Sale, Atlanta 3.01; Hicks, San Francisco 3.01.

Strikeouts — Glasnow, Los Angeles 116; Cease, San Diego 101; Wheeler, Philadelphia 95; Sale, Atlanta 92; Peralta, Milwaukee 92; Suarez, Philadelphia 85; Greene, Cincinnati 84; King, San Diego 83; Yamamoto, Los Angeles 83; Gray, St. Louis 82.
Saves — Helsley, St. Louis 21; Finnegan, Washington 18; Suarez, San Diego 17; Iglesias, Atlanta 16; Bednar, Pittsburgh 14; Diaz, Cincinnati 13; Alvarado, Philadelphia 12; Doval, San Francisco 11; Megill, Milwaukee 10; Neris, Chicago 9.

NBA

FINALS

(Best-of-7; x: if necessary)
No. 1 Boston Celtics 3, No. 5 Dallas Mavericks 0
Thursday: Celtics 107, Mavericks 89
Sunday: Celtics 105, Mavericks 98
Wednesday: Celtics 106, Mavericks 99
Friday: Celtics at Mavericks, 8:30 p.m.
x-Monday: Mavericks at Celtics, 8:30 p.m.
x-June 20: Celtics at Mavericks, 8:30 p.m.
x-June 23: Mavericks at Celtics, 8 p.m.

NHL

STANLEY CUP FINAL
(Best-of-7; x: if necessary)
Florida Panthers 2, Edmonton Oilers 0
Saturday: Panthers 3, Oilers 0
Monday: Panthers 4, Oilers 1
Thursday: Panthers at Oilers, 8 p.m.
Saturday: Panthers at Oilers, 8 p.m.
x-June 18: Oilers at Panthers, 8 p.m.
x-June 21: Panthers at Oilers, 8 p.m.
x-June 24: Oilers at Panthers, 8 p.m.

WNBA

Eastern Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Connecticut	11	1	.917	—
N.Y. Liberty	11	2	.846	½
Atlanta	5	5	.500	5
Chicago	4	7	.364	6½
Indiana	3	10	.231	8½
Washington	1	12	.077	10½

Western Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	9	3	.750	—
Seattle	8	4	.667	1
Phoenix	6	6	.500	3
Las Vegas	5	5	.500	3
L.A. Sparks	4	8	.333	5
Dallas	3	7	.300	5

Tuesday, June 11
Washington 87, Atlanta 68
Minnesota 100, Las Vegas 86
Seattle 95, L.A. Sparks 79

Wednesday, June 12
Connecticut 83, Chicago 75

Thursday, June 13
Atlanta at Indiana, 7 p.m.
Seattle at Dallas, 7 p.m.
Las Vegas at Phoenix, 10 p.m.

Friday, June 14
Chicago at Washington, 7:30 p.m.
L.A. Sparks at Minnesota, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 15
Connecticut at Dallas, 1 p.m.
N.Y. Liberty at Las Vegas, 3 p.m.

MLS

Eastern Conference				
	W	L	T	PTS
Inter Miami CF	10	3	5	35
Cincinnati	10	3	3	33
N.Y. City FC	9	5	2	29
N.Y. Red Bulls	8	4	5	29
Charlotte FC	7	6	4	25
Toronto FC	7	7	3	24
Columbus	6	2	6	24
Philadelphia	4	8	2	20
Nashville	4	5	7	20

D.C. United	4	6	7	19	25	31
Orlando City	4	7	5	17	16	24
CF Montreal	4	7	5	17	23	35
Atlanta	4	8	4	16	22	21
Chicago	3	8	6	15	17	29
New England	4	10	1	13	12	27

Western Conference				
	W	L	T	PTS
Real Salt Lake	9	2	6	33
Los Angeles FC	9	4	3	30
Minnesota	8	3	5	29
LA Galaxy	7	3	7	28
Vancouver	7	5	4	25
Austin FC	6	6	5	23
Houston	6	6	4	22
Colorado	6	7	4	22
Portland	5	7	6	21
Seattle	4	7	6	20
Saint Louis	3	4	9	18
Sporting KC	3	9	5	14
FC Dallas	3	8	5	14
San Jose	3	11	2	11

Friday, June 14
Columbus at NY City FC, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, June 15
Real Salt Lake at CF Montreal, 7:30 p.m.
Houston at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.
Chicago at Toronto FC, 7:30 p.m.
Los Angeles FC at Orlando City, 7:30 p.m.
Inter Miami CF at Philadelphia, 7:30 p.m.
Vancouver at New England, 7:30 p.m.
D.C. United at Charlotte FC, 7:30 p.m.
Nashville at NY Red Bulls, 7:30 p.m.
Saint Louis at FC Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
Austin FC at Colorado, 9:30 p.m.
Sporting KC at LA Galaxy, 10:30 p.m.
Minnesota at Seattle, 10:30 p.m.
Cincinnati at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

GOLF

PGA Tour Statistics
Season Points
1, Scottie Scheffler, 5,051. 2, Xander Schauffele, 2,880. 3, Rory McIlroy, 2,045. 4, Collin Morikawa, 1,971. 5, Wyndham Clark, 1,906. 6, Sahithi Theegala, 1,806. 7, Ludvig Aberg, 1,785. 8, Byeong Hun An, 1,620. 9, Hideki Matsuyama, 1,540. 10, Sepp Straka, 1,324.

Scoring Average
1, Scottie Scheffler, 68.55. 2, Xander Schauffele, 69.50. 3, Rory McIlroy, 69.86. 4, Billy Horschel, 69.95. 5, Alex Noren, 70.00. 6, Keith Mitchell, 70.08. 7, Maverick McNealy, 70.10. 8, Collin Morikawa, 70.23. 9, Christiaan Bezuidenhou, 70.24. 10, Ludvig Aberg, 70.25.

Driving Distance