

Cars with defects aren't getting fixed

Automakers making little progress in repairing safety issues, putting drivers at risk. **In Weekend Extra**

Which NFL team is legit contender?

A 2-0 start has given some a leg up in playoff chase, but not all are built for the long haul. **In Sports**

ETIENNE LAURENT/
REUTERS

A banner year for Carrie Coon

"His Three Daughters" star opens up about hard work, family life and "The Gilded Age." **In Life**

E2

Ohio city wants out of spotlight

Springfield at center of immigration debate

Erin Glynn and Haley BeMiller
USA TODAY NETWORK – OHIO BUREAU

SPRINGFIELD, Ohio – Springfield residents want to get back to normal. In the past two weeks, the central Ohio city of nearly 60,000 has faced police cars outside of church services, 200 students absent from an elementary school amid bomb threats and a City Commission meeting so packed that dozens of residents had to stream it on their phones outside City Hall. After Ohio Sen. JD Vance posted claims about Haitian immigrants abducting and eating dogs and cats and after former President Donald Trump repeated the claims during a presidential debate, residents and local officials have been left to deal with security issues, national media attention and hateful flyers and phone calls.



Heidi Earlywine, right, gives comfort to Myriam Joseph, a Haitian migrant, outside a Springfield, Ohio, church on Sunday. LIZ DUFOUR/USA TODAY NETWORK

Springfield's moment in the national spotlight is going to continue as Trump says he is going to the city in the coming weeks. State and local officials say Trump's claims about Haitians eating dogs and cats are false. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources also said it could not find evidence to support reports that immigrants were stealing geese around local parks and trails. The claims have meant less attention to the real challenges facing Springfield and how it deals with the influx of Haitian migrants, according to Springfield Mayor Rob Rue, a Republican. "If I knew that my words were hurting people consistently, I would want to change that and I would want to not do that," Rue said. "I'm just asking them to move on and quit using us as a political tool. We want to get out of this political vortex that we've been caught up in." In an interview on CNN last week, Vance said he was trying to draw

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HOPE IN AMERICA



Tourists look at the melting Portage Glacier near Hope, Alaska, from aboard the M/V Ptarmigan. The town's population is 130. On some weekends, visitors push that figure over 1,000. PHOTOS BY TREVOR HUGHES/USA TODAY

In Alaska, solitude, amazing nature rule



Members of the band Annie Bartholomew and the Sitka Roses play a bluegrass concert on the deck of the Historic Hope Cafe in Hope, Alaska, as an audience member dances with band member Taylor Vidic in the dirt road in front.

People in United States are far more hopeful than you may think

Trevor Hughes
USA TODAY

Across our great nation, hope abounds. That's the lesson we learned this summer as we dispatched journalists to the places called Hope. From the Maine coast to the Gulf of Alaska, we heard over and over that the U.S. is a country where life is good for most of us, despite our challenges – and where people remain relentlessly

optimistic that even better days lie ahead. We also learned valuable lessons about the importance of close connections with your neighbors, the intersection of national politics and local issues, and what it means to truly call a community home. So, after thousands of miles of travel and hundreds of interviews, here are five lessons we learned about America's Hopes. See **TAKEAWAYS**, Page 2A

Hope might be 'most romantic town' in universe

Trevor Hughes
USA TODAY

HOPE, Alaska – Fifty miles from the nearest gas station, where the dirt road dead-ends at the old gold mining claims, bluegrass music drifted into the night. Dressed in mosquito-net shirts customized with purple fringe, the four women of the band Annie Bartholomew and the Sitka Roses were singing, plucking banjos and dancing in front of the Historic Hope Cafe as a small crowd in lawn chairs sipped beers. The seemingly endless sunset gleamed off the snowcapped peaks behind. "The first time I saw this place I thought it might be the most romantic

See **ALASKA**, Page 3A

About this series

USA TODAY visits six cities named Hope at a time when divisions in the nation appear to threaten hopes for America's future. In this five-day series, we explore the cities and what we learned. Read the entire series online at usatoday.com.

As boomers have more sex, STIs skyrocket



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PROVIDED BY LISA COPELAND

"Dating in your 20s was about getting married, having kids, cats, dogs – building your world. Today, it's about fun and play."

Lisa Copeland
Cleveland-area resident

Experts say many lack education, not willing to talk

Adrianna Rodriguez
USA TODAY

In 2010, Lisa Copeland found herself single, again. After two marriages – one lasting 24 years and the other lasting two – the Cleveland-area resident in her early 50s didn't know where to start her search for companionship. Copeland tried enlisting the help of a dating coach but realized there weren't any under 50 years old who would understand the dating scene for adults her age. Instead of crying to her sister on the phone, which she had tried already, she decided to change her outlook. "Dating in your 20s was about getting married, having kids, cats, dogs –

building your world," Copeland said, now 68. "Today, it's about fun and play." But the dangers single people over 50 face differ from those they encountered as singles decades earlier. Learning that lesson has become essential for Copeland and others as research shows that sexually transmitted infections, or STIs, are skyrocketing among older adults at a faster rate than among other age groups. The rising STI rates for older adults can be explained, in part, by the comforts of 21st-century life. Older adults are living and staying sexually active longer thanks to medical advances, health experts say. They're more likely to live in senior communities and have multiple

See **BOOMERS**, Page 6A

Funding vote fails in the House as shutdown looms

Six-month extension tied to voting legislation is defeated 220-202

Riley Beggin
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – With just 12 days to go until a potential government shutdown, the House attempted – and failed – to pass a 6-month funding extension that was tied to a contentious piece of voting legislation on Wednesday.

The chamber voted 220-202 to defeat the measure, which would fund the government at existing levels through the end of March 2025 and advance a bill that would require people to show proof of citizenship in order to vote.

The effort has been a pet project of House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., and former President Donald Trump. But the legislation has received widespread criticism from Democrats, as noncitizens already are barred from voting in federal elections. Critics argued it could make voting harder for millions of Americans who don't have easy access to their citizenship documents.

The package also would have been doomed to fail in the Democratically controlled Senate, and House Republicans acknowledged ahead of the vote that it wouldn't receive enough support from GOP lawmakers to pass.

But it offered Johnson the opportunity to show his right flank he tried to pass one of their key immigration- and election-related priorities.

“Congress has an obligation to fund the government, and Congress has an obligation to ensure that our elections are secure, fair, and free. This vote tonight would have accomplished both,” Johnson told reporters following the vote, adding he is “very disappointed” it didn't pass.

“We'll draw up another play, and we'll come up with a solution. I'm already talking to colleagues about their many ideas. We have time to fix the situation, and we'll get right to it.”

Trump wrote Wednesday on Truth Social that House Republicans should not agree to a funding extension “in any way, shape, or form” if the voting legislation does not pass and claimed that noncitizen voting could sway the results of the presidential election. Noncitizen voting is extremely rare.

Johnson declined to say on Wednesday whether he would listen to the former president and allow the government to shut down over the voting legislation.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., said ahead of the vote Wednesday that Johnson has not told him what the plan is once the effort fails.

“I think there's always an alternative, but I think he's focused on what your main objective is,” he said. “You start talking about Plan Bs everybody forgets about Plan A.”

However, an actual shutdown is unlikely, even as the end of the month rapidly approaches. Neither party wants to risk such a catastrophe in the lead up to the presidential election, when they would surely be punished by voters.



Johnson

“We cannot have a government shutdown,” Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., told reporters Tuesday. “It would be politically beyond stupid for us to do that right before the election, because certainly we'd get the blame.”

The collapse of Johnson's plan Wednesday means Congress will spend its next seven working days trying to hammer out a deal that can pass both chambers. Lawmakers are scheduled to return to their districts for the month of October.

“We need a date in December for which we can try to move the ball forward. Then we will go and negotiate the programs and the money that we need,” said House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn. “We wasted another week” working on the extension that was sure to fail.

There are some signs that lawmakers may successfully fund the government – or at least kick the can down the road. Despite the House's failure on Wednesday to pass a government funding package, Senate Republicans and Democrats are much more aligned. Senate leaders support a shorter extension that would end in mid- to late December, in order to allow lawmakers to negotiate funding levels with full knowledge of the next presidential administration.

“I hope that once the Speaker's CR fails he moves on to a strategy that will actually work: bipartisan cooperation,” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said on the Senate floor Wednesday. “It's the only thing that has kept the government open every time we have faced a funding deadline. It's going to be the only thing that works this time too.”

GOP Whip Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said the chamber would start working on its own funding deal if the House can't pass something by the end of the week. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, the top Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, said Tuesday that process has not yet begun, but “time is growing very short.”

What happens in a government shutdown?

During a government shutdown, federal agencies that are classified as “nonessential” are sent home and paid once the government reopens. “Essential” workers – those necessary to keep the most crucial elements of the federal government functioning – would keep working and receive their pay.

Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits are considered essential and would continue, though it might be harder to get through to representatives for assistance during the shutdown. Other key benefit programs, such as military veterans programs and food programs would also continue.

The U.S. military and federal law enforcement agencies including the FBI, DEA, and prison staff, as well as the Secret Service, Coast Guard and border security agents would also keep working.

National parks and monuments would close to the public and it may be harder to get other government services, like assistance with passports and visas, during a closure. Child care programs such as Head Start would be left without funding.

Airport security and air-traffic controllers would keep working, but there could be airline delays because of absenteeism.

Contributing: Sudiksha Kochi.

Takeaways

Continued from Page 1A

1. We are dramatically more hopeful than an outsider might think.

Watching the election filled with doom-and-gloom campaign ads, it's easy to think America's entire way of life is at risk. But the people we interviewed said they remain optimistic about the future.

A USA TODAY/Suffolk University poll bears that out: 81% of Americans say they have “hope for the future of the country,” a view that stretches across lines of gender, race and political party. Only 18% say they lack that hope. The poll of 1,000 likely voters, taken by landline and cellphone Aug. 25-28, has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

That's not to say things are perfect. The economy is tough for many. Food costs have skyrocketed. High interest rates have complicated home-purchasing, and the high cost of fuel, insurance and other necessities are squeezing many. The war in Gaza has hardened divisions, as has the federal government's inability to find a solution to the southern border challenges.

Political disputes have sundered families, and heartless social media posts can bring people to tears.

But amid those challenges, Americans still see a future filled with hope.

“Even when things are kinda crazy, and they're crazy right now, I tend to lean toward the optimist camp, because I would like that future for myself and the rest of humanity,” said musician Kat Moore during a break performing a bluegrass concert in Hope, Alaska.

2. We share many values.

A strong economy, clean air and water, independence and a good education for our kids: What binds us together is stronger than our differences.

Politicians like to divide us by magnifying small differences so they can exploit our outrage and win power. But at the end of the day, our families, our friends, our faith draw us closer. In Hope, New Mexico, Anglos and Mexican immigrants have built a strong community even as the farms and irrigation water dwindled.

“We're more or less a family here,” Mayor Bill Fletcher said. “None of us is kin, but we're a family anyway. You scratch one of us, we all bleed.”

3. Our neighbors matter.

Our neighbors matter, not just because we can call them for help, but because they help create that sense of community so many Americans are seeking.

To be clear, people disagree. A lot.

But in small towns, just being able to get in a room with your neighbors and listen to their concerns helps generate consensus. The parking frustrations faced by some residents are the flip side of the music venue's financial success. The increased traffic and trash left by tourists is a problem, sure, but also reflects the growing stream of dollars keeping the gift shop afloat.

“Every town has its politics,” said Susan Pushaw, who owns a trading post in South Hope, Maine, where locals gather to hash out challenges. “They start out with little arguments, but it all ends up good before they all leave.”

4. Politics is – and should be – local.

National politics have their place, but for most of us, local governments have a far larger impact on our daily lives. And many American remain deeply invested in helping make their communities better.

With all the attention being paid to this fall's presidential election, it's easy to forget there are an estimated 90,000 local governments across the country – school boards, water districts, library boards and liquor licensing authorities – all run by our neighbors. For most of us, that's where the real governing happens: hiring teachers, recruiting police officers, overseeing drinking water and making sure roads are safe.

And for many of us, the hope in America comes not from some top-down government mandate, but a personal liberty and motivation to make our corner of the universe a little better for our families and friends.

“I don't need other people's speech and ‘rah rahs’ to find the hope I have in my own abilities,” said John Sitzes of Hope, Arkansas. “I think if people are looking for hope, then they need to dig their feet into the dirt and go get it.”

5. No one thinks we live in a perfect country.

While we may disagree on the best path to get to the “more perfect union” envisioned in the preamble to the U.S. Constitution, we strongly believe that even better days are ahead.

Perhaps no one feels that more keenly than Jeanne Hope, 67, who calls one of Michigan's two Hope Townships home. Still unsure who she'll support for president, Hope, of Barry County, said the Republicans and Democrats who live near her all pitch in for community events, lift up those who struggle and keep an eye out for each other, despite their political differences.

“When I get teased by everybody about my last name, I say there is always hope,” she said. “Nothing is ever too far gone that you can't find a bright side somewhere. There's got to be hope, or why are we even here in the first place?”

Contributing: Lauren Villagran, Terry Collins, Karissa Waddick, Kristen Shamus and Sarah Wire

Lebanon on edge as Israel vows to start ‘new phase’ in war targeting Hezbollah

Kim Hjelmggaard
USA TODAY

Lebanon was on edge Thursday after Israel's defense minister vowed to begin a “new phase” in its war with Hamas in Gaza, and after pagers and walkie-talkies belonging to Hezbollah fighters exploded in the Middle Eastern country across two days, killing at least 37 people and injuring thousands.

Lebanon's government and Hezbollah, an Iran-backed group that uses the nation as a base for its militants, both blamed Israel for the attacks on wireless electronic devices. Many people lost eyes and fingers in the blasts. Others suffered serious stomach wounds. Israel has not commented on the mass attack on Hezbollah communications but multiple reports have said it was carried out by its spy agency Mossad.

Israel and Hezbollah have long been enemies and fought a major war in 2006. But cross-border fighting between the two sides has been stoked by the Israel-Hamas war and tens of thousands of Israelis have been forced to evacuate northern Israel amid waves of near-daily Hezbollah missiles since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7.

In a statement Wednesday, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said the “center of gravity” in the Israel-Hamas war was moving north to Lebanon. He said



Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system intercepts rockets launched from Lebanon toward Israel on Wednesday. AYAL MARGOLIN/REUTERS

more military units and resources were being sent to the border.

“This is not Hamas – we're dealing with something different, and we need to prepare accordingly,” he said.

The attacks on Hezbollah, whoever is responsible, are a humiliation for the group, which has said it will take revenge. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, said in a televised address Thursday that the attacks were “unprecedented” and that they amounted to a “declaration of war” by Israel.

He said “the resistance in Lebanon will not stop supporting the people of Gaza and the West Bank.”

Nasrallah spoke from a secret location. As he did so, Israel launched airstrikes on Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon. Its jets also made huge sonic booms that were heard in Beirut.

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Alaska

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town in the universe,” said band member Kat Moore, 42, during a break in performances. “It’s just quaint and historic and there’s beautiful mountains all around ... and amazing nature everywhere.”

Long past 10 p.m. the sun still hung in the sky. A day after summer solstice, the daylight lasted almost 20 hours. As the twangs and strums from musicians lifted into the sky, visitors rolled into town with campers and pickups, rattling VW buses and Subarus equipped for camping. They swell the town’s official population of 130 into more than 1,000 on some weekends.

This is popular place for weddings because people want to start their marriages off from a place of Hope, as one local put it. There’s no official town government – many decisions are instead made by the nonprofit Hope Inc. that any voting-age resident can join – and busiest coffee shop is a cabin reached by walking carefully around the momma moose lounging with her calf. The gourmet hot dog stand opens at 10 p.m., and the ice cream shop will deliver to your tent or camper well past midnight.

This tiny community two hours’ drive from Anchorage is one of 19 towns of the same name across the United States.

In interviews over the first half of the year, USA TODAY reporters repeatedly heard frustration and a deep longing for better times to come. So we visited six towns called Hope, from Michigan to Arkansas, Maine to Alaska, looking for signs of optimism and what was getting in people’s way.

Here’s what we found at the end of the road, about as far west as you can go on the North American continent.

It’s important to get along with your (few) neighbors

In a town as small as Hope, everyone pretty much knows everything about everyone: The truck they drive, whether they’ve gotten a new snow machine, what they order for breakfast.

Though Alaskans love to embrace their “Last Frontier” status and the freedoms that come from living in a state with about as many residents as Denver, it’s hard to escape the gaze of your neighbor or disappear into a crowd.

Instead, the harsh winter conditions – 3 feet of snow overnight isn’t unusual – prompt a neighborliness rarely found in larger cities. After all, it’s not a good idea to feud with the people who own the snowplows.

During long winter nights with only five hours of daylight, Hope residents use social media message boards to discuss pressing issues, from whether the summer’s live music is too loud to how to handle the tourists’ parking and trash. And while those online debates sometimes get heated, people usually realize they’re attacking their neighbors and cool down, said Barb Bureau, 58, a retired adventure tourism guide who volunteers at the library.

“We’re forced to face each other,” she said. “We get together and talk out our differences. When you’re in a room talking face-to-face, you can get a lot more done than just yelling on social media.”

Still, disputes can quickly get personal, especially when it comes to things like parking, noise and the appropriate way to leave unwanted items at the “Hope Mall” – the dumpsters where residents toss their trash and set out no-longer-needed things like old bikes, washing machines or furniture.

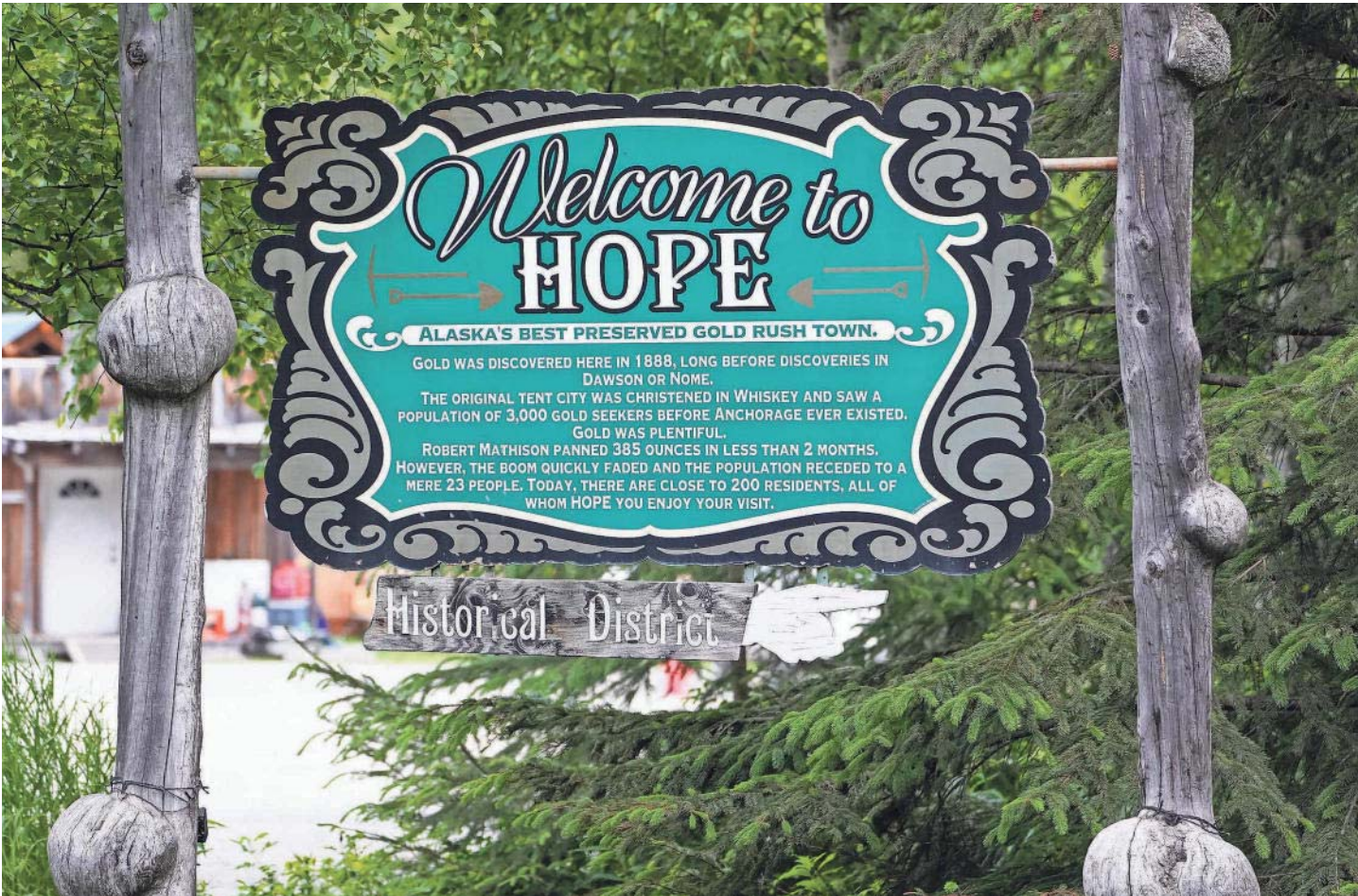
“It’s way more painful, way more difficult” to deal with those small-town issues than the “future of the country,” said Hope resident and fourth-generation Alaskan Jeannine Jabaay, 47.

Scotty Smith, the town’s de facto mayor, drifted into Hope as a river guide 20 years ago, eventually starting his own rafting business. Thousands of tourists arrive in Hope each summer to raft the Class IV and V rapids of Six Mile Creek, which flows into a narrow ocean bay called Turnagain Arm, where the tide is so fierce people regularly surf it.

Anchorage, Alaska’s largest city, is about 15 miles from Hope as the bald eagle flies, but there’s no bridge or boat across the sticky glacial silt covering the bottom of Turnagain Arm.

Smith, 44, said Hope’s isolation was a big part of what drew him there. Growing up in the Atlanta area, he was frustrated by how political everything seemed. It’s even worse today, he said, briefly tearing up as he recalled hateful social media posts from an otherwise loving family member.

With two kids he plans to home-school, Smith said he wants to instill in them the same neighborliness he sees practiced every day. He said he rejects traditional “red versus blue” approaches in favor of community consensus, though he concedes that can be hard to find when longtime residents get irked



A sign welcomes visitors to Hope, Alaska, which is about a two-hour drive from Anchorage. Local legend says Hope, named after a prospector, had a population of about 3,000 during its gold-rush heyday. TREVOR HUGHES/USA TODAY

by newcomers.

“When I showed up here 20 years ago it was pretty quiet,” Smith said. “Tourism is great, but right now we have a town with little infrastructure and a lot of (tourist) impact.”

Like Bureau, Smith said small fights over parking, trash and toilets often ripple through the town’s message board but usually stop once people start talking to one another face-to-face. Because Hope has so little infrastructure, the volunteer-run library is a popular place for people to find a flush toilet instead of using the pit toilets and Porta Potties scattered around town.

“You can go to a room and people can talk it out,” Smith said as he collected raffle tickets to benefit the library and volunteer fire department.

Grounds for hope

Long known as an off-the-beaten-path place for locals to escape from Anchorage, Hope is gaining popularity as a live music destination with three venues. On the solstice weekend the Creek-bend Café, the Dirty Skillet and the Historic Hope Café were booked back-to-back with musical performances, campers and weddings. Riders staged up for a 250-mile mountain bike race that the fastest rider completed in under 30 hours, aided by near-continuous daylight.

At Grounds For Hope Espresso, owner Samantha Brown, 49, bustled from the coffeemaker to the panini press, serving up homemade burritos, oat milk lattes and lavender muffins. Most summer mornings, the tiny cabin serves as a de facto meeting place for Hope. Smith grabbed coffee and breakfast for his family. A friend snuck in to pay his bill.

Jack the golden retriever wandered from group to group, investigating tourists and their dogs, sniffing at customers’ flip-flops, sandals, running shoes and otherwise ubiquitous Xtratuf rubber boots, often worn with the tops folded down to show off a colorful lining of sea creatures.

Brown, a retired nurse, bought the coffee hut 12 years ago. At the time, her husband was working as a bartender but they were looking for a quieter lifestyle, which they found living in a cabin without running water. Now, she and her husband run the coffee hut five days a week, along with several seasonal vacation cabins for tourists.

“It’s a pretty good gig, actually,” she said. “The challenge is that we don’t live near anything.”

At least once a week, Brown drives her Toyota Prius to Anchorage for supplies for the cabins and the coffee hut. She has watched as food costs have steadily risen, especially eggs, and adjusted her burrito prices accordingly. Brown said she’d like to think she lives a low-impact lifestyle but adds that she also takes a lot of airplane trips during her six-month offseason.

Like many Americans, she worries what the future holds for her daughter, especially the cost of housing and climate change. Like many Hope residents, Brown doesn’t have a mortgage. Many of the homes here are modest, and some of the hand-hewn cabins built by the early gold rush prospectors are still standing.

Because Alaska has such extreme temperatures, especially in the winter, scientists say it is more vulnerable to a warming climate.

Some coastal Alaska Native villages are being washed away by rising waters, new plants and insects are moving in as large wildfires scorch the landscape,

and experts fear large portions of the permanently frozen ground known as permafrost are melting, releasing heat-trapping methane. The warming coastal waters also are affecting the state’s commercially important crab, cod and salmon fishing grounds.

At the same time, the oil and gas industry is the state’s biggest economic driver, making up nearly 85% of tax revenue. High gas prices in the rest of the U.S. mean boom times for Alaskans, and a transition to clean energy like solar and wind imperils the roughly 76,000 direct and indirect oil-industry jobs.

Hope isn’t isolated from those concerns. It sits on the Turnagain Arm, which connects to the Gulf of Alaska. People still talk about the effect of the 2019 Swan Lake Fire, which burned 265 square miles on the other side of the mountains, sending a choking pall of smoke across the area for days. Many residents count on catching salmon as a food source, and nearby receding glaciers can make rivers extra silty.

“We see it all around us, so many examples of how things are changing even in my time here,” said Bureau, the retired tour guide. “We are going to hit some pretty low lows before we are forced to realize a lot of things aren’t sustainable. And maybe getting in our gas cars and driving two hours to the grocery store is not sustainable.”

Isolation is a feature, not a bug

Hope’s isolation is precisely what most visitors are seeking, though.

Just outside the core old town area, Jabaay and her husband own and manage the Dirty Skillet restaurant and Bear Creek Lodge Cabins. They ran a construction company in Anchorage, and although they bought a house in Hope in 2007, they didn’t fully commit until 2018, when they purchased the lodge and restaurant. Anchorage, she said, was starting to feel kind of “icky” and unsafe.

Like many of America’s urban areas, Alaska’s biggest city has struggled with homelessness, drug overdoses and crime fueled by drug addiction. With nearly 300,000 residents, almost 40% of the state’s entire population lives in Anchorage (though it’s the 74th largest city in the country).

“I knew what we were letting go of – that big-city feel. Moving to Hope was for the lifestyle, for the kids,” said Jabaay, who, along with her husband homeschooled their six children. “Maybe it should have been more scary. It was a lifestyle we were choosing and it was a totally different trade.”

Today, she wouldn’t trade it for anything. As the evening sun lingered in the sky on the summer solstice, staff at the Dirty Skillet bustled around busy tables, serving up Anchorage-brewed beers, burgers and chocolate-topped cherry cheesecake.

About 14 workers help Jabaay and her family run the lodge and restaurant – 14 hires out of 700 applicants seeking a summer Alaskan adventure, which included free housing. Several workers said the offer of housing was a key factor in seeking their positions because such opportunities are rare in the Lower 48.

“On the surface, there’s nothing to do here,” Jabaay said. “It feels like ‘Little House on the Prairie,’ with Wi-Fi, but not good Wi-Fi.”

That spotty internet connectivity, along with the long summer days, means residents and visitors alike have all the excuses in the world to disconnect and go hiking or mountain biking. Wildlife photographers search for bears

and moose, and anglers head out for salmon and halibut from Whittier. Others make the 70-mile drive to Seward to clamber up an overlook showing how far the Exit Glacier has receded over the past 200 years.

Further afield, tourists admire the Russian Orthodox churches scattered around Homer, a reminder that Alaska belonged to Russia until William Seward, Abraham Lincoln’s secretary of state, negotiated a deal for the United States to buy it in 1867 for \$7.2 million – about \$120 million in today’s dollars.

The gold rush that brought white settlers and prospectors to Alaska began almost immediately after the “Seward’s Folly” purchase, and Hope was settled just before 1900. Local legend says Hope, named after a prospector, had a population of about 3,000 during its gold-rush heyday, when one man panned 385 ounces of gold in two months. That’s worth more than \$800,000 in 2024 dollars.

Gold mining in Hope has largely vanished, although a local artist makes earrings using gold flakes panned from the river.

Sitting at the bar at the Dirty Skillet as her staff poured drinks and accepted customer compliments, Jabaay laughed as she recalled how some tourists invariably arrive in Hope looking for a specific chain hotel. That hotel doesn’t exist in this Hope, she said, and they’ve instead accidentally booked one in Hope, Arkansas. They usually take the mistake in stride, she said, and figure out a solution so they can stay.

“Hope has a weird way of drawing you in,” Jabaay said. “Nobody ends up in Hope by accident. It has to be intentional.”

All politics is local

Most Hope residents tread carefully around national politics, but Dru Sorenson doesn’t bother with that. Though none of her neighbors fly Trump or MAGA flags or drive around with Biden-Harris bumper stickers, the front yard of her “world’s greatest gift shop” is festooned with political signs, many of them criticizing Democrats and Republicans alike.

Sorenson, who goes by “Sourdough Dru,” said she has been told to “cool it” at the Historic Hope Café for talking politics. Among the stickers on display, one says “Make America Happy Again,” and another: “It’s funny until someone files a lawsuit. Be Nice, Hope Alaska.”

Sorenson moved to Hope in 1981 after cashing in some retirement savings. She had been coming camping in Hope since childhood and leapt at the chance to put down roots after living in several places around Alaska.

“When I came here, the thing I loved most about it was I could be myself and nobody gave a damn,” she said, drinking a breakfast Guinness. “We’re at the end of the road. That makes it special. People have to be intentionally coming here. Everyone who comes to Hope, I guarantee, you’ll be back.”

The tourists who flooded into town solstice weekend from Anchorage said they appreciated the opportunity to leave behind the politicized day-to-day life of modern America.

“This never gets old: opening up the camper door to see all of this, having the kids playing in the river while you’re opening up a cold Coors for breakfast,” said tourist Ariane Aramburo, 42, an Anchorage television news anchor visiting with three friends and a handful of children. “When you come here, you don’t have sides. It gives you hope that politics aside, that there is hope for our country.”

Forecasters keep eye on system in Caribbean

Hurricane season passes halfway point

Doyle Rice
USA TODAY

Hurricane forecasters are watching a new potential storm as the Atlantic hurricane season motors past its halfway point. So far, the season hasn't logged an exceptional number of storms, despite predictions of a hyper-active season.

Hurricane forecasters have turned their attention to the Caribbean Sea, where an area of low pressure could form late this weekend or early next week, the National Hurricane Center said. The center said some slow development of this system is possible through the middle of next week while it moves to the north or northwest over the northwestern Caribbean Sea or the southeastern Gulf of Mexico.

The season continues to sputter along and is over halfway done. So far, the number of storms (seven) is slightly below average, while the number of hurricanes (four) is about average. For many reasons, the season has yet to live up to many preseason predictions.

"There is a growing signal among long-range global model ensembles that the next storm could start brewing in the western Caribbean in the coming days," said University of Miami meteorologist Brian McNoldy.

The system is expected to form using energy from what forecasters call the Central American gyre, a large but weak slow-spinning storm set up over Central America.

If the system, which has yet to form, becomes a named storm, it would be Tropical Storm Helene, the eighth named storm of the 2024 season.

What is the Central American gyre?

The system in question is expected to form using energy from what forecasters call the Central American gyre, which is a type of large but weak, slow-spinning storm set up over Central America, AccuWeather said.

The gyre can be an early and late-season source of tropical development, Weather.com said. This mid-season development is unusual, experts said, but it could help spawn a storm that could affect the U.S.

"Given how warm waters typically are in the region and energy from the Central America gyre, there is the potential for any system that forms over the western Caribbean to the central Gulf to quickly intensify and track into the U.S.," AccuWeather hurricane expert Alex DaSilva said.

Where could the storm go?

Computer models have a wide range of outcomes for the system: There is a "solid signal for development, but lots of spread in where it might end up," noted NOAA meteorologist Andy Hazelton on social platform X. "Lots of moving parts and uncertainty with these Central American gyre setups. Good idea to at least review your hurricane plan if you're anywhere from S FL to the Western Gulf."

NOAA meteorologist Tomer Berg said "There's been plenty of talk about a potential tropical cyclone in the Caribbean & Gulf next week." While there is a legitimate signal for a storm, the details are less clear, says Berg, who warns against fixating on any single model, some of which show a major hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico.

The remnants of what had been Tropical Storm Gordon continue to spin out in the Atlantic, far from land. Forecasters say it could regenerate over the next few days: "Environmental conditions could become more conducive for development later this week, and a tropical depression or storm could re-form in a few days while the system moves slowly northward over the central subtropical Atlantic," the hurricane center said.

Body found is thought to be suspect in highway shooting

Police found 'articles associated' with Couch

Killian Baarlaer and Thao Nguyen
USA TODAY NETWORK

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – A body found in southeastern Kentucky on Wednesday is believed to be the man suspected of shooting and injuring five people on an interstate highway earlier this month, authorities said.

The unidentified body was found Wednesday afternoon in an area near Exit 49 of Interstate 75 in Laurel County, where Joseph Couch, 32, is suspected of opening fire at vehicles on Sept. 7, according to Kentucky State Police Commissioner Phillip Burnett Jr.

It was discovered by two troopers and two civilians in a "deep brush" behind the exit, Burnett said at a news conference Wednesday night.

"There were articles associated with the body that at this time we feel is Joseph Couch," Burnett said.

Police are currently investigating the scene and the body will be sent to the coroner in Frankfort, Kentucky, for identification Thursday, according to Burnett.

The discovery comes after an almost 12-day manhunt.

More than a dozen local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies scoured thousands of acres of rugged and densely wooded terrain in the Daniel Boone National Forest, where authorities believed Couch to be hiding.

"We're very confident that this brings the closure in the search of Joseph Couch," Burnett said.

On Tuesday, officials announced that search efforts in the forest would be scaled back and resources would be reallocated toward surrounding communities.

Since the shooting, police received more than 400 tips with a majority of the tips pointing to outside of the forest.

Kentucky couple, state troopers discover body near shooting scene

At about 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, Kentucky State Police were notified that two troopers and two civilians had discovered an unidentified body near the site of the shooting, according to Burnett.

Troopers had been searching in the area "all day" and observed vultures circling overhead, Burnett said.

"They continued to try and locate (the area) that the vultures were circling in," Burnett said. "While they were in there, they began to detect a strong odor of what appeared to be of decomposing flesh."

The troopers encountered a couple, identified as Fred and Sheila McCoy, who were also searching for Couch, according to Burnett. He added that the two troopers and the McCoy's then "almost immediately" found the body.

The Lexington Herald-Leader reported that the McCoy's, who are YouTube streamers, had live-streamed the moment they discovered the body.

Kentucky State Police announced on social media at around 4:18 p.m. that authorities had found the body and were working to identify it. The announcement came about an hour after the McCoy's posted on YouTube claiming that they found Couch's body after a lengthy search, according to the Lexington Herald-Leader.

Burnett confirmed Wednesday that the couple will receive a \$25,000 reward for their efforts, including \$15,000 from Laurel County Crime Stoppers and an additional \$10,000 from a private donor.

What happened in the Kentucky highway shooting?

Laurel County sheriff's deputies were dispatched around 5:30 p.m. Sept. 7 following reports of a gunshot victim on I-75 near Exit 49 and U.S. Route 25, about 8 miles north of London, a city about 75 miles south of Lexington. Officers discovered multiple vehicles parked on the side of the highway with

broken windows and bullet holes when they arrived.

Twelve vehicles were found shot on both sides of the roadway and five individuals were injured – all of them survived, according to authorities.

The shooting caused an hourslong closure of the highway as authorities searched for the suspect. The Laurel County Sheriff's Department named Couch a person of interest that night, upgrading him to a suspect the next day as evidence against him mounted.

Authorities located Couch's vehicle on the night of the shooting and on Sept. 8, police found an AR-15 in the wooded area near Exit 49 of I-75, along with fully loaded magazines. Authorities said at the time that the weapon may have been used in the shooting.

An employee of a nearby gun shop confirmed to police that Couch had purchased an AR-15 and 1,000 rounds of ammunition from the store the morning of the shooting, according to an affidavit released by the Laurel County Sheriff's Office. The firearm discovered by police matched the description of the one Couch purchased that day.

Couch also told the mother of his child in a text message that he was planning to "kill a lot of people" less than an hour before the incident, according to the affidavit.

He added that he planned to kill himself afterward.

Couch was a former member of the Army Reserves and resided south of Laurel County in Whitley County, Gilbert Acciardo, spokesperson for Laurel County Sheriff's Department, said.

Officials offered a \$35,000 reward for information leading to Couch's arrest and the U.S. Marshals Service named Couch a fugitive.

Commonwealth's Attorney Jackie Steele, the felony prosecutor for Laurel County, charged Couch in the incident with five counts of attempted murder and five counts of first-degree assault.

Killian Baarlaer reports for the Louisville Courier-Journal; Thao Nguyen for USA TODAY.

Flu-related deaths in kids at troubling levels

CDC: Nearly 200 have died in 2023-24 season

Eduardo Cuevas
USA TODAY

The nation recorded one of its worst totals for child deaths from the flu this past season, coinciding with troubling drops in U.S. vaccination rates, federal health officials warned.

Nearly 200 children died from influenza-related complications in the 2023-24 season, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Officials announced the death count last week after two children died in early September.

The season's death toll of 199 matches the 2019-20 flu season, CDC said. The highest death toll recorded was 288 children who died from the flu in the 2009-10 season, at the height of the H1N1 swine flu pandemic.

Most of the 199 total children who died from the virus were eligible for a vaccine but did not receive one. Studies have shown that annual flu vaccines, while not foolproof against infection, are effective against serious illness.

"It's hard to watch," Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, said. "There was a way to prevent this."

Officials must now contend with misinformation and hesitancy around vaccines that took hold with COVID-19, Offit said. The COVID-19 pandemic also disrupted families' regular visits with their doctors, when they may have received routine vaccines. The CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get their annual flu shot, especially if they are at higher risk, such as having asthma, neurologic conditions, or being obese.

The CDC data included 158 children who died who were eligible for a vaccine and whose vaccination status was known. Out of those, 131 children, or 83%, were not fully vaccinated. Among the 189 deaths with known information on medical conditions, 93, or 49%, had at least one preexisting medical condition.

By age, 126 of the children were between 5 and 17 years old. There were 73 children younger than 5 years old. Children younger than 5, along with children with certain underlying con-



Flu vaccines can reduce risk of serious illness or death from the virus, though officials worry drops in vaccines are contributing to a rise in childhood deaths from flu in the 2023-24 season.
MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

ditions, face a greater risk of complications such as bronchitis or pneumonia from the flu.

The deaths coincide with drops in vaccinations among children. As of May 11, just over 53% of children between ages 6 months and 17 years old were vaccinated this season, which was lower than the prior season's 56%, when there were 187 deaths. This past season is also lower than pre-pandemic coverage when 62.4% of children were vaccinated in 2020.

Vaccinations by children's race, ethnicity, and whether they lived in rural areas appear to be worsening. Less than half of Black children received their annual flu vaccine, and slightly more than half of white children did, compared to nearly 60% of Hispanic children and nearly 59% of children listed as "Other," CDC data showed. Less than 40% of children in rural areas received their annual dose, compared to nearly 60% of children in urban areas and nearly 54% in suburbs.

How effective is annual flu vaccine?

Annual flu vaccines target last year's circulating strains of the virus. While it doesn't completely eliminate the risk of

getting infected, it reduces the chances of serious illness. A 2022 study found that vaccines were increasingly effective against the most life-threatening forms of disease.

"A lot of this is preventable with vaccination against severe illness," Dr. Adrienne Randolph, the study's senior author and a critical care physician at Boston Children's Hospital, said. "It's really important that parents go get their kids vaccinated."

Still, Randolph added the latest season's children's deaths are the only ones reported as positive for flu. There are also other factors, such as longer-term issues from serious respiratory illness and missed school days, that affect children and their families. In addition, elderly people and others with underlying conditions are especially vulnerable to the flu, which kills tens of thousands of people annually.

Where can I get a flu shot?

Just before respiratory illness season in the fall and winter months, Randolph recommended families start planning their annual flu shots in October. It's easier now with pharmacies administering vaccines, along with free clinics in communities.

In Memphis, Fight Flu Tennessee is set to bring free vaccines through a state program whether or not people are insured.

"We are a healthier society when we make sure our children are vaccinated," Dr. Michelle Taylor, director of the Shelby County Department of Health Services, which serves Memphis, told USA TODAY. "We know that when children are protected, and their health is protected, it means that the entire community is more protected."

The results of more deaths and lower vaccination means more work needs to be done, said Michele Slafkosky, executive director of Families Fighting Flu, a nonprofit founded in 2004 by parents whose children died from flu complications.

The organization has fought to include universal flu vaccine recommendations to reduce illnesses and deaths. This work also includes improving vaccine confidence and making families aware of options available for annual shots.

"We all need to do a better job of taking care of not just our loved ones, but our communities," Slafkosky said.

Ex-CIA officer sentenced in sex abuse case

Attacks on dozens of women lead to prison

Brian Day and Thao Nguyen
USA TODAY NETWORK

VICTORVILLE, Calif. – A former longtime CIA officer was sentenced to 30 years in prison Wednesday for drugging, sexually abusing, and video recording dozens of women over 14 years, including while serving abroad in Mexico City and elsewhere, federal prosecutors said.

Brian Jeffrey Raymond, 48, of La Mesa, California, was sentenced in U.S. District Court after prosecutors accused him of drugging and sexually abusing numerous women in multiple countries between 2006 and 2020, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Raymond pleaded guilty in November 2023 to one count of sexual abuse, one count of abusive sexual contact, one count of coercion and enticement, and one count of transporting obscene material.

In his plea agreement, Raymond admitted to drugging and engaging in non-consensual sexual acts with four women, as well as having nonconsensual

sexual contact with six women, prosecutors said in a news release. He also admitted to drugging another 28 women and creating obscene material depicting them without their knowledge or permission, as well as drugging two additional women.

Prosecutors said many video recordings showed Raymond “touching and manipulating” the victims’ bodies while they were unconscious.

He then deleted or attempted to delete the obscene material after he learned about the criminal investigation, according to the DOJ.

Raymond “exploited his trusted position as a U.S. government representative to lure women into his confidence,” FBI Washington Field Office Assistant Director in Charge David Sundberg said in a statement. “He then drugged and sexually assaulted them and took explicit photos and videos of them without their consent.”

Following his 30-year prison term, Raymond will be placed on supervised release and registered as a sex offender for the rest of his life, according to the DOJ.

He was also ordered to pay \$260,000 in restitution to his victims.

Following his 30-year prison term, Raymond will be placed on supervised release and registered as a sex offender for the rest of his life, according to the DOJ.

Hundreds of explicit photos, videos uncovered on devices

According to court documents, Raymond was employed by the U.S. government. The FBI and the U.S. Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service said in 2021 that Raymond had previously worked for the CIA for many years.

Raymond resided in Washington, D.C., and San Diego, but often traveled and lived in other countries such as Mexico and Peru, according to the FBI. From August 2018 to May 2020, Raymond lived in Mexico City and worked at the U.S. Embassy.

The FBI said Raymond met many of his victims through various dating applications. The last known crimes occurred at Raymond’s government-leased home in Mexico City.

The long-term sexual abuse came to

light on May 31, 2020, when a naked woman was seen screaming for help from a balcony of Raymond’s Mexico City home.

“Raymond admitted to having sexual intercourse with her, but the woman reported that she had no memory of events after consuming drinks and food provided by Raymond,” according to an FBI statement.

During the investigation, the FBI and Diplomatic Security Service said they recovered Raymond’s electronic devices that contained hundreds of photographs and videos from 2006 to May 30, 2020, that showed numerous unconscious women who were nude or partially nude.

“Almost all of the women in the photos and videos experienced memory loss during their time with Raymond and had no knowledge of the photographs, videos, or any physical contact,” according to the FBI.

If you have experienced sexual assault, RAINN offers support through the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE & online.rainn.org).

Brian Day reports for the Victorville Daily Press and Thao Nguyen reports for USA TODAY.

Ind. woman pleads guilty to hate crime in stabbing

Chinese American student stabbed in head on bus

Laura Lane and Minnah Arshad
USA TODAY NETWORK

An Indiana woman has pleaded guilty to a federal hate crime after she repeatedly stabbed a Chinese American teen on a city bus while yelling slurs, court records show.

Billie Davis, 58, admitted to stabbing an 18-year-old Indiana University student in her head seven to 10 times last year. The teen survived the pocketknife assault but suffered several wounds.

Davis told police she “snapped” when she saw the student and attacked her because she was Chinese. She added that she wanted to make “one less enemy,” according to the plea agreement.

Trinh Le, community care director at civil rights nonprofit Stop AAPI Hate, told USA TODAY the guilty plea hasn’t erased the grief Indiana’s Asian American community has grappled with since the assault.

“Students we supported at (Indiana University) after the attack shared that they’ve been living in fear ever since,” Le said. “We know that racism against Asian American communities continues to be a pervasive issue, and it’s being dangerously fueled by xenophobic, anti-immigrant comments from politicians and leaders. It’s time to hold our leaders who embolden racist attackers accountable as well.”

The announcement in Indiana comes less than two months before the election as some civil rights leaders warn the campaign cycle could trigger a spike in hate crimes. A study by the Leadership Conference Education Fund found reported hate crimes have increased during the past four presidential election cycles – and warns this year could see another dangerous rise.

Student stabbed several times

On Jan. 11, 2023, Davis boarded a Bloomington Transit bus that the victim was seated on, according to the plea agreement filed in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana.

After the victim, identified as “Z.F.” pulled a cord to indicate she wanted to stop at the next exit, Davis removed a folding knife from her right front pocket and opened the blade, the agreement said. As the student stood to exit the bus, Davis turned toward her and repeatedly stabbed her in the head, according to court filings.

“Z.F. exited the bus screaming in pain from the stab wounds,” the plea agreement read. “The Defendant collapsed the knife and put in back in her pocket and sat back down on the bus.”

The student suffered several wounds on her head, including a deep cut that required sutures and staples, according to court documents.

Another passenger followed Davis when she got off the bus. “The defendant ... said the woman she attacked was going to blow up the bus because she was Asian,” the plea agreement said.

Security camera footage from the bus showed no interaction between Davis and the 18-year-old student before

the sudden attack, which happened at 4:43 p.m. as the bus came to a stop.

Court documents say Davis “has demonstrated a recognition and affirmative acceptance of personal responsibility for the defendant’s criminal conduct.”

Lawyers representing Davis argued she was mentally ill and incompetent to stand trial. But after she was put on proper medication, her condition improved. This January, the judge in the case ruled that Davis was competent and that a trial would be scheduled.

A plea agreement says Davis will be sentenced to no more than six years in prison when she comes before the judge on Dec. 3.

A public defender listed for Davis in court records didn’t immediately return USA TODAY’s request for comment.

Rise in hate crimes

The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University released a report earlier this year that found hate crimes rose by an average of 17% across 25 American cities in 2023. Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston and Austin all broke hate crime records dating back to the early 1990s, according to the center.

In one of the latest hate incidents, Springfield, Ohio, has faced a slew of violent threats after Republican leaders, including former President Donald Trump, spread false claims that Haitian immigrants were eating pets.

On Wednesday, federal prosecutors announced that a “self-described racist skinhead” was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for threatening his Black neighbors in Maine. Charles Allen Barnes, 47, admitted to sending a Facebook voice message saying he was outside his neighbor’s apartment and would kill anyone who emerged, while repeatedly using racial slurs.

A Boston-area man earlier this month was sentenced to 18 months in prison for an anti-Asian hate crime. Prosecutors said John Sullivan, 78, encountered a group of Asian Americans he hadn’t met before outside a post office – including three children – and yelled: “Go back to China.”

Sullivan threatened to kill them, then drove his car into one of the adults, eventually causing the man to fall face-first into a 10-foot-deep construction ditch, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

With the presidential election weeks away, one report warns the nation could be seeing a rise in hate incidents. The Leadership Conference Education Fund, a national civil rights group, said in a study last year that data going back to 2008 reveals that hate crimes against racial groups increase around general elections.

“From the mainstreaming of hate and the failure of social media platforms to adequately address disinformation, the current climate is rife with opportunities for the trend of increased hate to continue into the 2024 election — unless action is taken,” the report said.

Contributing: N’dea Yancey-Bragg and Claire Thornton, USA TODAY

Laura Lane reports for the Herald-Times; Minnah Arshad reports for USA TODAY.



Hundreds gather in Atlanta on March 20, 2021, to protest the killing of eight people, six of them of Asian descent, in shootings. TREVOR HUGHES/USA TODAY

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Boomers

Continued from Page 1A

partners, but are less aware than their younger counterparts about how to use prevention tools, such as condoms and regular STI screenings.

Part of the problem is people in this population lack education, experts say. The larger issue is that people of all ages are uncomfortable talking about sex – especially among older Americans – which makes it difficult to spread awareness about sexual health.

“There’s a lot of factors going into this,” said Janie Steckenrider, who researches political gerontology, aging and sexuality as an associate professor at Loyola Marymount University. “We need to start normalizing that older adults are sexually active and interest in sex doesn’t stop at a certain age.”

STIs skyrocket among boomers

Younger people have a greater number of STI cases, however, experts say what’s alarming is the rate at which STIs are increasing among adults 55 and up.

From 2012 to 2022, chlamydia cases in this population more than tripled, increasing from 6,084 cases to 19,776 cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. During the same time, the agency’s researchers also found gonorrhea cases more than quadrupled and syphilis cases increased sevenfold.

Steckenrider said the increase since 2012 has been “extremely dramatic.”

These diseases can be easily cured with the right antibiotics, but they cause complications if left untreated. This is especially true for older adults, who often have other medical conditions that could worsen with an infection, said Dr. Angelina Gangestad, division chief of obstetrics and gynecology at University Hospitals in Cleveland.

Untreated chlamydia and gonorrhea in women can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which may lead to chronic pelvic pain, according to the World Health Organization. Men with untreated chlamydia can also experience

painful infections and swollen joints.

Syphilis can attack any organ system and can cause long-term damage to the heart, brain, nerves and eyes, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

Dating trends that increase risk

Sexually transmitted infections are increasing at an alarming rate among older adults partly because they’re living longer, healthier lives, experts said.

They’re also more likely to remain sexually active for longer thanks to the help of erectile dysfunction drugs and hormone therapy to treat menopausal symptoms. Two-thirds of older adults say they’re interested in sex, according to AARP.

“When you have an elderly population who are just physically healthier, they’re going to be more sexually active and are better able to perform in those ways,” Gangestad said.

More adults are also choosing to live in senior living communities than staying at home or with a family member, Steckenrider said, which leads to more socialization and sexual encounters.

More than 800,000 people live in assisted living communities in the U.S. and approximately 1.5 million live in nursing homes, according to the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living.

The dating prospects are often narrower for older adults than singles in their 20s.

About 30% of U.S. adults over the age of 50 are single as the result of death or divorce, according to 2022 data from the Pew Research Center, compared with 47% of adults under 30.

Women live six years longer than men on average, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. While research shows men of all ages tend to have more partners than women, experts say this trend may be more pronounced among older men because there are fewer men in the dating pool.

Older adults are also more likely to meet online through dating apps, where partners are unaware of each other’s sexual history and the plethora of options lends itself to more casual dating with multiple partners.

“This is a generation that came of age in the 1960s and ’70s during the sexual revolution,” which challenged monogamy and traditional sex roles, Steckenrider said. They carry this perspective of sex and free love into their later years but fail to incorporate the safe sex component that was taught to younger generations.

Sex education and stigma

Having multiple partners or anonymous sex is less of an issue if older adults use prevention tools to protect themselves against STIs, experts said. The problem is they aren’t.

This population may have grown up in the generation of “free love,” but education about sexually transmitted infections didn’t enter the comprehensive curriculum until the 1980s, according to Planned Parenthood.

Gangestad said teens during that era learned pregnancy prevention but teachers didn’t focus on STIs. “You have an age group where you’re no longer concerned about pregnancy and so ... they’re not thinking about using condoms in the same way.”

Many older adults were in monogamous relationships and had families by the time HIV became a public health crisis in the 1980s, Steckenrider said. Sexually transmitted infections weren’t a concern for them then, and aren’t a concern now.

“For many seniors, there’s a disconnect. They don’t think of themselves as being at risk,” said Fred Wyand, sexual health expert and communications director at the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA).

Experts say people can prevent STIs by getting screened and tested, however, health care providers are less likely to offer testing to older adults than younger patients, experts say.

Patients may not show signs they have a sexually transmitted infection or their symptoms may mimic those associated with certain medications or other health conditions, so providers may not think to ask about testing for STIs.

Doctors “tend to assume that older adults are not sexually active, so they don’t routinely ask about their sexual

health,” Steckenrider said. “Unless the older adult brings it up with their medical provider, it’s not being talked about.”

How to reverse the trend

The key to reversing the skyrocketing STI rate among older adults is better awareness and education, experts say.

Doctors must be unafraid to broach the topics of sex and STIs with their older patients and older patients must know what to ask.

“There’s discomfort for both patients and professionals,” Wyand said. It’s difficult for older patients to discuss these topics with a primary care provider who is much younger than them.

To help start these conversations, the organization offers 10 questions to ask health care providers during a wellness visit, including, “Where can I go for testing?” and “How often should I get tested?”

Sex health experts also suggest that educators bring materials about sex and STIs to senior living communities, senior centers, libraries, hospitals and other places where older adults are likely to see them.

It’s also important to promote testing information, experts say. ASHA and Everlywell, a virtual care provider, partnered for a National Get Tested Day on Sept. 30, to spread awareness. They’re offering 250 free at-home kits, which typically cost \$69 each, to test for chlamydia and gonorrhea.

“The whole issue of stigma is really a barrier, not just for older people, but anything to do with S-E-X can be hard to talk about,” Wyand said.

But dating after 50 doesn’t have to be uncomfortable. Copeland, who got back out there in 2010, said recalling her own experience. It should be fun.

After she found joy in her romantic life, she created the website FindAQualityMan.com in 2012 to help women over 50 navigate the seemingly daunting world of dating. She advises her clients to have conversations about safe sex with prospective partners and use condoms and lubricants.

“I don’t want people to feel guilty, but be safe about it,” Copeland said. “It’s OK to fulfill your hormones.”

Springfield

Continued from Page 1A

attention to the immigration issues in Springfield. “If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people, then that’s what I’m going to do,” he said. Vance clarified in the interview that the story “comes from firsthand accounts from my constituents” and that he was not implying that he was making up the story.

Rust belt town with growing pains

Springfield has been an industrial town since the late 1800s, but the city’s median income dropped between 1999 and 2014 when manufacturing jobs declined in the U.S.

Springfield made an effort to attract more businesses and companies expanded in the city in 2022. Those jobs in turn attracted immigrants and word spread quickly among the Haitian community.

Pierre Eric Jean, a Haitian resident of Springfield, said he moved to the city because it was the first place in America he had heard of.

“We Haitian people are here to work hard and help our family in Haiti,” he said.

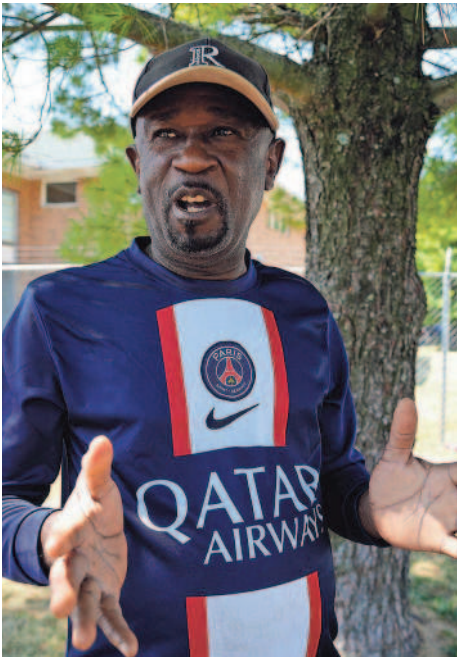
The city now has a “Little Haiti” neighborhood, a library branch with a French language section for Haitian residents, two Haitian restaurants and seven Haitian grocery stores.

City officials have wrestled for years with the impact of Haitian migration, which increased the population by an estimated 25%. Rue said the school district went from 200 to 2,000 non-native English-speaking students. He said their emergency responders are among the busiest in the state and end up providing primary care to residents because the health care system is over-taxed.

Back in July, Springfield City Manager Brian Heck penned a letter to federal officials – including Ohio’s senators – asking for help to address the city’s housing crisis. The letter, read by Vance during a committee hearing, led to a Fox News interview with Heck and Rue.

Springfield resident Heidi Earlywine said she noticed more complaints related to immigration at City Commission meetings last year and believes it was related to the end of Medicaid continuous enrollment in March 2023 and increased visibility of homeless people in the city after a homeless shelter closed.

“What happens when you drive through town in 2023 is you see un-



housed people and now you don’t have your benefits anymore, right? And so those two things were a confluence of events where some people in town started rabble-rousing at city meetings,” she said.

Then the bus wreck happened, Earlywine said.

In August 2023, Hermanio Joseph, an immigrant from Haiti, was driving a minivan and struck a Northwestern Local Schools bus that overturned. Eleven-year-old Aiden Clark died after being ejected from the bus and more than 20 other students were injured in the crash.

Joseph was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter and vehicular homicide and sentenced to a minimum of nine years in prison and a maximum of 13½ years in prison in May.

“When that happened, it really made everything extra bad,” Earlywine said.

Don and Marie Owens, Springfield residents of 40 years, agreed. They said the crash “absolutely” increased tension in the city.

Nathan Clark, Aiden’s father, publicly asked residents and politicians last week to stop using his son’s death as an excuse to say hateful things about immigrants. Clark asked politicians, including Vance and Trump, who’ve brought up his son’s death, to apologize. He said to use his son as a political tool is “reprehensible.”

But national attention on Springfield didn’t stick until the days before the presidential debate when Vance and other Republicans amplified rumors about Haitian immigrants eating people’s pets.

Once Trump repeated the claim to a national audience, everything changed,



Myriam Joseph, a home health care nurse in Springfield, said she feels scared in her community.

Pierre Eric Jean said many Haitians in Springfield feel discouraged after the rumors JD Vance amplified gained traction and some Haitians are talking about moving out of Ohio.
PHOTOS BY LIZ DUFOUR/USA TODAY NETWORK

Rue said.

“They’re eating the dogs. They’re eating the cats. They’re eating the pets of the people that live there,” Trump said during the ABC debate with Vice President Kamala Harris.

City reckons with national attention, threats of violence

Since the presidential debate, Springfield City Hall, two elementary schools, two hospitals, three grocery stores, two colleges and the Ohio Statehouse have received threats.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, a Republican, said Springfield was the target of 33 bomb threats, which all turned out to be hoaxes. Still, the threats derailed government and school operations and forced organizers to cancel its annual cultural festival.

“As a human being, I hate to see a broad brush of lies spread against any group,” Rue said. “My heart goes out to those in the Haitian community that are experiencing this fear and this hate and would like it to stop.”

Some residents spoke about the increased immigration at the Springfield City Commission meeting on Sept. 10, describing it as an “invasion” and expressing concerns about homelessness and fear of rising rents and housing prices and increased response times from police.

Don and Marie Owens said their neighborhood was predominantly Black when they moved in in 1992 and now the neighborhood includes several Haitian families. Their grandson played with the children of a Haitian family growing up and now has a Haitian friend in school.

They have concerns about rising

house prices but were upset to hear the rumors about geese and cats and say the Haitians in Springfield “got a raw deal.”

Marie Owens said the situation is unfair to the Haitians and other Springfield residents.

“It’s unfortunate that Trump said it and he had no clue whether it was true or false,” she said. “It’s a publicity stunt at our cost.”

Some Haitians in Springfield are afraid to leave their houses

Luckens Merzius immigrated to Springfield from Haiti with his wife and two daughters six years ago. The family attends First Baptist Church in the city, where Sunday’s church program includes a prayer request for the people of Haiti.

Merzius said many Haitians left Haiti for political reasons and a fear of violence and now they once again are feeling scared in their community.

Myriam Joseph, a Haitian woman who moved to Springfield in 2020, works as a home health care nurse and primarily cares for white residents. She said she feels afraid when she goes into their homes and residents ask her about politics, like whether she likes Trump or Harris.

Joseph said her 15-year-old son called her last week and asked to be picked up from Springfield High School because he was scared.

DeWine announced the Ohio State Highway Patrol will conduct daily bomb sweeps at Springfield schools and encouraged parents to send their children back to school. Springfield City School District Superintendent Robert Hill said attendance has been down in the district and there were 200 students absent from an elementary school with an enrollment of 500 students on Tuesday.

What’s next for Springfield?

Local officials are concerned about a potential visit from Trump and say resources in the city are strained.

Rue noted at a news conference Tuesday that just a week ago, the city was not facing the threats it’s facing now.

“We’re trying to do these interviews to let the world know that Springfield is a beautiful city,” Rue said. “We’re a hardworking city. We’re a city that wants to move forward together. We’ve always had to struggle for success, but we are here, we are trying to be a vibrant community, and we need help, not hate. We need peace, not unrest.”

Contributing: Amber Hunt and Scott Wartman, Cincinnati Enquirer

OPINION

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CMA exclusion of Beyoncé speaks volumes



Andrea Williams
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY

Word on the street is that country is cool again. The industry is, indeed, in the midst of a surge in popularity, indicated as much by the flow of non-country artists into the genre as current sales and streaming numbers. In 2024 alone, we've gotten new country music from Lana Del Ray and Post Malone, as well as an album announcement from R&B star Monica.

And then there was Beyoncé, whose release of singles “Texas Hold ‘Em” and “16 Carriages” during the Super Bowl last February shook the internet and appeared to usher in a new era for both the international icon and the country music industry itself.

Since then, her success in the genre has been unparalleled and unprecedented: “Cowboy Carter,” which rose to No. 1 on the Top Country Albums Chart, spawned four top-five entries on the Hot Country Songs chart: “Hold ‘Em,” “II Most Wanted,” “Jolene” and “Levi’s Jeans,” the latter featuring the aforementioned Malone.

But last week, when the Country Music Association announced the nominees for its 2024 awards ceremony, to be held in November, Beyoncé had none.

It’s a reality check for everyone who credited “Cowboy Carter” with busting down industry doors that had previously been locked to Black artists, Black women in particular.

Because if you truly thought Beyoncé would be celebrated by the same CMA that didn’t give a Black woman an award until 2023 – and for a white man’s cover of a 35-year-old song, no less – you haven’t been paying attention.

CMA eligibility rules uphold industry exclusion

The CMA has long been able to exclude most Black creatives, and all Black women not named Tracy Chapman, because of eligibility rules that function as intangible gatekeepers, silently reinforcing those of flesh and blood.

Single of the Year nominations must have reached the top 10 of Billboard’s Hot Country Songs, Billboard’s Country Airplay or Country Aircheck’s charts. Song of the Year is “eligible based upon the song’s activity during the eligibility period.”

And while Album of the Year, Musical Event of the Year and Female Vocalist of the Year are less explicit about nomination criteria, they make nods to “national prominence,” “chart position” and “overall contribution to Country Music,” respectively.

Labels and publishers, radio and the industry trade organizations (the CMA as well as the Academy of Country Music) represent the three pillars of country music, working together to construct and maintain a genre that has a very specific sound, a very specific look and a



Beyoncé’s “Cowboy Carter” album climbed the country charts yet she was snubbed by the Country Music Association Awards. PROVIDED BY COLUMBIA RECORDS

very specific fan base.

Outliers (who are always Black men) aside: Understanding that Black women are rarely signed to publisher and/or label deals, and are rarely played at country radio even when they are, helps explain the overwhelming whiteness of CMA Awards history.

But Beyoncé, by virtue of being Beyoncé, was successful in spite of the industry’s rigid systems.

Beyoncé wasn’t reliant on a country label to take a chance on her album and then flounder when attempting to market her outside of its prebuilt, homogeneous audience.

Neither did she need a radio tour or the connections of a well-paid radio promoter to garner spins. “Texas Hold ‘Em” climbed the charts and stayed there, largely on the strength of Beyoncé’s brand and the Beyhive.

Those successes were great for Beyoncé stans, as well as the folks who value “firsts” more than “many.” But for everybody else who knows better – including and especially the Black creatives you’ve never heard of, who are still struggling to eke out a career in the country music industry – Beyoncé’s success was never going to knock down the walls that have been barring Black entry for a hundred years.

Country music has rules, you see, and even though she recruited industry legends Dolly Parton and Willie “Charley Pride is a Super(N-word)” Nelson for “Cowboy Carter,” Beyoncé didn’t play by enough of them.

First, the list of collaborators she curated didn’t include the industry heavyweights who lend immediate credibility and keep music business profits in the hands of chosen few.

Nashville is a songwriters’ town, and there weren’t enough Nashville song-

writers, or their publishers, getting paid from the tracks on “Cowboy Carter.”

Second, while most artists – especially women new to the genre – are forced to slog through grueling, expensive radio tours to promote their music and beg for a few spins, “Texas Hold ‘Em” appeared on the charts virtually overnight.

In a Feb. 15 Variety article, titled “The Country Format is Bullish on Beyoncé’s ‘Texas Hold ‘Em,’ Top Radio Execs Say,” Brian Philips of Cumulus Media called the single “a gift.” He also seemed willing to eschew all preestablished ways of doing country music business.

What might have sealed the fate of ‘Cowboy Carter’

“I don’t care who services what,” Philips said of the traditional process of a label officially “sending” a new song to country radio. “I go on the internet and there it is – that means I’ve been serviced, if I can find a WAV file! I don’t care what their marketing plan is.”

What read like a perfectly benign statement (especially to people outside the industry, who have no idea how it works), might have very well sealed the mainstream industry fate of “Cowboy Carter.”

It also facilitated the need to send a clear message to anyone else who would dare to make country music outside of the Nashville Way and still expect Nashville support.

Country music couldn’t pull Beyoncé’s country music from the charts – not after the Lil Nas X debacle that resulted in a rerelease of “Old Town Road” featuring Billy Ray Cyrus’ stamp of Nashville approval. But that doesn’t mean country music couldn’t simply ignore Beyoncé’s placement on the charts, denying her

the earned opportunity to even be nominated for the industry’s most prestigious awards.

I have a friend, a white woman, who laughed when she told me about her thoughts on the country music industry before moving to Nashville to try her hand as an artist. She could see the genre’s issue with women from afar, even if the lack of racial diversity didn’t sound immediate alarms.

Yet she assuaged the nagging in her gut by telling herself that women in country music weren’t achieving the same level of success as the men because the women weren’t smart enough, or talented enough, or *something* enough.

It had to be the women, she thought. Surely, the problem couldn’t be with the industry itself.

Even when she learned the truth – via the rampant sexual harassment on radio tours and in Music Row offices alike, and in the way labels choose one woman at a time, happily cannibalizing its own product to adhere to industry norms that keep even white women relegated to the margins of radio play and, subsequently, earned revenue – my friend kept her head down and her mouth shut.

She couldn’t risk torpedoing her shot at success.

Country music is as country music does

Later, I had a meeting with a high-ranking executive in country music. She wanted me to know that, despite the industry’s myriad sins and her organization’s role in upholding them, she was from Chicago. Chicago is a very progressive city, she reminded me. And she always, always voted Democrat.

What she didn’t say – and what I can only assume – is that she, like all the other women in town, needed her job, needed her paycheck, and needed to not stick her neck out in an industry in which people with anything to lose rarely, if ever, do. It’s a familiar refrain for all of the industry’s marginalized – the women and, especially, the non-white.

And while the intentions might be rooted in self-preservation or self-promotion or some combination of the two, the result is the same: an industry allowed to run afoul of anything that could even closely resemble fairness or inclusion.

Country music is as country music does because all the people involved – and even some who hope to be – allow it.

Beyoncé got snubbed, but at least she’s Beyoncé.

That’s more than any of the other Black creatives in town can say.

Andrea Williams is an opinion columnist for The Tennessean, where this column originally appeared, and curator of the Black Tennessee Voices initiative. She has an extensive background covering country music, sports, race and society. Email her at adwilliams@tennessean.com or follow her on X (formerly known as Twitter): @AndreaWillWrite

I’m a conservative who believes in reproductive rights



Jim Young
Opinion contributor

Abortion has been an explosive political issue this year. Our U.S. Supreme Court is made up of some individuals who I’m sure are extremely intelligent, thoughtful American legal scholars.

But I have to say, when it comes to making practical, commonsense rulings on real-life issues that face modern-day Americans, they seem to not have a clue. (Their position on presidential immunity is an example.)

Former President Donald Trump brags about having nominated some of the justices who sent the question of a woman’s right to abortion back to the states.

As a lifelong conservative, registered Republican and believer in Christian values, I have a moral problem with the idea of abortion.

If, hypothetically, my beautiful young granddaughter were to find herself facing an unwanted pregnancy, I’d do all I could to persuade her to have her baby and maybe consider adoption or some similar solution.

Nonetheless, if her final decision were to go ahead with the procedure, I would give her a big hug, respect her decision and always love her just the same.

Further, I’d want her to have access to the absolute best medical care available in whatever state she lived.

Politicizing a moral issue

I have complete respect for those Americans who see abortion as a moral, yes, even a mortal sin. Many religious leaders rightfully view the subject with abhorrence. I get it.

But, for the sake of what is best for our democratic society, as a whole, with vastly diverse opinions and circumstances, there are just some problems that such a collective society’s leaders cannot and should not try to solve.

I believe we tried politicizing a moral issue in 1920 with the 18th Amendment, better known as Prohibition. Finally, after many unintended consequences, we gave up in 1933 and repealed the act.

The decision to have an abortion is or should be an extremely, uniquely personal, intimate decision that can only be made by a woman and her closest loved ones. Ultimately, hopefully, a competent medical doctor should also be part of the decision.

Incidentally, issues like contraception, in vitro fertilization, gender alteration are similar issues that should be completely individual ones – not the subject of political debate and social commentary. We don’t need the Supreme Court to tell us where abortion questions should be answered.

State legislators are just like all politicians. Both sides seem to want to use the abortion issue as a political football, to make their political enemies look bad and themselves look like the heroes.

It has become just another issue being used to divide us as a nation.

The Supreme Court should have sent this moral issue back to the place it belongs, the individual American citizen who is directly affected by it.

Preserve individual freedom

Let’s demand that our legislators and our fellow citizens pass a constitutional amendment that prohibits any government entity – federal, state or local – from passing any law that denies any citizen their reproductive rights. Let’s agree that this is an issue that government cannot and should not attempt to control. That’s the kind of individual freedom our founders envisioned.

Let’s move on to solve the many other political issues that deserve intelligent, commonsense solutions by politicians who are real leaders instead of sycophants to demagogues or demagoguery.

Jim Young, retired from a 42-year career as a senior banking executive, is a community leader in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. This column originally appeared in The Oklahoman.



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MAKING WAVES
JEAN SMART

Deborah Vance, or rather the actor who brings her to life onscreen, is headed to Studio 8H. Fresh off her sixth Emmy win, Jean Smart of “Hacks” has been announced as host of the season premiere of “Saturday Night Live,” with musical guest Jelly Roll. The Sept. 28 episode will be Smart’s “SNL” hosting debut. Additional episodes this season will be hosted by Nate Bargatze, Ariana Grande, Michael Keaton and John Mulaney, with musical guests Coldplay, Stevie Nicks, Billie Eilish and Chappell Roan.



IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY

Aldis Hodge is 38. Jon Bernthal is 48. George R.R. Martin is 76.

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Aries (March 21-April 19). Your productivity may be diminished today. The sun confronting Neptune can space you out when there's stuff to be done.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Getting strange reactions from others? Expressing your authentic self may be misinterpreted.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). You may need a break. A time out from your ambitions to get clear is encouraged.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Today is ripe for existential exploration. Abstract understandings are dissected for greater clarity.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Is an investment not what it's cracked up to be? Illusions come to light.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Today, you are aware of everything you give to others. Is your service depleting or strengthening your life force?

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Your vitality may not be what it usually is. Take a slower pace.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A friend may burst your creative bubble today. Discouraged by the practical feedback? Don't lose faith. Find the middle ground.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You may feel like you're living in two worlds. Professional life blooming while your private life is getting uncertain?

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The facts may be elusive. Resort to your practical wisdom. What do your senses say?

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Being asked to give? Someone may need what you have. Expect charitable requests to arrive.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Foggy about a relationship? You may not know how you feel about a certain someone today. Don't jump to conclusions.

STREAMING



Carrie Coon's Midwestern upbringing keeps her humble. “You just put your head down and do your work,” JENNIFER S. ALTMAN/SPECIAL FOR USA TODAY

Carrie Coon may finally be ready for her close-up

Patrick Ryan USA TODAY

NEW YORK – Carrie Coon has never made a film quite like “His Three Daughters.” ● The intimate family drama (now streaming on Netflix) follows estranged sisters Katie (Coon), Christina (Elisabeth Olsen) and Rachel (Natasha Lyonne) as they reunite to care for their ailing patriarch. The movie was shot in just three weeks in a cramped New York apartment; next-door units were fashioned into makeshift green rooms, while the building’s basement became a production office. Miraculously, there were no noise complaints from nettled tenants. ● “They emailed all the neighbors so they knew we were there,” Coon recalls with a grin. “We kept respectful hours.”

The character was written specifically for Coon by filmmaker Azazel Jacobs, who found her “absolutely brilliant” in 2020’s “The Nest” and endeavored to work together. He knew she could peel back vulnerable layers of the high-strung Katie, who bulldozes her siblings as she tries to micromanage their dad’s final days in hospice.

“The fact that Carrie could play a locomotive train is not the surprise,”

Jacobs says. “It’s what happens after that, that I felt she could really go in some other direction.”

In real life, Coon, 43, grew up as the middle child of five in Copley, Ohio. She always has been the family mediator, although like Katie, “I can be overbearing with my unsolicited advice.” Reading Jacobs’ script,

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Natasha Lyonne, from left, Elisabeth Olsen and Carrie Coon star as siblings in “His Three Daughters.” PROVIDED BY SAM LEVY/NETFLIX

MOVIES

‘Substance’ co-stars bare more than their bodies

Brian Truitt
USA TODAY

Making the absolutely bonkers body-horror film “The Substance” was an emotionally taxing, physically exhausting effort for Demi Moore and Margaret Qualley. Some days were definitely better than others, however.

Lying in a clump on the floor with your co-star in a state of undress might seem like one of those uncomfortable situations, but Qualley was all good with it. “I don’t mind Demi Moore naked on me. Like, it’s just not a problem. There’s so much worse in the film,” she says, cracking her fellow actress up over a Zoom conversation.

“You probably felt more safe in those moments than some of the others,” Moore figures.

“I was *fine* with that,” Qualley adds. “Yeah, you want me to fall on Demi Moore naked? Sure. OK.”

Writer/director Coralie Fargeat’s “The Substance” (in theaters Friday) has become the buzziest horror film of the year after garnering a 13-minute standing ovation at Cannes Film Festival and winning the Midnight Madness People’s Choice award at the recent Toronto International Film Festival. Moore’s go-for broke performance has also put her in the best actress Oscar conversation.



A TV fitness celebrity (Demi Moore) experiments with getting younger in “The Substance.” PROVIDED BY TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

In the film, she plays Elisabeth Sparkle, a middle-aged TV fitness celebrity who’s shoved out the door by her male boss (Dennis Quaid) in favor of someone younger. Elisabeth signs up for a black-market drug that promises to bring out her “younger, more beautiful, more perfect” version. A shockingly brutal process births Elisabeth’s younger self (Qualley), but they have to follow certain rules, most important switching bodies every seven days.

Calling herself Sue, the younger version is cast as Elisabeth’s replacement and becomes an instant star, and when she begins to bend those rules, a battle between the two leads to a wild and gore-filled climax.

Qualley, 29, reports that it’s been “cool to be in the room” with people wowed by Moore’s “unexpected” performance. “That’s how I feel about Demi’s career,” she says. “She goes from ‘G.I. Jane’ to ‘Striptease.’ It’s all over the place and every single one, she’s going into some uncharted territory, completely vulnerable, completely badass (and) utterly singular.”

Moore, 61, finds it “a joy and a pleasure” to have a script come her way with “such rich, complex characters” as well as “something that really pushed us out of our respective comfort zones.”

Adds Qualley: “I mean, understatement of a lifetime.”

During the grueling 5½-month shoot, both actresses underwent a bunch of prosthetics work – Elisabeth’s body gradually turns into more of a horror show due to Sue’s actions, and Moore would undergo upward of six hours of applications. But she also appreciated having her emotional vulnerability tested in nude scenes where Elisabeth studies her body.

“Part of what was attractive is I knew that this wasn’t about highlighting my (body) and being lit in my most attractive ways, that in fact, it would

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MUSIC NEWS & VIEWS

Ringo is a joyful ringmaster with All Starrs

Melissa Ruggieri
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – About halfway through the show with his All Starr Band, Ringo Starr reached into the crowd to retrieve a sign proffered by a fan.

“I agree!” he said with a smile as he held up the white poster board that read, “Ringo for President 2024.”

It isn’t too farfetched a thought – except the pesky fact that Starr was born in Liverpool, England – given the enduring love from tens of millions around the world as well as the 3,000-plus who filled The Anthem in D.C. on Tuesday.

Starr is in the midst of a fall leg of his tour with the All Starrs, which began this most recent run in May and will end Sept. 25 in New York.

His compilation tours, which began in 1989 and have continued steadily with a rotating cast of familiar names equipped with their own catalog of hits, remains a novel idea. Why not pair the iconic Beatles drummer with a crop of versatile players who want to have as much fun as he clearly does onstage?

This current assembly offers another multit talented bunch: Colin Hay (guitar; Men at Work), Steve Lukather (guitar; Toto), Warren Ham (horns, percussion, flute; Kansas), Hamish Stuart (bass; Average White Band), Gregg Bissonette (drums; David Lee Roth) and Buck Johnson (keyboards; Aerosmith).

The 19-song, 100-minute show attracted a multigenerational crowd primed to stand and video (and stand and video some more) and sing along with Starr-fronted Beatles treasures such as “Yellow Submarine” and “Octopus’s Garden,” solo hits such as “It Don’t Come Easy,” and “Photograph” and immediately identifiable radio classics from the band.

“Those that don’t know any of these songs ... God help you,” Starr joked at the start of the concert.



Ringo Starr spreads his message of peace and love at a show in Austin, Texas, with his All Starr Band on June 9. The tour played The Anthem in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday. SUZANNE CORDEIRO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Starr is an ageless wonder

A Carl Perkins cover – rockabilly toe-tapper “Matchbox” – kicked off the show, but soon the animated Starr, who bounced out from backstage and flashed peace signs, settled in for his own track, “It Don’t Come Easy.”

A diminutive figure in rock-star-cool black pants and jacket over a T-shirt bearing – what else? – a peace sign, the 84-year-old Starr showed the benefits

of his healthful lifestyle as he swayed on stage whenever he clasped the mic and jogged up to his drum riser in the middle of “Back Off Boogaloo” to pick up the beat with Bissonette.

Starr remained onstage for the majority of the show, only bowing out to “have a cup of tea.” Meanwhile, his ace cast showcased their versatility through a winding jam of Average White Band’s “Cut the Cake” and, with the spotlight on Bissonette, a roll call of vintage rock

songs (“We Will Rock You,” “Rock and Roll” and a masterful meshing of the drum fills in “Golden Slumbers,” “Carry That Weight,” “The End” and Van Halen’s “Hot for Teacher”).

Men at Work and Toto classics steal the Ringo Starr show

As gratifying as it to witness a Beatle performing Beatles songs, what makes these All Starr Band shows so inviting is their accessibility.

Three of the night’s highlights came from the songbooks of Hay and Lukather (who played with the fierceness of a guy whose guitar is heard on more than 1,500 songs).

The witty Hay, who told a story about hearing Men at Work songs on the speakers at CVS while waiting in line for his prescriptions, led a muscular “Overkill,” accented by Ham’s elastic tenor sax notes and his commendable victory on the song’s glorious key change.

Later in the show, a guitar-driven “Who Can It Be Now?,” that sax-filled tale of finding peace and paranoia, kept the crowd standing as they yelled along.

But the reason they already were hyped was thanks to Toto’s “Africa.” The band performed an engaging rendition – again Ham amazed with his work on congas, flute and tenor sax – of a song that possesses one of the most sublime melodies of its era.

Naturally, Starr’s material wrapped the show with the singsong-y “Photograph” and an anthem introduced by him saying, “If you don’t know this next song, you’re in the wrong venue.”

“With a Little Help From My Friends,” performed in front of giant yellow flowers dancing on the screen behind the stage, extracted the expected vocalizing from the crowd. But most endearing was seeing the band look as if it was having as much fun playing this sweet chestnut as the fans singing its message of togetherness.

Coon

Continued from Page 1B

the actress admired his unvarnished approach to grief, as well as the dark humor that cuts through.

On paper, it might “sound really depressing,” Coon says. “But whenever I see something that doesn’t have a sense of humor, it doesn’t feel real to me. The absurdity of the human condition must find its way in.”

‘His Three Daughters’ caps off a banner year for Coon

“His Three Daughters” could catapult Coon into the Oscar race after more than a decade of jaw-dropping work on stage and screen. The Tony nominee made her film debut in 2014’s “Gone Girl,” playing Ben Affleck’s wisecracking sister. (At a hometown screening of the David Fincher thriller, Coon’s Catholic grandmother flinched every time she dropped an f-bomb, “and I said it in just about every sentence in that movie, so that was really painful for me.”)

Coon has worked steadily ever since, juggling roles in awards dramas (“Widows,” “The Post”) and blockbuster franchises (“Ghostbusters,” “Avengers”). She also has become a queen of prestige TV, starring in FX’s “Fargo” and HBO’s “The Leftovers” and “The Gilded Age.” In July, she earned a best actress Emmy nomination for the latter, playing the relentlessly ambitious Bertha Russell.

“Gilded,” in particular, has become a niche success. Created by “Downton Abbey” mastermind Julian Fellowes, and starring mostly Broadway veterans, the addictive period drama has never been a ratings juggernaut. But it has gradually found a passionate, online fan base of women and gay men.

“It seems to be something younger people are watching with their mothers and grandmothers, either because they like theater or they think (co-star) Morgan Spector is hot,” Coon says, laughing. “And, of course, I really do feel like Gay Twitter saved our show. Never underestimate the power of Gay Twitter!”

Even as her star rises, she credits her Midwestern upbringing for keeping her humble. “You just put your head down and do your work,” Coon says. “I haven’t had a big gap where I haven’t been working, and I’m really proud of my résumé.”

And, the actress insists, she’s not (yet) at the level of fame where people stop her on the street: “Everything that’s happening to me is happening on the internet – not in my real life. And thank goodness! I wouldn’t want it any other way.”



Carrie Coon and Morgan Spector play a married couple in “The Gilded Age.” PROVIDED BY BARBARA NITKE/HBO

Coon and Tracy Letts are raising their kids to love cinema

Coon’s stock will continue to rise next year with Season 3 of HBO’s “The White Lotus,” which she shot in Thailand this past spring. (An avid reader, she spent most of those 18-hour flights blissfully unplugged.)

She also has a small role in this fall’s “Another Happy Day,” a comedy about postpartum depression. Writer/director Nora Fiffer was “committed to doing an eight-hour workday with access to child care, and that is a movement we should all get behind in every industry,” says Coon, who shares two young kids with actor/playwright Tracy Letts.

“I’m lucky I’m in a supportive marriage – my husband is not afraid of female ambition and I really like being home,” Coon says. “Now the things that take me away from my family have to be really special. I’m very privileged to be in a position where I get to make choices about that.”

Coon and Letts are, in many ways, the ultimate creative power couple. The pair are hoping to bring two of his plays, “Bug” and “August: Osage County,” back to New York soon. (“They’re essentially period pieces now, but what they were predicting about the country is staggering,” Coon explains.) They also are avid cinephiles, with a collection of more than 10,000 Blu-rays.

The parents are now passing that love onto their kids, who watch at least one film every day. Although their 6-year-old son recently enjoyed “Inside Out 2,” he prefers old Charlie Chaplin and Japanese “Gamera” movies.

“The other day, we asked my 3-year-old what she wanted,” Coon says. “She said, I want to watch ‘The Fly,’” the 1958 sci-fi horror film starring Vincent Price.

“We said, you don’t want to watch that! You’re just trying to impress your brother! But she’s obsessed with it – they’re total nerds.”



Margaret Qualley stars as a TV fitness celebrity’s younger self in “The Substance.” PROVIDED BY MUBI

Substance

Continued from Page 1B

be amplifying those things that you might see as flaws or that you don’t want somebody to see,” she says.

Qualley’s own personal horror show was a sexy dance class that Sue leads, twerking and gyrating in a skin-baring pink leotard.

“Being a woman and having your relationship to your body is so specific, based on the cards that you’re dealt,” Qualley says. In her career, “I’m super-lucky that I didn’t have to use my body in that way because it doesn’t come very naturally to me. That said, doing that dance, that was the most emotionally vulnerable, scary thing for me because it’s outside of my comfort zone. It’s not how I feel hot, but I had to ‘feel hot’ while doing it.”

And while their characters don’t share that much screen time, Moore and Qualley usually were working on the same days and acted as each other’s support system. “Demi would tap in, I would tap out,” Qualley says. “We would just pass each other and look at each other like, ‘Mm-hmm. You got this.’”

“The Substance” explores themes of age and sexism but it’s not just limited to celebrities: Moore sees a universal appeal in how we all view our bodies, men and women alike. The movie’s Hollywood setting is the “perfect” way to communicate that, “where outside criticism is already heightened, that you’re already on display,” she says. “We’ve all stepped through that door of self-judgment, self-criti-



Qualley, left, and Demi Moore attend the premiere of “The Substance” in Los Angeles. ETIENNE LAURENT/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

cism, that kind of battle, and in many cases can lead to almost a violence against ourselves.”

Qualley didn’t see herself in Sue very much – “I’m not like a soulless sexbot or something” – but agrees that everyone can relate to Demi’s portrayal of Elisabeth. “The way this is portrayed is a satire, it’s exaggerated, and yet it’s effective because it’s based on some level of reality,” she says.

There’s “almost like an unspoken collective agreement about women’s value diminishing as they get older, their place,” Moore concludes. “But I don’t like to view anyone as a victim. Certainly not myself.”

“The hope is that maybe we can be part of laying down some new stones on that pathway to a cultural shift by creating just an awareness,” she adds. “But that awareness starts within each of us as individuals. We can’t wait for the outside to catch up to us. When we change what we believe about our value, then thereby the outside world will reflect it.”

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Anna Gundlach
BY Kiran Pandey
LETTERBOXD FILMS

ACROSS

1 Russian title derived from “Caesar”

5 Taj Mahal’s city

9 Seeks divine intervention

14 Cunning plan

15 Some savings accounts

16 Shakespearean lover boy

17 Killer whale

18 Slam ____

19 Vacant

20 2005 movie based on an Alan Moore graphic novel

23 Lauder of cosmetics

24 “Specifically . . .”

25 Device dropped in victory

28 Tie in chess

30 “You saved me!”

32 Archer’s talent

35 Some breakfast chains

38 Bothersome

39 2011 movie prequel to a superhero trilogy

42 World-weariness

43 Kind of roll derived from “Caesar”

44 Temporary vehicle

46 Espionage org.

47 Addition result

50 Droop

51 Hybrid utensil

54 It might be skipped across a pond

56 Just in

58 1993 David Cronenberg romantic drama

60 Shrek and Fiona

62 Succulent in skin care

63 Central Plains tribe

64 Actress Knightley

65 Chow ____

66 “Pants on fire” person

67 Catch some Z’s

68 Pottery and poetry, e.g.

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DOWN

1 Stash of treasure

2 Rides the waves

3 Fancy neckwear

4 Brought up

5 Politician’s assistant

6 Menial labor

7 That guy at a party whom no one seems to know

8 Slanted

9 Words that might precede “with a cherry on top”

10 Tomato variety

11 Electric guitar equipment

12 As of now

13 Ingredient in tempah

21 Uses two-factor authentication, for example

22 “____ and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!”

25 Sticky situation

26 Gets on the nerves of

27 Not forthcoming

29 Sushi tuna

31 “I ____ . . .” (start of a rumor)

32 Figure skating leaps

33 “Don’t think of me as a perfect person”

34 “The Glass ____” (Tennessee Williams play)

36 “The More You Know” spot

37 “Don’t stop now!”

40 Habit wearer

41 CBS forensics franchise

45 Turntable speed stat

47 Sentimental sort

48 Empty, like a truck

49 Late-night TV host Seth

52 “Becoming” author Michelle

53 Measuring stick

55 Creature under a bridge

57 “____ All Going to the World’s Fair” (2021 horror film)

59 Perfect scores, often

60 Gives the thumbs-up to

61 Gullible target

Answers: Call 1-900-988-8300, 99 cents a minute; or, with a credit card, 1-800-320-4280.

TXTPERT

Across

2. 72846

4. 4673

6. 8439

8. 4255929

9. 727567

Down

1. 942824

2. 738

3. 6239

5. 84552

6. 86935

7. 37937

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Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Find and Circle:

Six stringed instruments

Four six-letter U.S. state capitals

Two neighboring countries

Two Hawaiian islands

Number of moons orbiting Pluto

Thursdays answer: BUTTER YOGURT CHEESE CREAM MILK / SWAN DOVE TERN WREN / DOLLAR POUND PESO / VITAMIN GRADE NOTE / EXCEL WORD

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 9/20

And others (Latin)

Painter Salvador

Volkswagen model

Existence (Latin)

Ford model

Volkswagen model

Thursdays Answer

“Catch” and “over” endings

Classic board game

© Andrews McMeel

1. **POKER**

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

DINNER

Clues:

1. They can be wagered

2. Contributors

3. Holding office, say

4. Electricity provider

5. “Burger King,” for example

6. Christen in honor of

7. When to have dessert

Thursdays Answer

ANCIENT / PAST / DUE / SOUTH / ATLANTIC / OCEAN / BREEZE

PAST / DUE / SOUTH / ATLANTIC / OCEAN / BREEZE / THROUGH

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PLAY ONLINE

PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

DON'T QUOTE ME

English actress Emilia Clarke shares this advice.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.

BIGGER BOOK FATHER SHELF TRUST WHOSE

MY _____ ALWAYS SAID, ‘NEVER _____ ANYONE _____ TV IS _____ THAN THEIR _____

© WIGGLES 3D GAMES

Thursdays Answer: “It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious.” - Oscar Wilde

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES

1 knit or purl (6)

2 quote (4)

3 refreshing one’s memory (9)

4 sowers (8)

5 Renaissance scholar (7)

6 Alden of “Hail, Caesar!” (10)

7 fictional detective Wolfe (4)

SOLUTIONS

STI ERA IND CI PL

REM EH RO SM CH

US REI TE ING TE

AN NE TCH REN RS

Thursdays Answer: 1. EMERALD 2. CLARENCE 3. FELLOWS 4. DEHUMANIZE 5. BIOSCIENCE 6. PARRIED 7. FOREWARN

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ACCEH

ONRWS

LOERNL

LHMIEU

When George Washington jumped his stallion over the fence, he rode on ____

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Yesterday’s Jumbles: BURRO ABOUT FOUGHT OXYGEN Answer: The NFL kicker not only made lots of money during his career, but he had — FUN TO BOOT

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Numbers

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Feedback: feedback@usatoday.com



SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

1	9							
7	8		9	5				3
			2		9	1		
		2		1				5
	9		3			2		
5			8		7			
	1	5	4					
8			9	5			7	4
					8		2	

9/20 DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

SUDOKU FUSION
ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

	1		2		
			5		
		6	3	2	
	2	1	6		
		5			
		2		6	

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

Thursdays Answer

2	4	9	7	6	8	5	3	1
3	6	5	1	2	4	7	9	8
1	7	8	5	9	3	6	4	2
7	5	3	4	8	9	2	1	6
9	1	4	6	7	2	3	8	5
8	2	6	3	5	1	9	7	4
4	3	7	2	1	6	8	5	9
5	8	2	9	4	7	1	6	3
6	9	1	8	3	5	4	2	7

9/19

KENKEN

3- 7+

2÷ 3 48x

5+

6x

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1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 (easy) or 1 through 6 (challenging) without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY’S SOLUTION

1-		12x	1
2	3	4	1
3-	1	2÷	3
4	1	2	3
7+	3	4	1
1-	2		

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KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo Difficulty: EASY

25 41 42 28

43 30 21 42

14

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Solution to Thursday’s puzzle

4	12	10	7
2	8	5	6
13	3	11	9
16	14	1	15

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Armed conflicts

5 Word of woe

9 Superhero’s garment

13 “— a kick out of you”

14 Hinder

16 Spoken

17 Brass instrument

18 “Lorna —”

19 “Untouchables” leader Eliot —

20 Funeral vehicle

22 Incite

24 Actor — Diesel

25 Philosopher — Descartes

26 Fought for

31 Grouch

34 “— we there yet?”

35 Inevitable

36 Moving about

38 Shuttlecock

40 French artist

43 Place of exile

44 Ascot

46 Fly high

48 Actress — MacGraw

49 Epithet

50 Advocated

52 College administrator

55 Shade tree

56 Inferior verse

60 Calyx parts

64 River in Ireland

65 Separately

67 Home goods retailer

68 Injury mark

69 More stark

70 Hoop

71 Singer — Perry

72 “— and the Tramp”

73 Means justifier

DOWN

1 Among

2 Chills and fever

3 Singer — McEntire

4 Go hungry

5 Postscript

6 Star sign

7 Corpuscle

8 Man from Madrid

9 Talk

10 Region

11 Days gone by

12 If not

15 Nerve network

21 Breaks a commandment

23 Old Peruvian

26 Bits of paint

27 Clapton and Stoltz

28 Wild

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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

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29 Period

30 Thick

32 Book of maps

33 Book of scriptures

37 Foray

39 Hard work

41 Dawn

42 Decorative hanging cloth

45 On the house

47 Part

51 Game VIP

53 Bedouin

54 India neighbor

56 Escritoire

57 Killer whale

58 Pesky bug

59 Pasternak character

61 Related

62 Furnish

63 Droops

66 Scarlet

TELEVISION PREVIEW

Farrell terrifies, mesmerizes as ‘The Penguin’



Kelly Lawler
Columnist
USA TODAY

This isn’t Gotham like you remember it.

Sure, the infamous city of the one and only Batman has always been portrayed in comics, movies and television as a seedy, crime-infested hellscape with a few skyscrapers thrown in. The cops are dirty, the politicians are corrupt and even the criminals are too evil for the other criminals. This is the town that Heath Ledger’s Joker from “The Dark Knight” just wanted to watch burn.

But there’s something even grimmer about the Gotham portrayed in HBO’s new Batman-adjacent “The Penguin” (Thursday, 9 EDT/PDT, moves to Sundays starting Sept. 29, ★★☆☆ out of four). This Gotham is full of the same bad guys, violent crime and lack of sunlight (seriously, it’s always overcast in Gotham), but this time there’s no hope. That’s perhaps because there’s no hero here: no Batman, no CGI, no battles of good and evil. Just Tony Soprano in Gotham City. Or rather, Colin Farrell as the titular villain in layers of prosthetic makeup trying to make a profit and gain some power amid the chaos. It’s fascinating, if deeply depressing, to watch.

Farrell is reprising the role you couldn’t believe he played in 2022’s “The Batman” alongside Robert Pattinson and Zoe Kravitz. The series takes place in the aftermath of the seawall explosion from the end of the movie (committed by Paul Dano’s Riddler). The city is in disarray and the death of crime boss Carmine Falcone (John Turturro) has left a power vacuum.

After the Penguin (also known by Oswald Cobblepott, or Oz Cobb, it’s not to-



Colin Farrell stars as Oz, aka the Penguin, in “The Penguin.”



Cristin Milioti is Sofia Falcone in the HBO series. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HBO

tally clear) commits an ill-advised crime of passion in the first few minutes of the premiere, he’s forced onto a new and dangerous path to keep himself alive in the complicated criminal underbelly of the city. Oz’s story is not clean and it’s not pretty; he pillages, cheats and mur-

ders with abandon. He doesn’t care who he runs over, or how hard. He only cares that he’s alive at the end of another day.

Batman fans will recognize names from the comic books and other shows and films. The mobster Falcone family is prominent, even without Carmine, with psychotic daughter Sofia Falcone (Cristin Milioti, a revelation) taking a leading role. There are other mobsters and criminals in the Penguin’s world, from the slimy Johnny Vitti (Michael Kelly) to Oz’s new green recruit Victor Aguilar (Rhenzy Feliz).

If you don’t recognize anyone, it’s fine. “Penguin” wisely crafts a story that doesn’t require knowledge of the intricacies of Batman lore or even the 2022 film to understand and appreciate. It’s a fully realized story all on its own, which is what every TV show should be, spin-off or not.

“Penguin” is, more or less, just a

crime show that happens to have some Batman villains. It is well thought out by the producers, including “The Batman” director Matt Reeves, Farrell himself and Lauren LeFranc (“Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.”). But the success of the show depends entirely on Farrell’s performance, which is as shocking and disturbing (in a good way) as it was in the film.

Truly there are some onscreen transformations that are impressive, and then there’s what the makeup department has done to Farrell, who is unrecognizable.

But in spite of a heavy layer of silicon and who knows what else on his face, the actor never lets anything get in the way of his cold, unsettling character.

He’s helped chiefly by Milioti, who is gleefully unhinged as Sofia, aka The Hangman. She’s a deranged killer that has been released from Arkham Asylum and is being shunned by her own family for her, well, impulsive ways. Milioti’s giant eyes, which have helped her play lovable and adorable characters in the past, are instead windows into a demonic soul, deployed in ways discomfiting and terrifying. She finds in Oz an ally or an enemy or both. Either way, the two actors are exquisite in their shared scenes, which are the best part of the series.

“Penguin” is at many times far too morose and dark. No one is expecting a comedy, but there is a fine line between grisly storytelling that is compelling and plots so depressing (and sometimes boring) you want to turn off the TV. “Penguin” jumps back and forth over the line for the eight-episode season.

Still, it’s hard to keep your eyes off Farrell. He is committed to the role, to say the least. He might make you worried if you don’t watch.

Who knows what the Penguin would do to us?

TELEVISION

Emily Deschanel’s podcast takes a fresh look at ‘Bones’

Kelly Lawler
USA TODAY

Bones has some thoughts on “Bones.”

Well, Emily Deschanel, who played Temperance “Bones” Brennan on 12 seasons of the Fox crime drama “Bones” from 2005-17, has some thoughts on the 200-plus episodes of the series. With her friend and co-star Carla Gallo, who played the later-season role of Daisy Wick, Deschanel is on a mission to re-watch the entire series and talk about it on her new podcast, “Boneheads,” out Wednesday from Lemonada Media.

The pair will watch all 245 episodes in order (if the podcast lasts that long) and add commentary for fans. Topics include a cynical appreciation for the fashion choices of the early 2000s and behind-the-scenes gossip. (You’ll have to tune in to find out which actress booked the part of Brennan before Deschanel but then dropped out.) And occasionally, they’ll train a critical eye on a series that hasn’t always aged well when it comes to stereotypes and the sexualization of female characters.

It’s become something of a cliché for stars to look back on their most successful series in podcasts, from “Office Ladies” to “Talking Sopranos,” and that’s something Deschanel keenly understands. “Everyone’s done a rewatch podcast,” she said in an interview last year, before the podcast was delayed by the SAG-AFTRA actors’ strike. “Including my husband and my sister,” she added, referring to “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia” actor/writer David Hornsby and sister Zooe Deschanel (“New Girl”), respectively. “We decided to jump



Brennan (Emily Deschanel) at a crime scene in a 2011 episode of “Bones.” The actress is rewatching all 245 episodes for her podcast. PROVIDED BY FOX

on the bandwagon.”

Deschanel is the ultimate “Bones” insider: She was never absent from a single episode in the series’ long run, but Gallo was around only for a small portion of the series and never watched it regularly, which Deschanel sees as an asset. “We have not just inside stories, but someone watching it with fresh eyes

saying, ‘Wait, what were you guys thinking? Why did you do that?’ ”

And in a long running and somewhat dated series, there are plenty of chances to ask “what were you guys thinking?” In the podcast’s first episode, Deschanel recounts a story about an unnamed executive who told her “Bones” only got on the air because of Deschanel’s décollet-

age.

She knew there would be things she didn’t like when she revisited “Bones.”

“Things that felt uncomfortable at the time feel even more uncomfortable” now, she said. “(Carla and I) knew going in that there’d be some uncomfortable things or some things we didn’t like about the show. It’s a bit daunting. It’s hard to know how to address things like that when our ultimate goal is to entertain ‘Bones’ fans. But we didn’t want to not criticize when things felt weird or wrong.”

Deschanel believes she and Gallo are tough but fair, and that others involved in the show, many of whom will later appear on the podcast, would agree. Future guests include T.J. Thyne (Jack Hodgins), Michaela Conlin (Angela Montenegro), Tamara Taylor (Camille Saroyan), Eric Millegan (Zack Addy) and series creator Hart Hanson. Deschanel also promises her co-star David Boreanaz, who played steely FBI Agent Seeley Booth, hopefully will stop by for an episode when his schedule allows.

The podcast also provides Deschanel a chance to look back at her own life, which has changed dramatically (including marriage and motherhood) in the nearly two decades since she first put on Temperance Brennan’s lab coat.

“I’m glad to look at it now, (19) years later, because I have more of a perspective on it,” she said. “It’s nice to feel like I was part of something that I really liked. I’m curious to examine what the show meant to the world of television and to my life as well. It was a good experience overall, doing ‘Bones.’ I wouldn’t want to do a rewatch podcast if it wasn’t.”

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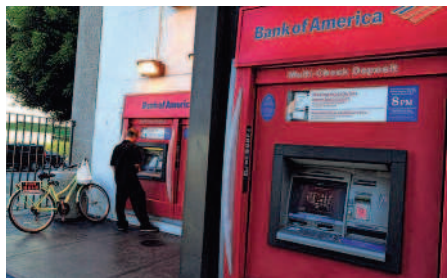
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FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

STUDY: IN-PERSON BANKING MAY BE A THING OF THE PAST

Finance and credit-building company Self Financial recently released a study using data provided by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) on consumer banking trends. Researchers found that in-person banking is currently on the outs. According to the data, bank closures have been on the rise for more than a decade, with the number of physical branch locations consistently trending downward since 2012. Since 2018, an average of 1,646 branches have closed each year in the U.S., according to the data, bringing the total to 69,590 in 2022 compared with 82,461 in 2012.

FED RATE CUT SHOULDN'T AFFECT FOREIGN EXCHANGE

The Federal Reserve lowered its key interest rate by a half percentage point Wednesday, its first rate cut in four years. As a result, the value of the dollar abroad fell slightly. Yet there's no need to rush to the nearest foreign currency exchange bureau if you have a trip abroad planned. Because the rate cut has been forecast for so long, it's largely already been priced into the value of the dollar in international markets. "Exchange rates tend to adjust when a decline is expected," Laura Veldkamp, professor of economics and finance at Columbia Business School, told USA TODAY on Tuesday before the decision.

DEARBORN SAUSAGE WIENER PRODUCTS ARE RECALLED

Dearborn Sausage Company, Inc. has issued a recall of nearly 2,000 pounds of product due to undeclared allergens, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) said Thursday. According to the recall notice, the labels for two ready-to-eat (RTE) wiener products were swapped, resulting in soy, a common allergen, and pork going undeclared on the packaging. Dearborn was notified of the switch after a retailer complained that beef wiener products had been mislabeled as beef and pork, and vice versa. The Michigan-based company said the products were shipped to locations in Ohio.



PROVIDED BY MOUNTAIN MIKE'S PIZZA

INDULGE IN SPICY DEALS FOR PEPPERONI PIZZA DAY

Restaurants are offering deals on Sept. 20 in honor of National Pepperoni Pizza Day. While the deals at Domino's aren't specifically tied to National Pepperoni Pizza Day, customers can order any two or more menu items for \$6.99 each as part of the Mix & Match deal. And when online customers mix and match any two or more medium two-topping pizzas, they can upgrade one of their pizzas to a large for free until Sept. 29. Papa John's is offering a similar deal in which customers can pair any two or more Papa Pairings items for \$6.99 each. While also not tied to Pepperoni Pizza Day, Little Caesars fans can get a large 3-Meat Treat for \$8.99. And Papa Murphy's is offering 25% off orders of \$25 or more on Sept. 20.

Privacy audit can keep phone safe

Check permissions and lock down everything



Tech Talk
Kim Komando

We've all got a load of sensitive info on our phones – texts with loved ones, banking details, passwords and family photos.

You don't want anyone snooping around, whether it's an app maker on the other side of the world or the guy

sitting behind you at the coffee shop. Take five minutes to run this privacy audit, and then pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

Check your permissions

When you download apps, they often request a variety of permissions to access different parts of your phone – think your location, camera, microphone, contacts and text messages. Some are essential for the app to function properly (like a navigation app needing access to your location) but others are absolutely unnecessary.

The most critical permissions to pay attention to are your phone's location, camera and microphone. Only trust

apps that have a clear, legitimate need for these permissions.

Use your common sense, too. Ask yourself: Does a shopping app really need access to my contacts? Should a photo editing app know my current location? For me, the answer is no. Granting unnecessary permissions increases your privacy exposure, so it's better to err on the side of caution.

To check what permissions each app have:

- **Apple iPhone:** Go to **Settings > Privacy & Security**, then **Location Services**, **Camera** or **Microphone**.
- **Google Pixel:** Open **Settings > Security and privacy > Privacy controls**

See **KOMANDO**, Page 6B



Walmart gets jump on holiday shopping

Holiday Deals to start in October

Betty Lin-Fisher USA TODAY

Walmart has announced its Holiday Deals days for October as consumers have begun shopping earlier. ● Walmart will host its Holiday Deals event from Oct. 8-13, the retailer said on Wednesday. ● It will coincide with – and last longer – than competitor Amazon's second Prime Day sales, also in October. ● Amazon on Tuesday announced its Prime Big Deal Days would be held Oct. 8 and 9. The discounts will be available to Amazon Prime customers in the U.S. and 17 other countries. ● People are shopping earlier for holidays and holiday celebrations and Walmart has adapted its approach to serve its shoppers, Latriece Watkins, executive vice president and chief

See **WALMART**, Page 6B

Walmart will host its **Holiday Deals** event from **Oct. 8-13**, the retailer said on **Wednesday**.

Black Friday deals are on display on **Nov. 16, 2023**, at the **Walton Street Walmart** in **Rockford, Ill.**

KARA HAWLEY/
USA TODAY NETWORK

What to do on the first day of your cruise

Plan ahead to avoid check-in hassles

Nathan Diller
USA TODAY

When Mike Smith takes a cruise, he doesn't waste any time. Cabins often aren't ready for guests until early afternoon, so the 35-year-old brings a swimsuit in his backpack and changes in one of the public bathrooms after boarding.

Then he grabs a drink and sits by the pool.

"I really want to use my two hours to relax, enjoy," said Smith, who teaches American Sign Language and makes travel content on his Instagram account. "I don't want to have to idly walk around and wait for my luggage."

While Smith – who has taken nearly 10 cruises just in the past two years –



Mike Smith and his boyfriend, Kurt Pinto, take cruises together.

PROVIDED BY MIKE SMITH

has his embarkation day routine down, first-time passengers may find themselves wondering what parts of the ship are open, when their luggage will arrive and more.

Here's what to expect:

How do I prepare for cruise embarkation day?

Smith starts getting ready to board well before his departure date.

Cruise lines typically notify guests via email or their app that they can check in and choose from several arrival times. Smith said he tries to get the "earliest boarding time possible."

"I'll try my very best to do it that day when they (say) you can," he said. Cruise lines encourage guests to check in ahead of time.

"Due to government regulations requiring cruise lines to submit final departure manifests at least 60 minutes prior to sailing, guests are requested to complete check-in no later than 3 days prior to their cruise," Royal Caribbean International said on its website, for example. "If you do not complete check-in

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Walmart

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merchandising officer for Walmart U.S., said in a news release.

“Customers are still shopping, especially for seasonal events. They aren’t missing moments to celebrate together,” Watkins said in a conference call with reporters late Wednesday. She said that value-seeking customers are from “all income levels,” highlighting Walmart’s recent prices cuts across 7,200 items.

Walmart also is lowering the cost of its Thanksgiving meal and offering it earlier and for a longer period to help shoppers stretch their dollars, Watkins said.

What are Walmart Holiday Deals?

During Walmart’s Holiday Deals days, the retailer said it will offer deep savings across departments such as electronics, home, fashion and toys. Some of the deals shoppers will be able to snag include a special buy on a TV,

\$300 off a refrigerator, a \$100 discount on a gaming laptop, \$170 off a powered ride-on toy truck and \$60 off on a tool set.

The event begins Oct. 8 at midnight EDT on Walmart.com and the retailer’s app. Walmart+ members get exclusive early access to shop the most-wanted deals, 12 hours earlier than other shoppers, the retailer said.

The deals will be available on Oct. 9 at local stores when the locations open, Walmart said.

Watkins said the October sale will serve as a kickoff to holiday savings, including during Walmart’s Black Friday and Cyber Monday events.

Walmart to offer inflation-free Thanksgiving meal earlier, longer

Walmart on Wednesday also said it was “removing inflation to offer a traditional Thanksgiving meal at an even lower price than last year to help customers set their holiday table without compromise.” The Walmart holiday meal this year serves up to 10 people and includes 28 customer favorites, includ-

ing turkey from under \$1 a pound to trimmings and dessert, the retailer said. The value will be less than \$7 a person.

Walmart said it was offering its inflation-free holiday meal weeks earlier this year, starting Oct. 14 and running through Dec. 25 in stores and on Walmart.com.

New this year, customers can gift the holiday meal for pickup or delivery to neighbors, friends and family. Customers also have a new option to donate the equivalent of a holiday meal to a local family when purchasing a holiday meal on Walmart.com or round up a purchase on Walmart.com.

Walmart Thanksgiving hours and delivery options

Walmart also said it was offering early morning delivery of goods starting at 6 a.m., express delivery available as soon as 30 minutes and an expansion of its artificial intelligence technology that allows its delivery to reach an additional 12 million households.

The retailer also will be closed again on Thanksgiving Day, it said.

“Customers are still shopping, especially for seasonal events. They aren’t missing moments to celebrate together.”

Latriece Watkins
Executive vice president and chief merchandising officer for Walmart U.S.

Walmart is also prepared if a potential longshore worker strike, which could affect operations along the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico occurs on Oct. 1, Watkins said.

“Our teams are closely following the situation and hopeful an agreement will be reached before the end of the month,” Watkins said during the call with reporters. “We prepare for these situations and maintain additional sources to supply to ensure that we have the key products available for our customers when and however they want them.”

Cruise

Continued from Page 5B

3 days prior, you will be required to complete this process at the pier at least two hours prior to the published sailing time.”

Smith also likes to look over the deck plans for the ship, which are usually available online, to familiarize himself with the layout.

“Otherwise, sometimes day one becomes, like, walking to one end of the ship and going, ‘Oh, wait, it’s not over here, it’s over there,’ and then turning around,” he said. “And I think mitigating any kind of frustration is always a good way to start a cruise.”

What happens on cruise embarkation day?

At the port, passengers can check luggage with a porter and go through security before getting on the ship.

Once on board, Smith said the “first, first, first, first” thing he does is go to his muster station, a designated meeting point for guests and crew in the event of an emergency. Muster drills used to be more involved, but the process can usually now be completed by watching a safety video and checking in at the assigned locale. All guests must do so before the ship sets sail.

“I think a lot of people, especially people who haven’t cruised in a long time, they might have my childhood trauma, which was putting on that life jacket and standing outside by the lifeboats and listening to the horn blow and going through all those instructions,” he said. “And every cruise I’ve been on now for the past two years, everything’s in the app.”

In Smith’s experience, staterooms on major cruise lines are typically available around 1 p.m. after crew members finish turning them over



Royal Caribbean’s Oasis of the Seas ship. PROVIDED BY ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL

from the previous sailing.

Checked luggage is left outside guests’ cabins, but delivery times can vary. Smith tries to bring enough items in his backpack – which he carries with him during boarding – that he doesn’t need anything from his suitcase until the evening.

Once his bags arrive, he “1000%” unpacks everything that day. “I like to do it; my boyfriend is adamant about it,” he said. “He’s the driving force.”

Once the suitcases are empty, they slide them under the bed, which can create some extra room for guests in the sometimes tight quarters of cruise cabins.

What’s open on embarkation day?

Smith has found that many onboard amenities are accessible to guests on embarkation day.

But there is one he likes to avoid just after boarding: the buffet. Many passengers tend to go straight there, causing it to get packed.

He prefers to eat before getting on the ship, so he doesn’t have to worry about grabbing food right away.

Other venues, like specialty restaurants, may also not be open until dinner on the first day of a cruise.

And while large cruise ships often have a range of retail stores, they gen-

erally aren’t open while in port. Smith recommended that guests bring items like sunscreen and any medications they might need in case the shops are closed or they don’t have what they’re looking for.

He also uses time after embarkation to make reservations for specialty dining and peruse the entertainment schedule, making notes on his phone of the activities and shows he and his boyfriend want to attend.

“And then I just put whatever we’re doing there so we don’t have to really think about anything because the last thing I really want to do on vacation is think a lot,” Smith said.

Komando

Continued from Page 5B

> **Permission manager.**

- **Samsung Galaxy:** Head to **Settings > Security and privacy > Permission manager.**

You’ve probably granted permissions to apps on your computer, too, that you forgot about.

Lock down everything

Your lock screen is the first line of defense against unwanted eyes. You can use a PIN, pattern, fingerprint, facial recognition, whatever. No matter which method you choose, it’s far better than leaving your phone unsecured.

If you’re using a PIN, stay away from anything obvious like 1234, your birthday or address, or the last digits of your phone number.

- **Apple iPhone:** Set this up via **Face ID & Passcode.**
- **Google Pixel:** Head to **Settings > Security and privacy > Device lock.**
- **Samsung Galaxy:** Under **Settings**, look for **Lock screen and AOD.**

You’ll also want your phone to lock as soon as possible when you’re not using it. I find around 30 seconds is the sweet spot between safety and annoyance.

- **Apple iPhone:** Under **Settings**, choose **Display & Brightness > Auto-Lock.**
- **Google Pixel:** Head to **Settings > Display and touch > Screen timeout.**
- **Samsung Galaxy:** From your settings, tap **Display > Screen timeout.**



Your lock screen is the first line of defense against unwanted eyes. SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

Keep out strangers

The short-range transfer tech built into iOS and Android is super handy when you need to share something with a friend or relative. But you don’t want strangers pinging you with unwanted photos, videos and other files.

This happened to me once at the airport. In my case, it was just teenagers pranking me with silly pictures, but this can end a lot worse.

- **Apple iPhone:** Your device uses AirDrop for these types of transfers. Limit it to contacts only or turn it off al-

together via **Settings > General > Air-Drop.**

- **Android devices:** The transfer tool here is called Quick Share (formerly Nearby Share). On a Pixel, you’ll find the sharing prefs under **Settings > Connected devices > Connection preferences > Quick Share.** On a Galaxy, it’s under **Settings > Connected devices > Quick Share.**

Browse the web

Open your phone’s browser and say hello to instant tracking, unless you do something about it.

- Put limits on this on your iPhone by opening **Settings > Apps** and tapping on **Safari.** Under the app’s settings, scroll to **Privacy & Security** and toggle on the option for **Prevent Cross-Site Tracking.**
- For Chrome on Android, open the browser and tap the **three dots** (top right). From there, hit **Settings > Privacy and security > Third-party cookies** and turn on **Block third-party cookies.**

That wasn’t so bad, right? Now, do your loved ones a solid and pass it along so they can stay safe, too. Yes, that includes teenagers!

The views and opinions expressed in this column are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect those of USA TODAY. Learn about all the latest technology on the Kim Komando Show, the nation’s largest weekend radio talk show. Kim takes calls and dispenses advice on today’s digital lifestyle, from smartphones and tablets to online privacy and data hacks. For her daily tips, free newsletters and more, visit her website.

TRAVEL

10 best fall foliage train rides in US for '24

Plenty of getaways to try to take in autumn colors

Allison Tibaldi
FamilyVacationist.com

Getting there is part of the fun with a fall train ride. Instead of navigating busy highways on a family road trip, you can sit back and take in the autumn colors on a relaxing journey through scenic countryside. An ideal multigenerational adventure, fall foliage train rides give the whole family time for togetherness without anyone having to get behind the wheel.

Charming towns, vibrant forests, and scenic stretches you might miss from the road: It's time to get on board for an autumn train ride to remember. From multiday family travel adventures to simple weekend getaways for couples, here are the best fall train rides in the U.S. for unforgettable foliage.

1. Mount Washington Cog Railway

Mount Washington, New Hampshire

The world's first mountain-climbing cog railway, New Hampshire's historic Mount Washington Cog Railway uses steam and bio-diesel-powered locomotives to carry passengers to the summit of the tallest peak in the northeast. The three-hour round-trip fall foliage train ride departs and returns from Bretton Woods in New Hampshire's White Mountains, close to the popular family vacation destination of North Conway.

While the coaches are mechanically state-of-the-art, a retro aesthetic replicates what travelers would have experienced in the early 1900s, making it a fun idea to incorporate as part of a multigenerational vacation with grandparents. Cold weather comes early at Mount Washington's high altitude, with leaves usually starting to blush by mid-September. During the one-hour layover atop the summit, you can explore the Mount Washington Observatory and enjoy views that stretch to five states, Canada, and the Atlantic Ocean.

2. Amtrak's Ethan Allen Express

New York to Vermont

With daily service between New York City and Vermont, Amtrak's Ethan Allen Express fall foliage train ride takes you on a journey through storybook New England villages and upstate New York landscapes. Soak in snippets of cute farms and idyllic towns in the Hudson River Valley along with the glorious Green Mountains of Vermont.

The Green Mountain State is known for its autumn displays with oak, maple, and ash trees exploding in rainbow pops of crimson, tangerine, and saffron. The scenic train ride ends in the classic New England fall getaway spot of Burlington, a charming pedestrian-friendly city on the shores of Lake Champlain.

3. Amtrak's Downeaster

Boston to Brunswick, Maine

This three-hour Amtrak ride through portions of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine combines stops in some of New England's most beloved cities with magnificent glimpses of seasonal colors. Running between Boston's



Mount Washington Cog Railway. PROVIDED BY VISIT WHITE MOUNTAINS

North Station and Brunswick, Maine, the Downeaster is a leaf-peeper's delight in the fall. Blazes of color are punctuated by historic towns, New England beaches, and flocks of migratory birds flying overhead.

Along the way, you'll stop in the culinary sweet spot of Portland and feast on creamy clam chowder or the lobster roll of your dreams. The final stop on this foliage ride is Brunswick, where you can snap postcard-perfect photos from the top of Androscoggin Swinging Bridge, a suspension bridge built in 1892.

4. Rocky Mountaineer Rockies to the Red Rocks

Denver to Moab, Utah

The Rockies are a fairytale in autumn, and there's no better way to appreciate their sublime beauty than fall foliage train rides onboard a luxury train. The Rocky Mountaineer's Rockies to the Red Rocks route is a two-day trip traveling between Denver and Moab. It runs until October, a good time to immerse yourself in a canopy of yellow created by countless Aspen trees.

With an air of yesteryear elegance, all of the Rocky Mountaineer routes are first-class all the way. At night, you're escorted off the train to sleep in a fine hotel. Stellar service and top-notch dining on board are gravy on top.

5. Amtrak's Coast Starlight

Seattle to Los Angeles

Widely regarded as the most dazzling West Coast train route in the U.S., Amtrak's Coast Starlight links Seattle to

Los Angeles. Lush forests, fertile valleys, and rambling stretches of Pacific shoreline await passengers.

As the weather cools, Washington, Oregon, and Northern California's expanse of evergreens, including Douglas fir and Western hemlock, are punctuated by broad-leaved maple, poplar, and alder trees in bold autumn shades. The peaks of the Cascade Range are ignited with splashes of yellow, red, and orange for a kaleidoscope of color.

6. Amtrak's Cardinal

New York to Chicago

Revel in a panorama of autumn tones as you traverse the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains, the Shenandoah Valley, and the West Virginia countryside on Amtrak's Cardinal, a route that meanders from New York to Chicago. Tall peaks, big cities, and small towns present scenery to suit a variety of tastes. Departing three days a week, this scenic train route delivers an eyeful of fall color over the course of its 26-hour journey.

7. Western Maryland Scenic Railroad's Frostburg Flyer

Cumberland to Frostburg

The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad is a heritage rail company that utilizes both steam and diesel locomotives. Passengers on the Frostburg Flyer ride in vintage rail cars from Cumberland to Frostburg as the train ascends an impressive swath of the Allegheny Mountains.

You'll cross hardwood forests brushed with a rainbow swirl of sunny

yellows, brilliant oranges, and bold reds. Live commentary enhances the experience of the fall foliage train ride. The round-trip takes about 4 ½, including a 90-minute stop in Frostburg.

8. Grand Canyon Railway

Williams, Arizona, to the Grand Canyon South Rim

The Grand Canyon is one of the country's natural wonders that every kid should see, but why drive there when you can ride a vintage train straight to the South Rim instead? The Grand Canyon Railway departs from Williams, Arizona, in the morning and returns in the afternoon. During the two-hour and 15-minute ride, you'll enjoy live Wild West entertainment including strolling musicians and a hilarious mock train robbery.

Color changes on this route are more subtle than other fall foliage train rides, yet as you travel through Arizona's high desert of red buttes, scrub brush, and pinyon pines, you'll be rewarded with crisp temperatures and a deep blue sky that combine to make it a fabulous way to soak in the changing landscape.



Pennsylvania's East Broad Top Railway offers one-hour fall foliage scenic train rides. PROVIDED BY EAST BROAD TOP

9. East Broad Top Railroad

Rockhill Furnace to Colgate Grove , Pennsylvania

Located in Central Pennsylvania, the East Broad Top Railroad offers nostalgic one-hour fall foliage train excursions that are the perfect length if you're vacationing with toddlers or grade-school-aged kids. Constructed in 1872, East Broad Top Railroad is the oldest narrow-gauge railroad in the United States. The historical integrity of the railroad has been meticulously preserved, so a ride feels like a moving museum.

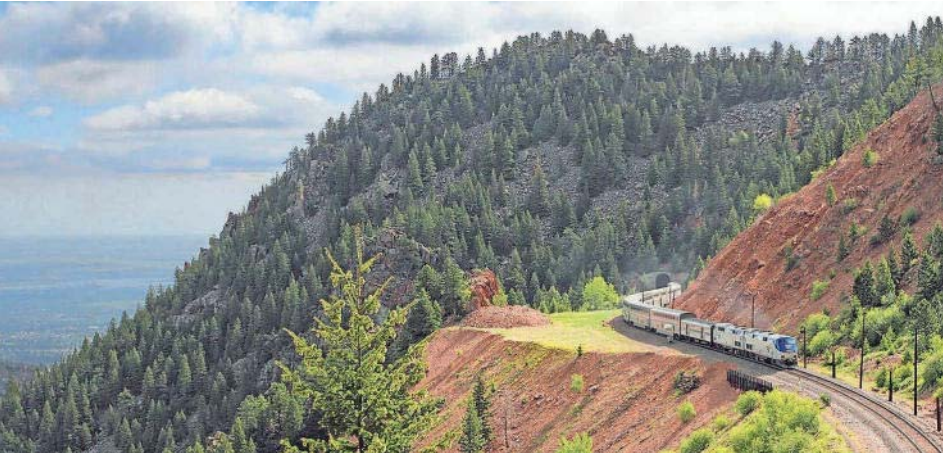
There's no shortage of spectacular leaf peeping in the dense woodlands, too. Each October, the Great Pumpkin Patch Express invites kids to wear their Halloween costumes, meet Snoopy, and pick a pumpkin from the patch.

10. Amtrak's California Zephyr

Chicago to Emeryville, California

Amtrak's California Zephyr travels daily between Chicago and Emeryville, California, with a connecting bus service to San Francisco. You don't need to ride the 51-hour route in its entirety to make it a worthy fall trip. From the buttery hues of Colorado's Aspen trees to the brilliant oranges and fiery reds of dogwoods and maples in the Sierra Nevada, expect a painter's palate.

The views and opinions expressed in this column are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of USA TODAY.



Amtrak's California Zephyr weaves through the Rockies on its journey between Chicago and the San Francisco Bay area. PROVIDED BY AMTRAK

Travelers frustrated at booking flight, report said

Over half say options too complex to understand

Kathleen Wong
USA TODAY

Travelers are feeling increasingly overwhelmed, and it's not because of in-flight Wi-Fi offerings or lie-flat seat options.

They're too busy navigating the maze of hidden fees and policies for essentials like seat selection or luggage – and they're getting frustrated, according to new data from the travel platform Travelport.

In Travelport's recently released 2024 Modern Retailing Report, over half of the 1,659 respondents – from Germany, the U.S., South Africa and the U.K. – said the myriad options for travel, from fares to bundles and brands, have become “complex and difficult to understand.” What travelers actually care about are luggage allowances, cancellations and changes to flights, and free seat selection.

From airline bundle offers that allow you to select your seat and bring a carry-on (for an extra fee, of course) to hotel and flight packages, travelers have to sift through more choices than ever before.

Travelport estimates that travelers are faced with 10,000 offerings compared to around 500 in 2010.

“Uncertainty is one of the biggest challenges for air travelers right now,” Jen Catto, chief marketing officer at Travelport, told USA TODAY. “Travel is a high-stakes purchase, and people might feel worried they'll be penalized for making a mistake when they book. What they need is more clarity, simpler comparison shopping, and a reassuring experience.”

On average, the travelers said they spend over four hours comparing and looking for the best deal, the report found. In 2013, people browsed through 38 webpages before booking their trip while now, it's up to 277 webpages – from third-party booking platforms to the official airline or hotel website. Around 80% found that comparing

fares from different airlines is “very time-consuming.”

And after all that research, nearly 71% of respondents said they still don't feel confident with their booking.

“It could be easier to weigh ten really strong options that have been identified especially for you rather than looking at 100 options that have some basic element of what you're looking for, but not everything,” said Catto. “You might be left wondering what else is out there.”

Facing too many hidden fees

According to the survey, the biggest challenge faced by travelers is hidden fees – two-thirds of respondents said there are just too many. These can range from a mandatory resort fee to paying extra to bring more than one personal item like a backpack on your flight.

For travelers, booking flights is twice as difficult than accommodations, the survey said.

Almost half of travelers are also finding themselves frustrated when it comes to cancellations and refunds, like

trying to change their flight. Many airlines' cheapest class fare won't allow you to change your flight or pay a hefty fee.

“Servicing has also seemingly become an afterthought, and customers wind up confused and frustrated when some changes can or can't be made, depending on what fare type they booked,” Catto said.

The government has attempted to cut down on these junk fees for travelers and get refunds back into their pockets quickly.

In May, the Department of Transportation was sued by major U.S. airlines after it announced a new rule requiring them to be upfront about fees. The agency said consumers are overpaying \$543 million in fees each year. The rule would require baggage or flight change fees to be “individually disclosed” the first time consumers were booking their flight.

The agency was also cracking down on “bait-and-switch tactics” in which a discounted flight ends up costing more due to mandatory fees.

50★States

ALABAMA Etowah County: United Way of Etowah County announced that Pacesetter companies, along with the agency’s staff, board and other partners, raised \$407,339 to jump start this year’s drive. That’s 41% of the campaign goal, according to a news release from the agency.

ALASKA Juneau: Alaska Airlines said on Wednesday it had completed its \$1.9 billion acquisition of Hawaiian Airlines after reaching an agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation. The airlines agreed to maintain key Hawaiian routes and adopt consumer protections under an agreement that will last six years.

ARIZONA Phoenix: The Phoenix Zoo is fundraising for a new veterinary medical center. The zoo wants to build a 27,000-square-foot facility that would improve health care for larger animals and allow visitors to watch operations. Phoenix Zoo is aiming to raise \$25 million, with \$19 million in the bank so far.

ARKANSAS Little Rock: Boating access to Lake Georgia-Pacific in Ashley County has been temporarily closed after the discovery of water hyacinth, an invasive aquatic plant, KATV reported.

CALIFORNIA Sacramento: British drugmaker GSK said on Wednesday it had agreed to settle two lawsuits in California that claimed its discontinued heartburn drug Zantac caused cancer. GSK does not admit to any liability, it said in a statement.

COLORADO Fort Collins: Brick pavers along a stretch of Fort Collins’ old trolley tracks will get a facelift. The pavers will be removed and cleaned as part of a planned restoration project. The pavers will then be reset on top of a new concrete foundation, which will be poured to improve safety around the historic tracks.

CONNECTICUT Hartford: The Nov. 5 ballot will feature one question, which, if passed, could allow for no-excuse absentee voting. Currently, residents may vote by absentee ballot for several reasons. The question is a proposed amendment to the state constitution and would authorize the General Assembly to create language that would eliminate reasons needed for absentee voting.

DELAWARE Wilmington: Three airports received federal funds to improve their operations. The Federal Aviation Administration’s Airport Improvement Program doled out nearly \$9 million to the Wilmington Airport, the Delaware Coastal Airport and the Delaware Airpark.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: The DC Fire and EMS Department said one person was taken to the hospital after a “hazmat incident” at an elementary school forced students to evacuate Tuesday, DC News Now reported.

FLORIDA Tallahassee: The vaccination rate of kindergartners has fallen to 90.6%, the lowest in over a decade, and concerned pediatricians say they are exhausted trying to combat anti-vaccine information – including from the state government. “It’s gotten difficult to manage,” said Dr. Lisa Gwynn, a Miami pediatrician. For highly contagious diseases like measles, health experts recommend a vaccination rate of at least 95%.

GEORGIA Atlanta: State School Superintendent Richard Woods announced he will push for additional state funding for school safety initiatives during the 2025 General Assembly session in the aftermath of this month’s school shooting in Barrow County. The goal will be providing a school resource officer and a crisis alert system in every Georgia school.

HAWAII South Kohala: Hawaii Island police have arrested three minors in connection with an online threat made towards a South Kohala school last week, HawaiiNewsNow reported.

IDAHO Cardiff: Two people died after a fire and explosion Wednesday at a gas station in Clearwater County, Idaho Press reported.

ILLINOIS Springfield: Aided by favorable weather and new attractions, it was another year of record-breaking attendance at the Illinois State Fair. More than 773,000 people attended the 11-day event, topping last year’s record by nearly 66,000.

INDIANA Owen County: Sycamore Land Trust has purchased 160 acres in Owen County. The property, known as Barnebey Woods, fits in between several sections of the Owen-Putnam State Forest.

HIGHLIGHT: RHODE ISLAND



Charles Clarkson with Rhode Island Audubon finishes construction of a tower that will create nesting habitat for chimney swifts. The first tower is at the Caratunk Wildlife Refuge in Seekonk. DAVID DELPOIO/USA TODAY NETWORK

Providence: The chimney swift may not readily come to mind when you think of birds in need of conservation. But, like countless other species of birds in North America, their numbers are dropping fast. Over the last six decades, the chimney swift has lost two-thirds of its population, due at least in part to a decline in access to its preferred nesting sites inside chimneys. So if you’re wondering why chimney-like towers have risen up over a couple of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island’s wildlife refuges in the past few weeks, know that the new structures were built in support of a little bird that deserves all the help it can get.

IOWA Iowa City: The University of Iowa’s recently acquired downtown medical center might be getting a new look. UI Healthcare is requesting approval to plan several structural improvements at the Medical Campus Downtown.

KANSAS Topeka: Despite improvement in the child welfare system, the Kansas Department for Children and Families continues to lag behind goals established in a legal agreement. The Center for the Study of Social Policy, which monitors DCF’s progress toward achieving multi-year commitments, released a report Monday.

KENTUCKY Louisville: Baristas at Quills Coffee, a Louisville-based coffee chain with seven locations, are on track to unionize after the company’s owner recognized employees’ efforts, according to a news release from 32BJ Service Employees International Union.

LOUISIANA LaPlace: Canadian renewable fuel company Woodland Biofuels announced an investment of \$1.35 billion at the Port of South Louisiana to establish a renewable natural gas plant and ultra-green hydrogen facility. The new facility will be located at the Globalplex facility at the Port of South Louisiana, with the first phase of commercial operations set to start in 2028.

MAINE York: The Art Committee of York Hospital is soliciting proposals for artwork to be displayed in the Café at York Hospital and featured virtually online in 2025. Each exhibition will be on view for three months. Installations typically include 15-25 works of art.

MARYLAND Annapolis: U.S. Sens. Chris Van Hollen and Ben Cardin announced more than \$560,000 for three Eastern Shore fire departments to upgrade personal protective equipment. The senators said \$566,481.89 would be headed to fire departments in Ocean City and Somerset and Kent counties.

MASSACHUSETTS Worcester: A family is demanding a full investigation after a state police recruit died after being injured during a training exercise late last week at the Massachusetts State Police Academy. Police said Enrique Delgado-Garcia, 25, of Worcester, was injured and became unresponsive during a training exercise on defensive tactics. He died the next day.

MICHIGAN Allen Township: Troopers are investigating after a 2-year-old girl escaped her home after being put to bed by her parents and was later fatally struck by a vehicle. Michigan State Police reported the death took place on a road outside the home where the toddler lived with her family in Allen Township.

MINNESOTA St. Cloud : Stearns County voters at the recent Justice Center forum had one common question on their minds: What’s going to happen to the downtown St. Cloud courthouse? The answer to that question may not have been as set in stone as some may have liked. “We don’t know exactly what we will do with the historic courthouse, but we certainly won’t tear it down,” a county administrator said.

MISSISSIPPI Clinton: Mississippi College is squeezing every student it can onto its campus this fall. The private Christian school has had surging enrollment the past two years. Enrollment for fall semester sits at 4,253, up 100 from last year, and dorms are at 99% capacity.

MISSOURI Columbia: Costs associated with the city’s budget have increased when comparing to the last couple of years. That was a message from the city manager during Monday’s final 2025 budget hearing. After amendments, the final 2025 budget passed 4-2.

MONTANA Butte: An amateur biologist from Butte has been capturing video of Wolverines to help professional wildlife biologists track their populations, KPAX reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: A 27-year-old man who posed as a high school student to prey on teenage girls has been sentenced to 85 to 120 years in prison. Zachary Scheich, who was known by peers as 17-year-old “Zak Hess,” attended multiple schools throughout the Lincoln Public Schools District.

NEVADA Reno: The Reno-Tahoe International Airport is flying high from the region’s growth as it posted its busiest summer in two decades. The airport saw a 10% overall increase in passenger traffic for this year’s summer season compared to last year, according to the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Portsmouth: Lazy Jack’s, a tiki-style bar known for its rum buckets and restaurant overlooking the Piscataqua River, is closing after nine years. The closure comes as the building housing it is being listed for sale for \$7.8 million.

NEW JERSEY Trenton: OceanFirst Bank will pay \$15.1 million to settle a U.S. Department of Justice lawsuit accusing it of illegal redlining in the central part of the state.

NEW MEXICO Santa Fe County: The Sheriff’s office announced a six-month pilot patrol schedule will begin next month. Deputies will work eight hours a day four days a week and devote another two hours to activities for their physical and mental well-being, KRQE reported.

NEW YORK New York City: Multiple New York City Public Schools employees have been accused of taking their children and grandchildren on a Disney World trip meant for young people suffering from homelessness, according to a report released this month.

NORTH CAROLINA Lake Toxaway: The outdoor therapy camp Trails Carolina is up for sale as the camp remains the subject of intense scrutiny following the death of a 12-year-old boy in early 2024, a sexual assault lawsuit and its recent loss of accreditation from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. The camper’s death was ruled a homicide in June.

NORTH DAKOTA Minot: A proposal to set aside \$100,000 for police recruiting in the 2025 budget was struck down amid an investigation into the department’s police chief, KMOT reported.

OHIO Columbus: City Council approved a check for \$195,000 to a former executive assistant to Mayor Andrew J. Ginther to compensate her for unpaid overtime equal to almost three years of her regular salary. It’s unclear how the executive assistant ran up so much unpaid overtime.

OKLAHOMA Wewoka: A second female prisoner who claims to be a domestic abuse survivor has filed an appeal seeking to be released from prison after so far serving 34 years of a life sentence without the possibility of parole for murder. Attorneys for Lisa Rae Moss, 59, filed the appeal for a lesser prison sentence under the Oklahoma Survivors Act.

OREGON Eugene: Hundreds of people gathered at Alton Baker Park for the Black Cultural Initiative’s 75th Anniversary Across the Bridge Celebration, honoring the legacy of Eugene’s pioneering Black families.

PENNSYLVANIA Harrisburg: As the state risks falling behind others on addressing affordable housing and homelessness, Gov. Josh Shapiro signed an executive order creating the commonwealth’s first comprehensive Housing Action Plan.

SOUTH CAROLINA Isle of Palms: Confusion over directions led a tourist couple to drive into the water at a marina, police said. Restaurant employees jumped into the water to rescue the couple from their vehicle at the Isle of Palms Marina, the city’s police department said. No injuries were reported.

SOUTH DAKOTA Pierre: Enrollment at South Dakota’s public universities increased by 5% this year, from 34,370 students last fall to 36,091 students this fall, according to data released Wednesday.

TENNESSEE Nashville: Three drownings in less than a week pushed boat or watercraft-related deaths on state waters to 19 this year as of mid-September, according to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. The state has averaged about 22 boat or watercraft fatalities per year since 1965.

TEXAS Houston: NASA has awarded Intuitive Machines, headquartered in Houston, a contract of up to \$4.82 billion for communication and navigation services for missions in the near space region, the space exploration company said Tuesday.

UTAH Salt Lake City: Police say a 25-year-old man crashed into a parked police car Tuesday, causing a chain reaction that damaged other patrol vehicles and injured an officer, KSL.com reported.

VERMONT Montpelier: Vermont failed to complete most of the tasks outlined in its 2018 State Hazard Mitigation Plan – a five-year “blueprint” for reducing harm against people and property in the event of flooding, drought, heatwave, disease or other natural disasters, according to a recent state auditor report.

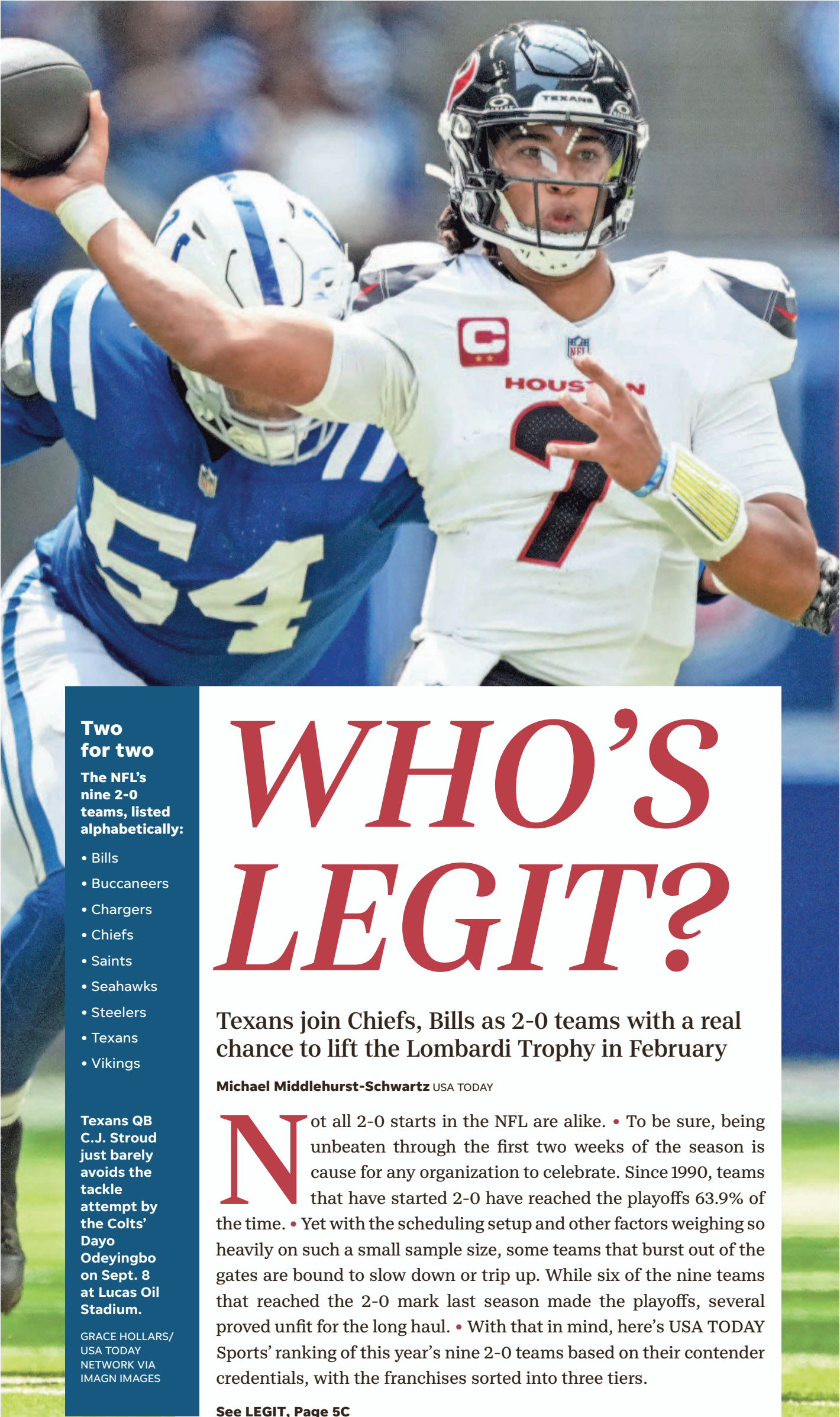
VIRGINIA Staunton: A former Waynesboro High teacher has pleaded not guilty to 54 charges involving allegations of child sexual abuse and child pornography possession.

WASHINGTON Kitsap County: The Kitsap County Sheriff’s Office announced that a suspect is in custody after an apparent homicide just west of Bremerton Monday morning.

WEST VIRGINIA Charleston: A black bear with only two legs was sighted in the mountains of West Virginia. Kirk Price told USA TODAY Monday that his trail camera spotted the two-legged animal in the Appalachian Mountains in southwest West Virginia. Price, who shared videos and images of the bear on Instagram, said he believes the bear to be an approximately 8-year-old male. Price said he first saw the bear in 2018, and the animal was “has almost doubled in size since originally spotted.”

WISCONSIN Milwaukee: On Tuesday, Milwaukee Public Schools planned to present a proposal intending to increase four administrators’ salaries by thousands of dollars each. But that proposal, which came as the district faces a financial crisis that has drawn multiple state audits, was removed from discussion before the meeting.

WYOMING Cheyenne: Secretary of State Chuck Gray said the white powder that caused the Herschler Building to be evacuated Monday was tested and was not a threat, Wyoming Tribune Eagle reported.
From USA TODAY Network and wire reports



Two
for two
The NFL's
nine 2-0
teams, listed
alphabetically:

- Bills
- Buccaneers
- Chargers
- Chiefs
- Saints
- Seahawks
- Steelers
- Texans
- Vikings

Texans QB
C.J. Stroud
just barely
avoids the
tackle
attempt by
the Colts' Dayo
Odeyingbo
on Sept. 8
at Lucas Oil
Stadium.

GRACE HOLLARS/
USA TODAY
NETWORK VIA
IMAGN IMAGES

WHO'S LEGIT?

Texans join Chiefs, Bills as 2-0 teams with a real chance to lift the Lombardi Trophy in February

Michael Middlehurst-Schwartz USA TODAY

Not all 2-0 starts in the NFL are alike. • To be sure, being unbeaten through the first two weeks of the season is cause for any organization to celebrate. Since 1990, teams that have started 2-0 have reached the playoffs 63.9% of the time. • Yet with the scheduling setup and other factors weighing so heavily on such a small sample size, some teams that burst out of the gates are bound to slow down or trip up. While six of the nine teams that reached the 2-0 mark last season made the playoffs, several proved unfit for the long haul. • With that in mind, here's USA TODAY Sports' ranking of this year's nine 2-0 teams based on their contender credentials, with the franchises sorted into three tiers.

See LEGIT, Page 5C

Two-way star Travis Hunter most versatile off field too

Brent Schrotenboer
USA TODAY

College football superstar Travis Hunter has a favorite subject to study at the University of Colorado.

It's all about the science of human beings:

Anthropology.

After previously choosing psychology, he changed his major for a reason. "I'm an anthropology major, and I really enjoy learning about different cultures and how they interact with one another," Hunter said in an email interview with USA TODAY Sports.

"Being able to learn about these cultures and skills is incredibly beneficial to me even when playing football. I have the opportunity to learn the importance of accepting and interacting with other people and playing with other people despite their cultural or ethnic makeup."

This is part of what makes Hunter a human specimen worth studying in his own right – a stellar student and two-way sensation who has become quite unlike anybody else who's ever played the game, and not just because of his freak athletic ability. He's also a budding business juggernaut who has a particular way of recharging his energy at home, often wearing onesie pajamas and eating his fiancée's home-cooked meals, especially her cheesy chicken and shrimp-stuffed potatoes.

This week as Colorado (2-1) prepares to play Baylor (2-1) in a sold-out game Saturday at Folsom Field, Hunter shared some insight with USA TODAY Sports about how he does it all, including managing his energy, his future plans, Heisman Trophy hopes and a growing financial portfolio of endorsement deals.

How does Hunter do it all?

- To start with:
- He has fueled himself with gummy bears at times to help him play

See HUNTER, Page 5C



Travis Hunter on NFL goal: "To continue to be a 2-way player. I believe my versatility is one of my greatest strengths." CRIS TILLER/IMAGN IMAGES

Wild cards not folding in expanded playoff format

Gabe Lacques
USA TODAY

It's mid-September and Year 3 of Major League Baseball's expanded playoff format, a tournament that only deepened the degree of volatility when it comes to crowning pennant winners and World Series champions.

With that has come a moderate overreaction to a two-year sample size that may prove aberrational.

In 2022 and 2023, the No. 3 wild card team in the National League – the last team in the field, in essence – has ridden a hot streak all the way to the World Series. The defending World Series champion Texas Rangers emerged from the wild-card round, as well.

With that surprise success has come a school of thought that it's better to be relegated to the best-of-three wild-card series, that having to win two more games is a more favorable position than an automatic berth in a division series – and the five-day, potentially rhythm-wrecking break that comes with it.

Yet the fascination with the 83-win Arizona Diamondbacks (2023) and 87-win Philadelphia Phillies (2022) runs to NL pennants ignores key factors.



The Diamondbacks celebrate after sweeping the Dodgers in their 2023 NLDS. MATT KARTOZIAN/USA TODAY SPORTS

Most notably: simple math. Would you rather have to win five games to advance to the league championship series, or three? A chance to come back from a 2-0 or 2-1 deficit or end your season at that point?

The obsession with wild-card winners prevailing in later rounds ignores the fact that for every October Cinderella, another team is packing its bags barely 48 hours after arrival at the post-season ball.

"After 162 games, any kind of day off you can give your body is beneficial. I just don't really buy into the hot team – good teams are going to win, period," says Tampa Bay Rays starter Zack Littell, whose club was on the wrong end of 2-0 wild-card round sweeps each of the past two years. "I don't think three days, five days off after you just played 162 will matter – it's not like coming into spring training where you just had four months off and relearn to play together. Five days that you're still with each other, still coming to the yard."

"I don't buy into five days off all of a sudden changing your ability to play competitive baseball."

'It can end pretty quick'

There's a larger sample size that suggests relegation to the wild-card series essentially reduces your season to one must-win game, despite the best-of-three format. Game 1 winners have won all eight wild-card series, seven of them in sweeps, with only the 2022 New York Mets taking Game 2 off the San Diego Padres before falling in Game 3.

See WILD CARDS, Page 3C

NFL WEEK 3 PREVIEW



Chargers (2-0) at Steelers (2-0)

TV: 1 p.m. EDT Sunday, CBS
Spread (BetMGM): Steelers by 1.5

Chargers RB J.K. Dobbins has bounced back from injury-plagued years with back-to-back games with more than 130 rushing yards, but the Steelers neutralized the Falcons and the Broncos on the ground. QB Justin Fields will remain the Pittsburgh starter.

Eagles (1-1) at Saints (2-0)

TV: 1 p.m. EDT Sunday, Fox
Spread (BetMGM): New Orleans by 2.5

The Eagles might need a ball-control offense to keep New Orleans RB Alvin Kamara and QB Derek Carr off the field as the Saints are averaging 45.5 points per game. The Philadelphia offense is more than capable with QB Jalen Hurts and RB Saquon Barkley.

Packers (1-1) at Titans (0-2)

TV: 1 p.m. EDT Sunday, Fox
Spread (BetMGM): Titans by 1.5

RB Josh Jacobs (151 yards versus the Colts) needs to keep rolling so Green Bay can chew up clock with the ground game to make the job easier for whichever Packers QB starts. Although Tennessee is winless, the defense has given up the fewest yards in the NFL.

Bears (1-1) at Colts (0-2)

TV: 1 p.m. EDT Sunday, CBS
Spread (BetMGM): Colts by 1

Chicago needs a steady dose of the ground game with RBs D'Andre Swift and Khalil Herbert. On defense, the Bears need to contain RB Jonathan Taylor and make Indianapolis' offense one-dimensional.

Giants (0-2) at Browns (1-1)

TV: 1 p.m. EDT Sunday, Fox
Spread (BetMGM): Browns by 6.5

Cleveland QB Deshaun Watson and WR Amari Cooper can be an explosive combo. Giants rookie WR Malik Nabers has 15 receptions for 193 yards and a TD in two games but dropped a key fourth-down pass late in the loss to the Commanders in Week 2.

Texans (2-0) at Vikings (2-0)

TV: 1 p.m. EDT Sunday, CBS
Spread (BetMGM): Texans by 2

Houston QB C.J. Stroud has multiple receiving options, while RB Joe Mixon will try to make it a balanced attack. The Vikings are coming off a six-sack effort and on offense need to lean on RBs Aaron Jones and Ty Chandler as QB Sam Darnold continues to feed WR Justin Jefferson, who is coming off a 133-yard outing.

Broncos (0-2) at Buccaneers (2-0)

TV: 1 p.m. EDT Sunday, Fox
Spread (BetMGM): Buccaneers by 6.5

Denver rookie Bo Nix needs to be consistent in the pocket while the running back corps led by Javonte Williams needs to complement its rookie quarterback. Baker Mayfield has been having fun with Tampa Bay, and Chris Godwin has excelled as his favorite target.

Dolphins (1-1) at Seahawks (2-0)

TV: 4:05 p.m. EDT Sunday, CBS
Spread (BetMGM): Seahawks by 4.5

Seattle QB Geno Smith is putting up numbers (327 yards, one TD and no interceptions in Week 2) worthy of the contract extension he received last year. Hello, Skylar Thompson, who gets the keys to the Miami offense with Tua Tagovailoa (concussion) out.

Panthers (0-2) at Raiders (1-1)

TV: 4:05 p.m. EDT Sunday, CBS
Spread (BetMGM): Raiders by 5

The Panthers benched QB Bryce Young in favor of 36-year-old veteran Andy Dalton, who hasn't started regularly since 2022. Las Vegas must get the ground game going (NFL-worst 49 yards per game average).

Lions (1-1) at Cardinals (1-1)

TV: 4:25 p.m. EDT Sunday, Fox
Spread: (BetMGM): Lions by 3

Detroit must play a cleaner, smarter game without as many mistakes and turnovers that occurred in Week 2. If the Lions can contain Arizona QB Kyler Murray and rookie WR Marvin Harrison Jr., they should be OK.

Ravens (0-2) at Cowboys (1-1)

TV: 4:25 p.m. EDT Sunday, Fox
Spread (BetMGM): Ravens by 1

QB Lamar Jackson is still electric as a runner but RB Derrick Henry has been bottled up, and Baltimore's downfield passing game is missing. Cowboys WR CeeDee Lamb has been QB Dak Prescott's go-to receiver and that's not likely to change anytime soon.

49ers (1-1) at Rams (0-2)

TV: 4:25 p.m. EDT Sunday, Fox
Spread (BetMGM): 49ers by 7

The Rams are a bit undersized up front on defense, which should give San Francisco RB Jordan Mason some running room between the tackles. It'll be critical for Los Angeles to create turnovers and apply pressure on 49ers QB Brock Purdy.

Chiefs (2-0) at Falcons (1-1)

TV: 8:20 p.m. EDT Sunday, NBC, Peacock
Spread (BetMGM): Chiefs by 3.5

QB Patrick Mahomes will play like the star, but Kansas City would love to get TE Travis Kelce more involved after a quiet start to the season. Can Atlanta ride the momentum of QB Kirk Cousins' spectacular final drive to stun the Eagles on "Monday Night Football"?

Jaguars (0-2) at Bills (2-0)

TV: 7:30 p.m. EDT Monday, ESPN
Spread (BetMGM): Bills by 5

The Jaguars should try to get RBs Travis Etienne and Tank Bigsby going to open up play-action. Buffalo should lean on its passing game, getting Dalton Kincaid, Curtis Samuel and Keon Coleman more involved.

Commanders (1-1) at Bengals (0-2)

TV: 8:15 p.m. EDT Monday, ABC/ESPN+
Spread (BetMGM): Bengals by 7.5

Washington RBs Brian Robinson Jr. and Austin Ekeler need to dominate against a depleted Bengals defensive line. The Bengals are due for an offensive out-break from star WR Ja'Marr Chase.

– USA TODAY NETWORK

COLLEGE FOOTBALL WEEK 4

SEC, Big Ten debuts headline seven games to watch

Eddie Timanus
USA TODAY

No. 7 Tennessee at No. 13 Oklahoma

Time/TV: Saturday, 7:30 p.m. EDT, ABC
Why watch: The Sooners get their official welcome to the SEC as they host the Volunteers in a game that will also bring Tennessee head coach Josh Heupel back to his alma mater. Tennessee's offensive operation has run much more smoothly to date with both QB Nico Iamaleava and RB Dylan Sampson putting up huge numbers. LB Danny Stutsman and the OU defense should offer more resistance, but some scoring help will be needed for the Sooners. QB Jackson Arnold made some of his best throws last week against Tulane, but he must beware of Tennessee DB Will Brooks, a former walk-on who recorded a huge pick-six in the Week 2 win against North Carolina State.
Why it could disappoint: The evidence thus far suggests that Tennessee is the stronger candidate to make this a one-sided affair. Though the Oklahoma defense should offer more resistance than any the Vols have encountered, a couple of big plays could put it away quickly if the Sooners struggle on offense.

No. 12 Southern Cal at No. 17 Michigan

Time/TV: Saturday, 3:30 p.m. EDT, CBS
Why watch: The Trojans fittingly begin their inaugural journey through the Big Ten in the Big House, where they find a Wolverines squad still searching for an identity in the post-Harbaugh, post-championship era. After a bye week, USC will be rested for its first long flight of the season. Even so, QB Miller Moss and his protectors must be ready to deal with Michigan's defensive line, arguably the team's strongest unit featuring Josaiah Stewart and Rayshaun Benny. The other side of the ball has been far less consistent for the Wolverines, however, and now Alex Orji is set to take over at QB in place of opening-day starter Davis Warren. He'll be up against a vastly improved Trojans defense anchored by LBs Eric Gentry and Easton McCarenas-Arnold.
Why it could disappoint: Michigan's offensive issues aren't likely to be fixed in a week. If USC can jump on the Wolverines early, this could turn into a rerun of the Texas game.

No. 10 Utah at No. 15 Oklahoma State

Time/TV: Saturday, 4 p.m. EDT, Fox
Why watch: Elsewhere in the Sooner State will be the first Big 12 contest for these expected contenders. It is potentially a preview of the conference championship game, although plenty of other teams in the expanded "Oversized Dozen" will have something to say about that (see below). The biggest game-week question centers on the availability of Utah QB Cam Rising, who sat out last week's slog past Utah State



Oklahoma defensive back Billy Bowman Jr. runs back an interception against Tulane quarterback Darian Mensah. KEVIN JAIRAJ/IMAGN IMAGES

with a hand injury. He is expected to be ready, but backup Isaac Wilson will be prepared. Regardless of who takes snaps, Cowboys DE Obi Ezeigbo and LB Nick Martin must be kept out of the Utes backfield. Oklahoma State is capable of moving the ball by air via QB Alan Bowman or by land with RB Ollie Gordon II. Utah DE Van Fillinger, however, can be a disruptive force against any play call.
Why it could disappoint: Even if Rising is available, both these teams have well-schooled defenses that could make this game a bit of a slog.

Illinois at No. 23 Nebraska

Time/TV: Friday, 8 p.m. EDT, Fox
Why watch: It's a tad early to call any game a must-win. This is, after all, the first Big Ten Conference contest for both teams. But it's definitely one that both programs would like to have in the bank with plenty of tough games still to come as they continue their respective rebuilding efforts with an aim toward bowl eligibility. The Fighting Illini's best win came against a Kansas squad that was ranked at the time but has since slipped to 1-2, while the ultimate value of the Cornhuskers' dominant decision against Colorado remains in doubt. The Illinois attack is led by QB Luke Altmyer, a transfer from Ole Miss who has kept the ball out of harm's way. His primary target is WR Pat Bryant, who figures to draw attention from Nebraska CB Tommy Hill. Freshman sensation QB Dylan Raiola is the catalyst for the Cornhuskers. He has spread the ball around well through his first three starts.
Why it could disappoint: Illinois's lofty plus-8 turnover margin looms as one possible scenario. Raiola and Co. have been quite sound with the ball thus far, however.

North Carolina State at No. 19 Clemson

Time/TV: Saturday, noon EDT, ABC
Why watch: This game was circled as one of the key

early matchups in the ACC race. It's even bigger now with both programs that were ranked in the preseason already having a "1" in the loss column. Those "L's" to top-10 SEC squads are quite forgivable, but they left both these teams still in need of a positive result against top-tier competition. The Tigers found an extra gear in an easier-than-expected romp past Appalachian State, as freshman WR Bryant Wesco emerged as the deep threat QB Cade Klubnik needed. That development will likely draw the attention of key N.C. State CB Aydan White, expected to be available after missing a game with an undisclosed injury. The Wolfpack offense has yet to find its groove and must now head to Death Valley with starting QB Grayson McCall sidelined with another undisclosed injury. Freshman CJ Bailey did well in relief to rally N.C. State to a comeback win against Louisiana Tech. The going figures to be much tougher against the Clemson defense.

Why it could disappoint: Clemson's offense could revert to the stagnant predictability that kept it stuck in neutral in Week 1. But the Wolfpack might have the bigger issues with a first-time starter at QB.

No. 11 Miami (Fla.) at South Florida

Time/TV: Saturday, 7 p.m. EDT, ESPN
Why watch: The Hurricanes have emerged as the team to beat in the ACC. But before they embark on their conference campaign, they take on this potentially difficult road test against the Bulls, who gave Alabama a tussle a couple of weeks ago and will hope to make noise in the American Athletic Conference. LB Mac Harris and the USF defense was able to keep Alabama's Jalen Milroe in check for three-plus quarters, a possible cause for optimism for the Bulls as they get set for a similar challenge against Miami QB Cam Ward. South Florida QB Byron Brown is a talented dual threat in his own right.
Why it could disappoint: Miami might just be that good.

No. 14 Kansas State at BYU

Time/TV: Saturday, 10:30 p.m. EDT, ESPN
Why watch: This time slot is known for wild occurrences, so there's a high probability of #Big12After-Dark vibes in this one. The Wildcats' decisive home triumph over Arizona last week does not count in the league standings, so this trip west is their first official Big 12 clash. The Cougars, now in their second year as members of the Big 12, are hoping for better results in Year 2. Life with BYU QB Jake Retzlaff is an adventure, as he has seven scoring throws but can be turnover prone. The Wildcats' backfield duo of QB Avery Johnson and RB DJ Giddens lead a ground attack averaging 7 yards per attempt.
Why it could disappoint: With all due respect to ACC newcomer SMU, this is the Cougars' first brush with top-tier competition.

All hope not lost for NFL’s 0-2 teams

Ranking all nine by their playoff viability

Nate Davis
USA TODAY

The NFL’s regular season is little more than 10% complete, yet a whole faction of the league’s teams is staring at a roughly 90% probability that their Super Bowl hopes are already dashed. Nine clubs are winless after two weeks – which isn’t quite a death knell as it pertains to playoff aspirations, but it does essentially put them on life support.

“(We’re) 0-2,” Ravens coach John Harbaugh said after Baltimore’s stunning home loss to the Las Vegas Raiders on Sunday afternoon. “We’re going to play a 17-game season, and we will be defined by the next 15 games.

“So that’s going to be our objective – to play the best 15 games we can, be the best football team we can be. And if we do that, then we’re going to have a really good season, have a shot to win a lot of games and get in the playoffs and make a run, so that’s what we have to do.”

Sorry, Coach, but the odds are most definitely not in your favor.

Since the playoff field expanded to 12 teams in 1990, just 11.5% of teams (32 of 279) starting 0-2 have recovered to reach the postseason. Yet the barrier to entry for those squads has only gotten higher recently. Since the start of the 2019 season, *two* teams of 41 (4.9%) have survived a 0-2 rollout. You’d think with the Super Bowl bracket ballooning to 14 berths in 2020, the margin for error would increase, but not so.

As for the Lombardi Trophy? Since 1990, three teams – 1.1% – have overcome the 0-2 hurdle to win it all: The 1993 Dallas Cowboys (Emmitt Smith held out the first two games); 2001 New England Patriots (Tom Brady became their starter in Week 3); and 2007 New York Giants, who improbably knocked off the 18-0 Pats in Super Bowl 42.

The math is daunting yet also suggests one of this year’s heretofore winless outfits will surmount it to at least reach Week 19. Who could it be? Let’s rank their postseason viability from least likely to most:

9. Denver Broncos

Bo Nix has looked every bit a rookie quarterback, completing fewer than 60% of his passes – to teammates, anyway – serving up a league-worst four interceptions and engineering just 22 points on offense, worst in the AFC. But it’s not like he’s getting much playmaking around him, WR Josh Reynolds the only player on the team with more than 90 yards from scrimmage – and that because he hauled in a 49-yard pass in Sunday’s loss. Being mired in what still appears to be the tougher conference – and specifically in the AFC West, which can already be awarded to the Kansas City Chiefs (again) – hard to find a viable trail forward for the Broncos.

8. New York Giants

They have very few players who scare you, and a quarterback in Daniel Jones who forces opposing defenders to suppress smiles given his penchant for carelessness with the football. Only Carolina has scored fewer points than the Giants’ 24. And a defense allowing 5.3 yards per rush is going to struggle to



The Bengals and quarterback Joe Burrow have taken early hits this season but the rest of their schedule is favorable for a recovery from 0-2.

SAM GREENE/
THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

get off the field – though New York has been tough in the red zone and held the Washington Commanders without a touchdown Sunday. Still, hard to envision this group going on a run ... or even winning many games, especially if other teams focus on taking rookie WR Malik Nabers out of games.

7. Tennessee Titans

Strip out second-year QB Will Levis’ league-leading five turnovers, and we might be talking about a surprise 2-0 team rather than one that’s surrendered second-half leads in both losses. The defense has allowed the fewest yards in the league, but it hasn’t been able to offset Levis’ mistakes, generating only one takeaway of its own. There are some high-end players on this roster, even if expectations for this team have been generally muted. But there might be room for hope given two other AFC South squads are also winless, not to mention the fact QB2 Mason Rudolph came off the bench to lead the Pittsburgh Steelers’ playoff charge last year – and, given rookie head coach Brian Callahan’s obvious frustration with Levis, it doesn’t seem like we’re a long way off from seeing Rudolph take the field.

6. Carolina Panthers

This might seem extraordinarily optimistic for a team that’s looked like the NFL’s worst on the field and on paper – league-low 13 points scored (not even half as many as New Orleans Saints RB Alvin Kamara’s 30), league-high 73 points surrendered, league-worst 9.1% conversion rate on third down ... the list goes on. Fortunately, two bad losses count the same as two near misses. Here again, living in the NFC should be an inherent advantage for Carolina. More important – and while it’s not exactly fair to expect a Joe Flacco effect – the promotion of veteran Andy Dalton, 36, to QB1 on Monday could have a cascading effect on a team that’s flatlined for a season-plus with Bryce Young, the top pick of the 2023 draft, at the controls.

Dalton started one game last year, a 37-27 loss at Seattle in which he threw for 361 yards and two scores – and that game was about the best the Panthers offense has looked in the last year. This attack has capable weapons in WRs Diontae Johnson and Adam Thielen and RBs Chuba Hubbard and Miles Sanders – and stands to get an even better one whenever rookie RB Jonathon Brooks, who tore his ACL while at the University of Texas last season, is ready to play. Losing DL Derrick Brown, arguably the team’s best player, to a season-ending knee injury is an obvious blow. But Dal-

ton, who did a nice job as the Saints starter two years ago, has a legit shot to turn this around. And it’s incumbent on this roster at large to respond after rookie HC Dave Canales cited the needs of the greater good as his primary rationale for sitting Young.

5. Jacksonville Jaguars

“We suck right now,” QB Trevor Lawrence said after Sunday’s loss to the Cleveland Browns. Gotta appreciate the man’s honesty. This defense hasn’t made many big plays (zero takeaways) but tends to surrender them, including four of more than 20 yards Sunday and two completions beyond 60 yards in Week 1, including a game-changing 80-yarder to Miami Dolphins WR Tyreek Hill. The team’s lone turnover this year, RB Travis Etienne’s fumble on his way to an apparent game-clinching touchdown, preceded Hill’s score. And HC Doug Pederson’s game-management decisions occasionally continue to mystify. But the spotlight is fairly trained on Lawrence, who has lost seven straight starts going back to last season and has failed to execute on the plays that could’ve flipped the Jags’ 0-2 start to 2-0. The issues seem correctable. Yet with upcoming trips to Buffalo and Houston, Lawrence and Co. are staring down the barrel to 0-4.

4. Indianapolis Colts

Like the Jaguars and Titans, they’re already in a two-game hole behind the Texans in the AFC South standings. The inconsistency of QB Anthony Richardson, 22, who shares the league’s interception lead (four) with Nix, shouldn’t come as a surprise given his relative inexperience at the position, which extends to high school and at the University of Florida. He’s also made nearly enough spectacular plays to guide this team to two wins. Richardson clearly needs to safeguard the ball better, but his defense also very much needs to help him out. The Colts, who just put Pro Bowl DT DeForest Buckner on injured reserve with an ankle injury, are allowing 237 yards per game on the ground – almost 40 yards clear of the next-worst team and a massive reason Indy ranks dead last in time of possession. Richardson’s going to make mistakes, but he can’t flash and HC Shane Steichen can’t execute his often-masterful game plans if the offense isn’t on the field.

3. Los Angeles Rams

A wild-card team last year, the Rams are very clearly being undermined by a flurry of injuries – Pro Bowl WR Puka Nacua, OL Jonah Jackson, Joe Note-

boom and Steve Avila and DBs Darius Williams and John Johnson III already on IR, with WR Cooper Kupp (ankle) likely to miss an extended stretch. TE Tyler Higbee (knee) remains on the physically unable to perform list. A defense trying to adapt to life after the retirement of superstar Aaron Donald isn’t – already guilty of 33 missed tackles, by far the most in the league. The issues on the O-line, which also included a now-served suspension to OT Alaric Jackson, have led to a unit that can’t run the ball (NFC-low 68 yards per game on the ground) and has allowed seven sacks of 36-year-old QB Matthew Stafford. But a group that owns a Week 6 bye has time to get healthy, did survive a 3-6 start last year before a late-season surge and has a coach, Sean McVay, who has never retreated from a challenge.

2. Baltimore Ravens

You’re probably old enough to remember when they were the AFC’s top-seeded playoff team ... which, of course, was last year. Presently, they’re suffering from a respectable loss to the Chiefs and a bad one to the Raiders. While the signing of RB Derrick Henry was the team’s dominant offseason storyline, significant personnel losses on both sides of the ball – particularly in the trenches – and the departure of DC Mike Macdonald were at least as important. Henry’s been fine thus far, though, at 30, his best attribute might be the ability to draw defenders away from QB Lamar Jackson. Elsewhere, only four teams have allowed more points, and the O-line remains a work in progress. This is the Ravens’ first 0-2 start since 2015, and they’ve only had one losing season in the past eight and missed the postseason once in the past six campaigns – so it stands to reason they’ll figure things out. But with four of their next six games against 2023 playoff squads and another against Cincinnati, they better not wait long.

1. Cincinnati Bengals

You’re probably old enough to remember when they represented the AFC in the Super Bowl ... which, of course, was three years ago – the only team in the past five seasons to prevent the Chiefs from appearing on Super Sunday. Presently, they’re suffering from a respectable loss to Kansas City and a bad one to the Patriots. Notoriously slow starters since QB Joe Burrow was drafted in 2020 – a collective 1-9 in Weeks 1 and 2 since, their only win coming in 2021 – he’s currently a significant part of the problem, responsible for all of Cincinnati’s league-high three fumbles. Predictably, he’s also on pace to be sacked 51 times. Furthermore, Burrow is dealing with the temporary absence of injured WR Tee Higgins, the permanent one of traded RB Joe Mixon, all while top playmaker Ja’Marr Chase appears clearly affected by his ongoing contract stalemate. Still, collectively, there probably isn’t a team among this group of nine with more upside than Cincinnati’s. And one distinction that may ultimately separate them from their AFC North rivals in Baltimore is the Bengals’ last-place schedule. Also noteworthy? The 2022 Stripes were one of the two teams in the last five years to dig out of the 0-2 hole. If Burrow is healthy and Chase is even-keeled, little reason to believe they can’t do it again.

Wild cards

Continued from Page 1C

Given the chaotic circumstances for many wild-card entrants – battling down to the last weekend of the season, often pursuing multiple lanes into the tournament – it can end in a hurry.

The Miami Marlins secured their playoff berth in Pittsburgh on the penultimate day of the 2023 season – same as the Diamondbacks – and were matched with fellow wild-card entrant Philadelphia. But that’s only after having to wait and see if they’d need to make up a suspended game in New York on the off day before the playoffs.

Instead, they hopped across Pennsylvania for their wild-card matchup at Philadelphia – and fell 4-1 and 7-1.

“With the current format, there’s all the sitting, but it’s a chance for guys to get their bodies right,” says Marlins infielder Jake Burger. “For us, you’re going into Philadelphia after 162 games, trying to get into that playoff mindset. You have that urgency to try and win Game 1, but a lot of this game is about momentum. When you have three games versus five, it’s tough to flip that momentum at times.”

The Rays know that well.

In 2022, their pitchers were beyond heroic in Cleveland, pitching 23 innings and posting zeroes in 21 of them. Yet two swings of the bat – one from Jose Ramirez, the other Oscar Gonzalez – produced 2-1 and 1-0 Guardians victories and some early tee times for the Rays.

Last year, the Rangers got hot at their expense, coming into Tropicana Field and winning 4-0 and 7-1 to end the Rays’ season and launch a seven-game postseason winning streak. And in consecutive years, staying active did little to rouse the Rays.

“Postseason baseball is cool. It’s exciting, but it can end pretty quick,” says Rays reliever Garrett Cleavinger, who pitched in both 2022 games at Cleveland and has pondered how resting teams might avoid rust. “It’s a tough one to balance. You don’t want to keep red-lining it if you don’t have to. If you get a couple days off and get some guys rested, that’s probably a good thing.

“But you want people to stay sharp, too. It’s tough for teams to balance both ways.”

Matchup game

Yet make no mistake: There’s just one primary goal for contenders down the stretch.

“Everybody’s mindset in here is win

the division,” says Orioles starter Zach Eflin. “I don’t think there’s any scenario in the game of baseball where we shy away from that.”

Eflin is headed to his third consecutive postseason, playing a key relief role for the ’22 Phillies and starting, and losing, Game 2 for the Rays last season. He’ll likely be a Game 2 starter behind Corbin Burnes for these Orioles, who trailed the Yankees by five games in the AL East going into Thursday.

Whether that’s in a wild-card series or ALDS will be determined in the next 10 days. The Orioles epitomized the “rust” concept in a 2023 ALDS, getting steamrolled by the Rangers in three games.

“In Philly in ’22, it was perfect for us to continue playing baseball. We got hot at the end of the year and just kept going,” says Eflin. “With the Rays, we just faced an extremely hot (Texas) team. They were barreling balls up, came here to Baltimore and kept doing it.”

Looking for a dark horse to emerge as that hot team in ’24? Don’t necessarily look for clues in these weeks. Eflin’s ’22 Phillies were 14-14 in the season’s final month and lost 10 of 13 in late September to imperil their playoff hopes before winning four of five for their 87th win.

And while the ’23 Diamondbacks enjoyed a 15-8 September, they lost their

last four games, one of them after their playoff berth was ensured.

Perhaps it’s more instructive to view the compromised opponent as potential springboard. Arizona received a huge break before its wild-card series when Milwaukee Brewers starter Brandon Woodruff was declared out with a shoulder injury that would require surgery; the Brewers never recovered.

And in the NLDS, the Dodgers were similarly out of pitching, with Game 1 starter Clayton Kershaw requiring shoulder surgery after the season, but not before the D-backs jumped him for six runs in the first inning; they out-scored LA 19-6 in the three-game sweep.

Arizona rode that wave all the way to Game 5 of the World Series. So perhaps that’s the blinking light we should look for – not the team bound to be rusty but a No. 3 wild card that had to play hard all the way into October and finds favorable matchups in the postseason.

Then again, it’s just the third year of the mega-playoffs. October will determine if this is the year for the revenge of the rested.

“There’s no crystal ball answer,” says Rays manager Kevin Cash. “The priority is to get in, do anything you can to get in.

“And maybe let the momentum of a strong month carry a little bit farther than what you would have thought.”

LIV players to be eligible for PGA Championships, Ryder Cups

Cameron Jourdan
Golfweek | USA TODAY NETWORK

The PGA of America announced Thursday that its board has determined LIV Golf League players will be eligible for both future PGA Championships and the Ryder Cup.

LIV players will be offered A-3 membership into the PGA of America, the same granted to PGA Tour players, those on the DP World Tour and nine other circuits around the world.

The announcement is consistent with what the PGA of America has done the past two years, including in 2023 when LIV Golf’s Brooks Koepka won the PGA Championship for the third time and then participated on the United States Ryder Cup team in Rome.

“To ensure the PGA Championship will continue to deliver the strongest field in golf and that the U.S. Ryder Cup team will continue to have access to the best American players, the PGA of America board has determined that LIV Golf players will be eligible for both,” the statement read.

“Going forward, all LIV Golf players are eligible for the PGA Championship and any American player who qualifies for the Ryder Cup on points or is added to the U.S. team as a captain’s pick is eligible to compete.”

No LIV Golf players were banned from competing in the PGA Championship or from the U.S. Ryder Cup



Brooks Koepka won the Wanamaker Trophy after finishing first in the 2023 PGA Championship at Oak Hill Country Club.
ADAM CAIRNS/
IMAGN IMAGES

LIV Golf Dallas Team Championship

Course: Maridoe Golf Club (Par 72, 7,567 Yards) in Carrollton, Texas
Team purse: \$50 million (Winners: \$14 million)
TV: Friday: 1-6 p.m. EDT (CW App, LIV Golf Plus); Saturday-Sunday: 1-6 p.m. (CW Network, LIV Golf Plus)
X: @livgolf_league

The top three teams in the regular-season standings – Crushers GC, Legion XIII and Ripper GC – earned first-round byes while the other 10 teams will be in action in Friday’s quarterfinals, in which five head-to-head matches will consist of two singles matches and one foursomes (alternate-shot) match. ... Saturday’s semifinals will be four head-to-head matches following the same format as Friday. The highest-ranked teams will select their opponents via draft. ... Four teams advance to Sunday’s finals, which consist of one round of stroke play where all four individual scores count toward the team’s score. The eliminated teams will also compete for fifth through eighth and ninth through 13th place. ... Bryson DeChambeau’s Crushers GC won last year’s title and have the top seed this year, while newcomer Jon Rahm, who just won the 2024 individual title, and his Legion XIII also start out with a first-round bye.

– Field Level Media | Reuters

Italy ousts USA from America’s Cup

Alexander Smith
Reuters

Italy will face Britain in the final of the America’s Cup sailing challenger series, recovering from a breakage with a convincing win over its U.S. semi-final opponent on Thursday.

The Italian team beat the United States 5-3 in the first-to-five Louis Vuitton Cup semifinals. The British crew had ended Switzerland’s challenge in Barcelona on Wednesday.

The Louis Vuitton Cup final starts on Sept. 26. The winner will take on America’s Cup defenders New Zealand for the coveted “Auld Mug.”

For the USA, which suffered a setback when co-helm Paul Goodison fell down a hatch and broke five ribs, the America’s Cup dream is over once again.

“A huge congratulations, the better team won,” said Tom Slingsby, co-helm of New York Yacht Club’s American Magic, which represented the USA. “We knew we had a big fight on our hands.”

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Friday FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
SYRACUSE	8.5	57.5	Stanford
NEBRASKA	7.5	42.5	Illinois
WASH. ST.	12	55.5	San Jose St.

Saturday FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
ARMY	6.5	43	Rice
INDIANA	29	49	Charlotte
Tulane	3	54.5	LOUISIANA
Florida	6	58.5	MISS. ST.
N. CAROL.	10.5	48	James Madison
OHIO STATE	40	52.5	Marshall
CINCINNATI	3.5	47.5	Houston
WEST VA.	2	57	Kansas
CLEMSON	20.5	44	NC State
KENTUCKY	20	42.5	Ohio
C. MICH.	6.5	53	Ball State
Utah State	6	54	TEMPLE
Virginia	3.5	55.5	CSLT. CAROL.
IOWA STATE	21.5	51.5	Arkansas ST.
JCKSNVLL. ST.	6	60	Sthern Miss
Memphis	9.5	49	NAVY
AUBURN	3	56.5	Arkansas
LSU	24	56.5	ucia
TEXAS TECH	2.5	58.5	Arizona State
IL. ILLINOIS	13.5	43	Buffalo
PENN STATE	49	55.5	Kent State

NOTRE DAME	28	43.5	Miami (OH)
LOUISVILLE	10.5	57.5	Ga. Tech
VA. TECH	3.5	44.5	Rutgers
usc	5.5	44	MICHIGAN
Utah	2.5	52.5	OKLA. ST.
Duke	14.5	52	M. TENN.
MISSOURI	20	53.5	Vanderbilt
COLO. ST.	9.5	49.5	utep
tcu	3	58.5	SMU
LIBERTY	6	54	E. Carolina
UCONN	2.5	46	Fla. Atlantic
N. TEXAS	7	55.5	Wyoming
Miami (FL)	16.5	65	S. FLA.
LA. TECH	3	57.5	Tulsa
Toledo	2.5	60	W. KENT.
FLA. ST.	2.5	44.5	California
SAM HSTN	16.5	44.5	NM State
WASHINGTON	10.5	42.5	Northwestern
Tennessee	7	57	OKLAHOMA
TX A&M	22.5	52.5	Akron
Iowa	2.5	35.5	Bowling Green
OLE MISS	36	67.5	MINNESOTA
TEXAS	44.5	53	Ga. Southern
COLORADO	2	50.5	La. -Monroe
BOSTN COL.	6.5	45	Baylor
Fresno State	14	59.5	Michigan St.
OREGON ST.	4.5	50	NEW MEXICO
Kansas State	6.5	48.5	Purdue
			BYU

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WEATHER

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WEEKEND FORECAST

As a coastal storm slowly moves out to sea into this weekend, surf will remain rough along much of the **Atlantic coast**. Rain will retreat in southeast **New England** into Saturday. As a storm makes some eastward progress in the **Midwest** with spotty showers and thunderstorms, some moisture may reach parts of the **Northeast** during the weekend.

As a storm moves eastward over the **West**, it will lead to a broad area of rain from **Colorado** to **Minnesota** this weekend. The rain can lead to travel delays with strong thunderstorms over the southern **Plains**.

The air will get cold enough for some snow to fall on part of northern **Colorado**. Much of the balance of the **West** will be dry. A tropical storm or hurricane may form in the Gulf of Mexico next week.

EXTREMES

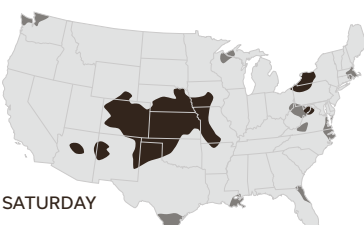
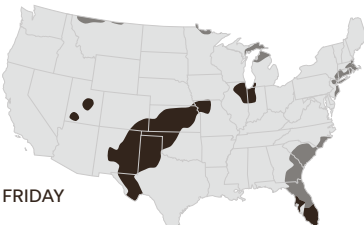
Note: For contiguous 48 states through 3 p.m. Thursday

HOTTEST: 99°
Enid, Okla.

COLDEST: 27°
Kremmling, Colo.

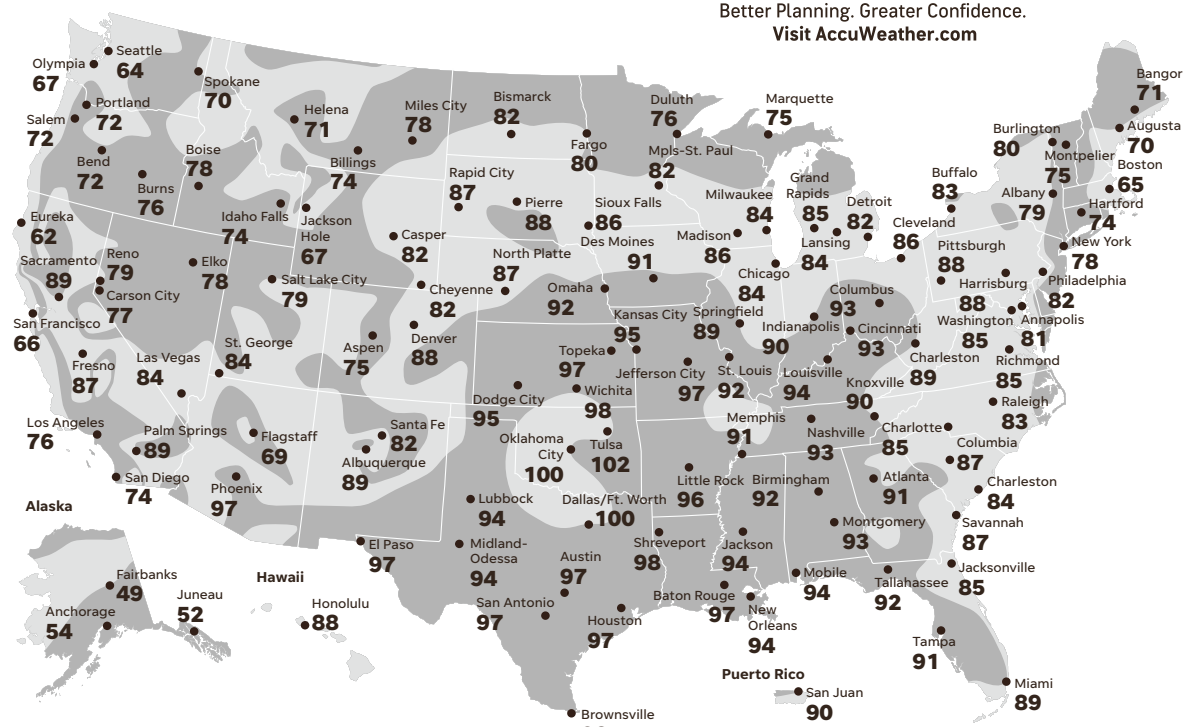
PRECIPITATION FORECAST

● T-storms ● Rain ○ Snow ● Ice/mix

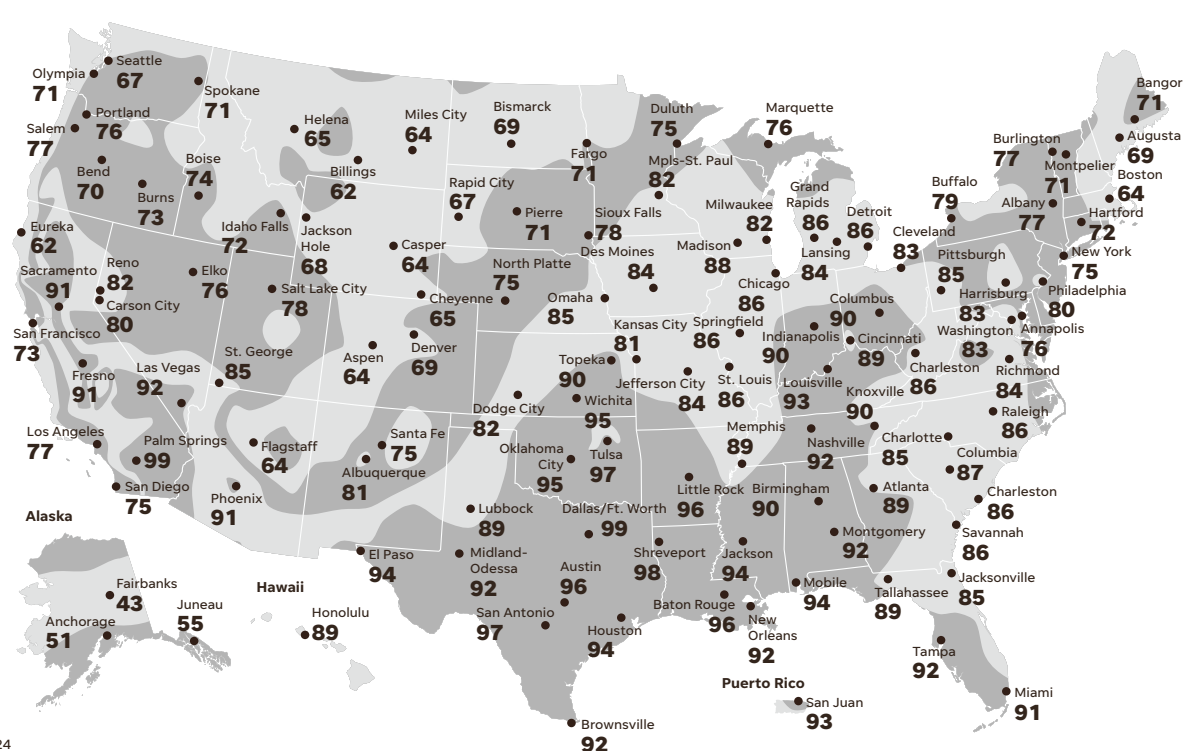


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FRIDAY’S HIGH TEMPERATURES



SATURDAY’S HIGH TEMPERATURES



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U.S. CITIES

	FRI	SAT
Albany, N.Y.	79/59pc	77/56pc
Albuquerque	89/65pc	81/54pc
Amarillo, Texas	97/67t	87/59t
Anchorage, Alaska	54/40c	51/39s
Atlantic City, N.J.	75/62t	72/61w
Augusta, Ga.	89/64pc	89/64s
Austin, Texas	97/70s	96/70pc
Baton Rouge, La.	97/70s	96/71s
Billings, Mont.	74/43s	62/41s
Birmingham, Ala.	92/66s	90/67s
Bismarck, N.D.	82/49s	69/43w
Boise, Idaho	78/48s	74/50s
Buffalo, N.Y.	83/65s	79/60t
Burlington, Vt.	80/61sh	77/56pc
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	89/59pc	86/59t
Charleston, S.C.	84/68sh	86/65s
Charleston, W.Va.	89/61s	86/60s
Cheyenne, Wyo.	82/47pc	65/40t
Cincinnati	93/68s	89/67pc
Cleveland	86/67s	83/62pc
Columbia, S.C.	87/66pc	87/64s
Columbus, Ohio	93/67s	90/62c
Corpus Christi, Texas	94/78pc	92/75sh
Daytona Beach, Fla.	88/73pc	87/72pc
Des Moines, Iowa	91/65s	84/58t
Duluth, Minn.	76/54pc	75/49t
Durham, N.C.	82/61r	82/62s
El Paso, Texas	97/72pc	94/63s
Fairbanks, Alaska	49/38c	43/36r
Flagstaff, Ariz.	69/40s	64/38pc
Fargo, N.D.	80/58pc	71/46w
Fort Myers, Fla.	90/73t	91/73pc
Fort Wayne, Ind.	92/62t	89/59pc
Fresno, Calif.	87/64s	91/65s
Green Bay, Wis.	84/54pc	85/62pc
Harrisburg, Pa.	88/64s	83/64pc
Hartford, Conn.	74/57r	72/55c
Indianapolis	90/67s	90/67pc
Jackson, Miss.	94/67s	94/70s
Jacksonville, Fla.	85/70sh	85/68pc
Jefferson City, Mo.	97/70s	84/70t
Kansas City	97/71s	91/66t
Key West, Fla.	90/81t	89/80pc
Knoxville, Tenn.	90/62s	90/63pc
Lincoln, Neb.	95/64s	85/55t
Little Rock, Ark.	96/72s	96/70s
Louisville, Ky.	94/72s	93/71pc
Manchester, N.H.	70/58c	67/53pc
Memphis, Tenn.	91/71s	89/70s
Milwaukee	84/63pc	82/67pc
Mobile, Ala.	94/69s	94/70s
Montgomery, Ala.	93/66s	92/66s
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	81/67sh	81/66s
Nags Head, N.C.	87/66pc	72/65c
Nashville, Tenn.	93/68s	92/69pc
Newark, N.J.	81/63c	78/61c
Norfolk, Va.	79/66pc	77/67pc
Oakland, Calif.	71/55pc	74/56s
Oklahoma City	100/72s	95/71pc
Omaha, Neb.	92/65pc	85/47t
Palm Springs, Calif.	89/68pc	99/72s
Pittsburgh	88/64s	85/60pc
Portland, Maine	59/57c	65/53pc
Portland, Ore.	72/52pc	76/55pc
Providence, R.I.	66/59r	64/57sh
Raleigh, N.C.	83/63r	86/63s
Rapid City, S.D.	87/50s	67/43w
Reno, Nev.	79/51s	82/51s
Richmond, Va.	85/62pc	84/63pc
Rochester, N.Y.	81/62s	81/58t
Sacramento, Calif.	89/56s	91/59s
San Antonio	97/77s	97/74s
San Jose, Calif.	80/58pc	83/60s
Savannah, Ga.	87/67sh	86/65s
Shreveport, La.	98/73s	98/72s
Sioux Falls, S.D.	86/61s	78/50pc
South Bend, Ind.	86/62t	87/65pc
Spokane, Wash.	70/45pc	71/47pc
Springfield, Mo.	95/72pc	91/72t
Springfield, Ill.	89/64t	86/67pc
St. Louis	92/73t	86/71pc
Syracuse, N.Y.	84/62s	82/60pc
Tallahassee, Fla.	92/68s	89/67s
Tampa, Fla.	91/74t	92/73pc
Topeka, Kan.	97/72t	90/66t
Tucson, Ariz.	94/62s	86/64s
Tulsa, Okla.	102/78s	97/76pc
Wichita, Kan.	97/75t	95/70t
Wilmington, Del.	82/62pc	79/60pc
Winston-Salem, N.C.	83/63sh	83/63s

pc Partly cloudy s Sunny sh Showers c Cloudy t Thunderstorms w Windy dr Drizzle h Haze f Fog l Ice r Rain sf Snowflurries sn Snow

Legit

Continued from Page 1C

Legit contenders

1. Kansas City Chiefs: If not for ending up on the favorable side of a couple of fourth-quarter plays, the Chiefs easily could be 0-2 and sparking panic about their Super Bowl three-peat bid. Call it good luck or championship mettle – or some combination of both – but Kansas City once again finds itself 2-0 for the fifth time in seven seasons with Patrick Mahomes as the starting quarterback. Between Marquise “Hollywood” Brown’s long-term shoulder injury and rookie left tackle Kingsley Suamataia’s benching on Sunday, visions of a far more explosive offense might have been premature. But this remains the team that everyone is chasing, and there’s reason to believe that significant improvement is within reach, especially with Travis Kelce barely factoring into the passing attack thus far. With Mahomes still capable of finding a spark at a moment’s notice and Steve Spagnuolo’s defense continuing to deliver in key spots, Kansas City’s margin for error feels as big as ever.

2. Buffalo Bills: An offseason of roster upheaval has only given way to more personnel hits for Buffalo, which has lost linebackers Matt Milano and Terrel Bernard as well as cornerback Taron Johnson to injuries. But the Bills haven’t buckled yet. With Joe Brady establishing himself as one of the NFL’s most adaptable offensive minds, Josh Allen and Co. have shown any number of ways to exploit defenses despite still sorting out a reconfigured receiving corps. Sean McDermott will eventually have to demonstrate he can overcome the hits that could prove to be the difference against the AFC’s elite. For now, however, the Bills are one of the few teams capable of meeting the Chiefs – or any other top contender – at their best.

3. Houston Texans: Tied with the Chiefs for the lowest point differential (+8) of all the undefeated teams, the Texans didn’t exactly mow down their first two opponents. The defense also was able to tee off against Anthony Richardson and Caleb Williams, who have a combined six starts between them. But Houston has the all the necessary talent to be a title threat, and reign-

ing NFL Coach of the Year DeMeco Ryans continues to position his group to succeed. Sustained improvement in the running game could put the team over the top, as Joe Mixon looked rejuvenated in his 159-yard performance in Week 1 but then suffered an ankle injury against the Chicago Bears. With the AFC South looking nowhere near as competitive as it appeared it might be, the Texans could run away with another division title and make a push for very favorable seeding.

Almost there

4. Tampa Bay Buccaneers: Maybe it’s time to stop expecting a falling off for the three-time defending NFC South champions, who are enjoying their fourth consecutive 2-0 start. The first two came as a recognized powerhouse with Tom Brady behind center. But Baker Mayfield and Todd Bowles have fended off any notion of a regression, and their 20-16 victory Sunday over the Detroit Lions served as a reminder that Tampa Bay belongs among the conference’s best. The resurgence of Chris Godwin is a major boon for the offense, while Bowles’ group continues to hold firm when in key spots. A stagnant run game and shortage of firepower in the pass rush remain potential long-term limitations, but the Buccaneers’ abilities are readily evident.

5. New Orleans Saints: While the Saints have been pilloried for continuing to double down on a roster that has produced middling results in recent years, the franchise might be responsible for the most consequential move of the offseason. The hiring of offensive coordinator Klint Kubiak activated something in a veteran-laden attack that few could have seen coming, as New Orleans’ 91 points are tied for the fourth most in league history through a team’s first two games. It must be noted, however, the scoring outbursts came against the hapless Carolina Panthers and a Dallas Cowboys defense playing its second game within a new scheme. Still, the rampant use of motion and play-action has done wonders for both Derek Carr, who looks far more confident after a rocky debut season in the Big Easy, and Alvin Kamara, the five-time Pro Bowler who leads the NFL in yards from scrimmage (290) after averaging just 3.9 yards per rush last season. If the Saints can handle a brutal four-



Tyrann Mathieu and the Saints have roughed up the Panthers and Cowboys. KEVIN JAIRAJ/IMAGN IMAGES

game stretch (vs. Eagles, at Falcons, at Chiefs, vs. Buccaneers), then kick them up a tier. For now, though, put a pin in any projection of a home Super Bowl.

More to prove

6. Minnesota Vikings: It’s understandable that the focus of the Vikings’ sizzling start has been Sam Darnold, as it’s not often a former top-five pick serves a reminder of his promise upon joining his fourth team (Mayfield, of course, was the pioneer here). But there’s little question that more recognition should be given to defensive coordinator Brian Flores. As San Francisco 49ers quarterback Brock Purdy put it to Flores after Minnesota bagged him for six sacks and two turnovers in a 23-17 win on Sunday, “Your scheme is crazy.” While Flores should continue to fluster opposing attacks throughout the season, Darnold still must demonstrate that he can be a consistent triggerman and do more than let Justin Jefferson be Justin Jefferson. But if Kevin O’Connell can continue to put Darnold in favorable spots – and the mounting injuries to his pass catchers don’t take too much of a toll – Minnesota could be in the wildcard mix late into the season.

7. Los Angeles Chargers: With more yards rushing (395) than passing (270), Jim Harbaugh’s crew has already established its NFL counterculture identity. Yet the approach used to grind down the Raiders and Panthers almost certainly won’t be deployed as easily against the likes of the Steelers and Chiefs, who await the next two weeks. The Bolts’ dominant defensive performances are

inextricably tied to the moribund passing attacks they faced, and an underdeveloped receiving corps threatens to be a stumbling block when early-game conditions are less favorable. Still, even if the group can’t quite keep up with contenders, the schedule is soft enough that the Chargers could be a rough-and-tumble version of last year’s Dolphins, overpowering the subpar-to-average teams to stay relevant in the postseason picture.

8. Pittsburgh Steelers: It’s fitting that the Steelers are squaring off with the Chargers on Sunday, as the two have plenty of overlapping traits. Like Los Angeles’ group, Pittsburgh’s defense has smothered its overwhelmed opponents, but the unit is in need of a greater test. And the Steelers haven’t had to make much of an ask of their passing game with Justin Fields filling in for Russell Wilson. Still, while Mike Tomlin has proved himself adept at navigating roster deficiencies that would sink lesser coaches, this formula doesn’t appear tenable for the long run, as neither Fields nor Wilson look capable of bailing the offense out the way Herbert can. A league-best +5 turnover differential has been key to Pittsburgh’s early success. Maybe the defense can continue to generate big plays, but the offense could be facing some bigger holes ahead if the team sticks with Fields, who had 41 turnovers in 40 games with the Chicago Bears while taking 135 sacks in the same span.

9. Seattle Seahawks: Credit Mike Macdonald, the NFL’s youngest head coach at 37, for getting off on the right foot with an unblemished start – something no other coach in franchise history has managed in his first year. But there was no easier opening slate than the one Seattle had in facing the Denver Broncos and New England Patriots, with each franchise sorting through major roster resets. Macdonald’s complex scheme will likely continue to vex opponents throughout the season, and Geno Smith looks fully in command of new offensive coordinator Ryan Grubb’s attack. But an offensive line that ranks 31st in both ESPN’s pass block win rate (38%) and run block win rate (65%) remains a major liability, particularly on the interior. While the Seahawks might be far more competitive than many predicted, a regression seems inevitable once the level of competition ratchets up.

Hunter

Continued from Page 1C

almost every play week after week. Last week, he played 123 of 138 snaps from scrimmage as a cornerback and receiver in a 28-9 win at Colorado State, according to Colorado.

- When not playing his first “first love” of football, he’s often glued to a screen. He said he takes all of his college classes online and sometimes has played football video games four hours a day. This helps him recharge and manage his time.

- His passion for fishing makes him happy. In Colorado, he often fishes on a friend’s private lake and sometimes goes fishing with his coach at Colorado, Deion Sanders.

- He gets big support behind the scenes from Leanna Lenee, his fiancée. They got engaged in February and celebrated with a weekend of paintballing, riding trails on ATVs and hosting a barbecue.

- He also is growing wealthy through his many deals for his name, image and likeness (NIL). He talks to his financial manager every week and recently announced a deal with NerdWallet, a personal finance company, in which he decided to put 20% of the money earned into a savings account.

Hunter, 21, said this partnership “gave me the tools to take charge of my long-term financial future by prioritizing my financial health now.”

If he had to choose, would Hunter pick offense or defense?

Hunter discussed this and more in the email interview arranged through that partnership. But there was one question he wouldn’t really answer because of the way it limited his options:

If an NFL team makes you choose to focus mostly on offense or defense, which will you choose and why?

“My goal is to continue to be a 2-way player,” Hunter wrote in his response, refusing to pick a side. “I believe my versatility is one of my greatest strengths, and playing both offense and defense allows me to contribute to the team in various ways. I love the challenge of learning and excelling in both roles and pushing my limits. If given the opportu-

nity, I’d strive to continue making an impact on both ends of the field, helping my team wherever they need me most.”

Hunter showed how last week when he produced a stat line that Colorado said is believed to be the first of its kind in modern college football history – 13 catches for 100 yards and two touchdowns, five tackles, an interception with a 38-yard return and a pass break-up while playing 123 of 138 snaps from scrimmage. He ranks second nationally in catches per game (10) and touchdown catches (five). Off the field, as of January, he also had a cumulative grade-point average of 3.6, according to Colorado.

“I don’t know how he do it,” Colorado running back Micah Welch said Tuesday. “But he’s the best player in college football.”

How is Hunter ‘everywhere?’

After Colorado’s season-opening win against North Dakota State on Aug. 29, United Airlines took advantage of Hunter’s three-touchdown game by pushing out a short commercial on social media. It shows Hunter in a Colorado uniform doing it all for United as an employee: He’s tagging luggage, marshaling planes, serving as a flight attendant and sitting in a window seat as a passenger.

Not only was Hunter “everywhere,” as the commercial says, but he also surprised teammates who wondered when Hunter had found the time to film a commercial, too.

“When did you do this,” teammate Shilo Sanders asked on Instagram.

The advertisement actually was shot on a camera phone in July at Denver International Airport. He showed up in his Buffaloes uniform and caused a stir at the airport among those who recognized him.

“We were naturally drawn to him,” United’s chief advertising officer, Maggie Schmerin, told USA TODAY Sports. “We see a lot of synergy between everything that he does in a single game and everything our employees do to get a single flight off the ground, let alone close to 5,000 flights that we have a day.”

Hunter’s background

Hunter’s rise as a player and commercial pitchman follows a familiar

path, led by his coach and role model, Deion Sanders, a Pro Football Hall of Famer. Both grew up in tough environments. Both are from Florida. Hunter was born in West Palm Beach before moving to Collins Hill High School in Suwanee, Georgia, where his family of five was living back then in a converted motel room, said Drew Swick, the coach at Collins Hill.

Swick said Hunter’s grades started dropping at one point before another coach, Frontia Fountain, let him move in with him.

“From there on, Travis kind of flourished,” Swick told USA TODAY Sports.

Hunter recently bought his mom and stepfather a new house in the Savannah area, where his younger brother Trayvis is a sophomore and receiver prospect to watch.

It runs in the family. Hunter’s father, Travis Hunter Sr., is a former high school football and track star in Florida.

Deion Sanders as Hunter’s mentor

In college, Hunter now has another father figure in Sanders, who treats him like a son and shares his love of fishing.

“We talk about everything,” Deion Sanders said at a news conference Tuesday.

Hunter stunned the college football world in 2021 when he decided to play for Sanders at Jackson State in Mississippi instead of sticking with his commitment to Florida State.

As the nation’s No. 1 recruit for 2022, he then transferred from Jackson State to Colorado after Sanders was hired there at the end of that year.

“I have the best coach (Coach Prime),” Hunter said in the email. “He is out on the field, teaching me new things every day, and I love having him as a mentor.”

Sanders’ oversight of Hunter includes another important factor to consider in the study of this unusual human – making sure he gets enough rest to recover from his nonstop action on the field.

How does Hunter get his rest?

Sanders gives Hunter extra days off early in the week when his team is practicing. Hunter also has a routine after morning practices.

“Being a two-way player, I prioritize

my recovery as much as possible and am grateful my coaches allow me to spend a few extra days recovering,” he said in the email. “I usually will nap after practice before my classes and meetings, and then try to go to bed as early as possible, but sometimes get locked in streaming the EA College Football 25 game!”

That game was made for him, so to speak. He happens to be on the cover of it, along with Texas quarterback Quinn Ewers and Michigan running back Donovan Edwards. He also is borderline obsessed with playing. On a recent edition of his podcast on YouTube, he said it helps as a football aid.

“You really pretty much study any play you want to study on the game,” he said on the podcast.

Hunter on his Heisman hopes

The EA Sports cover had another effect on him, too. It increased his celebrity, which grows every week with his two-way highlights on national television. His team has played prime-time games this season on ESPN, NBC and CBS. On Saturday, he plays on Fox.

After the last game, the effect of his rising fame was on full display. He signed autographs for fans who tossed him a helmet and jerseys to sign from the stands at Colorado State. Each wanted a piece of him to save for themselves.

Likewise, NerdWallet is promoting its partnership with him by offering a chance to win a “sports relic card” containing a piece of his contract with the company.

Many consider him to be the best player in college football. If he stays healthy, he could make that title official by winning the Heisman Trophy in December.

“I got no personal goals,” Hunter said after his first game this season on Aug. 29.

The Heisman is a little different, though. The anthropology major knows it takes a football village to make it happen.

“Earning the Heisman would mean so much,” he said in the email. “It’s more than an individual award – it’s a reflection of the hard work and dedication of my teammates, coaches, and supporters. It’s a collective achievement and a celebration for us all.”

Once-exiled Heupel still loved in Oklahoma



Blake Toppmeyer
SEC Columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

Joe Castiglione lets the word hang in the air like a harvest moon. His succinct answer stands on its own. It requires no elaboration. Two syllables. Seven letters. That’s all Castiglione needs to explain how Oklahoma feels about Josh Heupel.

“Beloved,” Castiglione, Oklahoma’s veteran athletic director, told me this week.

No equivocation. Heupel remains an Oklahoma legend, and Castiglione said the school plans to treat him as such in the pregame before the No. 13 Sooners host No. 7 Tennessee on Saturday.

“We’re working through all of that, but we will absolutely recognize him in a way that is appropriate,” he said.

And then the game will begin, with Heupel standing on the opposing sideline as the red-hot coach of the Vols, thanks in part to the fact that Oklahoma fired him a decade ago, the inflection moment of Heupel’s coaching career.

The January 2015 day that Bob Stoops canned Heupel, his former star quarterback and longtime lieutenant, placed an even bigger chip on Heupel’s shoulder. It also freed Heupel of his bonds to his alma mater and afforded him the chance to restart.

Heupel set out from Norman to freely build the offense he wanted to operate. That offense put him on a path to restoring Tennessee to prominence, rather than face the burden of Stoops’ shadow.

Heupel’s career shines as bright as ever. So, is he ready to call his 2014 firing a blessing in disguise?

“Yeah, absolutely,” he said Wednesday. “Proud of a lot of what we did or I was a part of while I was (at Oklahoma), but I wouldn’t change anything.

“I’m fortunate and blessed to be here and absolutely love it on Rocky Top.”

Heupel ‘talked a little more trash than I was used to’

Barry Odom needed only one game

against Josh Heupel, a 1999 Big 12 meet-up in Norman, to realize this guy was unlike most quarterbacks he faced.

“He talked a little more trash than I was used to quarterbacks talking,” said Odom, the former Missouri linebacker who’s now UNLV’s coach, “and he backed it up with his play.”

That chip on Heupel’s shoulder existed before Stoops fired him.

Maybe that chip traces to Heupel being under-recruited as a star quarterback from Aberdeen, South Dakota. Heupel journeyed through the Football Championship Subdivision and junior college pit stops before Mike Leach recruited Heupel to play quarterback for Stoops and the Sooners. In 2000 Heupel became the Heisman runner-up and led Oklahoma to its lone national championship in the past 38 years.

That Stoops fired Heupel years later just made that chip grow a little bigger. And that was just fine by Odom.

After becoming Missouri’s coach before the 2016 season, Odom knew he wanted to do something outside the box with the Tigers offense.

Missouri had a promising young quarterback, Drew Lock.

“I wanted a quarterback’s guy,” Odom said.

Who better than Heupel?

Heupel had just finished a season as Utah State’s offensive coordinator. Odom thought he could nab him to be Missouri’s offensive coordinator. Still, Odom found Heupel hard to pry loose.

“It wasn’t easy to get him hired, because he’s a loyal guy,” Odom said.

Odom coached on the defensive side of the ball. That meant Heupel, officially his offensive coordinator, functioned as Missouri’s “head coach of the offense,” as Odom described it.

“I trusted him,” Odom said. “There wasn’t anybody in the building who outworked him.”

Heupel enjoyed free rein to install the warp-speed spread offense that became his calling card and later propelled him to head coaching success at Central Florida and Tennessee.

Missouri’s offense markedly improved in his first season on Odom’s staff. The following year, the offense really took off. So did Heupel’s career.

When UCF came calling, Odom knew Heupel couldn’t pass on this opportuni-



Tennessee coach Josh Heupel starred at Oklahoma in 1999 and 2000 and was on Bob Stoops’ OU staff from 2006-14.
CAITIE MCMEKIN/KNOXVILLE NEWS SENTINEL

ty. He always figured his time working with Heupel would be limited. “I knew we wouldn’t probably have a chance to work together very long,” Odom said, “because I thought he would be a head coach because of his vision, his consistency, his disciplined approach and his ability to see the big picture.”

And what of Stoops’ view of the big picture a decade ago?

Did Stoops make the right call?

It’s tough to answer that definitively, but here are the facts: Stoops brought in Lincoln Riley to take over the offense. The Sooners won 11 games in each of the next two seasons before Stoops retired. Riley ascended to the Oklahoma throne, and the Sooners made three consecutive playoff appearances before Riley flew the coop to Southern Cal.

By then, Heupel had Tennessee cooking.

Why Stoops fired Heupel, an ‘iconic figure’ of Oklahoma

Something needed to change after Oklahoma flopped throughout a 2014 season that ended with a 40-6 loss to Clemson.

Stoops changed his offensive leadership. He retained his defensive coordinator, brother Mike Stoops, and fired his co-offensive coordinators, Heupel and Jay Norvell.

This ended Heupel’s nine-year run on Stoops’ staff. More, it killed the pos-

sibility of Heupel becoming Stoops’ heir.

Stoops, in his autobiography, wrote that firing Heupel stands as “the worst day” of his 18 years coaching at OU.

It’s not uncommon for coaches to fire a coordinator or two after a disappointing season, and 2014 qualified as a disappointment. The Sooners opened the season ranked No. 4 and ended with a loss to rival Oklahoma State in Bedlam and a whipping in the Russell Athletic Bowl.

Firing Heupel, though, was undeniably unique. He wasn’t just any assistant. He’d become part of the soul of Oklahoma football. He’d captured the hearts of Sooners fans and provided jet fuel to Stoops’ tenure, first as a player and then as an assistant who developed Sam Bradford.

“He is one of the iconic figures in Oklahoma football history,” Castiglione said of Heupel.

Castiglione, the school’s athletic director since 1998, remembers fondly Heupel’s role as quarterback during Oklahoma’s famous 2000 march through “Red October,” when the Sooners beat No. 10 Texas, No. 3 Kansas State and No. 1 Nebraska in succession.

Castiglione also stressed Heupel’s “positive and notable impact” throughout his years on Stoops’ staff.

“I don’t want to speak for coach (Stoops), but it was a really, really difficult decision to step back and see what a coach feels has to be done,” Castiglione said, “but there wasn’t any hint of anybody being a scapegoat for anything. That was totally not the case. Just a time that a leader believes that some changes have to occur.”

Stoops, who did not respond to my interview request, released a public statement in which he wrote that he has “great respect” for Heupel and Sooners coach Brent Venables, another of his former assistants.

Stoops described Heupel as “the MVP of all my recruits” and “the catalyst” of his tenure.

Then, forced to chart a new course, Heupel became the catalyst for Tennessee.

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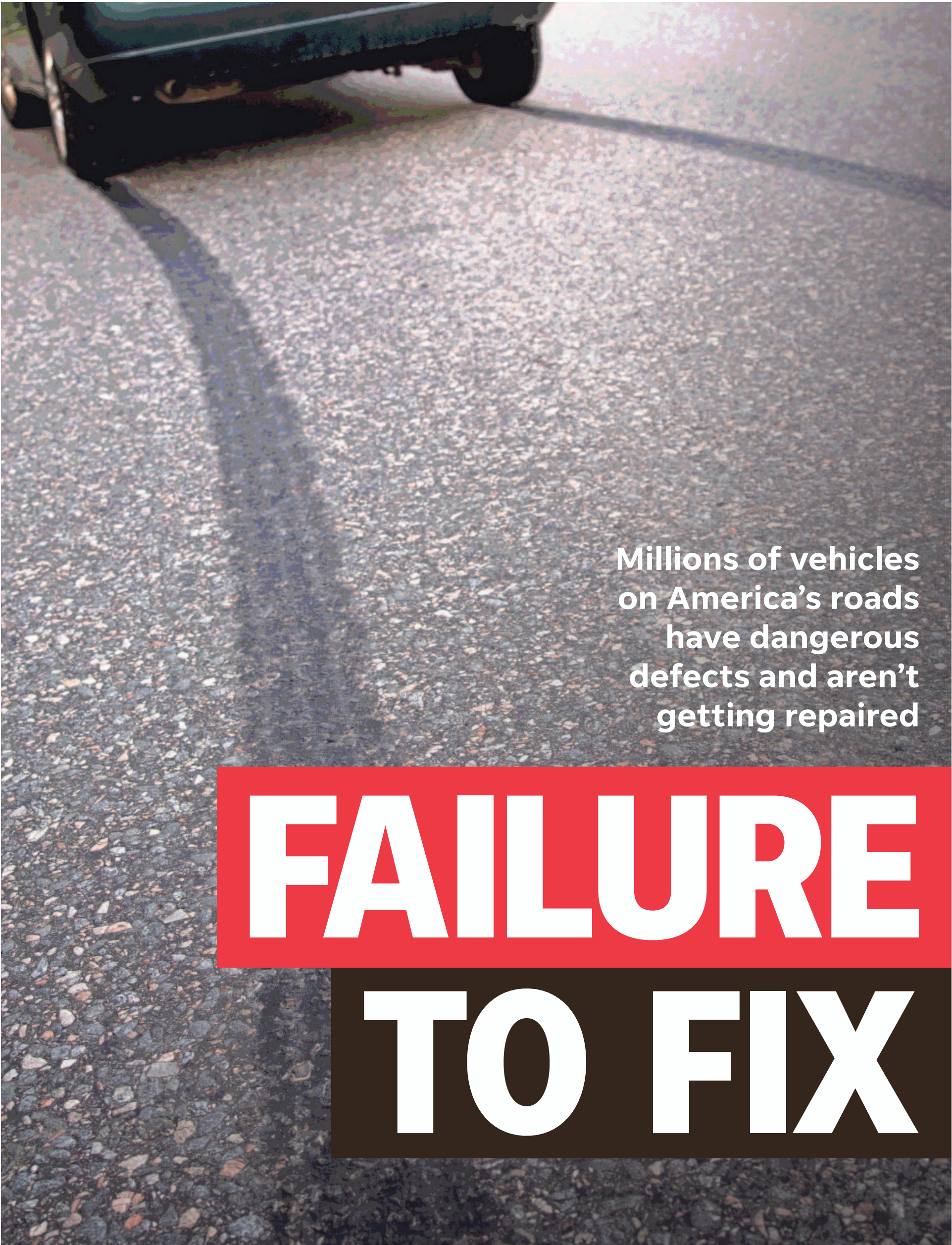
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Millions of vehicles
on America’s roads
have dangerous
defects and aren’t
getting repaired

FAILURE TO FIX

GETTY IMAGES



Jeffrey Wu, 47, of Lakeville, Minn., prepares to put on a prosthetic brace before going to work. Wu’s lower leg was amputated in 2022 after it was crushed in an incident involving his Jeep Grand Cherokee, which had been recalled due to a so-called “park-to-reverse” defect. RYAN GARZA/USA TODAY NETWORK

Matthew Dolan Detroit Free Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

On a dark winter morning, Jeffrey Wu nearly lost his life stopping for gas. ● Wu was driving his Jeep Grand Cherokee to work on March 4, 2022, when he pulled over to fill up about 20 miles south of Minneapolis. ● He had a moment of forgetfulness as he tried to drive away from the Kwik Trip without removing the pump nozzle from his fuel tank. So the dairy plant worker said he stopped and stepped out again into the frigid predawn. ● Little did Wu know that the way he tried to put his SUV into park would lead to tragedy. ● Six years before, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles had issued a recall on his 2014 Jeep for problems related to the gear shifter and parking the vehicle. The problem was so pervasive that industry insiders already dubbed it the “park-to-reverse defect.” All it would take is a quick software update to fix. Wu later said he had no idea about the danger and never received a recall notice to get the repair done.

See RECALLS, Page 3D

Potential solutions languish as risks grow

Why fixes to the industry’s recall problem haven’t passed. **2D**

Find out if your vehicle has an open recall

What owners need to know to get safety repairs taken care of. **6D**



Safety experts have proposed a plethora of ways to improve recall repair completion rates. They include allowing employees to use sick time to bring their recalled vehicles to dealerships for repairs, creating incentives for people to get repairs done and modernizing the notification system. ERIC SEALS/USA TODAY NETWORK

Proposed fixes for system are stuck

Safety experts blame auto industry blocks; manufacturers, dealers push back

Matthew Dolan
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Many proposed solutions to fix the nation’s vehicle safety recall system have either been sidelined or short-circuited, largely at the behest of some of the biggest players in the auto industry.

In a monthslong investigation, the Detroit Free Press, part of the USA TODAY Network, found automakers overseen by federal regulators are making little progress in repairing their oldest passenger models that have potentially life-threatening defects, putting millions of drivers at grave risk.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a former state attorney general who made his name on consumer issues, is pushing a bill to enact a nationwide ban on dealers selling used vehicles with open recalls, saying in an interview that “some of these safety defects are serious and potentially extremely dangerous. But consumers have no idea about them, often, when they purchase used cars, and the dealers should have an obligation to repair them before they sell them.”

The Democratic senator from Connecticut has introduced or reintroduced his bill in every new Congress since 2015. The bill also addresses concerns by dealers about having unsellable cars and trucks on their lots. It would allow recalled vehicles to be sold to other dealers who are able to fix the defects. In addition, the legislation would require manufacturers to provide parts to make fixes within 60 days or reimburse dealers if the manufacturers cannot provide needed parts.

Auto safety experts support his effort.

“New cars can’t be sold with an open recall, why should used cars be an exception?” asked longtime safety researcher Sean Kane of Safety Research & Strategies in a statement to support Blumenthal’s bill.

Michael Brooks, an auto safety advocate, blames the failure of the law’s passage on the auto industry, which has “better lobbyists” than other industries with known defective products that are prohibited for sale. “Because it seems like you would want to get them off the road as soon as possible.”

Some big industry players like Honda Motor endorsed an earlier proposal that would require any outstanding safety recall to be completed before a vehicle could be legally registered in a state. Some consumer groups now criticize that approach because it could unfairly restrict low-income families who depend on their vehicles.

Blumenthal’s sales ban has faced opposition from the National Automobile Dealers Association, which represents about 16,000 dealers. Representatives for the association did not respond to a request for comment for this article.

The association has said its dealers



Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., for years has been pushing a bill that would ban dealers from selling used vehicles with open recalls. BONNIE CASH/GETTY IMAGES

“You still get mail, snail mail, hard copy, right? You can’t do it electronically? It’s like, what year is this, right?”

Mark Rosekind
Former NHTSA leader, advocating for modernizing the recall notice system

don’t sell vehicles with the most severe warnings, such as a “Do Not Drive” edict. Carfax estimates fewer than 10% of all recalls have such warnings.

The dealer association also emphasizes that all recalls are not equal, with many minor enough to still allow customers to drive while waiting for repairs. The association insists any wholesale ban on selling used cars with open recalls would lead to additional costs to consumers.

In exchange for those higher prices, the sales ban, according to the association, would have little impact on the nation’s overall efforts to get recalled cars and trucks fixed at a greater rate.

“Restricting the sale of recalled vehicles that are deemed acceptable to drive by the government and manufacturers will thus not remove the vast majority of recalled vehicles from the road or get them repaired,” the NADA says on its website, stating only 2% of used vehicles are at dealerships at any given time.

“Instead, it will only cripple the used vehicle market, devalue affected vehicles and move recall sales into the unregulated private market where they are less likely to be repaired.”

And yet, in 2022, when General Motors started its own used car platform, CarBravo, the company pledged that “every vehicle from CarBravo is certified and recall-free. In fact, dealers check for

open recalls not once, but twice.”

At the top of the list of proposed solutions by safety advocates: Modernizing the way car and truck owners receive recall notices. Today, manufacturers are required to send notices only through the U.S. mail, which consumers can easily overlook.

“You still get mail, snail mail, hard copy, right? You can’t do it electronically? It’s like, what year is this, right?” said Mark Rosekind, who served as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s leader from 2014 until 2017. “So, I mean the whole system really needs to be reviewed with new actions and then truly upgraded.”

Other ideas include requirements for new cars and trucks to have an in-vehicle recall notification as well, providing more mobile repair, independent repair facilities, over-the-air updates for software issues, and temporary repair facilities. (Individual manufacturers offer some of these services already.) Additional proposals include boosting the availability of replacement parts.

Jennifer Timian, a former federal official who oversaw recall issues, floated the idea of giving owners greater incentive to get their cars repaired, like the ability to use sick time from work. “You allow them to use their sick leave to go see the doctor for their preventative maintenance,” she said. “Why not get the safety recall fixed?”

According to a May NHTSA report on consumers, the recall repair rate could benefit from a number of factors, including sending more than just letters and reinforcing the consequences of not getting a recalled vehicle repaired. It also found consumers would respond if recalls avoided overly technical language, created incentives for repairs and targeted an individual message to vulnerable groups: older adults, lower-income drivers, rural owners and Span-

ish-language reliant people.

In many ways, states could also adopt a more direct role in getting unsafe vehicles off the road and fixed. Through secretaries of state and departments of motor vehicles, they could match vehicle identification numbers to registration information and let owners know about pending recalls. They could also time such notifications to driver’s license renewals, emissions checks and safety inspections, as New York does. In the most severe remedy, they could even hold up registrations for vehicles with open recalls, citing a safety hazard.

Most states have failed to act.

During her time at the NHTSA, Timian said in an interview, “I was very frustrated with the fact that we couldn’t get that much DMV interest.”

In a pilot program, the federal government has provided grants to a handful of states to encourage their motor vehicle departments to warn registered owners of cars and trucks about open recalls through their registration or inspection programs. Officials in Maryland, the first participating state, said they had seen enough success to continue the program indefinitely.

Maryland’s transportation department discovered more than 1 million safety recalls among the nearly 4.3 million vehicles registered. By the end of the two-year program in 2020, more than 376,000 vehicle recalls were fixed, or roughly 37% of the total recalls identified. Of the vehicles fixed, nearly half – 47.8% – involved recalls that were at least 2 years old, indicating the program may have been effective in reaching owners who had been unaware of the safety warning or put off repairs.

A private sector partnership between Carfax and the Alliance for Automotive Innovation also offers a free recall check to eight states using the Vehicle Recall Search Service and those results are provided to the vehicle’s owner. The service has checked more than 5.8 billion vehicles for those states and auto-related companies since its launch in 2018.

But the vast majority of states still have no statewide operations to inform residents about open recalls on their cars and trucks. Michigan, for example, is pushing back on the idea that the state should be responsible.

“Auto companies are already required to send notices to drivers with vehicles under safety recall and companies already have access to Michigan driving records for this purpose,” said Angela Benander, spokeswoman for Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. “We are mindful that if the department were to begin issuing duplicative notices or taking other actions, it could be an unnecessary waste of public resources.”

This report received funding from the Abrams Nierman Fellowships for Local Investigative Journalism at Harvard University.

Recalls

Continued from Page 1D

On that cloudy morning around 3, after getting out of his Jeep, Wu was shocked to realize that his unrepaired vehicle was suddenly rolling backward toward him. The Jeep quickly slammed into him, crushing his left leg so severely doctors would later need to amputate it below the knee.

“I thought, ‘Oh my God, there it goes, I’m probably going to lose my life, right here at this moment,’ ” Wu recalled.

Wu’s lawsuit now making its way through the courts illustrates one of the most serious, yet unresolved problems in the auto industry: Millions of aging, used passenger cars and trucks on the road in the U.S. today aren’t getting fixed despite dangerous defects identified by automakers and the federal government.

An investigation by the Detroit Free Press, part of the USA TODAY Network, found that automakers are making scant progress in repairing their oldest models with safety problems, putting a growing and vulnerable group of drivers at unnecessary risk.

- Without any federal requirement on auto companies to fix all of the potentially dangerous used vehicles, the annual repair rate rarely exceeds 65% – and much less than that for older vehicles.

- Parts to fix problems aren’t always available, even after consumers are notified about their faulty vehicles. Sometimes, no one knows immediately how to fix them.

- Vehicle recall campaigns do not place any threshold for manufacturers to reach or deadlines to fix all of the potentially flawed cars and trucks. Close federal oversight is rare.

- Proposed reforms are stalled, despite recommendations of federal officials, industry insiders and safety advocates.

- Used car retailers continue to sell potentially faulty cars and trucks with open recalls in most places, while new car dealers legally can’t.

- States around the country register vehicles as roadworthy despite unfixed safety defects. Most of them, through their departments of motor vehicles, have failed to sign on to a federal effort to increase awareness about recalls.

“The recall system is still broken, and it needs to be fixed,” said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., who has fought for nearly a decade to ban dealers from selling used cars and trucks with uncorrected defects.

For the Detroit Three automakers and other major builders of cars and trucks, recalls are piling up, saddling companies with huge costs and the potential to ding their brands’ reputations. One-third of consumers said a recall on their vehicle would make them less likely to purchase that brand in the future, according to LexisNexis Risk Solutions.

More than 30 million vehicles were recalled in 2023. Ernst & Young, one of the nation’s largest accounting firms, estimates the industry shells out billions of dollars annually to address recalls. The three largest U.S.-based auto manufacturers – Ford Motor, General Motors and Tesla – paid a total of \$10 billion in warranty claims, including recalls, during 2023, exceeding the previous year by just about a billion dollars, according to Warranty Week. That means a big drag on a company’s bottom line, employee profit-sharing and stockholder dividends.

The human toll has been enormous: The decade-old General Motors’ ignition switch defect linked to 124 fatalities and 275 injuries; the faulty Takata air bags connected to more than two dozen dead and at least 400 injured.

But a full accounting of the dead and injured related to all known safety defects is not regularly collected and reported widely by automakers or the federal government.

“What’s clear is the system has been stagnant for too long,” former top federal regulator Mark Rosekind said in an interview. “Every once in a while, it comes back to our headlines that defects ... can cost people their lives, create injuries, be unsafe to drive and we’re just happy leaving it where it is. And that’s not OK.”

Rosekind, who led the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration between 2014 and 2017, added that “Takata showed us this could be huge and very dangerous, and we need to do something about it. And we need to start thinking about sort of the full range of tools that we could use.”

Since 1966, Congress has given the NHTSA the power to issue safety stan-



Jeffrey Wu listens to Dr. Aaron Howe, a chiropractor, go over plans after his visit at Life Time Fitness in Lakeville, Minn., in December. Wu says the long recovery has been difficult on his marriage. RYAN GARZA/USA TODAY NETWORK



Wu rubs ointment on his leg as he gets ready for bed after getting home from his third-shift job at a dairy plant. Before he lost his leg, he worked a day shift as a forklift driver at the plant. RYAN GARZA/USA TODAY NETWORK

Wu stopped for gas near his house on March 4, 2022. What happened next is in dispute: He says he put his Jeep in park but it rolled back after he got out. FCA attorneys say it was in gear when he opened the door. PROVIDED BY JEFFREY WU



dards and require manufacturers to recall vehicles that have safety-related defects or do not meet standards. The NHTSA collects consumer complaints about vehicles and launches investigations, including those regarding the timeliness of recalls and whether they cover enough vehicles. Ultimately, manufacturers are responsible for reporting their own problems and voluntarily initiating recalls.

Their authorized dealers are required to fix all recalled vehicles brought to them for repair.

All repairs are free for cars and trucks up to 15 years old. In some cases, manufacturers eliminate the need for a trip to the dealership through an over-the-air software update.

Ralph Nader, the pioneering consumer advocate and auto-safety icon who helped lead the push for legislation to create the NHTSA, said in an interview the “whole recall system has been in shambles for decades.”

He said it’s possible for the NHTSA to initiate recalls on its own. But the agency leans heavily on automakers to lead the way. The result? A weakened approach, he said. “You want to start with the language of the recall. It’s not alarming enough. It’s almost wonky. They don’t say ... quick, bring it back. ...

“It was thought that NHTSA would have a flurry of mandatory orders and that the companies would be scared of the enforcement,” Nader added. “We overestimated that one, didn’t we?”

Millions unrepaired

Many people never get their vehicles fixed, making the problem more severe by the day. In the past 10 years, more than 300 million vehicles have been recalled.

All the while, the effort to fix a greater number of cars and trucks under recall has generally stalled, due, in part, to the growing number of recalled vehicles and shortages in workers and parts, as well as the greater consumer acceptance of risk many don’t see as especially severe.

The NHTSA regularly monitors recall efforts but, overall, the agency has focused more on investigating defects and pushing to launch recall campaigns, rather than broader efforts to get more recalled vehicles repaired, the federal General Accounting Office, a government watchdog, concluded in a

January report.

It’s also a world of haves and have-nots, favoring the wealthy with pricey new cars.

Over time, about 90% of new vehicles – up to 3 years old – have their recall problems quickly fixed. But the average age of vehicles in use – more than 12 years old – has soared to an all-time high. And a fraction – less than half – of recalled cars and trucks 8 years or older ever have their outstanding repairs completed, according to Stout, an auto industry consultant.

It “feels like you’re pushing a boulder up a hill,” said Jennifer Timian, the former chief of the recall management division at the NHTSA.

Federal transportation department officials tout numbers showing cars and trucks up to 5 years old have an 83% recall completion rate. But as cars age, those numbers drop off sharply: Vehicles 5 to 10 years old have a 60% rate; vehicles 11 to 15 years old have a 52% rate; and those 16 to 20 years old have a 38% rate.

Federal vehicle safety officials acknowledged the issue is a challenge. But they also cautioned that some of the data regularly cited may include scrapped or totaled vehicles likely no longer in service or even in existence.

Recent data indicates the auto industry is also failing to prioritize the most potentially lethal vehicles by getting them off the road and fixed. There isn’t much difference, for example, between the success rate for repairing vehicles with relatively minor flaws and the success rate for fixing cars and trucks with more serious problems that could lead to injury and death, figures from Stout show.

The used vehicle industry seems driven to sell potentially dangerous vehicles, warts and all.

Sparking objections from consumer groups and a coalition of U.S. senators, the Federal Trade Commission in 2016 announced a settlement after complaints that General Motors, CarMax and several associated car dealerships advertised their used vehicles with open recalls using terms like “certified” and “172-point inspection.”

Under the settlement, the FTC required these ads to mention that a vehicle “may” be under an open recall for safety defects. This enabled dealers to advertise these vehicles as certified even if they still had unrepaired safety

defects.

Today, according to a GM spokesman, its “dealers are required to remedy all new and used vehicles subject to open recalls before selling them.” CarMax says it informs customers about any recalls before purchase.

“The widespread practice of selling these dangerous vehicles without first fixing obvious and identified safety hazards unacceptably shifts the burden from manufacturers and used car sellers onto the party least equipped to address the danger – the consumer,” Michael Brooks, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety, said in a statement. He described the outlook to improve the repair rate for older cars and trucks as “bleak.”

“There’s a real problem in both reaching owners of older vehicles, and also in many cases, incentivizing them to bring their vehicle in,” he said in an interview, adding that “there’s a big gap in the law there, that if the (NHTSA) wants to push manufacturers to do a better job where it sees problems, it has a hard time doing that.”

So far, settlements over product liability lawsuits or actions taken by federal regulators haven’t moved the needle toward a significantly better repair rate for older vehicles with open recalls. The NHTSA can impose civil penalties for violation of federal safety laws – Volvo, for example, agreed last year to pay \$65 million for problems related to recalls – but such large fines against makers of passenger cars and light trucks have been generally few and far between.

“A more active regime around civil penalties and enforcement, as well as larger amounts to punish violations, would go a long way towards making automakers prioritize safety,” Brooks said in an email.

‘A bomb detonated’

Among the most alarming safety recalls still haunting roadways are the defective Takata airbags.

Roughly 67 million Takata airbags have been recalled in the U.S. since 2013, the largest callback in automotive history. Long-term exposure to high

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heat and humidity can cause these airbags to explode with flying shrapnel instead of safely deploying as designed.

Despite yearslong investigations, lawsuits, regulatory orders and unprecedented recall campaigns involving innovations such as repairs done in car owners’ driveways, more than 6 million inflators have yet to be replaced or otherwise accounted for in the U.S., according to the NHTSA.

“To many occupants who have experienced the explosion of a defective Takata air bag inflator, it is as if a bomb detonated in their vehicle,” according to a 2017 report from the independent monitor overseeing the recalls.

Older vehicles put their occupants at higher risk since the age of the airbag is one of the contributing factors. A Free Press review of Takata-related deaths in the U.S. compiled by Safety Research & Strategies found the vast majority of the vehicles involved were more than 10 years old.

Threats from the malfunctioning airbags still loom.

Two years ago, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles issued an urgent warning to owners of more than 250,000 vehicles to not drive them after the company reported two people in older Chrysler or Dodge vehicles died from exploding Takata airbags. And this year, a Free Press report revealed the challenges of Ford Motor Co.’s “recall of a recall,” a massive effort to reexamine more than a quarter-million vehicles after discovering subpar work around replacing Takata airbags.

The problem grew yet again in July with nearly 400,000 BMW models recalled for defective airbags that could lead to deadly explosions. In August, the NHTSA announced that Ford and Mazda issued new “Do Not Drive” warnings for more than 457,000 vehicles equipped with recalled, unrepaired Takata airbags.

Another Takata-like recall could be on the horizon.

More than 50 million airbag inflators built by other manufacturers and installed in vehicles by 13 automakers are dangerous and should not be in use, according to federal regulators. The agency has said the inflators are responsible for at least seven injuries and two deaths in the United States and Canada since 2009. A final decision on a new recall has not been announced.

Reform stuck in neutral

Jeffrey Liker, a retired University of Michigan professor who studied engineering with a focus on Toyota, believes the largely voluntary recall system has fundamental flaws.

“Depending on the automakers to come forward and say, ‘I’m gonna confess that I had this problem’ is not a great system,” Liker said in an interview. “And, in addition to that, then having no consequence for just sending out postcards, and waiting, and expecting people to make appointments and take time from their busy workday to bring the car in for the day.”

In an effort to alert consumers quickly, the NHTSA in 2013 moved up the notification requirement, mandating that manufacturers alert owners within 60 days of notifying the government of a recall campaign. The agency more recently created a lookup website and cellphone app to push out the latest information.

But often, the part needed to fix a problem is not available, an issue made worse during the supply-chain crisis after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still, one of the authors of the 60-day deadline defended the approach.

“This is America, OK? And people deserve to know, even if there’s nothing you can do about it. Even if it’s frustrating, you deserve to know,” said Timian, the former safety official.

This has led to consternation among some owners, who may call the dealership once seeking a fix but never again if the solution isn’t yet available, safety advocates say.

“What good is this actually doing?” asked Rosemary Shahan, president of the national group Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety. “When people get it and there’s no repair available, then what are they supposed to do?”

Consumers say they’re not getting their recalled vehicles fixed, in part, because they worry a dealership might try to upsell them during the visit. They also expressed concern about the inconvenience of giving up their vehicles for repair, according to a 2017 University of Michigan national survey.

Who pays the price

Who is likely to pay the price of unrepaired vehicles still on the road? Poor and vulnerable people. The greatest



Boxes of replacement parts for recalled Takata airbag inflators line seven aisles in a Stellantis parts depot in Winchester, Va. Roughly 67 million Takata airbags have been recalled in the U.S. since 2013. PROVIDED BY STELLANTIS



Since settling a lawsuit about nondisclosure, CarMax now informs customers about open recalls involving the used cars they buy. BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES

percentage of vehicles purchased by low-income consumers are used, which means that group will likely be sold a disproportionate share of recalled vehicles.

One in every 5 used vehicles for sale in the U.S. – more than 21% of all used cars for sale from both private sellers and auto dealers – carries an unfixed recall, according to Carfax, the private vehicle data company.

“It is completely unacceptable that any vehicle with an open recall could leave a dealer’s lot,” said U.S. Sen. Ed Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts who was a co-sponsor with Blumenthal on the proposed used-car recall sales ban. “This endangers the driver, and everyone on the road with them.”

In 2019, Genon Bell, a Connecticut man who worked for an auto parts store but had never bought a car from a dealer, purchased an 8-year-old Hyundai Sonata with 11 open recalls. According to an arbitrator in his legal case, “this fact was disclosed to Mr. Bell only when he tried to return the car the same day he purchased it because he did not think it was safe to drive.”

Tracking down current owners of older cars and trucks can also be difficult. Their mailing addresses on file may be outdated. And speed matters. If an automaker can contact customers within three months of them purchasing their vehicles, consumers are five times more likely to complete a safety recall fix, according to LexisNexis research.

Still, even if alerted, many are wary of bringing their only vehicle into a pricey car dealership even though the vast majority of recall repairs are free. (Vehicles older than 15 years with recalls don’t qualify for no-cost repair.) There also may be a language barrier for some car owners.

Vivek Astvansh, who studies consumer behavior and U.S. vehicle recalls as an associate professor at McGill University in Montreal, found part of the problem is inertia.

Owners of older vehicles “are less motivated or incentivized to take their car or vehicle to dealerships,” Astvansh said in an interview. He added that consumers often believe that if the recalled vehicle has been working safely thus far, the attitude is “why worry, why bother?”

Many car and truck owners “tend to

migrate away from dealerships” as their vehicles age, making it less likely to get a recall vehicle repaired, said Bruce Belzowski, a retired auto safety scientist at the University of Michigan Transportation Institute. “They tend to go to mom-and-pop shops that are less expensive. And for some reason or another, they have more trust in them.”

Among the hardest owners to reach for manufacturers are young people and people who move often, according to David Nemtuda, who works in data services for carmakers at LexisNexis.

The Government Accountability Office in its January report found “accommodations, such as towing and mobile repair, were effective in encouraging owners of older vehicles to schedule a recall repair.” But many manufacturers don’t offer such services for routine recall repairs.

Some state officials say they have tried to keep consumers better informed about potential risks.

Thirty-six states’ attorneys general sued CarMax Auto Superstores, alleging nondisclosure of information about recalls as well as advertising vehicles as safe despite open recalls. The states settled for \$1 million and the promise that the giant retailer would disclose open recalls on vehicles before consumers buy them. (CarMax said in a statement it has been disclosing vehicle-specific recall information in its sales process and online advertising since 2014.)

Today, CarMax says it links its vehicle listings to the federal safety website on recalls, nhtsa.gov/recalls. The national used-car retailer also posts two stickers on the windows of its used cars and trucks for sale with information about how to check a recall status. Before any purchase, customers review two separate times if the car or truck has an outstanding recall and then sign an acknowledgment.

“As CarMax is not authorized by manufacturers to complete recall repairs and close out recalls, we work hard to ensure our customers have the information they need to take action and have recalls repaired at a manufacturer-authorized facility,” said Joe Wilson, CarMax’s chief operating officer.

Some manufacturers argue the ultimate responsibility rests with the owners, including those who don’t take recalls seriously.

One vehicle owner was so incensed by multiple notifications that “he threatened us with a cease-and-desist letter if we did not stop sending recall

“Depending on the automakers to come forward and say, ‘I’m gonna confess that I had this problem’ is not a great system.”

Jeffrey Liker

Retired University of Michigan professor, who studied engineering with a focus on Toyota

notices to him,” said Eric Mayne, a spokesman for Stellantis, which builds cars and trucks under the Chrysler, Jeep and Ram brands, among others.

Recalled vehicles remain unfixed

Jeffrey Wu says he never knew his Jeep had an outstanding recall because he never received a notice. Wu says he would have had his Jeep fixed if he had known.

That’s because he had another truck before the Jeep and received a recall notice. He knew to pay attention to the safety notices and get his truck’s recall addressed in a timely way.

“I had a Toyota pickup truck I drove for 12 years, with hundreds of thousands of miles on there. And one day I got this recall saying ... the car was unsafe.” He said the frame was falling apart and wearing down his tires.

“Finally, I got the recall notice and I brought it in,” he said. Toyota eventually paid Wu three times the value of the aging truck because the safety problem could not be fixed. “They really wanted the car back because it was unsafe.”

A Toyota spokesman did not respond to specific questions about Wu’s experience.

Overall, nearly 58 million vehicles on U.S. roads are being driven with a known recall that should be repaired, according to data from January compiled by Carfax for the Free Press.

Manufacturers in part blame the challenge of identifying the fix quickly and making the part available, especially for older models out of production.

Ford spokeswoman Maria Buczkowski said the industry would benefit from learning which vehicles are out of commission as it did in the cash-for-clunkers program – the federal government subsidy for consumers turning in their beat-up old cars to buy new ones.

“Many older vehicles are already off the road but can’t be located due to data-sharing gaps,” Buczkowski said.

The GAO more than a decade ago found the NHTSA could be doing more to improve the recall repair rate.

The internal watchdog agency found in 2011 that “although recall completion rates vary considerably by certain factors, NHTSA has not consistently used the data it collects to identify which factors make some recalls more successful than others.”

This year, the agency echoed a similar theme.

The GAO found that the current recall repair rate is hampered by a lack of convenience for customers, the owner’s diminished perception of safety risk, the owner’s awareness of the recall, the availability of parts as well as the vehicle’s age. The agency concluded in its

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January report that the NHTSA knows this information but has no plans to do more research into what can be done to improve the rate.

The GAO also worried that “NHTSA may be losing valuable insights that could improve repair rates and help the agency work toward its vision of achieving a 100 percent repair rate for every recall.”

In addition, the watchdog chided the NHTSA for failing to fully embrace measures, including industry “collaborations that aim to improve completion rates.”

A May NHTSA research report based on focus groups sought to find out more about potential barriers for consumers. The report concluded drivers like to keep on top of vehicle maintenance, but they say checking for recalls is “not top-of-mind.” They also see providing free alternative transportation and offering mobile repairs as keys to improving the likelihood of getting their recalled vehicles repaired.

There have been some bright spots. In 2015, with support from the industry, Congress passed a law that banned rental car companies from loaning vehicles with open recalls.

But other key players like auto insurance companies don’t want to enter the fray.

“Safety recall notifications are meant to give manufacturers the chance to correct a defect in their product before something worse happens. Recall notices establish a direct line of communication between the responsible party and consumers who may be affected if the problem isn’t fixed,” said Tony Cotto, public policy counsel for the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies.

“Bringing an insurer into this process is only likely to add to confusion around recalls.”

Some industry analysts worry that the federal government, auto manufacturers and other stakeholders responsible for vehicle safety are failing to concentrate their effort on the most acute problem.

“When we talk about recalls not being completed, we’re talking about older vehicles,” Raymond Roth, a director focusing on automotive recalls with the consultancy Stout, said in an industry meeting on the issue in Livonia, Michigan, last year.

Roth said the broader industry has not stepped up its efforts to identify, notify and motivate owners of older vehicles, even though that’s where the greatest gap is.

Some dealers have argued that auto manufacturers don’t have a great incentive to get vehicles with safety defects fixed because it drives up their costs.

“Manufacturers view recalls as expense, and they naturally seek to avoid expense wherever and however they can,” said Jim Appleton, president of the New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers, a statewide trade association that represents more than 500 franchised dealerships.

“Dealers, on the other hand, see recalls as revenue – and an opportunity to step up and often advocate on behalf of their customer to build and strengthen the relationships they have with their customer. ...

“The automakers don’t have the financial incentive. Indeed, they have the financial disincentive to go any further than they’re required under the federal law to notify consumers.”

The government and auto manufacturers sometimes send more severe “Do Not Drive” and “Park Outside” recall alerts when the safety risk is seen as especially high. Those notifications are for vehicles with a risk of serious accident or physical harm, and those with high risk of fire that could start inside a garage or near a home.

Those notifications have recently exploded.

There are 4.2 million vehicles that have been tagged with “Do Not Drive” or “Park Outside” safety recalls and remained unrepaired as of January, up from an estimated 2.5 million last year, according to a Carfax analysis completed for the Free Press. For example, Hyundai Motor America and Kia America issued “Park Outside” recalls for more than 3.3 million vehicles due to the risk of fire, according to an NHTSA announcement last year.

Among those owners left in the cold is Gloria Villegas.

The 49-year-old full-time caregiver from Woodland, California, bought her 2015 Hyundai Elantra with about 180,000 miles from a CarMax store for \$18,000 in October 2022. When the car began to have trouble, a friend recommended a search for open recalls. Villegas found an urgent one for her brakes that could spark a fire, but she said she never got the legally required notice in the mail.

Villegas, who works six days a week, parks the car away from her home but



Gloria Villegas’ 2015 Hyundai Elantra, which she bought in 2022, has a “Park Outside” recall because the brakes could catch fire. Villegas says she never got the legally required notice in the mail and instead found out about it when a friend – who’d heard she was having car trouble – recommended she search for open recalls. Villegas parks the car away from her Woodland, Calif., home as instructed; she says she hasn’t had time to get the brakes fixed. PROVIDED BY GLORIA VILLEGAS

still hasn’t gotten it fixed.

“I have a crazy schedule,” she said. “It’s just really hard.”

Even if Villegas had had the time, it wouldn’t have mattered. Hyundai sent warning letters last November, but it wasn’t scheduled to have a fix until sometime this spring, according to the NHTSA. (A Hyundai spokeswoman said in an email in August that a part to fix the problem is available and customers can now schedule an appointment to get the work done.)

Some analysts worry overall that vehicles with the greatest risk to cause injury and death are not getting enough attention from automakers and other important stakeholders to get them fixed.

“We’re taking a generally one-size-fits-all approach to recalls, we have recalls that we know are hurting people, and we’re treating them the same way as a typo in an owner’s manual,” said Roth, the Stout analyst. “So we know what can be done and what should be done. But just haven’t thought through, ‘OK, maybe we should treat these differently.’ And this is important.”

Recalling a sales ban

Industry forces have long fought a proposed ban on the sale of used cars and trucks with unfixed recalls. One leading used car dealer imposed its own ban, but that didn’t last very long.

In 2015, AutoNation – one of the nation’s largest automotive retailers – announced that it would

not sell, lease or wholesale from its nearly 300 stores any vehicle that had an open safety recall.

“There’s no way to expect that customers would or should know of every safety recall on every vehicle they might purchase, so we will ensure that our vehicles have all recalls completed,” AutoNation CEO Mike Jackson said at the time. “We make it our responsibility as a retailer to identify those vehicles and remove them from the market until their safety issues have been addressed.”

A year later, the company reversed course, selling those vehicles with open recalls again because they said their competitors failed to follow suit.

Former CarMax CEO Tom Folliard told a forum hosted by Florida Institute of Technology in October 2019 that “what we want to make sure we do is be

completely transparent with the customer.” He called some recalls “not really safety issues.”

“It’s not really realistic to say you won’t sell a car with an open recall,” Folliard, who still serves as the company’s chairman of the board, told the audience. “You’d be surprised how many cars on the road today have open recalls. Many of them are not really safety issues. They’re just open recalls. But because of all the consumer movement around it, they’re all considered safety recalls. So we don’t not sell a car that has a recall. We just make sure we’re transparent with the customer.”

The federal government disagrees. It’s our position that “every recall is a safety recall,” said Tanya Topka, director of the NHTSA’s Office of Defects Investigation. “And it’s critical to be done.”

Concerned about a possible ban, the used car industry has sought to enshrine at the state level the right to sell cars and trucks with open recalls.

Auto dealers crafted what’s known as “model legislation” that would allow them to continue selling recalled used cars, so long as they disclosed open recalls to customers somewhere in a stack of sales documents. An investigation published in 2019 by USA TODAY and others found that after a lobbying effort, copycat versions of the auto dealers’ bill had been introduced in at least 11 states, including two states that passed the measures.

Consumer advocates criticized the bills, which required disclosure of open recalls but no requirement for vehicle owners to fix them.

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel’s Office said it’s concerned about sales of vehicles with open recalls, but press secretary Danny Wimmer added that because of recent state court cases that prevent state investigation of certain businesses, and a lack of legislation, the office is unable to undertake “meaningful in-state investigation or enforcement.”

‘Park-to-reverse’ recall

Wu drove his recalled Jeep for the last time in March 2022.

“I was picking up the hose and was trying to put it back on the ... gasoline (pump),” Wu recalled in a recent interview from his home in Lakeville, Minnesota. “I saw the car come around me. ... Should I go towards the car and try to stop it? Or should I try to move away? So my reaction was maybe I should go to-

wards the car, but then I realized that was a bad mistake.”

He was soon pinned by his own car, his lower left leg absorbing the blow.

“I think I fell down to the ground. And then I reached for my leg. And then that’s when I realized my leg was gone.

“I tried to call for help, help ... screaming for two minutes, nobody was around, because it was early at 3 in the morning, around that time. So finally, someone helped ...

“And they rushed out and they, you know, try to take care of me and try to comfort me. ... They actually was able to get ahold of my wife and get her down to the spot before the ambulance took off.”

Wu bought his used Jeep with nearly 30,000 miles from an independent seller in September 2015.

He said in an interview he never knew that in April 2016, FCA, the manufacturer of the Jeep, issued a recall warning:

“Your vehicle may roll away striking and injuring you, your passengers, or bystanders, if the vehicle’s engine is left running, the parking brake is not engaged, and the vehicle is not in the park position before exiting the vehicle. Drivers may inadvertently fail to achieve the park position before exiting the vehicle.”

The fix to the gear shifter was related to the Jeep’s computer. The recall was designed to “update software to include an additional mechanism to mitigate the effect of operator error in failing to shift the monostable gear selector into PARK prior to exiting the vehicle.”

Wu was not alone in his encounter with a tricky gear shifter. Star Trek film actor Anton Yelchin was killed in 2016 when he was struck by his Jeep Grand Cherokee; his attorneys say they believe it happened after he tried to put the vehicle into park.

The recalled Grand Cherokees used electronic shift levers that confused drivers because they could think they put their vehicle in park, but they had not. As part of a recall of more than a million vehicles, FCA altered the software so Jeeps with the engine running automatically shift into park after the driver’s door is opened.

According to police reports, Yelchin climbed out of his recalled Jeep, which rolled backward down a driveway, pinning him against a mailbox pillar and killing him.

“If you look at the recall letter, ‘Dear Anton Yelchin, your car is defective. It can roll away,’” Yelchin family attorney Gary Dordick told a news conference announcing a lawsuit against FCA later in 2016. “They mailed that letter to him seven days after he died.”

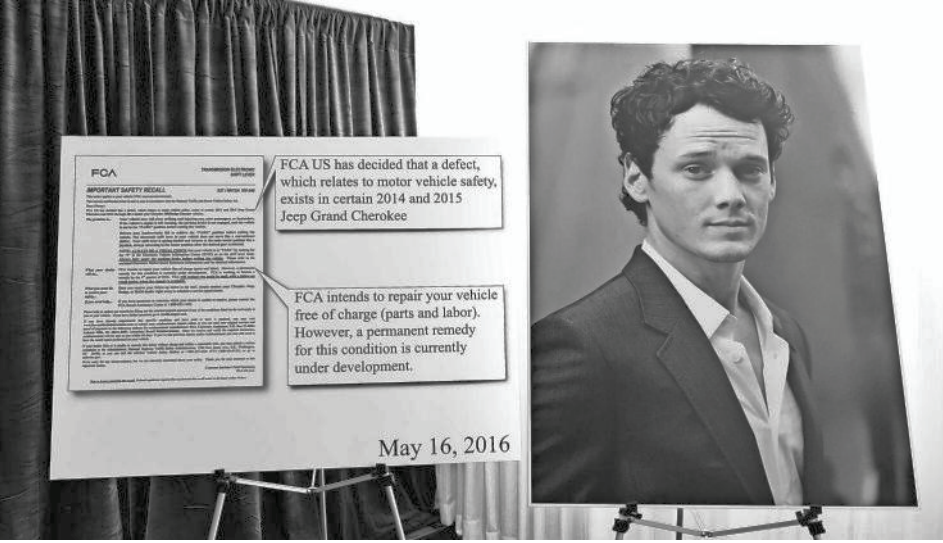
Douglas Shaffer, an attorney at Dordick’s firm who worked on the case, said in an interview in August it had been unclear whether Yelchin had received an earlier letter sent by FCA explaining it was working on a fix.

Shaffer added Fiat Chrysler knew of problems with the gear selector as early as 2012 but still installed it in the 2014 and 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokees.

The gearshift was changed for the 2016 model.

FCA, now Stellantis, reached a confidential settlement with Yelchin’s family out of court in 2018.

“We extend our sincerest condolences to Mr. Yelchin’s family,” Mayne,



“Star Trek” film actor Anton Yelchin was killed in 2016 when his recalled Jeep Grand Cherokee rolled backward and pinned him. Yelchin’s family held a news conference Aug. 2, 2016, to announce a lawsuit against the manufacturer. The recalled Jeeps used electronic shift levers that could make drivers think they had put their vehicle in park when they had not. AMANDA EDWARDS/GETTY IMAGES

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the Stellantis spokesman, said in a statement. “A recall notice, which also contained an advisory to help further enable safe operation of the vehicle, was sent to his home address in May of 2016.”

He estimated that “customers used this shifter to safely exit their vehicles more than 1.75 billion times.”

Wu and his wife, Ting Yang, said they filed suit in March 2023 in state court against FCA so that others don’t suffer a similar fate.

Regarding the couple’s suit, Mayne said for Stellantis, “We reject these claims and will vigorously defend against them in court.”

“Multiple recall notices were sent to this customer’s home address,” Mayne added. “More than 635,000 customers availed themselves of the free remedy within the first 24 months of service launch in 2016.”

In court filings, defense attorneys for FCA raised their doubts about Wu’s account of his accident, citing a video and a police report from the scene.

The Jeep “starts to reverse when the driver’s door is opened” by Wu, who never exited the Jeep, according to a November 2023 court document. FCA’s lawyers also cited Wu’s statement to the police, in which Wu reportedly said he left his left foot and leg dangling outside the open driver’s side door while operating the Jeep in reverse.

“I don’t want any family to go through what we went through.”

Ting Yang

Jeffrey Wu’s wife

The police officer’s incident report said that Wu told the officer he “exited the vehicle without placing it back into park; Jeffrey observed the vehicle begin to move again and quickly reentered the vehicle to place the transmission into park.”

“As he entered the vehicle, Jeffrey stuck his left foot out. This limb then became trapped between the slow-moving vehicle’s door and the barrier protecting the pump.”

When asked about the police report description of his account, Wu said during a deposition in his lawsuit, “I don’t remember saying anything like that,” adding “this is not even close to what happened.” In the deposition, Wu also said, “I put the car in park.”

The judge in the case has so far declined to take sides in the conflict.

“This Court need not decide the underlying facts at this time,” Dakota County District Judge Danna Edwards wrote in a March 1 order. “Regardless of which parties’ factual contentions are more accurate, it is uncontested that as a result of the March 4, 2022, incident, (Wu’s) left leg was amputated.”

In an interview in her Minnesota home late last year, Yang questioned why customers appear to shoulder so much responsibility in trying to find out and repair potentially dangerous cars and trucks.

“Why do we have to make sure that we’re buying a safe vehicle?” Yang asked. She added that she hopes automakers would “focus more on the safety” of the vehicles they manufacture “rather than the quantity they’re making. ... I don’t want any family to go through what we went through.”

The injury to Wu, 47, meant he could no longer drive a forklift during a day shift at his dairy plant and had to move to an overnight production line.

His long recovery has tested the strength of the couple’s marriage.

Yang, 42, said she refuses to sugarcoat the family’s struggle. “It’s never a pretty picture.”

“So the accident happened. It was never a smooth recovery for us. It’s up and down ... emotionally, physically, we fight over small things. We lost temper on each other” because of the lingering anguish over the accident.

“But we’re still here today because we love each other,” she said, adding, hopefully, one day, “we will help each other to have our life back again.”

Wu’s case is set to go to trial in September 2025.

He pleaded for the auto industry to make and sell safe vehicles “because I’m going to continue driving,” he said. “So just next time, I want to buy a new car, I want to be safe.”

This report received funding from the Abrams Nieman Fellowships for Local Investigative Journalism at Harvard University.

Have a question or news tip about recalls? Contact Matthew Dolan at msdolan@freepress.com.



Bowman Chevrolet service technician Anthony Carbone, 22, removes a recalled Takata front passenger airbag from a Chevrolet Silverado before replacing it with a new one at the dealership in Clarkston, Mich. ERIC SEALS/USA TODAY NETWORK

Checking whether vehicle has safety recall is simple

Matthew Dolan Detroit Free Press | USA TODAY Network

It’s OK, most of us have done it. We see headline after headline about yet another safety recall of thousands, if not millions, of cars or trucks – and never check to see whether our car or truck is among them. Or we get a snail-mail recall notice that some of us mistake for junk and quickly toss in the trash. ● Here’s what to do instead to make sure the Ford or Ferrari parked in your garage is up to snuff safety-wise.

What is a safety defect?

A safety defect is a problem in your car or truck that poses an unreasonable risk to safety. It may exist in other vehicles of the same design by an automaker or different models from the same auto company. The defect may also affect similar parts used by different automakers.

How do recalls work?

Federal standards set minimum requirements for parts of a vehicle involved in its safe operation. Those mandates are also used to protect drivers and passengers from death or serious injury in the event of a crash. A recall is required when a vehicle or a part of a car or truck does not meet those performance standards.

How big of a deal is a recall?

It’s a big deal. Recalls can include safety-related defects that could lead to a loss of steering control, wiring problems that could lead to fire, airbags that deploy and injure occupants. They don’t include nonsafety issues, such as a busted air-conditioning system or radio.

Right, but how do I know if it’s a really big deal?

Auto manufacturers send heightened alerts when the risk of the defect is seen as especially high. Two of these are “Do Not Drive” and “Park Outside” notifications. “Do Not Drive” instructs drivers not to operate their cars or trucks because a serious safety issue could spark an accident or physical harm. A “Park Outside” notice is sent out for vehicles with a high risk of causing a fire. Those owners are told to park their vehicles outside of garages and parking structures and away from their homes and other buildings.

How do I find out if I have a recalled car or truck?

By law, you should receive a notification in the mail from the maker of your car or truck. You can also search the website for the federal National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nhtsa.gov.

Many news organizations also report on widespread safety recalls.

What information will display in the online search results on the NHTSA website?

When searching by license plate or vehicle identification number, you’ll learn if your car or truck is under a recall and needs to be repaired. When searching using more general information about a vehicle’s year, make and model, you’ll get information about recalls, investigations, complaints and communications from carmakers.

What if I want to stay in the know about recalls affecting me?

You can sign up to receive NHTSA email recall notifications that affect your make and model. You can download the Safercar mobile app for iPhones or Androids to have recall alerts sent to your phone. If you want another way to stay in touch, subscribe to RSS feeds about safety-related recalls.

Are there other ways to find out about a vehicle safety recall?

Yes. Automakers often have their own websites with information. Ford Motor Co. has a mobile phone app called FordPass, which has a tab with recall information and a notification feature to push out the latest information. The nonprofit Center for Auto Safety has a lookup tool on its website, autosafety.org. The private data company Carfax warns its 30 million Car Care members when there’s an unfixed recall for their vehicle. Government and businesses can also sign up for a service to check their vehicle fleets. In select states partnering with the U.S. government, the secretary of state or department of motor vehicles may check your car or truck against recall information and alert you separately about an outstanding safety issue. Other resources include the National Safety Council’s Check to Protect campaign.

How do I check for recalls on my own?

Go online to the NHTSA website and use its lookup tool to check your license plate number or VIN for any

open safety recalls. Look on the lower left of your car’s windshield for your 17-digit VIN. It’s also on your vehicle registration card and it may be on your insurance card, too.

Where do I get it fixed?

An authorized manufacturer dealership can do repairs. But increasingly with the advent of the massive Takata airbag recall, automakers are coming to customers, performing mobile recall repairs at owners’ homes and workplaces. Ford, for example, offers complimentary pickup and delivery through participating dealerships for recall repairs.

How much will it cost to fix?

Nothing, in almost every case. If there is a safety recall, your manufacturer is required to fix the problem for free. There are some exceptions. A manufacturer may or may not pay for repairs on vehicles older than 15 years.

What if they tell me the fix is not known or the new part is not available?

You’ll have to wait. The manufacturer’s notice will sometimes indicate when a fix is expected to be available. They will often notify you again once it is.

I want to buy a used car. Is it legal to buy one with a safety defect that hasn’t been fixed?

In most places, yes. There is no federal law that prohibits the sale of used cars with an open recall. Many nationwide used-car retailers now warn customers about the recall status of the car or truck they intend to buy. If you buy the vehicle anyway, Consumer Reports and others suggest you make sure your registration has your current address. Also consider subscribing to email alerts about safety recalls and registering with a private data company like Carfax. Finally, think about reaching out to the manufacturer directly about your used car purchase so they have your contact information.

This report received funding from the Abrams Nieman Fellowships for Local Investigative Journalism.

NATION & WORLD

EXTRA

INSIDE
Analysis: Global investors brace for turmoil after Fed rate cut. **4NN**

CRISIS IN MIDDLE EAST



Smoke billows from the site of an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanese village of Kham on Thursday.
AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Israel unleashes heavy strikes

Hezbollah leader defiant as US, UK urge restraint in Lebanon

Laila Bassam and Maya Gebeily
REUTERS

BEIRUT – Israeli warplanes carried out late Thursday their most intense strikes on southern Lebanon in nearly a year of war, heightening the conflict between Israel and Lebanese armed group Hezbollah amid calls for restraint.

The White House said a diplomatic solution was achievable and urgent, and Britain called for an immediate cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah. The U.S. is “afraid and concerned about potential escalation,” White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre told a briefing.

The intense barrage followed attacks earlier in the week attributed by Lebanon and Hezbollah to Israel that blew up Hezbollah radios and pagers, killing 37 people and wounding about 3,000 in Lebanon.

In Thursday’s late operation, Israel’s military said its jets over two hours struck hundreds of multiple-rocket-launcher barrels in southern Lebanon that were set to be fired immediately toward Israel.

The bombardment included more than 52 strikes across southern Lebanon after 9 p.m. local time, Lebanon’s state news agency NNA said. Three Lebanese security sources said these were the heaviest aerial strikes since the conflict began in October.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Israel’s military vowed to continue to attack Hezbollah and said its strikes throughout Thursday hit about 100 rocket launchers plus other targets in southern Lebanon.

In a TV address on Thursday, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said the device explosions on Tuesday

See ISRAEL, Page 7NN



Members of Hezbollah salute during a comrade’s funeral in Adloun, Lebanon, on Thursday.
MAHMOUD ZAYYAT/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



An Israeli fighter jet takes off to conduct strikes on Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon on Thursday.
ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

Congress nearing Ukraine aid deal

One-year extension sought on \$6B in funding

Patricia Zengerle and Mike Stone
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Pro-Ukraine U.S. congressional leaders and President Joe Biden’s administration are near an agreement to seek a one-year extension of \$6 billion in military aid for Ukraine that is due to expire this month, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

There is bipartisan support for the plan to include the extension of the Presidential Drawdown Authority, or PDA, in a continuing resolution, a short-term emergency spending bill that the Senate and House of Representatives must pass in the next 11 days to avoid a Sept. 30 government shutdown, they said.

The issue comes at a crucial time in the war, as Russia pummels Ukraine’s energy grid ahead of the critical winter months.

Reuters reported on Sept. 5 that Biden’s administration has been engaged in urgent discussions with lawmakers about how best to keep the funding from expiring before it can be used. The issue has become more urgent as the deadline approaches.

The House of Representatives failed on Wednesday to pass a funding bill supported by the chamber’s Republican leaders that included a controversial voting measure backed by former President Donald Trump, the Republican candidate in the Nov. 5 presidential election, and opposed by Democrats.

That bill did not include an extension of the Ukraine PDA authority. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Thursday the Democratic-led Senate would prepare its own temporary spending legislation that would avert a shutdown. Negotiations on that bill are continuing, but the sources said it is expected to include the one-year extension of the Ukraine aid.

It was not yet clear whether Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, who held up Biden’s last Ukraine spending request for months, would support a Senate spending bill including the extension for Ukraine.

Johnson’s office did not respond to a request for comment. A State Department spokesperson declined comment.

Another congressional aide, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing negotiations, said there are “active conversations” involving relevant House committees and Johnson’s office about an extension of PDA authority.

The \$7.8 billion of Presidential Drawdown Authority was a key component of a \$61 billion aid package for

See UKRAINE, Page 6NN

NC Republican vows to stay in governor’s race

Report: Robinson once called himself Black Nazi

Daniel Trotta and Joseph Ax
REUTERS

North Carolina’s Republican candidate for governor promised to stay in the race on Thursday after CNN reported that he once called himself a “black NAZI” and proposed bringing back slavery in comments posted on a pornography website.

Mark Robinson, an African American who denied making the comments, is North Carolina’s lieutenant governor and running for governor in the Nov. 5 election against Democratic candidate

Josh Stein, the state’s attorney general.

North Carolina’s gubernatorial campaign has implications for the presidential contest. The fortunes of high-profile candidates there could affect partisan turnout or enthusiasm in one of the closely divided battleground states that might swing the election between Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump.

Robinson, 56, who was endorsed by Trump, has a history of inflammatory comments and issued a video denial on social media even before the CNN story published.

“Let me reassure you the things that you will see in that story – those are not the words of Mark Robinson,” the candidate said, calling the CNN report “sala-

cious tabloid lies.”

“We are staying in this race,” Robinson said.

In one October 2010 post on the pornography site, CNN said Robinson wrote: “Slavery is not bad. Some people need to be slaves. I wish they would bring it (slavery) back. I would certainly buy a few.”


CNN said Robinson also posted a series of “gratuitously sexual and lewd” posts dating from 2008 to 2012 before he entered politics, and that it was reporting only a small portion of them given their graphic nature.

Reuters was unable to immediately verify the posts.

See ROBINSON, Page 5NN

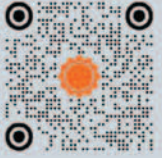
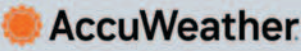


North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, the Republican candidate for governor, has a history of inflammatory comments. JONATHAN DRAKE/REUTERS FILE



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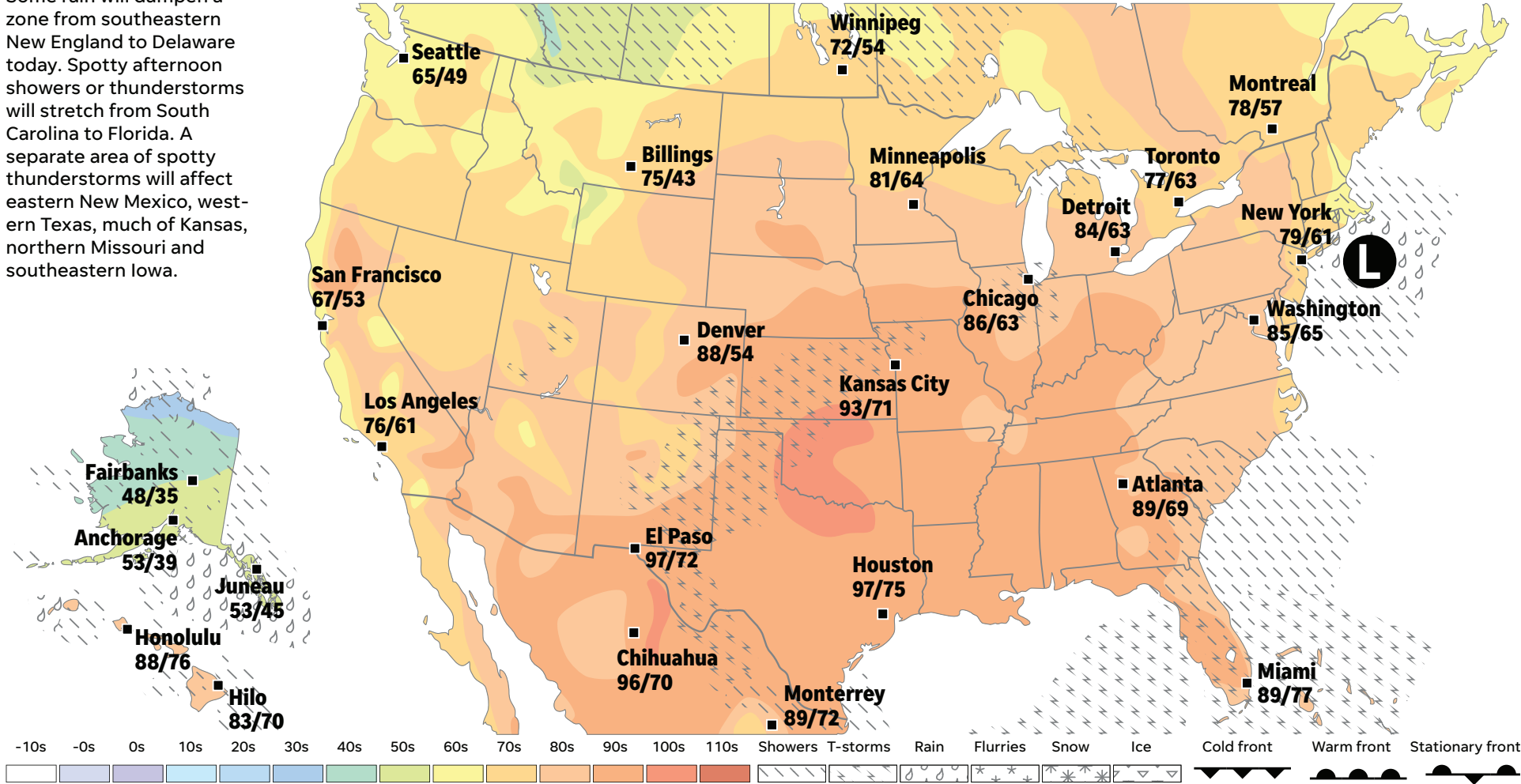


NATIONAL SUMMARY

Some rain will dampen a zone from southeastern New England to Delaware today. Spotty afternoon showers or thunderstorms will stretch from South Carolina to Florida. A separate area of spotty thunderstorms will affect eastern New Mexico, western Texas, much of Kansas, northern Missouri and southeastern Iowa.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation for Friday. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



THURSDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)
High: 104 at Alva, OK
Low: 25 at Crested Butte, CO
Precip: 1.90" at Fort Lauderdale, FL

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)
High: 112 at Tragen, Libya
Low: 11 at Tungokochen, Russia
Precip: 4.56" at Iba, Philippines

TODAY IN HISTORY

On Sept. 20, 1911, the temperature rose 40 degrees in 5 minutes at Kimberly, South Africa. Most thunderstorms bring cooler air. Sometimes a downdraft brings warm, dry air.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: Hair is used in what weather instrument?

Answer: A hygrometer which measures relative humidity

NATIONAL CITIES FRIDAY

	High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality		High/low/W	Air Quality
Aberdeen, SD	82/55/s	44	Evansville, IN	94/70/s	73	Levittown, PA	82/60/pc	60	Rochester, NY	81/61/s	54
Abilene, TX	98/72/s	30	● Fall River, MA	67/59/r	26	Lincoln, IL	86/61/t	70	Rockford, IL	88/54/pc	72
● Accomac, VA	78/59/c	70	Farmington, NM	86/52/pc	58	Louisville, KY	94/72/s	77	Ruidoso, NM	79/54/pc	51
● Adrian, MI	90/60/t	63	Fayetteville, NC	84/64/pc	36	Lubbock, TX	94/69/t	38	Salem, OR	71/47/pc	29
Akron, OH	86/64/s	49	Fond du Lac, WI	84/54/pc	60	Manitowoc, WI	79/56/pc	67	● Salina, KS	95/72/t	60
Alamogordo, NM	95/66/pc	49	Fort Myers, FL	91/74/t	39	Marshfield, OH	88/64/s	49	Salinas, CA	69/53/pc	39
Alexandria, VA	85/62/pc	67	Fort Smith, AR	98/74/s	54	Marshall, NC	84/56/pc	44	Salisbury, MD	81/61/c	72
Alliance, OH	87/62/s	49	Framingham, MA	66/57/r	27	Marshfield, WI	79/54/pc	40	San Angelo, TX	97/73/s	29
● Amarillo, TX	97/67/t	40	Freeport, IL	89/56/pc	58	Massillon, OH	88/64/s	47	Sarasota, FL	91/74/t	51
Ames, IA	89/62/s	38	● Fremont, OH	90/65/s	53	McLean, VA	85/61/pc	61	Savannah, GA	87/68/sh	46
Anderson, SC	88/65/s	46	Fort Collins, CO	88/52/pc	72	Melbourne, FL	87/74/pc	46	Sheboygan, WI	81/56/pc	69
Appleton, WI	82/58/pc	58	Gadsden, AL	91/59/s	49	Memphis, TN	90/72/s	53	Shelby, NC	84/61/pc	48
Asheville, NC	83/59/pc	46	Gainesville, FL	89/69/pc	47	Middletown, NY	78/55/pc	46	Sherman, TX	101/76/s	57
Ashland, OH	89/64/s	48	Galesburg, IL	87/58/s	63	Milford, MA	66/57/r	28	Shreveport, LA	98/75/s	62
Athens, GA	90/65/pc	53	Gastonia, NC	84/62/pc	50	Milwaukee, WI	84/61/pc	84	Silver City, NM	88/56/s	47
Augusta, GA	89/64/pc	44	Glen Rose, TX	99/72/s	46	● Monroe, MI	81/61/t	56	● Sioux Falls, SD	86/62/s	40
Austin, TX	98/72/s	32	Gonzales, LA	97/72/s	63	Monroe, LA	95/68/s	46	Somerset, NJ	81/58/s	53
Bartlesville, OK	101/73/s	55	Great Falls, MT	72/37/pc	32	Montgomery, AL	93/67/s	49	Somerville, NJ	82/58/pc	55
● Battle Creek, MI	86/60/t	69	Green Bay, WI	83/54/pc	60	● Muncie, IN	93/64/s	76	● South Bend, IN	86/60/t	87
Bedford, IN	88/67/s	66	Greenville, SC	86/64/pc	43	Murfreesboro, TN	92/63/s	54	Spartanburg, SC	84/63/pc	45
Binghamton, NY	78/56/s	53	Hackensack, NJ	81/59/pc	48	Naples, FL	91/75/t	39	● Springfield, IL	87/63/t	70
Bluffton, SC	84/69/sh	43	Hagerstown, MD	84/62/s	60	Nashville, TN	93/69/s	55	Springfield, MO	95/71/pc	60
Bremerton, WA	63/45/c	34	Hattiesburg, MS	95/68/s	56	● Neptune, NJ	77/62/pc	50	St. Augustine, FL	84/74/pc	47
Brockton, MA	66/58/r	26	Henderson, KY	94/68/s	67	● New Bedford, MA	67/61/r	28	St. Cloud, MN	79/58/s	37
Brownwood, TX	98/71/s	36	Hendersonville, NC	83/59/pc	48	New Bern, NC	83/63/pc	34	● St. George, UT	85/59/s	53
Burlington, IA	88/62/s	60	Herkimer, NY	81/55/pc	45	New Philadelphia, OH	89/62/s	46	Staunton, VA	81/56/s	51
Burlington, NC	82/62/sh	42	● Hillsdale, MI	87/59/t	63	Newark, OH	94/62/s	44	Stevens Point, WI	82/52/pc	46
Burlington, VT	80/58/sh	39	Holland, MI	78/60/t	76	Newton, NJ	77/55/pc	52	Stockton, CA	90/56/s	57
Cambridge, OH	91/65/s	47	Hornell, NY	85/58/s	47	New York, NY	79/61/pc	52	Stroudsburg, PA	80/55/pc	56
Camdenton, MO	95/70/s	57	Houma, LA	95/71/s	69	Norwich, CT	70/56/c	27	Stuart, FL	87/75/t	38
Canandaigua, NY	83/60/s	48	● Howell, MI	83/60/t	55	Ocala, FL	89/70/c	48	● Sturgis, MI	86/59/t	71
Canton, OH	87/64/s	48	● Hutchinson, KS	96/73/t	58	Oklahoma City, OK	100/73/s	46	Tallahassee, FL	92/70/s	51
● Carlsbad, NM	96/69/t	60	● Hyannis, MA	67/59/r	38	Opelousas, LA	95/70/s	52	Thibodaux, LA	94/71/s	66
Chambersburg, PA	86/60/s	59	● Indianapolis, IN	90/65/s	79	Oshkosh, WI	82/57/pc	52	Topeka, KS	95/73/t	56
Cherry Hill, NJ	83/62/pc	65	Iowa City, IA	89/61/s	57	● Palm Beach, FL	88/77/t	38	Tuscaloosa, AL	93/65/s	50
Cincinnati, OH	92/68/s	72	Ithaca, NY	81/59/s	52	Palm Springs, CA	87/68/pc	53	Utica, NY	80/56/s	44
Clarksville, TN	92/68/s	64	Jackson, MS	93/68/s	50	Panama City, FL	90/72/s	50	Ventura, CA	69/58/s	45
● Coldwater, MI	86/58/t	65	Jackson, TN	91/67/s	50	Pekin, IL	88/63/s	67	Victorville, CA	79/53/pc	62
Columbus, OH	93/67/s	51	Jacksonville, FL	85/70/sh	51	Pensacola, FL	91/71/s	56	● Vineland, NJ	82/58/c	74
Corning, NY	84/56/s	50	Jacksonville, NC	82/62/pc	35	Peoria, IL	88/64/s	73	Visalia, CA	86/58/s	70
Corpus Christi, TX	95/78/pc	32	Kent, OH	85/62/s	49	Petersburg, VA	85/60/pc	57	Washington, DC	85/65/pc	70
Daytona Beach, FL	87/73/pc	40	Kewanee, IL	88/58/s	62	Phoenix, AZ	96/70/s	62	Watertown, SD	81/58/s	40
Deming, NM	94/63/s	45	Keyser, WV	85/58/s	55	● Port Huron, MI	82/61/s	59	Wausau, WI	79/53/c	42
DeRidder, LA	94/70/s	48	Kinston, NC	83/61/pc	37	Portsmouth, NH	66/58/c	27	Waynesboro, PA	85/61/s	59
Des Moines, IA	90/67/s	44	Knoxville, TN	89/62/s	48	Poughkeepsie, NY	80/55/pc	43	White Plains, NY	78/58/pc	42
● Detroit, MI	84/63/t	56	● Lafayette, IN	88/60/t	72	Providence, RI	66/59/r	27	Wichita Falls, TX	103/73/s	41
Devils Lake, ND	73/52/pc	22	Lafayette, LA	94/74/s	60	Pueblo, CO	93/55/c	53	Wilmington, DE	82/62/pc	70
Dover, NH	65/56/c	23	Lakeland, FL	91/73/t	44	● Quincy, MA	65/59/r	33	Wilmington, NC	83/64/sh	36
El Paso, TX	97/72/pc	53	● Lansing, MI	84/60/t	62	Redding, CA	97/63/s	41	Wisconsin Rapids, WI	82/53/pc	44
Elmira, NY	83/57/s	50	Las Cruces, NM	93/66/pc	43	Reno, NV	79/51/s	68	Wooster, OH	87/61/s	48
Erie, PA	81/66/s	49	Lebanon, PA	85/59/s	67	Ravenna, OH	86/62/s	48	Worcester, MA	64/55/c	27
Eugene, OR	72/45/pc	28	Leesburg, PA	90/72/pc	44	Richmond, IN	93/65/pc	73	York, PA	86/61/s	72

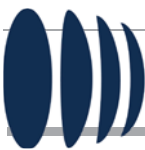
Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Friday High/low/W	Saturday High/low/W		Friday High/low/W	Saturday High/low/W		Friday High/low/W	Saturday High/low/W		Friday High/low/W	Saturday High/low/W
Acapulco	88/78/t	88/77/t	Cape Town	69/46/s	72/50/s	La Paz	64/37/s	61/34/pc	San Jose	79/67/r	75/68/r
Addis Ababa	73/52/s	71/52/sh	● Caracas	91/77/t	91/77/t	Lagos	85/77/t	85/78/t	● San Salvador	83/70/t	83/70/t
Algiers	85/70/c	87/65/t	Casablanca	83/65/pc	81/63/pc	Lima	66/58/pc	67/59/pc	Santiago	68/44/pc	69/45/c
Amman	85/67/pc	82/64/pc	● Colombo	88/80/sh	87/81/sh	Lisbon	74/63/r	74/60/pc	Sao Paulo	89/65/pc	74/64/c
Amsterdam	72/54/s	74/55/s	Copenhagen	72/53/s	68/56/s	London	73/58/sh	74/60/pc	Sarajevo	64/50/sh	72/43/pc
Ankara	77/54/s	76/56/s	Damascus	91/62/c	88/61/s	Madrid	74/59/pc	74/57/t	Shanghai	88/78/pc	81/72/pc
Asuncion	80/68/t	91/75/s	Dublin	63/55/pc	63/56/sh	Manila	86/78/t	84/78/t	Singapore	90/80/t	89/80/t
Athens	79/68/pc	80/67/pc	Geneva	72/51/pc	71/53/pc	Mexico City	78/57/sh	77/54/sh	Stockholm	67/47/pc	58/41/c
Auckland	62/54/r	64/50/s	● Guatemala City	79/63/r	78/63/t	Milan	76/58/pc	76/57/pc	Sydney	76/54/s	76/54/s
Baghdad	99/74/pc	101/76/pc	● Hanoi	91/76/t	91/77/sh	Mombasa	87/73/sh	86/70/sh	Taipei	96/81/r	94/81/t
● Bangkok	92/80/t	92/80/r	● Harare	90/57/s	86/53/s	Montevideo	71/52/s	78/61/s	● Tegucigalpa	83/67/t	83/66/t
Beijing	68/54/sh	76/52/s	● Havana	89/72/t	90/73/r	Montreal	78/57/s	74/54/pc	Tehran	85/68/pc	89/69/s
Beirut	87/76/c	86/77/s	Helsinki	66/53/s	59/45/s	Moscow	71/52/s	70/44/pc	Tokyo	93/82/pc	93/78/sh
Belgrade	73/51/pc	76/49/s	● Hong Kong	91/80/t	89/81/c	Nairobi	79/60/t	81/61/pc	Toronto	77/63/s	75/60/t
Berlin	73/49/s	74/50/s	Jakarta	93/76/pc	94/77/pc	New Delhi	91/79/pc	93/81/pc	Tunis	81/67/t	84/73/pc
Bogota	69/49/pc	70/47/sh	Jerusalem	85/67/s	80/65/c	● Panama City	87/76/r	86/77/t	Vancouver	62/49/pc	64/52/r
Brussels	72/52/s	75/58/s	● Johannesburg	62/42/t	46/40/sh	Paris	75/56/pc	73/60/sh	Vienna	71/49/s	71/50/s
Bucharest	73/50/pc	78/53/s	Kabul	87/66/s	90/67/s	Port-au-Prince	95/76/t	96/74/t	Warsaw	74/48/s	75/50/s
Budapest	73/49/s	75/44/s	Khartoum	105/83/s	107/83/s	Rio de Janeiro	83/72/c	82/72/pc	● Yerevan	65/55/t	68/53/t
Buenos Aires	73/59/s	73/64/pc	Kyiv	76/53/s	74/56/s	Riyadh	103/84/pc	105/84/pc	Zagreb	69/51/pc	72/48/s
Cairo	101/77/s	91/74/pc	● Kingston	91/80/pc	91/80/pc	Rome	76/58/s	77/59/pc	Zurich	71/47/s	72/48/pc

● Denotes possible travel delays Friday

Weather(W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.



BOLIVIA

Feudal politics

Violence broke out in Bolivia during a march in support of popular former President Evo Morales after counter-protesters blocked the route, underscoring an escalating power struggle in the country, Al Jazeera reported.

Morales mobilized his supporters for a weeklong, 118-mile “March to Save Bolivia,” starting in the small village of Caracollo and ending in the capital, La Paz, after the current president, Luis Arce, accused him on national television of orchestrating a coup.

Morales and around 10,000 supporters attended the march, including farmers, miners and Indigenous Bolivians, the leftist leader’s traditional base. Morales resigned in 2019, following mass protests that resulted in 36 deaths over his disputed reelection for a third term, which was deemed unconstitutional.

The trek began peacefully but turned violent when counter-protesters blocked the route, deploying tear gas, stones and firecrackers. The pro-Morales protesters fought back, using slingshots to target the counter-protesters, according to the Associated Press.

About 13 people were injured in the violence, including three police officers. Morales blamed the current administration for the violence, saying it had sent undercover police officers to instigate it. The government denied the charge.

Arce and Morales lead different factions of the Movement for Socialism Party, the dominant political party in Bolivia. Morales was previously Arce’s mentor and appointed him as economy minister, supporting his candidacy in the 2020 elections while he was in exile in Argentina.

However, the relationship between the two turned sour when Morales returned to Bolivia, seeking to regain power.



CZECH REPUBLIC

Base instincts

The right-wing Freedom and Direct Democracy Party’s political billboard in Wenceslas Square in the capital Prague depicts a dark-skinned man staring into the camera. He is angry. His brow is furrowed. He holds a sharp, blood-stained knife in his right hand. He, too, is covered in blood.

“Shortcomings of Czech health-care will not be solved by imported surgeons,” the sign said, according to Radio Prague International.

The sign illustrates how polarized the political climate in the Central European country has become, a climate that will likely affect Czech regional and senate elections on Friday.

The election follows one next door where the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, party won large shares of seats in the legislatures of the German states of Thuringia and Saxony. Forces that propelled the AfD to victory – rising xenophobia amid migrant influxes, economic inequality, higher living costs and so forth – are also at play in the Czech Republic.

This summer, for instance, former

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš established the Patriots for Europe group in the European Parliament, uniting far-right parties in Hungary, France, Austria and other countries under one banner espousing national interests before all others.

Summer saw particularly ugly campaigns for European Parliament races in the Czech Republic, too, said Balkan Insight.

Babiš’s ANO political party is slated to win the most seats in the regional elections, added BRNO Daily. But ANO politicians won’t necessarily be able to assemble the coalitions needed to control their regions’ governments.

Current Prime Minister Petr Fiala, meanwhile, is hoping his message of responsible government and fiscal constraint will win over voters worried about electing politicians who might cause more problems than they solve, Bloomberg wrote.

Russia’s role in the election is also an important part of the electoral landscape. Russia has meddled in elections in the country and elsewhere before, as Deutsche Welle explained.

As Politico reported, Babiš recently accused Fiala of “dreaming about war with Russia,” an indirect way of criticizing Fiala’s pro-Ukraine stance.

DISCOVERIES

Different strokes

The Viking way of life was not for the faint of heart.

Previously, scholars had presumed that the rate of violence in the Viking Age in Denmark and Norway was pretty similar, according to the Independent.

But a recent study found that Vikings in Norway were more likely to die violent deaths compared with their counterparts in Denmark.

University of South Florida researcher David Jacobson and his colleagues analyzed 30 skeletons from Norway and 82 from Denmark, as well as runestones to understand the societal structures and prominence of violence within them.

The team found that 37% of the Norwegian skeletons revealed individuals who had died brutal deaths, from bladed or pointed weapons.

However, this figure was around 7% in Denmark, most of which appeared to be from executions – such as hangings or decapitations – rather than the result of individual combat or personal conflicts.

Researchers also noticed that the Norwegian Vikings were more likely to be buried with their weapons, particularly swords, highlighting the culture’s association with violence and status. The study said over 3,000 swords from the period were found in Norway, while only a few dozen were discovered in Denmark.

The authors suggested that the type of society also contributed to the prevalence of violence: Norwegian Vikings lived in more decentralized societies that experienced more interpersonal violence.

In contrast, Denmark experienced less peer-to-peer violence because of its centralized society, which included defined social hierarchies and a stronger central authority. This was illustrated in its larger fortifications and also runestones that featured titles like “king.”

Wars loom large as world leaders meet at UN

Diplomats, analysts say they don’t expect progress toward peace

Michelle Nichols
REUTERS

UNITED NATIONS – More than 130 world leaders will meet at the United Nations next week, faced with wars in the Middle East and Europe threatening to spread, frustration at the slow pace of efforts to end those conflicts, and worsening climate and humanitarian crises.

While the conflict between Israel and Palestinian militants Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Russia’s war in Ukraine are set to dominate the annual high-level U.N. General Assembly, diplomats and analysts say they don’t expect progress toward peace.

“The wars in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan are going to be the three main crisis-points in focus at the General Assembly. I don’t think we are likely to see breakthroughs on any of them,” said Richard Gowan, U.N. director at the International Crisis Group.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last week told Reuters that the wars in Gaza and Ukraine were “stuck with no peaceful solutions in sight.”

Concerns about a spillover of the Gaza conflict to the broader Middle East have again escalated after Lebanese militant group Hezbollah accused Israel of detonating paggers and hand-held radios in two days of deadly attacks. Israel has not commented on the accusation.

“There is a serious risk of a dramatic escalation in Lebanon, and everything must be done to avoid that escalation,” Guterres told reporters on Wednesday.

The war in besieged Gaza was triggered by a Hamas attack on civilians in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, two weeks after world leaders finished their annual gathering last year.

Mediation efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar have yet to broker a cease-fire and global patience has waned nine months after the U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly demanded a humanitarian truce and as the Gaza death toll reaches 41,000.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – who has long accused the U.N.



The annual gathering of world leaders to mark the beginning of each new session of the U.N. General Assembly is often referred to as diplomatic speed-dating. EDUARDO MUNOZ/REUTERS FILE

of being anti-Israel – and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas are both scheduled to address the General Assembly on Sept. 26.

Diplomatic speed-dating

The annual gathering of world leaders to mark the beginning of each new session of the General Assembly is often referred to as diplomatic speed-dating.

While the event is anchored by six days of leaders’ speeches to the assembly, much of the action happens on the sidelines with hundreds of bilateral meetings and dozens of side events seeking to focus the global spotlight on the main issues.

Also looming this year is the prospect of a new U.S. administration. Republican Donald Trump – who cut U.N. funding and called the global body weak and incompetent while in office from 2017 to 2021 – faces Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris in a Nov. 5 election.

“Clearly in the back of everyone’s mind is going to be a guy called Donald Trump,” Gowan said. “I think in a lot of the private conversations around the General Assembly ... the number one question will be what will Trump do to the organization.”



U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the wars in Gaza and Ukraine were “stuck with no peaceful solutions in sight.” DAVID DEE DELGADO/REUTERS FILE

This year side events will be held on the war and humanitarian crisis in Sudan, where famine has taken hold, international efforts to help Haiti fight gang violence and the Taliban crack-down on women’s rights in Afghanistan.

Guterres on Wednesday poked fun at himself, saying he has “no power and no money.”

“There are two things the Secretary-General of the United Nations has, and I have to say that I’ve been using them,” he told reporters. “One is my voice, and

nobody will be able to shut it up. And second is the capacity to convene people of goodwill to address and solve problems.”

Iran, Ukraine

Western accusations about Iran’s role in the Middle East – Hamas, Hezbollah and Yemen’s Houthis are aligned with Tehran – and support for Russia’s war in Ukraine also shadow this year’s U.N. General Assembly.

European powers seek to revive efforts to rein in Iran’s nuclear program and Iranian and European officials are due to meet in New York next week to test their mutual willingness to engage.

Iran’s comparatively moderate new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, will address the United Nations on Tuesday.

Pezeshkian “will focus on detente, building confidence with the world, and deescalation,” a senior Iranian official said, but he will also “stress Iran’s right to retaliate” against Israel if needed.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will address the high-level General Assembly gathering for the third time since Russia invaded his country. He is due to address a meeting on Ukraine of the 15-member Security Council on Tuesday and the General Assembly on Wednesday.

Zelenskyy has a plan to push Russia to diplomatically end the war that he wants to present to U.S. President Joe Biden this month. He also wants to share it with both of Biden’s potential successors, Harris and Trump.

Some U.S. officials have already been briefed on elements of the plan.

“We think it lays out a strategy and a plan that can work. And we need to see how we can promote that as we engage with all of the countries’ heads of state who will be here in New York ... we do have hope to make some progress,” U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters on Tuesday.

While Russian President Vladimir Putin virtually addressed the General Assembly in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, he has not physically traveled to New York for the event since 2015. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is instead due to speak to the General Assembly on Sept. 28.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

S&P, Dow surge to record high close

Euphoria over recent Fed rate cut continues

Noel Randewich and Purvi Agarwal
REUTERS

The S&P 500 surged to a record high close on Thursday, the day after the Federal Reserve cut interest rates by 50 basis points and indicated more rate cuts were on the horizon.

The blue chip Dow Jones Industrial Average also registered a record closing high, ending the session above 42,000 for the first time.

Heavyweight stocks that have enjoyed much of this year's stock market rally made fresh gains, with Tesla surging over 7%, and Apple and Meta Platforms each up almost 4%.

AI powerhouse Nvidia jumped 4%, helping lift the PHLX semiconductor index surge 4.3%.

Better-than-expected jobless claims data further stoked global risk appetite.

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve announced a rate cut at the high end of expectations, and said it had greater confidence inflation was under control. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the U.S. economy remained strong and the central bank would decide on the appropriate pace of future rate cuts.

"The Fed has sanctioned a pretty strong economic picture here, and so we're just seeing the money flow back into some of the sectors that have perhaps underperformed so far this quarter," said James Ragan, Director of Wealth Management Research at D.A. Davidson.

The small-cap Russell 2000 index rose 2.1% as lower interest rates boosted prospects of reduced operating costs and greater profits.

The S&P 500 climbed 1.70% to end the session at 5,713.64 points, its highest close ever.

The Nasdaq gained 2.51% to 18,013.98 points, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.26% to 42,025.19 points.

Of the 11 S&P 500 sector indexes, eight rose, led by information technology, up 3.08%, followed by a 2.2% gain in consumer discretionary.

In extended trade, FedEx dropped 10% after the company cut its revenue target for its fiscal year 2025.

BofA Global Research said it now expects a total of 75 basis points in rate cuts by the end of this year, steeper than its previous forecast of 50 basis points.

Evercore ISI data going back to 1970 showed the S&P 500 has posted an average 14% gain in the six months following the first reduction of a rate-cutting cycle.

September has generally been a disappointing month for U.S. equities with the S&P 500 notching an average loss of 1.2% since 1928.

The S&P 500 banks index rose 2.5%, with gains in Citigroup and Bank of America after they lowered their respective prime rates.

Fertility benefits management firm Progyny plunged 33% after a significant client notified the company it had elected to exercise a 90-day option to terminate its services agreement.

Advancing issues outnumbered falling ones within the S&P 500 by a 2.4-to-1 ratio.

Across the U.S. stock market, advancing stocks outnumbered falling ones by a 3.8-to-1 ratio.

Volume on U.S. exchanges was relatively heavy, with 12.3 billion shares traded, exceeding the average of 10.8 billion shares over the previous 20 sessions.



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on Thursday.
BRENDAN MCDERMID/REUTERS

ANALYSIS

Global investors brace for turmoil after Fed cut

Debate on soft landing vs. recession remains

Naomi Rovnick and Yoruk Bahceli
REUTERS

LONDON – Big global investors are on alert for wild market swings after a jumbo U.S. rate cut sparked confusion over whether the world's dominant economy is set to boom or face recession, muddling prospects for stocks, bonds and currencies worldwide.

Global stocks hit records on Thursday, a day after the Federal Reserve lowered borrowing costs by 50 basis points from a 23-year high while the euro, sterling and currencies from Norway to Australia firmed against the dollar. U.S. stocks surged after an initial muted reaction to the Fed cut.

But in one sign the Fed's cut is making policymakers outside the U.S. edgy, the Bank of England held interest rates steady on Thursday, citing uncertainty about inflation and global demand.

Traders dialed back their U.K. rate cut forecasts and some money managers warned the Fed might be adding too much support to an already robust U.S. economy, lifting global growth but potentially also prices of commodities and consumer goods.

"I think it's more likely the Fed cuts too much and the economy accelerates," said Trevor Greetham, Royal London's head of multi-asset.

"It might be that there are then not loads of (global) rate cuts," he said, adding he expected higher market volatility from here.

"I see more turbulence, there are just too many risks," said Legal & General Investment Management head of economics Tim Drayson, citing prospects that the U.S. was slowing.

LGIM, Britain's biggest asset manager, was not taking strong positions on global stocks and bonds for now, he said.

Divergence?

Traders see the Fed's funds rate dropping 72 basis points this year and by 195 basis points by October 2025.

They have reduced near-unanimous bets for a quarter-point U.K. rate cut in November to around 80% and see the European Central Bank as unlikely to cut rates next month, but investors viewed such predictions as unstable. These European rate-setters are grappling with slower growth than the U.S., but stickier inflation. Their policy paths and markets depend on a scattergram of unpredictable scenarios for the U.S. economy.



The DAX stock index is displayed at the Frankfurt Stock Exchange in Germany. Global stocks hit records on Thursday.
REUTERS

Fidelity International portfolio manager Shamil Gohil said that faltering U.S. and U.K. growth could persuade the Bank of England to cut rates more rapidly and boost British government bonds, known as gilts.

But such positions were vulnerable to current expectations for further U.S. rate cuts proving wrong, he said.

"That could be a scenario where all markets sell off," he said, adding that on balance he expected global market volatility to rise.

Gohil said his portfolio was defensive, with a preference for investment-grade corporate bonds.

Neil Mehta, portfolio manager at BlueBay Asset Management, warned the Fed was cutting into a "very hot" economy with GDP growth at 3% and inflation still above target.

Eurozone core inflation is just under 3% and its policymakers are divided over future rate cuts after it lowered borrowing costs in June and September.

But if the Fed keeps going, further strength in the euro against the dollar would pile pressure on the ECB by making exports less competitive, Greetham said.

Marcus Jennings, fixed-income strategist at Schroders, said a dovish Fed, along with a weak eurozone economy, made German Bunds more attractive.

But investors warned any global

central bank outlook was likely to shift if U.S. data changed views on what the Fed may do next.

"If you start to see (U.S.) employment contract they (Fed) would be much more aggressive," said Dario Perkins, TS Lombard's head of macro. "Then they would start to panic a little bit about what's happening. If employment started to rebound, then that would suggest policy isn't as massively tight as they thought."

The VIX gauge of implied stock-market volatility dipped to 16.6 on Thursday, far below its spike to almost 66 during early August's market turmoil on a surprisingly weak U.S. jobs report and follow-on currency market gyrations.

MSCI's world share index has also gained more than 10% since that Aug. 5 shakeout.

Marlborough chief investment officer Sheldon MacDonald said market volatility could rise because stock-market valuations suggested the U.S. economy would be boosted by rate cuts but government bond pricing hinted at a recession.

Ben Gutteridge, multi-asset manager at Invesco, said if the Fed prevents a recession this would boost trades centered on central-bank divergence, such as bets that a more restrictive Bank of England would keep the pound strengthening against the dollar.

But a U.S. downturn would weaken stocks and support bonds worldwide, narrowing regional market divergence, he said.

"If you don't want to lose money, you've got to get the Fed right."

Nike's Hill to return as CEO

Analysts, investors cheer return and are expecting improved performance

Juveria Tabassum and
Nicholas P. Brown
REUTERS

Nike said on Thursday that former senior executive Elliott Hill will rejoin the company to succeed John Donahoe as president and CEO, as the sportswear giant shakes up its top rank amid efforts to revive sales and battle rising competition.

The company's shares rose 8% in after-hours trading.

Hill was at Nike for 32 years and held senior leadership positions across Europe and North America and was responsible for helping expand the business to more than \$39 billion, the company said.

He was previously Nike's president, consumer marketplace, leading all commercial and market operations for the Nike and Jordan brands before retiring in 2020.

Nike said in a regulatory filing that Hill's compensation as president and CEO will include an annual base salary of \$1.5 million. Hill will take over as CEO on Oct. 14.

Analysts cheered the move. The CEO change "gives a positive signal because it is someone that knows the brand and knows the company very well," said Jessica Ramirez of Jane Hali & Associates.

Donahoe was tasked with bolstering Nike's online presence and driving sales through direct-to-consumer channels.

The push initially helped the company build on the demand for athletic and leisurewear following the pandem-

ic, resulting in Nike touching more than \$50 billion in annual sales in fiscal 2023 for the first time.

However, sales have since come under pressure and growth has slowed, according to estimates compiled by LSEG. Nike's annual sales fell to \$48.87B for fiscal 2025 as inflation-weary customers cut back on discretionary spending and China's market rebounds more slowly than expected.

A lack of innovative and appealing products has also tripped demand for Nike. Rival brands including Roger Federer-backed On and Deckers' Hoka are attracting shoppers and retail partners with products considered more fashionable and trendy.

Expectations for a change at the top were heightened after billionaire investor William Ackman disclosed a stake in Nike. His Pershing Square Capital Management has continued to buy and now owns 16.3 million shares in Nike, a person familiar with the position said. Ackman was not immediately reachable for comment.

A person familiar with Ackman's thinking said that Hill would have been his top choice to replace Donahoe. Ackman, who announced his Nike stake via a public filing, had not been in touch with the company.

Hill's background as a former steward of Nike's valuable Jordan brand, a major profit-driver for the company, could also help the sportswear giant regain some momentum. The value of some Jordan shoes in 2023 had been slipping on the resale market as other sneaker brands, including On Running, experienced meteoric growth.

In the last couple of years, Nike had curtailed partnerships with retailers and pushed ahead with its plan to drive more sales through its own stores and websites. Those sales did not materi-



Nike's sales have come under pressure and growth has slowed, according to estimates compiled by LSEG.
CARLO ALLEGRI/REUTERS FILE

alize and put the company on \$2 billion cost savings route.

As part of the plan, Nike has so far cut jobs, reduced supply of classic shoes such as the Air Force 1 and tried to improve supply chain to boost margins.

"It clearly looks like Nike wanted to bring back somebody with a lot of experience" and "deep knowledge of Nike and its issues – unlike John Donahoe, who came in without any experience in the industry," said David Swartz, a senior analyst at Morningstar Research.

Hill will have to "work on repairing some of Nike's relationships" with retail partners who buy Nike shoes at wholesale, Swartz added. "Nike has dropped some customers over the years and pulled back some product and that has created some ill will towards Nike" among sneaker and footwear retailers, he said.

Thomas Hayes, chairman at Great Hill Capital, called Hill a "great pick." Nike now needs to "innovate and repair relationships with wholesalers," he added.

Nike's \$11 billion increase in stock market value in extended trade following the announcement late suggests how much investors value Hill.

Trump, allies sue over noncitizen claims

But their court filings offer little evidence

David Morgan and Andrew Goudswaard
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Donald Trump and his Republican allies are ratcheting up baseless claims that the Nov. 5 U.S. presidential election could be skewed by widespread voting by noncitizens in a series of lawsuits that democracy advocates say are meant to sow distrust.

At least eight lawsuits have been filed challenging voter registration procedures in four of the seven swing states expected to decide the election contest between Trump and his Democratic rival, Vice President Kamala Harris.

Trump and his allies say the legal campaign, which includes a wide-ranging challenge to the citizenship status of voters in Arizona, is a defense of election integrity.

But their court filings offer little evidence of the phenomenon that independent studies show to be too rare to affect election results, legal experts said.

“The former president is trying to do what he’s done the last three times he’s run, and set up this ‘If I win the election is valid and if I lose the election was rigged’ narrative,” said New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver, a Democrat.

Apart from his more recent presidential bids, Trump briefly ran in 2000 for the Reform Party.

The Trump campaign referred a request for comment to a spokesperson for the Republican National Committee, who said, “We believe our lawsuits will stop non-citizen voting, which threatens American votes.”

It is a felony offense for a noncitizen to vote in a federal election and independent studies have shown it rarely happens.

Backers of Trump’s strategy say that even one illegally cast ballot is too many.

Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose, a Republican, told a congressional panel last week that noncitizen voting is a rarity but that enforcement is necessary to keep it that way. He said his office recently identified nearly 600 non-citizens from state voter rolls that contain about 8 million registrants in total.

“We found 135 this year that had voted. We found another 400 that were registered but hadn’t yet voted. And this idea that it’s already illegal? It’s illegal to hijack airplanes, but we don’t get rid of the TSA,” LaRose said.

A study of Trump’s false claims of widespread noncitizen voting in the 2016 presidential election showed only 30 incidents among 23.5 million ballots



Former President Donald Trump and his allies say the legal campaign is a defense of election integrity. PIROSKHA VAN DE WOUW/REUTERS FILE



Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose, a Republican, said noncitizen voting is a rarity but that enforcement is necessary to keep it that way. GAELEN MORSE/REUTERS FILE

cast, accounting for 0.0001% of the vote, the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University said.

90-day rule

Federal law prohibits large-scale changes to voter rolls within 90 days of an election as well as purges that target particular class of voters, such as recently naturalized citizens, which the U.S. Justice Department reminded states of in an advisory last week.

That fact, democracy advocates say, show that Trump and his allies’ strategy in pursuing these suits is not to secure major changes in the electorate, but to lay the groundwork for contesting individual state results if he loses, both in the courts and by trying to persuade elected officials to take action.

“Lawsuits over noncitizens on voter registration rolls are meritless. But they’re part of a weaponized public relations campaign to erode confidence in

elections,” said Dax Goldstein, senior counsel for the nonpartisan States United Democracy Center, which promotes election security and fairness.

While national opinion polls, including the Reuters/Ipsos poll, show Harris with a slight lead over Trump, the race is close in the seven most competitive states: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

If a Harris win were to hang on just one or two states, a successful Trump challenge to a defeat in those states could be enough to reverse the election’s outcome.

“Our elections are coming down to just dozens or hundreds of votes,” said Republican Rep. Anthony D’Esposito, who is seeking reelection this year in a toss-up New York district.

Targeting states, counties

The lawsuits, filed by the Trump campaign, the Republican National Committee, the allied America First Legal Foundation and Republican state attorneys general, primarily target state and county election processes, alleging that officials are failing to do enough to prevent noncitizens from registering or remaining on voter lists.

Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, and an expert on election law, said that the lawyers bringing these cases have reason to use more careful language than Trump and his allies do in discussing them.

“The public messaging is aimed at trying to convince the Republican base that Democrats are trying to steal elec-

tions and there’s a lot of fraud,” Hasen said.

Trump tried unsuccessfully to overturn his 2020 loss to Democratic President Joe Biden in a campaign that included more than 60 lawsuits and inspired his supporters’ Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Nearly all of the 2020 lawsuits filed by Trump and his allies were dismissed for lack of evidence and other issues.

Four of this year’s lawsuits, filed in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Kansas and Texas, claim that a 2021 Biden administration initiative involving federal agencies in efforts to promote voter registration is a partisan effort to register voters likely to support Democrats.

Ken Blackwell, a former Ohio secretary of state who chairs the America First Policy Institute’s Center for Election Integrity, said on the social platform X last month that the Biden administration was staging an “attempt to weaponize federal agencies into a leftwing election operation that opens the doors to non-citizen voting.”

A 41-page complaint filed in Kansas federal court by Republican attorneys general from nine states makes only one reference to voting by undocumented immigrants, alleging that the Biden administration failed to examine the risks that “illegal aliens” may try to register to vote.

The RNC and North Carolina state Republican Party have twice sued that battleground state’s election board, making allegations on noncitizen voting.

The lawsuits allege the state registered nearly 225,000 voters, about 3% of its total, with insufficient documentation and had not removed from the rolls people who self-identified as non-citizens when reporting for jury duty.

The state is narrowly divided politically with two Republican senators, a Republican-controlled legislature, and a Democratic governor, Roy Cooper, and an evenly split delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives.

A state elections board spokesperson, Patrick Gannon, said it had complied with the jury duty requirement and identified nine registered voters who had claimed not to be citizens.

Those nine will be asked to cancel their registrations if their citizenship status cannot be confirmed, Gannon said, adding that the state cannot force them off the rolls this close to Election Day.

In Arizona, a lawsuit filed by Trump-aligned advocacy group America First Legal is seeking to force counties to further investigate about 44,000 voters – about 1% of the statewide total – who were allowed to register without providing proof of citizenship.

Senate to move on stopgap bill to avert government shutdown

House Republicans offer no hint on their plans

Moira Warburton, Richard Cowan and Andy Sullivan
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate will prepare a stopgap spending bill that would avert a looming partial government shutdown, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said on Thursday, as House Republicans offered no hint as to what their next move would be.

“Time is not a luxury that Congress has right now,” Schumer said on the Senate floor. He said lawmakers in the chamber would spend the next several days trying to reach a deal that Republicans and Democrats alike could support.

Congress must pass spending legislation before the start of the new fiscal year on Oct. 1 to avoid furloughing thousands of federal workers and shutting down a wide swath of government operations weeks before the Nov. 5 election.

A bill that would have paired six months of funding with controversial election-law changes opposed by Democrats failed in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives on Wednesday.

House Republican leaders said on Thursday they were working on another approach, but did not provide details.

“We’re having conversations and drawing up the next play,” House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters.

Aside from election rules, the two sides are also at odds over how long they



Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said lawmakers would spend the next several days trying to reach a deal that Republicans and Democrats alike could support. MANDEL NGAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

“We’re having conversations and drawing up the next play.”

House Speaker Mike Johnson

should extend temporary funding. Johnson has advocated for a six-month extension, which would take the issue off the table until next spring, when his Republicans could potentially control

both the White House and Congress.

Democrats are pushing for a shorter three-month extension, which would require Congress to tackle the issue by the end of this year, when Democratic President Joe Biden will still be in the White House and Democrats are still in charge in the Senate.

A lengthy extension of the current \$1.2 trillion funding plan also would hamper government operations because it would prevent agencies like the Department of Defense from launching new projects.

Robinson

Continued from Page 1NN

Stein, his opponent, has featured some of Robinson’s previous controversial comments in television attack ads and his campaign issued a statement condemning him on Thursday.

“North Carolinians already know Mark Robinson is completely unfit to be governor. Josh remains focused on winning this campaign so that together we can build a safer, stronger North Carolina for everyone,” Stein’s campaign said.

Following the publication of CNN’s story, the Harris campaign posted video clips of Trump praising Robinson. The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Under North Carolina law, the deadline for Robinson to withdraw from the race would be Thursday at 11:59 p.m., the day before the state begins sending absentee ballots to military and overseas voters. If he were to do so, the state Republican Party’s executive committee would select a replacement.

Absentee ballots with Robinson’s name on them have already been printed for all 100 counties, and some counties have already begun receiving printed ballots for early voting and Election Day, according to a spokesperson for the state elections board, Patrick Gannon. If a candidate withdraws and it is determined impractical to reprint ballots, any votes for that candidate will instead go to the replacement candidate.

Years ago, before running for public office, Robinson questioned the Holocaust in Facebook posts. He has denied being antisemitic and said his critics were twisting his words. In 2021 he used the word “filth” while discussing gay and transgender people.

IN BRIEF

Kentucky sheriff accused of killing judge in courthouse

A sheriff in rural Kentucky was arrested on Thursday, accused of shooting and killing a district court judge following an argument inside the courthouse, officials said.

Letcher County Sheriff Mickey Stines, 43, was taken into custody without incident at the Letcher County Courthouse, where District Judge Kevin Mullins, 54, was shot and killed, Kentucky State Police said in a statement.

Police offered no motive for the shooting. Stines has been charged with one count of first-degree murder.

“There is far too much violence in this world, and I pray there is a path to a better tomorrow,” Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said on X.

Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman wrote on social media that his office would be working with special prosecutors on the case, writing “we will fully investigate and pursue justice.”

The shooting took place in Whitesburg, the Letcher County seat, about 220 miles southeast of Louisville and near the Virginia border.

FCC chair rejects Trump call to pull ABC licenses over debate

WASHINGTON – The chair of the Federal Communications Commission rejected former President Donald Trump’s suggestion that Walt Disney-owned ABC should lose its broadcast licenses over the network’s moderating of the Sept. 10 presidential debate.

“The First Amendment is a cornerstone of our democracy. The Commission does not revoke licenses for broadcast stations simply because a political candidate disagrees with or dislikes content or coverage,” FCC chair Jessica Rosenworcel said on Thursday.

The FCC, an independent federal agency, does not license broadcast networks, but issues them to individual broadcast stations that are renewed for eight-year periods.

Trump claimed the debate was “rigged” because the ABC News moderators fact-checked several comments he made. “They ought to take away their license for the way they did that,” Trump told Fox News.

Rosenworcel, a Democrat, made the statement after Sens. Ed Markey and Ron Wyden had asked all five FCC commissioners to address Trump’s comments.

Mexico’s ex-drug czar deserves life in prison for bribery, US says

NEW YORK – Genaro Garcia Luna, who for several years led Mexico’s fight against the country’s violent drug trade, should spend the rest of his life in prison after accepting bribes to protect the cartels he was supposed to fight, the U.S. Department of Justice said on Thursday.

Garcia Luna faces an Oct. 9 sentencing in Brooklyn federal court before U.S. District Judge Brian Cogan following his February 2023 conviction for engaging in a criminal drug enterprise, taking part in various conspiracies and making false statements.

Prosecutors said Garcia Luna, Mexico’s public security minister from 2006 to 2012, took millions of dollars in bribes from the Sinaloa cartel once led by Joaquin Guzman Loera, better known as El Chapo. In exchange, he became an “essential ally and member” of the cartel, shielding members from arrest and providing aid as it shipped more than 2.2 million pounds of cocaine through Mexico into the United States, prosecutors said.

Garcia Luna, 56, faces a mandatory minimum 20-year prison term. His lawyer Cesar de Castro plans to submit his own sentencing recommendation.

Brazil seeks return to daylight saving time as drought bites

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazilian energy authorities have approved bringing back daylight saving time, a senior official said on Thursday, to save energy as the country faces a major drought that has hit power generation.

Before it goes into effect, reinstating daylight saving time will need to be backed by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

A prolonged drought in Brazil has affected some of the country’s largest hydroelectric plants, including two fed by an Amazonian river, forcing a shift to more energy imports and driving up power bills.

Former President Jair Bolsonaro abolished daylight saving in 2019, arguing it was no longer benefiting the power sector.

Reuters

Biden administration nears approval for Nevada lithium mine

Would be one of largest US sources of metal

Ernest Scheyder

REUTERS

The Biden administration on Thursday published a key environmental report for ioneer’s Rhyolite Ridge lithium mine in Nevada, the last step needed before approving what would become one of the largest U.S. sources of the electric vehicle battery metal.

The move comes after a review process of more than six years and as part of Washington’s ongoing efforts to boost domestic critical minerals production and offset China’s market dominance. If approved, the mine would be the first lithium project permitted by Biden officials.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management published a final environmental impact statement that sets in motion a review period of at least 30 days before a record of decision – essentially a mine’s permit – can be issued. The BLM also published an opinion on how a rare flower at the mine site can best be protected.

Shares of ioneer jumped more than 12% in New York trading.

The proposed mine, roughly 225 miles north of Las Vegas, contains enough lithium to power roughly 370,000 EVs each year. Ford Motor and a joint venture between Toyota and Panasonic have agreed to buy lithium from the mine.

The U.S. Geological Survey has labeled lithium a critical mineral vital for the U.S. economy and national security. As part of a push to boost domestic production, the U.S. Department of Energy last year said it would lend ioneer up to \$700 million to develop the mine, although the company would need to first obtain its permit.

Endangered flower

The site is also home to the Tiehm’s buckwheat flower, which is found nowhere else on the planet and was de-



The Nevada mine site is home to the Tiehm’s buckwheat flower, which is found nowhere else on the planet and was declared an endangered species in 2022. SARAH KULPA/U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE VIA REUTERS FILE

clared an endangered species in 2022.

The Center for Biological Diversity and some other conservation groups thus opposes ioneer’s project, making it a lightning rod in the debate over whether biodiversity matters more than the fight against climate change.

The BLM said on Thursday that it worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the company to craft “significant protections for the plant,” including changing mine design plans and propagation efforts that included construction of a greenhouse and hiring of botanists.

“We’re steadfast in our commitment to be responsible stewards of our public lands as we deliver the promise of a clean energy economy,” said BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning.

The Center for Biological Diversity said it was disappointed that Washington “continues to subvert public engagement on this mine by ... failing to back up any of its assertions.” Final details of the analysis will be released in the Federal Register on Friday.

“We’ve been fighting to save this en-

dangered little wildflower for over five years and we’re not backing down,” said the Center for Biological Diversity’s Patrick Donnelly.

The 30-day review process for the environmental report is a routine part of the federal permitting process.

Bernard Rowe, ioneer’s CEO, said the report reflects the company’s willingness to work with the government to protect the flower and develop a domestic source of lithium.

“It’s a testament to the approach that we took, and that was one of engagement, addressing the sensitive issues, seeing if we can come up with solutions. And we’ve done that,” Rowe told Reuters.

The death of more than 17,000 flowers near the mine site in 2020 sparked allegations of a “premeditated” attack. Australia-based ioneer denied harming the flowers. The government later blamed thirsty squirrels.

South Africa’s Sibanye Stillwater agreed in 2021 to buy half of the project for \$490 million, but only when permits are obtained.

US launches civil rights probe into Mississippi sheriff’s office

Sarah N. Lynch

REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Justice Department on Thursday launched a civil rights probe into the Rankin County Sheriff’s Department in Mississippi after several of its former officers known as the “Goon Squad” were prosecuted for torturing and sexually abusing two Black men.

Kristen Clarke, the assistant attorney general of the Civil Rights Division, said the investigation will examine whether the Rankin County Sheriff’s Department uses excessive force, routinely makes unlawful stops or searches, and whether it engages in racially discriminatory policing prac-

tices.

Clarke said the department’s decision to launch the investigation was not triggered by a particular incident, though she acknowledged the infamous January 2023 home invasion assault by five former Rankin County officers and a sixth former narcotics investigator from another police force in the state.

In that incident, the officers entered a home without a warrant where they handcuffed, stripped, beat and sexually assaulted Michael Corey Jenkins and Eddie Terrell Parker. Both victims were also subjected to electric Taser shockers and waterboarding as the officers screamed racial slurs at them.

The six former law enforcement officers were convicted for their crimes and

received prison sentences ranging from 10 to 45 years.

“Since the Goon Squad’s sickening acts came to light, we have received reports of other instances indicating that this conduct was far too common,” Clarke told reporters at a virtual news conference.

“Put simply, the concerns about the Rankin County Sheriff’s Department did not end with the demise of the Goon Squad.”

A representative from the Rankin County Sheriff’s Department could not immediately be reached for comment.

This marks the 12th civil rights investigation launched by the Justice Department during President Joe Biden’s term into abuses by local law enforcement.

Ukraine

Continued from Page 1NN

Ukraine that easily passed both the House and Senate in April after months of delay by Republican opponents of Ukraine aid. PDA allows the president to transfer defense articles and services from U.S. stocks in response to emergencies.

However, most of the \$7.8 billion in PDA in the bill has not been used, largely due to supply-chain issues, leaving officials scrambling to find a way to keep the remaining \$6 billion from expiring as the Sept. 30 deadline – the end of the 2024 fiscal year – approaches.

PDA has been the primary mechanism the Biden administration has used to ship weapons to Ukraine. Congress has approved nearly \$175 billion of aid and military assistance for Ukraine and allied nations since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Much of that has come in the form of long-term funding for U.S. defense production, as the Pentagon looks to replace equipment sent to Kyiv. Ukraine supporters have stressed the



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, left, meets with House Speaker Mike Johnson in Washington on July 10. Johnson held up the last Ukraine spending request for months. KEVIN MOHATT/REUTERS FILE

benefits for U.S. industry as they look to overcome resistance from a vocal bloc of Republicans who say taxpayer money should be spent at home, not sent abroad.

Companies like RTX’s Raytheon in Arizona which makes Patriot missile

systems and General Dynamics’ 155 millimeter artillery plants in Pennsylvania are receiving contracts for products that will replace those sent to Ukraine using PDA. Arizona and Pennsylvania are among the swing states expected to decide the presidential election.

CRISIS IN MIDDLE EAST

Probe of Lebanon pager attack widens

Bulgaria and Norway become new focal points

Nerijus Adomaitis, Krisztina Than and James Pearson
REUTERS

OSLO, Norway – Bulgaria and Norway became new focal points on Thursday of a global hunt for who supplied Hezbollah with the thousands of pagers that exploded in Lebanon this week in a deadly blow to the militant group. Security sources said that Israel was responsible for the explosions on Tuesday that killed 12 people, injured more than 2,300 and raised the stakes in a growing conflict between the two sides. Israel has not directly commented on the attacks.

How and with whose help the pager attack was carried out was not yet known, although so far there were possible leads in Taiwan, Hungary and Bulgaria.

It is not clear how and when the pagers were weaponized so they could be remotely detonated. The same question remains for the hundreds of hand-held radios used by Hezbollah that exploded on Wednesday in a second wave of attacks.

One theory is that the pagers were intercepted and hooked up with explosives after they left factories. Another is that Israel orchestrated the whole deadly supply chain.

Bulgarian authorities said on Thursday that its interior ministry and state security services had opened an investigation into a company’s possible ties. They did not name the company they were investigating.

Local media reports said Sofia-based Norta Global Ltd. had facilitated the sale of the pagers to Hezbollah. Citing security sources, national broadcaster bTV reported that 1.6 million euros related to the transaction passed through Bulgaria, and was sent to Hungary.

Reuters could not immediately confirm the claim.

Emails sent to a Norta email listed on Bulgarian company registration records were returned as undeliverable. The firm’s founder declined to comment.

Images of destroyed pagers analyzed by Reuters showed a format consistent with devices made by Taiwan’s Gold Apollo. Gold Apollo said on Wednesday that the pagers were made by BAC Consulting, a company based in the Hungarian capital Budapest.

The owner and CEO of BAC Consulting, Cristiana Barsony-Arcidiacono, did not return multiple requests for comment by phone and text message.

On Wednesday, she told NBC News that her company worked with Gold Apollo but that she had nothing to do with the making of the pagers. “I am just



Pedestrians walk past the building which reportedly houses Norta Global in Sofia, Bulgaria, on Thursday. Local media reports said Norta Global had facilitated the sale of the pagers to Hezbollah. NIKOLAY DOYCHINOV/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A TV crew works in front of the office building where BAC Consulting is said to be registered in Budapest, Hungary, on Wednesday. MARTON MONUS/REUTERS

the intermediate. I think you got it wrong,” she told NBC.

Hungarian news site Telex reported that the sale was facilitated by Norta Global Ltd., citing sources.

Norta’s Bulgarian headquarters are registered at an apartment building in the capital, Sofia, that is also home to nearly 200 other companies, according to a local company registry. There was no sign of Norta.

A lawyer, Vladimir Kuzmanov, who said he represented the company, was present at the address but declined to respond to questions when approached by Reuters on Thursday.

Content on Norta Global’s website, globalnorta.com, was deleted on Thurs-

day. The website previously had English, Bulgarian and Norwegian language versions, and advertised services including consulting, technology integration, recruitment and outsourcing.

“Are you looking for an agile company to help you succeed or to find that tech solution just right for you? Look no further,” the website had said, according to copies of the website reviewed by Reuters before it was altered.

Norta’s founder, Rinson Jose, is based in Norway. He declined to comment on the pagers when reached by phone and hung up when asked about the Bulgarian business.

His neighbors in a quiet suburb of Oslo said they didn’t know much about

him. Amund Djuve, the CEO of DN Media, where Jose currently works, told Reuters he was aware of the reports and had alerted the police and security services. He said that Jose was traveling to the United States.

“We are taking these matters very seriously,” Djuve said.

Oslo police said it had initiated “preliminary enquiries into the information that had come to light.”

Norway’s domestic intelligence agency, PST, said it was aware of the situation and declined to comment further.

There was no evidence of a link between DN Media and Norta.

Barsony-Arcidiacono of BAC Consulting, the Budapest-based company that was also linked to the sale of the pagers, vacated her apartment in Budapest on Wednesday, a neighbor told Reuters.

Her door was ajar on Wednesday but closed on Thursday morning, said a Reuters reporter at the scene. No one answered the doorbell.

A Lebanese security source told Reuters that Hezbollah believed it was ordering the pagers from Gold Apollo and that they were produced in Asia, not Europe.

The source said Hezbollah considered it much easier for Israel’s Mossad spy agency to operate in Hungary.

Israel

Continued from Page 1NN

and Wednesday “crossed all red lines.”

“The enemy went beyond all controls, laws and morals,” he said, adding the attacks “could be considered war crimes or a declaration of war.”

Israel has not directly commented on the pager and radio detonations, which security sources say were probably carried out by its Mossad spy agency, which has a long history of carrying out sophisticated attacks on foreign soil.

The Lebanese mission to the U.N. said in a letter to the Security Council on Thursday that Israel was responsible for detonating the devices via electronic messages and explosives implanted in them before they arrived in Lebanon, in line with theories that have circulated since the explosions.

The 15-member Security Council is due to meet on Friday over the blasts. Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati called on the Security Council to take a firm stand to stop Israel’s “aggression” and “technological war.”

‘Increasing price’

As Nasrallah’s broadcast aired, deafening sonic booms from Israeli warplanes shook Beirut, a sound that has become common in recent months but has taken on greater significance as the threat of all-out war has ramped up.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said late on Thursday that Israel will keep up military action against Hezbollah.



Smoke and fire rise from the site of Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon Thursday. RABIH DAHER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

“In the new phase of the war there are significant opportunities but also significant risks. Hezbollah feels that it is being persecuted and the sequence of military actions will continue,” Gallant said in a statement.

“Our goal is to ensure the safe return of Israel’s northern communities to their homes. As time goes by, Hezbollah will pay an increasing price,” Gallant said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened his close circle of ministers for consultations, Israel’s Channel 13 News reported.

Two Israeli soldiers were killed in combat on Thursday in Israel’s north,

the Israeli military said.

‘Crushing response’ vowed

Hezbollah fired missiles at Israel the day after the Oct. 7 cross-border attack by the Palestinian militant group Hamas which triggered the Gaza war.

Since then, constant exchanges of fire have occurred. Although neither side has allowed this to escalate into full-scale war, it has led to the evacuation of tens of thousands of people from the border area on both sides.

Nasrallah said Hezbollah hoped Israeli troops would enter southern Lebanon because that would create a “histor-

ic opportunity” for the Iran-backed group.

No military escalation, killing, assassinations or all-out war would return Israeli residents to the border area, he added.

Israel will face “a crushing response from the axis of resistance,” Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Commander Hossein Salami told Nasrallah on Thursday, according to state media, referring to a coalition of Iran-aligned militant groups including Hezbollah, Yemen’s Houthis, Hamas and armed groups in Iraq and Syria.

Speaking in Paris, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged restraint, adding he did not want to see escalatory actions by any party that make a Gaza cease-fire deal more difficult.

The attacks on Hezbollah communications equipment sowed fear across Lebanon, with people abandoning electronic devices for fear of carrying bombs in their pockets.

Nasrallah said thousands of pagers had been targeted simultaneously, with some of the explosions happening in hospitals, pharmacies, markets, shops and streets busy with civilians, women and children.

Israel says its conflict with Hezbollah, like its war in Gaza against Hamas, is part of a wider regional confrontation with Iran, which sponsors both groups as well as armed movements in Syria, Yemen and Iraq.

Israel has been accused of assassinations including a blast in Tehran that killed the leader of Hamas and another in a Beirut suburb that killed a senior Hezbollah commander within hours of each other in July.

SPORTSEXTRA

NFL JETS 24, PATRIOTS 3

Rodgers leads Jets to dominant victory

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Aaron Rodgers threw for 281 yards and two touchdowns as the New York Jets beat the New England Patriots 24-3 on Thursday night in East Rutherford, N.J.

Rodgers was playing at MetLife Stadium for the first time since tearing his left Achilles tendon in New York's 2023 season opener. He was injured on the fourth snap in that contest before missing the rest of the campaign.

Jets fans had to be pleased with what they saw on Thursday, though, as the 40-year-old completed 27 of 35 passes and was constantly escaping pressure from New England's front seven. Rodgers was sacked just twice.

Tyler Conklin thrived in New York's passing game, hauling in five catches for 93 yards.

Breece Hall had 54 yards and a TD on 16 carries for the Jets (2-1), who out-gained the Patriots 400-139 and controlled the ball for 40 minutes, four seconds. Hall added four receptions for 29 yards.

The Patriots (1-2) struggled to get anything going offensively. Jacoby Brissett had 98 yards on 12-of-18 passing and got no help from the running game. New England did not have a rusher break the 30-yard mark.

No. 3 overall pick Drake Maye made his NFL debut, taking over for Brissett late in the fourth quarter. Maye hit on 4 of 8 passes for 22 yards.

New York virtually put the game away on its first possession of the second half.

After their defense forced a

See JETS, Page 2NS



Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers throws a pass against the New England Patriots during Thursday's game in East Rutherford, N.J. AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

MLB



Los Angeles Dodgers designated hitter Shohei Ohtani hits a two-run home run against the Miami Marlins during the seventh inning of Thursday's game at loanDepot Park in Miami. SAM NAVARRO/IMAGN IMAGES

DODGERS' OHTANI STARTS OWN CLUB

Shohei Ohtani became the first player in MLB history to reach 50 home runs and 50 steals in the same season as his Los Angeles Dodgers clinched a playoff berth with a 20-4 beatdown of the host Miami Marlins on Thursday afternoon. Ohtani went 6-for-6 with 10 RBIs, three homers, two doubles, two steals and four runs. He got to 50-50 with an opposite-field homer in the seventh inning, earning a standing ovation from the crowd in Miami. **ROUNDUP, 4NS**

NASCAR COMMENTARY

Five bold predictions for Bristol

Samuel Stubbs
FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Saturday's Bristol Night Race is more than another edition of a premier event in racing. It also serves as the cutoff race for the NASCAR playoffs Round of 16 for the fifth consecutive season.

Chase Briscoe and Ty Gibbs are tied for the final transfer spot to the Round of 12. Denny Hamlin is currently below the cut line, with Brad Keselowski, Martin Truex Jr. and Harrison Burton also needing big performances to advance.

With the stage set for the 29th race of the 2024 season, here are five predictions for Saturday's nighttime action at Bristol Motor Speedway:

- Carson Hocevar will, for all intents and purposes, clinch the ROTY award
- Fellow Rookie of the Year contender Josh Berry may be stronger on short tracks, but the two drivers are moving in very different directions.
- Berry hasn't finished inside the top 20 since Richmond on Aug. 11, while Hocevar has five top-16 finishes — three top-10s among those — and a third-place effort at Watkins Glen in that same span. Berry's 12th-place finish at Bristol in March trumps Hocevar's 27th-place finish. Still, the momentum is all the side of the No. 77 team with eight races to go. A 45-point advantage for Hocevar over Berry will only grow on Saturday; Berry won't be able to catch up.
- Bright playoff lights melt Truex, No. 19 team for second consecutive season
- It's a shame Truex's final playoff run

See NASCAR, Page 6NS



Carson Hocevar could clinch the Rookie of the Year award on Saturday at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway. RICH BARNES/IMAGN IMAGES

NFL

NOTEBOOK

QB Young ‘grateful’ to be with Panthers

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Quarterback Bryce Young pledged to help the Carolina Panthers any way he can, though the former starter will be watching from the sidelines when the team plays host to the Las Vegas Raiders on Sunday.

Young, addressing his demotion from earlier this week, took responsibility on Thursday for his play after being lauded as the franchise quarterback since he was the No. 1 overall pick of the 2023 NFL draft.

“I had a lot of plays last year and in the first two games,” Young told reporters during locker room availability. “For the most part, every snap hit my hands and I didn’t do enough. I take accountability for that. There’s a long list of things that I wish was better and I’ll continue to work and grow and improve and be better at.

“Everyone has circumstances. If I went out there and played better and won games ... and at the end of the day that falls on me and that didn’t happen ... we wouldn’t be having this conversation.”

The Panthers (0-2) lost 26-3 to the visiting Los Angeles Chargers on Sunday, leaving the second-year quarterback with just two wins in 18 NFL starts.

Young, 23, has completed 55.4 percent of his passes this year for 245 yards with no touchdowns and three interceptions. Last year, he connected on 59.8 percent of his attempts for 2,877 yards, 11 touchdowns and 10 picks as the team went 2-15.

First-year head coach Dave Canales announced Monday that veteran Andy Dalton has moved up to first string after initially saying that Young remained the starter following Sunday’s loss. Young admitted Thursday that he was caught by surprise by the benching.

“It was not something that I necessarily I was expecting,” Young said. “Obviously, not something that was great to hear.

“But I respect coach Canales, I respect the organization. They made the decision. ... Right now that’s the situation that it is. I have to do everything I can to help the team in whatever way I can.”

That means running the scout team and mimicking Raiders quarterback Gardner Minshew to get the Panthers defense prepared for Sunday.

“I’m a day-by-day kind of person,” Young said. “I’ve talked about that consistently. Big picture stuff, that’s out of my hands. That’s organizational stuff, for the people upstairs. I’m super grateful to be part of the team, with our organization. I want to help in every way I can.”

Canales said Wednesday that the Panthers are not looking to trade Young, a Heisman Trophy winner who had great success at Alabama but little since his arrival in the NFL. Young said his future in the league is for others to decide, but the 5-foot-10, 204-pounder believes he can succeed at this level.

“I have confidence in myself,” Young said. “I’ve always had confidence in myself. Again, it’s a day-to-day thing. I always feel like at the end of the day I’m a competitor. Whenever there’s a football and there’s a field out there, I have the utmost confidence in myself.

“It’s been great with these guys too, having teammates I can lean on as well. That’s not something that’s going to



Panthers quarterback Bryce Young throws against the Los Angeles Chargers during Sunday’s game in Charlotte, N.C. JIM DEDMON/IMAGN IMAGES

waver. Again, what the circumstances are, what happens, that’s up for God to decide. That’s out of my hands.”

Carolina traded up prior to the 2023 draft with the Chicago Bears to select Young. Standout receiver D.J. Moore was sent to the Bears, who also used the 2024 No. 1 overall draft pick obtained in the deal to select quarterback Caleb Williams.

49ers star TE Kittle (hamstring) misses practice

The San Francisco 49ers are facing another blow to their offense after star tight end George Kittle missed practice with what ESPN and NFL Network reported to be hamstring tightness.

The 49ers may not have Kittle available for Week 3 when they face the Los Angeles Rams on Sunday.

Kittle, a five-time Pro Bowler and four-time All-Pro selection (including twice to the first team), had 11 receptions for 116 yards and a touchdown over the Niners’ first two games of 2024.

The 30-year-old has played in 100 games (92 starts) since starting his NFL career with San Francisco as a fifth-round draft pick in 2017, hauling in 471 receptions for 6,390 yards and 38 touchdowns.

The 49ers are already down two explosive weapons on offense: running back Christian McCaffrey (calf/Achilles), who’s on injured reserve, and wide receiver Deebo Samuel (calf strain), who is expected to miss a couple of weeks.

Report: Lions coach Campbell sells home over security fears

Detroit Lions coach Dan Campbell and his family have moved to a new home in the metro area, forced to list their former house for sale out of security fears.

Crain’s Detroit Business reported the

Campbells’ address got out online, leading to pranks and harassment on multiple occasions. After the Lions lost to the San Francisco 49ers in the NFC title game in January, the family filed a police report over harassment, Fox 2 Detroit reported.

The publication said Campbell and his wife, Holly, bought what it described as a 7,800-square-foot Cape Cod-style “mansion” in Oakland County, Mich., in 2021.

“The home is beautiful,” Campbell told Crain’s. “It’s just that people figured out where we lived when we lost.”

While Campbell gave no information about the family’s new home, the old one was listed on Zillow at \$4.5 million on Tuesday and was under contract the same day. Per Zillow information, the five-bedroom, seven-plus bathroom home set on 1.72 acres sold for \$3.5 million in March 2021.

Jags provide updates for TE Engram, S Savage

Jacksonville Jaguars coach Doug Pederson updated the statuses of tight end Evan Engram and safety Darnell Savage.

Engram sustained a hamstring injury during warmups prior to Sunday’s game against the visiting Cleveland Browns, while Savage is nursing a quad injury sustained in practice last week.

“Evan, right now, he is a little bit further away. We’ll have to take it kinda day-by-day with him,” Pederson said. “Sav, we’re going to work back into practice today and get him progressed so hopefully he’s available for Monday.”

The Jaguars (0-2) visit the Buffalo Bills (2-0) on Monday night.

Engram, 30, had career-high totals in catches (114) and receiving yards (963) to go along with four touchdowns in 17 starts last season. The two-time Pro Bowl selection was limited to just one catch in Jacksonville’s 20-17 loss to the

Miami Dolphins in Week 1.

Second-year tight end Brenton Strange, 23, caught a career-high three passes for 65 yards in Sunday’s 18-13 loss to Cleveland.

“I think it was big for Brenton. You know, that’s the type of player we know that he is, that he’s capable of being,” Pederson said. “He did some really good things, played well. Played physical, too, in the run game, which was good to see and he’s done that since he’s been here.

“So it just adds more to his confidence, obviously, and (he) just continues to I think grow with the offense and gets more opportunities.”

Savage, 27, signed a three-year, \$21.8 million deal with the Jaguars in the off-season. He had two passes defended in the opener at Miami and has tallied 302 tackles and nine interceptions in 73 career games (70 starts) for the Green Bay Packers and Jaguars.

Browns DT Hall pleads no contest to disorderly conduct

Cleveland Browns rookie defensive tackle Michael Hall Jr. pleaded no contest to a charge from a domestic altercation earlier this summer.

Hall, 21, entered the plea to the reduced charge of disorderly conduct in Ohio’s Avon Lake Municipal Court. Judge Alison Manning handed him a 30-day suspended jail sentence, a \$250 fine and two years of probation.

“I regret this whole situation,” Hall said in court, per Cleveland.com. “I’m getting counseling and trying to better myself.”

Per the website, a protection order between Hall and his fiancée was dropped at the latter’s request last week.

The NFL put Hall on the commissioner’s exempt list last month as a result of the initial charge.

Jets place DE Johnson (Achilles) on IR, ending his season

The New York Jets placed defensive end Jermaine Johnson on injured reserve on Thursday because of a ruptured right Achilles tendon, ending his season, and signed defensive lineman Jalyn Holmes from the practice squad to the active roster.

The Jets also called up linebacker Marcelino McCrary-Ball for their home game Thursday night against the New England Patriots. Standout linebacker C.J. Mosley is listed as questionable with a toe injury.

Johnson, 25, was injured on a non-contact play while rushing Tennessee Titans quarterback Will Levis in the third quarter of Sunday’s 24-17 road win. He immediately grabbed his right leg and was eventually carted off the field.

“Thank everyone for all the prayers and support!” Johnson, a Pro Bowl selection as an injury replacement in 2023, said in a social media post on Monday. “This is not a dark time for me, although there will be dark days ahead, this is Gods way for me to not only grow as a man, person and player but to also inspire others to as well.”

The Jets traded into the bottom of the first round of the 2022 NFL Draft to select Johnson No. 26 overall. In 33 career games (19 starts), he has amassed 88 tackles, 10 sacks, seven pass breakups, one interception and one forced fumble.

Jets

Continued from Page 1

three-and-out to begin the half, the Jets ate 7:10 of clock during a drive that ended with a 2-yard scoring strike from Rodgers to Garrett Wilson.

That provided the Jets with a commanding 21-3 lead and prompted the home crowd to get “Aaron Rodgers” chants going later in the third quarter.

Greg Zuerlein drilled a 28-yard field goal with 10:16 left in the game for the hosts’ final points.

New York opened the scoring with 4:21 left in the first quarter when Rodgers connected with Allen Lazard for a 10-yard touchdown.

Hall doubled the Jets’ lead with 8:32 remaining in the second quarter, punctuating a 13-play, 91-yard march by rushing into the end zone from 1 yard out to make it 14-0.

Officials initially ruled Hall down short of the goal line, but New York successfully challenged the call.



Jets running back Breece Hall (20) runs with the ball against the Patriots on Thursday in East Rutherford, N.J. BRAD PENNER/IMAGN IMAGES

A 34-yard defensive pass interference penalty got New England down to the Jets 25 on the ensuing possession,

but the Patriots ended up having to settle for Joey Slye’s 44-yard field goal with 3:56 left in the half.

N.Y. Jets 24, New England 3					
New England	0	3	0	0	3
N.Y. Jets	7	7	7	3	24
First Quarter					
NYJ—Allen Lazard 10 yd pass from Aaron Rodgers (Greg Zuerlein kick), 4:21.					
Second Quarter					
NYJ—Breece Hall 1 yd run (Greg Zuerlein kick), 8:32.					
NE—Joey Slye 44 yd FG, 3:56.					
Third Quarter					
NYJ—Garrett Wilson 2 yd pass from Aaron Rodgers (Greg Zuerlein kick), 6:18.					
Fourth Quarter					
NYJ—Greg Zuerlein 28 yd FG, 10:16.					
	NE		NYJ		
First downs	12		27		
Total Net Yards	140		400		
Rushes-yards	15-79		33-133		
Passing	2		253		
Punt Returns	2-12		4-27		
Kickoff Returns	1-19		1-27		
Interceptions Ret.	0-0		0-0		
Comp-Att-Int	16-26-0		27-35-0		
Sacked-Yards Lost	7-59		2-14		
Punts	5-49.0		3-40.7		
Fumbles-Lost	1-1		1-0		
Penalties-Yards	5-70		8-106		
Time of Possession	19:56		40:04		
INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS					
RUSHING—New England, Gibson 5-29, Stevenson 6-24, Maye 2-12, Douglas 1-9, Hasty 1-5. N.Y. Jets, Allen 11-55, Hall 16-54, Rodgers 3-18, Davis 3-6.					
PASSING—New England, Brissett 12-18-0-98, Maye 4-8-0-22. N.Y. Jets, Rodgers 27-35-0-281.					
RECEIVING—New England, Douglas 7-69, Gibson 3-8, Polk 2-13, Henry 2-9, Hooper 1-19, Boutte 1-2. N.Y. Jets, Conklin 5-93, Wilson 5-33, Hall 4-29, Lazard 3-48, Williams 3-34, Allen 3-13, Gipson 2-16, Ruckert 2-15.					
MISSED FIELD GOALS—Zuerlein 45.					

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

NO. 24 ILLINOIS AT NO. 22 NEBRASKA, 8 P.M. ET, FOX

Huskers, Illini clash in Big Ten opener

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

For the first time since October 2011, No. 22 Nebraska and No. 24 Illinois find themselves listed in the same Associated Press Top 25 poll. They'll meet in a Big Ten opener Friday night in Lincoln, Neb., to decide which team gets to stay there.

The Cornhuskers (3-0) are off to their best start since 2016 — their most recent bowl season — while the Illini are 3-0 for the first time since 2011.

After cruising through their respective non-conference schedules, both teams will get a much better picture of their might while they clash in front of Nebraska's 400th consecutive home sellout.

"To have two big teams ranked on a Friday night game is a little bit unusual," said Illinois coach Bret Bielema, who has his program in the polls for just the second time in the last 13 years. "It doesn't happen all the time. To see it play out and be a part of it is awesome. Give a lot of credit to their team and what they've accomplished to this point. I told our guys to continue to keep our focus, our mentality, and see where it can go."

The Huskers have three blowouts under their belt — they led at halftime against UTEP, Colorado and Northern Iowa by a combined score of 79-10 — but head coach Matt Rhule hasn't been overly impressed yet.

"I think any time you don't punt in the game, you feel pretty good," Rhule said. "So I felt pretty good about what we did Saturday offensively (against Northern Iowa). But that was all preseason to me. Now the season starts. We'll find out where we are. This will be such a different challenge playing against these guys."

The Illini enter Friday's game tied for second nationally in turnover margin (+8) and tied for fifth in turnovers forced (9). Defensive back Xavier Scott is one of four FBS players with at least 3



Nebraska quarterback Dylan Raiola (15) throws to receiver Isaiah Neyor against UTEP during the second quarter of an Aug. 31 game in Lincoln, Neb. DYLAN WIDGER/USA TODAY SPORTS

interceptions through three games, and he has forced four turnovers overall.

But Scott and company haven't faced a passer like Nebraska's Dylan Raiola. Even on the rare occasions when the pass rush has forced him to improvise, the five-star freshman has appeared unflappable while completing 73.8 percent of his passes for 670 yards, five touchdowns and just one interception.

"He brings a different element immediately," Bielema said. "He's a very talented young man that's got a great deep ball throw. They maximize him pretty well. There's some things you can literally see him get better on every series —

just very impressive to see."

Rhule seems eager to find out how Raiola will handle an Illinois group that ranks 12th nationally in pass efficiency defense (an 87.98 rating versus Raiola's 162.22).

"They've altered a lot of what they're doing," said Rhule, noting how Illinois second-year defensive coordinator Aaron Henry has been using more disguises this season. "They'll show man and play Cover 2. They'll show man and play zone. With a young quarterback, he's got to recognize because they don't show it to you. He's got to recognize zone on the snap. And they're taking the

ball away at a high level."

On the flip side, Bielema wants to see his rushing attack be more reliable. The Illini's quartet of backs have been satisfactory (153.3 yards per game), but Illinois hasn't faced anything like the Huskers' defense, which surrenders just 2.5 yards per carry and 70.3 rushing yards per game.

"If we're going to win in the Big Ten, we're going to have to run the ball in certain situations," Bielema said. "I think the greatest definition of a team is a team that can run the ball effectively when they want to run it against good competition."

WNBA

ROUNDUP

Dream top Liberty to clinch playoff berth

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Tina Charles collected 10 points and 10 rebounds to become the WNBA's all-time leader in rebounding and double-doubles as the visiting Atlanta Dream clinched the final playoff spot with a 78-67 victory over the league-leading New York Liberty on Thursday night.

Facing her former team, Charles surpassed Sylvia Fowles on the league's all-time rebounding list with a little less than seven minutes left in the first quarter by getting an offensive rebound of Jordin Canada's jumper for her 4,007th career rebound.

Charles then notched her 194th career double-double, also passing Fowles, when she grabbed a defensive board with 5:07 left in the third.

It was Charles' 21st double-double this season, and her performance helped Atlanta (15-25) edge the Washington Mystics and Chicago Sky for the league's final playoff spot. The win set up a best-of-three series with the Liberty in the opening round of the postseason, beginning Sunday in New York.

Sun 87, Sky 54

Connecticut got 12 points and 12 rebounds from DiJonai Carrington and beat Chicago in Uncasville, Conn., eliminating the Sky from playoff contention on the final night of the regular season.

Carrington was one of six players to score in double figures for the Sun (28-12), who enter the playoffs as the No. 3 seed. Ty Harris led Connecticut with 15 points, Alyssa Thomas had 13 points and seven assists, Marina Mabrey and Olivia Nelson-Ododa each had 12 points, and DeWanna Bonner chipped in 11.

The Sky (13-27) end the season on a five-game losing streak and will miss the postseason for the first time since 2018. Undermanned and injured, the Sky continued to play without star rookies Angel Reese (wrist) and Kamilla Cardoso (shoulder), as well as key veter-



The Atlanta Dream's Tina Charles (31) drives against the New York Liberty on Thursday in New York. BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

ans Chennedy Carter (foot) and Diamond DeShields (ankle). Dana Evans led Chicago with 14 points off the bench while Isabelle Harrison had 13 points and 11 rebounds.

Despite their depleted roster, the Sky kept pace with the Sun in the first half, tying the game up 29-29 midway through the second quarter. Connecticut then ended the period on a 17-6 run. Thomas had nine points and two assists during that crucial stretch for the Sun.

Mystics 92, Fever 91

Washington needed a win and some help in the regular-season finale to make the playoffs.

The Mystics took care of business, rallying past visiting Indiana for a wild win in front of 20,711 fans — the largest crowd in WNBA history — at Capital One Arena.

However, the help never came.

The Chicago Sky's 87-54 loss at the Connecticut Sun secured the eighth and final playoff spot for the Atlanta Dream, whom the Mystics (14-26) trailed by one game entering Thursday.

Sparks 68, Lynx 51

Dearica Hamby put up 20 points and seven rebounds and Rickea Jackson scored 19 points with eight rebounds as Los Angeles ended an eight-game losing streak with a victory over playoff-bound Minnesota in the regular-season finale for both teams in Minneapolis.

Kia Nurse added 12 points off the bench with three 3-pointers in the fourth quarter as the Sparks (8-32) closed the season with just their second victory over their last 17 games. Los Angeles finished with the worst record in the WNBA.

Hamby set the Los Angeles record for points scored in a season with 691, breaking Nneka Ogwumike's mark of 689 points set last season.

Aces 98, Wings 84

Megan Gustafson poured in a career-high 24 points and Tiffany Hayes added a season-best 21 as Las Vegas defeated visiting Dallas in the final regular-season game for both teams.

The Aces (27-13), with four of their regular starters in street clothes on the bench, held a 15-point lead at halftime, built it to 20 after three quarters and cruised to the win. Dallas, playing mostly bench players in the fourth quarter, got as close as nine points down the stretch but succumbed.

The Aces knew prior to tip off that they could not improve from the fourth seed in the upcoming playoffs, giving them little to play for other than momentum for the postseason. Las Vegas will clash with fifth-seeded Seattle at home on Sunday and Tuesday in the first two games of the best-of-three series.

Storm 89, Mercury 70

Seattle's Nneka Ogwumike had 17 points and eight rebounds as the Storm defeated host Phoenix in what may have been the final home game of Phoenix legend Diana Taurasi's career.

Taurasi, 42, has not officially announced she is retiring after this season, but the Mercury hinted in promotional material that Thursday could be Taurasi's final bow. Retired WNBA icon Sue Bird and UConn coach Geno Auriemma — Taurasi's college coach from 2000-04 — were among those in attendance.

The three-time champion and 2009 league MVP scored nine points on 3-of-6 shooting from 3-point range, upping her league-record scoring total to 10,646 points in 565 career regular-season games.

MLB

THURSDAY’S ROUNDUP

Dodgers’ Ohtani notches 1st 50-50 season

Guardians rally past Twins to clinch AL playoff berth

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Shohei Ohtani became the first player in MLB history to reach 50 home runs and 50 steals in the same season as his Los Angeles Dodgers clinched a playoff berth with a 20-4 beatdown of the host Miami Marlins on Thursday afternoon. Ohtani went 6-for-6 with 10 RBIs, three homers, two doubles, two steals and four runs.

He got to 50-50 with an opposite-field homer in the seventh inning, earning a standing ovation from the crowd in Miami.

Ohtani nearly hit for the cycle, as well, but he was thrown out at third trying to stretch one of his two doubles into a triple.

He finished the night with 51 homers — a new Dodgers single-season record, breaking Shawn Green’s mark of 49 in 2001 — and 51 steals.

The Dodgers, who have made the playoffs 12 straight years, got solid pitching from Jack Flaherty (13-7). He went six innings, allowing five hits, two walks and three runs. He is 3-0 in three career starts in Miami, and his 13 wins this season are a career best.

Guardians 3, Twins 2, 10 innings

Andres Gimenez had three hits, including a game-ending RBI single in the 10th inning, as Cleveland clinched a playoff spot by rallying to defeat visiting Minnesota.

With Minnesota’s Caleb Thielbar (2-4) on the mound and Cleveland’s Jose Ramirez as the automatic runner at second base in the 10th, Josh Naylor struck out, before Lane Thomas was intentionally walked. Gimenez then laced a hit to right field to end it.

Kyle Manzardo had three hits, including a solo home run for Cleveland (89-65) which won for the fifth time in six games to earn at least a wild-card spot in the upcoming playoffs.

Joey Cantillo gave up two runs (one earned) on three hits over 4⅓ innings for the Guardians, while six relievers did not give up a hit over the final 5⅓ innings. Eli Morgan (3-0) pitched a scoreless 10th inning to earn the win.

Simeon Woods Richardson gave up one run on five hits over 4⅓ innings for Minnesota (80-73) with six strikeouts. Manuel Margot drove in a run as the Twins lost for the fifth time in seven games.

Arizona 5, Milwaukee 1

Brandon Pfaadt bounced back from his worst start to take a one-hit shutout into the seventh inning as visiting Arizona kept pace in the National League wild-card chase with a victory over Milwaukee in the opener of a four-game series.

Pfaadt (10-9), who was chased by Milwaukee after giving up eight runs in 1⅓ innings in his previous start on Saturday, allowed only a single in the fourth inning before Garrett Mitchell’s two-out solo homer in the seventh cut the lead to 3-1.

Pfaadt struck out a career-high 12, including seven in a row to tie a franchise record, and walked none in a 104-pitch outing. A.J. Puk and Justin Martinez each followed with a perfect inning to complete the two-hitter.

Arizona (85-68) moved within two games of idle San Diego for the top NL wild-card spot. The New York Mets, who defeated Philadelphia 10-6 on Thursday, are tied with the Diamondbacks. Atlanta is in the first spot out of the playoffs, two games behind the Diamondbacks and Mets.

Pavin Smith put the Diamondbacks in front 5-1 in the eighth with his eighth homer off Joe Ross, following a one-out single by Christian Walker.

Mets 10, Phillies 6

Brandon Nimmo hit the tie-breaking homer in the third inning and finished with three RBIs for red-hot New York, which beat visiting Philadelphia in the opener of a four-game series between the National League East rivals.

Mark Vientos and Pete Alonso hit back-to-back homers in the first inning and Francisco Alvarez hit a three-run shot in the fourth for the Mets (85-68), who scored at least 10 runs for a third straight game for the first time in franchise history. New York routed the Washington Nationals 10-1 on Tuesday night before earning a 10-0 win



Guardians second baseman Andres Gimenez, center, celebrates with teammates after the Guardians beat the Minnesota Twins and clinched a playoff berth on Thursday in Cleveland. KEN BLAZE/IMAGN IMAGES

Wednesday night.

Vientos had two RBIs while Luisangel Acuna laced a run-scoring triple in the seventh as the Mets remained tied with the Arizona Diamondbacks for the last two NL wild-card spots. The two teams are two games ahead of the Atlanta Braves.

Jose Iglesias and Harrison Bader had two hits apiece.

Trea Turner briefly tied the game by hitting a two-run homer in the top of the third while Bryce Harper had a two-run double for the NL East-leading Phillies (91-62), who missed a chance to clinch a playoff berth. Brandon Marsh and Kyle Schwarber had an RBI apiece.

Mariners 3, Yankees 2

Logan Gilbert snapped a six-start winless streak as Seattle defeated visiting New York.

The Mariners (78-75) salvaged the finale of the three-game series as they chase Houston in the American League West and Minnesota in the wild-card race.

Jazz Chisholm Jr. homered for the Yankees (89-64), who had clinched a playoff berth with a 2-1 victory in 10 innings on Wednesday night and lead the AL East.

The Yankees had a scary moment in the bottom of the seventh inning as right fielder Juan Soto made a sliding catch of a ball hit by Jorge Polanco and crashed into the wall in foul territory, banging his left knee. Soto stayed on the ground for a couple of minutes while being attended to by Yankees trainers and manager Aaron Boone and staying in the game.

Gilbert (8-11), who hadn’t won since Aug. 10, allowed two runs on six hits in 5⅓ innings. The right-hander walked two and struck out nine.

Orioles 5, Giants 3

Anthony Santander hit a game-ending, two-run home run with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning to propel Baltimore past San Francisco.

Santander fouled off four consecutive two-strike pitches from Ryan Walker before connecting for his 42nd homer of the year. Gunnar Henderson, who singled earlier in the inning, also scored.

Jackson Holliday hit a two-run single and Zach Eflin pitched six strong innings to help the Orioles snap a three-game losing streak. Holliday had gone nine games without driving in a run until his fourth-inning hit and had only one RBI in September.

The Orioles (85-68) won for only the third time in their last 11 games, while moving within 4½ games of the first-place New York Yankees in the American League East. The Yankees were set to play at Seattle on Thursday.

Adley Rutschman had a run-scoring double, while Ryan O’Hearn and Henderson each had two of Baltimore’s 10 hits.

Astros 3, Angels 1

Jon Singleton slapped a two-run, two-out double into center field in the bottom of the eighth inning and Houston remained unbeaten in nine games started by Yusei Kikuchi by claiming the

opener of a four-game series with Los Angeles.

Singleton capped a rally against Angels reliever Ryan Miller (0-1) by lining a 1-2 sweeper to center field. Yordan Alvarez — who worked a leadoff walk — and Yainer Diaz scored on the play to snap a 1-1 deadlock.

Hector Neris, Bryan Abreu (3-3) and Josh Hader — who notched his 32nd save — worked a scoreless inning each as the Astros (83-70) reduced their magic number to clinch the American League West to five games.

Shackled by Angels left-hander Jose Suarez, who made his second start this season, the Astros relied on the errant defense of Angels third baseman Eric Wagaman to rally from a 1-0 deficit.

Wagaman committed three errors, including two on a Jeremy Pena ground-er leading off the second. Suarez pitched around that miscue but when Diaz reached on a Wagaman fielding error to open the fourth, Suarez wasn’t quite as fortunate. He surrendered consecutive singles to Pena and Victor Caratini, with the second hit driving home Diaz and tying the game.

Braves 15, Reds 3

Matt Olson and Michael Harris II each clubbed a pair of home runs as Atlanta crushed host Cincinnati in the rubber match of a three-game series.

Olson opened the scoring with a second-inning solo shot before his three-run blast put Atlanta (83-70) up 8-1 in the fifth. Harris cleared the right-center-field wall to open the eighth, then cracked a three-run homer an inning later.

Harris finished 3-for-5 with four RBIs and four runs scored.

Ramon Laureano and Jorge Soler also smacked three-run homers for the Braves, who trail the Mets and Diamondbacks by 1½ games in the National League wild-card race. New York and Arizona currently hold the last two wild cards, and both teams were scheduled to play later Thursday.

Atlanta starter Chris Sale (18-3) set a single-season career high by picking up his 18th win. He gave up two runs on five hits in five innings, walking two and striking out six.

Rays 2, Red Sox 0

Zack Littell allowed just one hit over seven innings as Tampa Bay claimed its three-game series with Boston, blanking the Red Sox in a combined one-hit shutout in St. Petersburg, Fla.

In an economical 75-pitch outing, Littell (8-9) fanned seven without a walk in his 28th start.

The right-hander got plenty of soft contact from the visitors. He retired 21 of 22 batters he faced, allowing just a single to center by Nick Sogard in the third — the only Red Sox baserunner on the night.

Littell stretched his active scoreless innings streak to 20 as the Rays (75-78) evened their season series with Boston at 5-5.

Edwin Uceta and Garrett Cleavinger (sixth save) retired all three batters they faced in the eighth and ninth, respectively, as Rays’ pitchers faced only 28 batters.

Cubs 7, Nationals 6

Dansby Swanson collected three hits and four runs and Cody Bellinger had three RBIs to lift host Chicago over Washington.

Chicago’s Seiya Suzuki launched a two-run homer and Ian Happ had three hits and scored twice. Isaac Paredes drove in a pair of runs for the Cubs (78-75), who banged out 12 hits to snap a modest two-game skid.

Washington’s Joey Gallo belted a three-run homer and James Wood, Andres Chaparro and Jose Tena each drove in a run.

CJ Abrams recorded four hits and scored twice for the Nationals (68-85), who have yielded 29 runs during their four-game losing skid.

Chicago overcame a 3-1 deficit by scoring two runs in both the third and fifth innings before Gallo answered with a three-run shot in the sixth. Gallo fouled off two pitches before depositing a 1-2 sinker from Drew Smyly over the wall in right field for his eighth homer of the season and second in his last four games.

Bellinger had an RBI single off Robert Garcia (3-6) to forge a 6-6 tie in the seventh inning before Paredes plated Swanson with a groundout. Garcia took the loss after permitting two runs on three hits in one inning.

Pirates 3, Cardinals 2

Nick Gonzales went 2-for-4 with a triple, a run and the decisive RBI as visiting Pittsburgh edged St. Louis.

Yasmani Grandal hit a home run for the Pirates (72-81), who avoided a four-game sweep.

Pirates starter Luis Ortiz allowed two runs on five hits in six innings. He struck out seven and walked two.

Reliever Carmen Mlodzinski (4-5) recorded the victory and Aroldis Chapman earned his 10th save.

Brendan Donovan went 4-for-4 with two RBIs for the Cardinals (77-76).

Blue Jays 4, Rangers 0

Kevin Gausman threw five hitless innings and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit a pair of solo homers to back up a pair of early runs as visiting Toronto beat Texas in the finale of a three-game series in Arlington, Texas.

Gausman and the Blue Jays’ bullpen combined to two-hit Texas, and Guerrero went 3-for-4 with three runs and a walk while smashing a long ball to left in the seventh and a shot to dead center in the ninth, his 29th and 30th homers of the season.

Toronto (73-80) avoided being swept in the three-game series, while the Rangers (73-80) lost for the sixth time in their last nine games.

Gausman (13-11) was perfect through 4⅓ innings before surrendering a walk to Nathaniel Lowe. Gausman had six strikeouts on 58 pitches without allowing a hit before being removed because of “lower back tightness,” according to the team.

Gausman appeared in some discomfort as early as the first inning, grimacing as he stretched his back. He gave way to Dillon Tate, who made his Toronto debut in the sixth.

MLB

THURSDAY'S BOX SCORES

Baltimore 5, San Francisco 3												
SF	000	200	001	—	3	8	0					
BAL	000	300	002	—	5	10	0					
San Francisco	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Yastrzemski rf	3	0	0	0	1	1	.234					
b-Canha ph-rf	1	0	0	0	0	0	.266					
Wade 3b	4	0	0	0	1	1	.264					
Encarnacion dh	4	1	2	0	0	2	.261					
Conforto lf	4	1	2	2	0	0	.234					
Fitzgerald ss	4	0	2	0	0	0	.293					
Bailey c	3	0	0	0	1	0	.234					
c-Wisely pr	0	1	0	0	0	0	.227					
Casali c	0	0	0	0	0	0	.182					
McCray cf	2	0	0	0	0	2	.223					
a-Ramos ph-cf	0	0	0	0	2	0	.266					
Schmitt 3b	4	0	2	1	0	0	.226					
Walton 2b	4	0	0	0	0	2	.118					
Totals	33	3	8	3	4	9						

Baltimore	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Henderson ss	5	1	2	0	1	2	.282					
Mullins cf	5	0	1	0	0	2	.228					
Santander dh	3	2	1	2	2	2	.238					
Cowser lf	4	1	1	0	0	2	.244					
Rutschman c	4	1	1	1	1	1	.292					
O'Hearn 1b	4	0	2	0	0	1	.258					
Kjerstad rf	4	0	0	0	0	1	.250					
Slater rf	0	0	0	0	0	0	.233					
Holliday 2b	3	0	1	2	1	1	.175					
Rivera 3b	4	0	1	0	0	2	.277					
Totals	36	5	10	5	3	13						

a-walked for McCray in 7th. b-grounded into a double play for Yastrzemski in 9th. c-ran for Bailey in 9th.

2B: Rutschman (19). **HR:** Conforto (18), Santander (42). **RBI:** Conforto 2 (62), Schmitt (13), Santander 2 (97), Rutschman (77), Holliday 2 (23). **SB:** Henderson (20), Mullins (30). **Runners left in scoring position:** San Francisco 4 (Canha, Wade Jr., Bailey, McCray), Baltimore 3 (Cowser 3). **RISP:** San Francisco 1 for 9, Baltimore 2 for 7. **GIDP:** Canha, Bailey. **DP:** Baltimore 2.

San Francisco	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Webb	5.0	4	3	3	2	8	96	3.58
Rogers	1.0	1	0	0	1	18	25.5	
Bivens	2.0	3	0	0	1	2	35	.89
Walker L, 9-4	0.2	2	2	2	0	23	1.99	
Baltimore	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Eflin	6.0	6	2	2	1	5	93	3.53
Perez H, 22	1.0	1	0	0	1	2	17	3.75
Cano H, 33	1.0	0	0	0	0	2	14	2.73
Dominguez BS, 1	0.1	1	1	1	2	0	17	.66
Soto W, 1-1	0.2	0	0	0	0	1	6.00	

Inherited runners: Soto 2-2. **IBB:** Bivens (1). **Umpires:** HP-Merzel, 1B-Baker, 2B-Scheurwater, 3B-Libka. T: 2:48. A: 23,181 (45,971).

Atlanta 15, Cincinnati 3												
ATL	013	043	013	—	15	18	0					
CIN	001	010	100	—	3	10	0					

Atlanta	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Harris II cf	5	4	3	4	0	0	.251					
Soler rf	3	3	2	3	0	1	.240					
White rf	2	0	1	0	0	0	.294					
Ozuna dh	4	1	1	1	0	2	.306					
b-Duvall ph-dh	2	0	0	0	0	0	.182					
Olson 1b	4	3	2	4	1	1	.243					
Laureano lf	5	1	2	3	0	2	.302					
d'Arnaud c	3	0	1	0	2	0	.243					
Merrifield 2b	4	4	0	0	0	1	.222					
a-Biggio ph-2b	1	1	1	0	0	0	.182					
Ursheila 3b	5	1	2	0	2	2	.242					
Arcia ss	5	1	1	0	0	1	.218					
Totals	43	15	18	15	3	10						

Cincinnati	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
India dh	3	0	1	1	0	0	.245					
c-Benson ph-dh	2	0	0	0	0	2	.191					
De La Cruz ss	5	0	3	1	0	1	.260					
Steer lf	2	0	0	0	1	1	.230					
Hinds lf	2	0	0	0	0	1	.261					
France 1b	4	0	0	0	0	3	.279					
Espinal 2b	4	0	1	0	0	0	.257					
Marte 3b	3	0	0	1	2	2	.212					
Rosario rf	4	0	0	0	0	3	.179					
Dunn cf	3	3	2	1	1	1	.167					
Malie c	4	0	2	0	0	0	.168					
Totals	36	3	10	3	3	14						

a-singled for Merrifield in 9th. b-flied out for Ozuna in 8th. c-struck out for India in 7th.

2B: Ozuna (31), Malie (4). **HR:** Harris II 2 (15), Soler (20), Olson 2 (28), Laureano (8), Dunn (1). **RBI:** Harris II 4 (45), Soler 3 (61), Ozuna (101), Olson 4 (94), Laureano 3 (25), India (57), De La Cruz (70), Dunn (1). **SB:** Dunn 2 (2). **Runners left in scoring position:** Atlanta 3 (d'Arnaud, Arcia 2), Cincinnati 4 (Steer, France 3). **RISP:** Atlanta 5 for 11, Cincinnati 2 for 10. **GIDP:** Merrifield, Arcia, France. **DP:** Atlanta 1, Cincinnati 2.

Atlanta	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Sale W, 18-3	5.0	5	2	2	2	6	93	2.38
Jackson	12	3	1	1	4	41	513	
Brebbia	11	1	0	0	3	26	270	
Hernandez	10	1	0	0	1	16	321	
Cincinnati	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Aguilar L, 2-1	4.0	6	7	7	2	4	75	6.25
Zulueta	1	2	1	0	1	15	579	
Leibrandt	4.0	10	7	7	1	5	80	9.95

Aguiar pitched to 3 batters in the 5th.

Inherited runners: Brebbia 2-2, Zulueta 2-0. **HBP:** Harris II, Soler. **Umpires:** HP-Thomas, 1B-Porter, 2B-Barber, 3B-Blakney. T: 2:58. A: 20,071 (45,814).

Cleveland 3, Minnesota 2 (10)												
MIN	000	020	000	0	—	2	3	0				
CLE	000	100	001	000	1	—	3	11	2			

Minnesota	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Margot lf	4	0	1	1	1	1	.241					
Correa dh	3	0	0	0	2	1	.312					
Buxton cf	5	0	0	0	0	3	.272					
Santana 1b	4	0	0	0	0	2	.238					
Lewis 3b	3	0	1	0	1	1	.250					
Jeffers c	4	0	0	0	0	2	.228					
Farmer 2b	4	1	1	0	0	1	.226					
Wallerin rf	3	0	0	0	0	3	.256					
Castro ss	2	1	0	0	0	0	.250					
Totals	32	2	3	1	14							

Cleveland	AB	R	H	BI	BB	SO	Avg.					
Martinez lf	5	0	0	0	0	3	.248					
a-Fry ph	3	1	3	1	0	0	.258					
a-Fry ph	1	0	1	0	0	0	.261					
d-Schneemann pr-dh	1	0	0	0	1	0	.222					
Ramirez 3b	4	1	0	0	1	0	.271					
Naylor 1b	5	1	1	0	0	2	.244					
Thomas cf-rf	4	0	0	0	2	2	.215					
Gimenez 2b	5	0	3	1	0	1	.253					
Noel lf	3	0	1	0	1	1	.229					
c-Straw pr-cf	0	0	0	0	0	0	---					
Rocchio ss	2	0	1	1	0	0	.241					
Hedges c	3	0	0	0	1	1	.153					
b-Naylor ph-c	1	0	0	0	1	0	.201					
Totals	37	3	11	3	4	12						

a-singled for Manzardo in 7th. b-struck out for Hedges in 8th. c-ran for Noel in 8th. d-ran for Fry in 7th.

E: Thomas, Rocchio. **2B:** Margot (16), Farmer (13), Gimenez (21). **HR:** Manzardo (4). **RBI:** Margot (31), Manzardo (14), Gimenez (61), Rocchio (36). **SF:** Rocchio. **S:** Castro. **Runners left in scoring position:** Minnesota 3 (Buxton 2, Santana), Cleveland 5 (Ramirez, Thomas, Noel, Hedges 2). **RISP:** Minnesota 1 for 6, Cleveland 2 for 9. **GIDP:** Margot, Ramirez. **DP:** Minnesota 1, Cleveland 1.

Minnesota	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	NP	ERA
Woods Richardson	4.2	5	1	1	1	6	72	4.00
Irvin	12	4	1	1	0	20	4.86	
Sands	0.2	1	0	1	0	17	2.79	
Varland	1.0	0	0	0	1	16	1.18	.8

AUTO RACING

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES



Layne Riggs celebrates after winning the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series UNOH 200 on Thursday at Bristol Motor Speedway. JAMES GILBERT/GETTY IMAGES

Riggs plays spoiler again, gets 2nd straight victory

Reid Spencer
SPECIAL TO FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Layne Riggs relished his role as spoiler so much that he returned for an encore Thursday night at Bristol Motor Speedway.

Riggs isn't competing for the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series championship, but that didn't prevent him from winning the playoff opener Aug. 25 at the Milwaukee Mile.

On Thursday, Riggs passed runner-up Corey Heim for the lead on Lap 121 of 200 in the UNOH 200 Presented by Ohio Logistics and held it the rest of the way to score his second career victory and his fourth straight top five.

"Oh, my gosh, we've just learned so much with the trucks," said the driver of the No. 38 Front Row Motorsports Ford. "My team, (crew chief) Dylan (Cappello), he's bad-ass ...

"To be running fifth, 10th and all of a sudden to go back-to-back in the playoffs-man, I wish I was in the playoffs so bad. I think we'd be a real threat to win the championship."

Heim had to settle for second place, but there was a silver lining for the driver of the No. 11 Tricon Garage Toyota. Heim scored enough points on Thursday to clinch a spot in the Round of 8, as did fourth-place finisher Christian Eckes and fifth-place Nick Sanchez.

"Every time we got a heat cycle on the tires, it seemed like we got tighter and tighter," said Heim, who fell one spot short in his defense of last year's victory at Thunder Valley. "Just didn't

quite have it, but solid points day in the playoffs-that's what you need, so I will keep moving forward.

"I'm looking forward to my favorite place (Kansas Speedway) next week."

Heim won a drag race for the runner-up spot over Rajah Caruth, who elevated his standing in the playoffs with a win in the first stage and a solid run the rest of the way.

Caruth vaulted from 10th to fifth in the standings with the third-place run and now stands 35 points above the current cut line with next Friday's elimination race at Kansas left to determine which eight drivers advance to the next round.

"We executed the race-just two spots short," said Caruth, who glanced toward Riggs' truck doing celebratory burnouts on the frontstretch. "Man, I wish that was us," Caruth added wistfully.

Reigning series champion Ben Rhodes fought an ill-handling truck and finished 27th, two laps down, and fell to 10th in the standings, 12 points behind Grant Enfinger in eighth.

Daniel Dye tangled with Kaden Honeycutt on the frontstretch on Lap 157 and finished 32nd, six laps down. Dye heads for Kansas seven points behind Enfinger.

Eighteen-year-old Sprint Car star Corey Day finished 18th in his Truck Series debut. After winning his NASCAR Xfinity Series debut last Saturday at Watkins Glen, polesitter Connor Zilisch spun in Turn 4 on Lap 109 and came home 19th.

FORMULA ONE

Verstappen riled by call for drivers to swear less

Rae Wee
REUTERS

SINGAPORE — Max Verstappen said Formula One should not air team radio if the sport was concerned about bad language after the head of the governing FIA compared drivers to foul-mouthed rappers.

Mohammed Ben Sulayem told motorsport.com that the FIA had asked Formula One Management to minimize the amount of swearing on television. The Emirati said drivers also had a responsibility.

"We're not rappers, you know," the FIA president was quoted as saying. "They say the F-word how many times per minute? We are not on that.

"Imagine you are sitting with your children and watching the race and then someone is saying all of this dirty language. I mean, what would your children or grandchildren say? What would you teach them if that is your sport?"

Verstappen, asked about the comments moments after using the very same 'F-word' in an FIA news conference at the Singapore Grand Prix to describe the state of his car, suggested the governing body was going too far.

"Everyone swears, some people a bit more than others," observed the Red Bull triple world champion and current championship leader. "Of course, abuse is something else ... but I think a lot of things get broadcast nowadays where in other sports you don't run around with a mic attached to you.

"A lot of people say a lot of bad things when they are full of adrenaline in other sports, it just doesn't get picked up. Where here, probably also for enter-

tainment purposes, things get sent out," he added.

"It's just probably a bit the world that we live in ... I think it already just starts with not broadcasting it or not giving the option for people to hear it.

"Of course, there are a lot of apps where people can listen to radios and stuff. You have to probably limit it, or have a bit of a delay, that you can censor out a few things. That will help a lot more than putting bans on drivers."

Formula One beeps out bad language on the global feed, with some drivers in the past also deliberately swearing in radio exchanges with the pit wall to prevent information being broadcast more widely.

Verstappen suggested the FIA was fighting a losing battle anyway.

"Excuse me for the language but like, what are we? Five-year-olds? Six-year-olds?," he asked.

"Even if a 5-year-old or 6-year-old is watching, I mean, they will eventually swear anyway. Even if the parents won't, or they will not allow it, when they grow up they will walk around with their friends, and they will be swearing.

"So, you know, this is not changing anything."

Mercedes's seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton, who is not known for swearing and agreed there was too much of it online, took issue with Ben Sulayem's use of language.

"I don't like how he's expressed it," he said. "If you think about it, most rappers are black ... So I think those are the wrong choice of words. There's a racial element there.

"Also, it's good to have some emotion. It's very, very hard."



Max Verstappen attends the drivers news conference on Thursday ahead of the Grand Prix of Singapore. LARS BARON/GETTY IMAGES

NASCAR

Continued from Page 1

could culminate in a first-round exit. It's the most likely scenario for a No. 19 team that sits 14 points below the cut line.

Truex's playoff collapse in 2023 was salvaged by an abundance of playoff points that led to the Round of 8, but no such insurance exists this time for the 2017 champion. Truex hasn't finished better than 20th since Pocono on July 14, and while he was second at Bristol in March, Saturday night will be a struggle for a driver who seems mentally checked out of the 2024 season.

- Denny Hamlin advances to the Round of 12 ... by the skin of his teeth

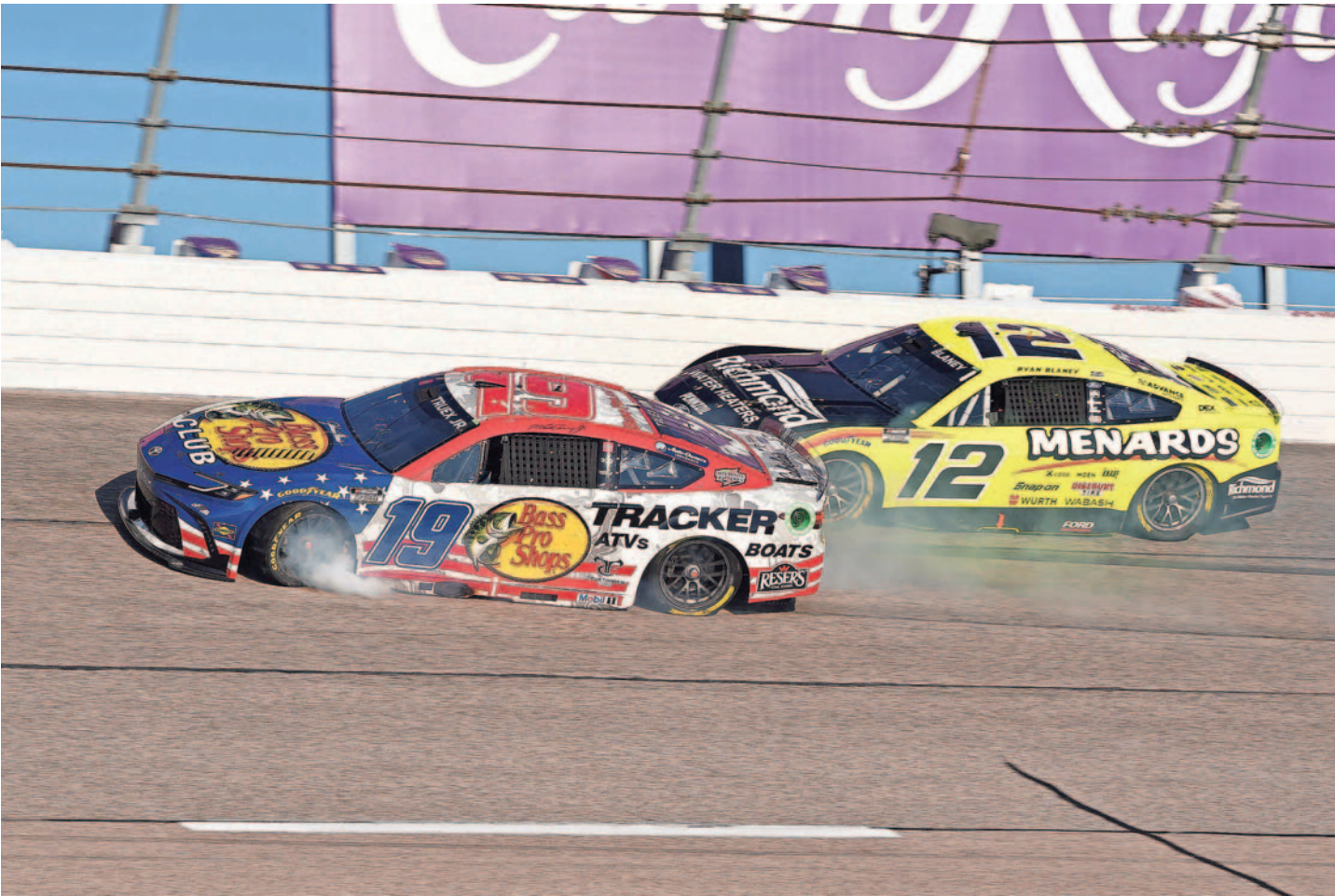
All signs point to Hamlin being the driver making a shocking Round of 16 exit on Saturday.

A six-point deficit to the cut line and finishes of 24th and 23rd in the first two playoff races don't exactly inspire confidence in the veteran driver, but the No. 11 team will be able to piece together enough speed for Hamlin to barely find his way into the second round. Whether he goes any further remains to be seen, but the winner of the past two Bristol races will find a way to keep his season alive.

- Bubba Wallace proves worth after contract extension, continuing late-season tear

Five top-10 finishes in the final eight races of the regular season weren't enough for Wallace to make the postseason for the second consecutive season.

But the Mobile, Ala., native was rewarded with a multiyear contract extension from 23XI Racing on Wednesday. Wallace missed the playoffs while 11th-hour wins from Burton and Briscoe



NASCAR Cup Series drivers Martin Truex Jr. (19) and Ryan Blaney crash during the Cook Out Southern 500 on Sept. 1 at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway. Truex faces playoff elimination on Saturday at Bristol. JASEN VINLOVE/USA TODAY SPORTS

helped nudge him out of the championship running.

But he was 12th in points after 26 races, and has already matched his career best in every statistic other than wins. The No. 23 team has potential to go on a late tear to end the year, and while it may not start at Bristol, Wallace shows over the final eight weeks of the season why he was worthy of a new deal.

- Cindric, Bowman and Suarez survive and advance

For Austin Cindric, (+43) Alex Bowman, (+41) and Daniel Suarez, the task is simple: Survive 500 laps at Bristol and earn a ticket to the Round of 12.

Surviving 500 circuits at the Last Great Colosseum is easier said than done, but all three drivers have risen to

the occasion through the first two races of the postseason. Most had Cindric, Bowman and Suarez circled as first-round exits, but catastrophe-free nights at Bristol stand as the only deterrent to a Round of 12 berth.

It won't be easy to come home with a clean car on Saturday evening, but all three playoff underdogs do enough to advance.



Team USA's Brooks Koepka greets his caddie, Ricky Elliott, on the 16th green during the final day of the Ryder Cup on Oct. 1. KYLE TERADA/USA TODAY SPORTS

LIV Golf players eligible for US Ryder Cup team

REUTERS

LIV Golf players have been deemed eligible to compete in the PGA Championship and for U.S. Ryder Cup teams going forward, the PGA of America said on Thursday.

The PGA of America said its board made the decision as a way to ensure the year's second major can have the strongest field possible while future U.S. Ryder Cup teams will continue to have access to the best U.S. players.

LIV Golf's Brooks Koepka was part of last year's U.S. Ryder Cup team due to a grace period that allowed him to remain a PGA of America member through 2024, but it was not clear how the body would further handle the divide in professional golf.

That same grace period also applied to LIV Golf players competing in the PGA Championship.

"Going forward, all LIV Golf players are eligible for the PGA Championship and any American player who qualifies for the Ryder Cup on points or is added to the U.S. team as a captain's pick is eligible to compete," the PGA of America said.

"This is consistent with LIV Golf players competing in the PGA Championship the past two years. Brooks Koepka was a member of the U.S. Ryder Cup team last year."

The decision clears the way for LIV golfers like reigning U.S. Open champion Bryson DeChambeau, who is third on the U.S. points list for the 2025 Ryder Cup despite being ineligible for PGA Tour events where the majority of points could be earned.

LIV Golf, which is funded by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, did not immediately respond when asked to comment of the PGA of America's decision.

The European Ryder Cup team has a pathway in place for those with LIV Golf to be eligible for the biennial matchplay event, with the main criteria being they must play at least four events on the Europe-based DP World Tour per year.

In addition, those players must also pay fines for competing in tournaments on the Saudi-funded circuit that conflicted with DP World Tour events without requesting permission from the European-based circuit.

Spaniard Jon Rahm, who was a key player for Europe in the 2023 Ryder Cup before joining LIV Golf two months later, intends to play the required European events and has appealed the fines that the DP World Tour assessed him.

The 2025 Ryder Cup between the United States and Europe will be held next September at Bethpage Black in New York.

GOLF ROUNDUP

Baldwin fires 65 for lead as McIlroy snaps club

WIRE SERVICES

LONDON — England's Matthew Baldwin eclipsed a powerful field to lead the BMW PGA Championship by one stroke after the first round at Wentworth on Thursday.

Baldwin signed for a 7-under round of 65 to top the leaderboard from Denmark's Niklas Norgaard and Belgium's Thomas Detry who carded 6-under rounds.

Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy was one of 11 players piled-up on 5-under although the former world No. 1 will remember his opening round after snapping a club.

McIlroy described it as a "weird feeling" after the bizarre incident in the par-5 12th where the clubhead detached from the shaft of his 9-iron while playing his approach.

Incredibly, McIlroy still birdied the hole.

"I hit a nine iron on the ninth and I looked at it and it looked like the ferrule was coming loose, but it was the head attached to the shaft," McIlroy said.

"I didn't realize it when I hit the shot on 12 and it was a weird feeling. You're expecting the weight of the club to pull through and there was nothing there."

McIlroy had a run of four birdies in a row early in his round but an eventful finish saw him go out of bounds at the 18th where he dropped his second shot of the day.

The 38-year-old Baldwin carded seven birdies and no bogeys to snatch the lead.

— Reuters



Matthew Baldwin watches his second shot on the 13th hole during the BMW PGA Championship on Thursday. ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTY IMAGES

time.

The group tied at 5-under 67 includes World No. 1 Nelly Korda, Olympic gold medalist Lydia Ko of New Zealand and Leona Maguire of Ireland. Also part of that tie are Savannah Grewal of Canada, Jasmine Suwannapura of Thailand, Peiyun Chien of Taiwan, Polly Mack of Germany and Angel Yin.

For now, they're all looking up at Buhai, the 2022 Women's Open champion with 22 professional wins worldwide, most of them in her native South Africa.

"I hit it great, putted well. That tends to add up to what it did," Buhai said.

"Yeah, I think I was just smart with when I could attack. At the same time, play to spaces. There were a few pins out there where you had to still try to be aggressive, and the greens got a little firm and ran through, but then made some good up and downs to keep me in it."

Buhai birdied the par-3 16th hole to move to 7 under before carding her lone bogey at the following hole. She made up for it at No. 18, a par-5, with her final birdie of the day.

She said she liked how TPC River's Bend had three reachable par-5 holes.

— Field Level Media

LPGA Tour

Ashleigh Buhai of South Africa set the early pace at the Kroger Queen City Championship with a 7-under-par 65 in the first round Thursday in Maineville, Ohio.

Buhai racked up eight birdies and carries a one-shot lead into Friday. Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand and Yan Liu of China are at 6-under 66 after their first round through TPC River's Bend, which is hosting the tournament for the first

TENNIS ROUNDUP

Adrian Mannarino wins opener in Chengdu Open

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Fifth-seeded Adrian Mannarino rallied for a 6-7 (9), 6-1, 6-3 win over fellow Frenchman Terence Atmane in the first round of the Chengdu Open on Thursday in China.

Mannarino fired six aces and benefited from nine double faults by his foe to win in 2 hours and 32 minutes.

Eighth-seeded Roman Safullin of Russia also needed three sets to post a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 win over Italian Fabio Fognini. Safullin had 13 aces and won 80 percent of his first-serve points to end the match in 2 hours, 8 minutes.

Unseeded Yannick Hanfmann of Germany, Juncheng Shang of China, Federico Agustin Gomez of Argentina and Christopher O'Connell of Australia each secured a straight-set victory to advance to the second round.



Emma Raducanu, shown during the U.S. Open on Aug. 27, defeated Yuan Yue at the Korean Open on Thursday. MIKE FREY/USA TODAY SPORTS

Hangzhou Open

Sixth-seeded Zhizhen Zhang notched a 6-2, 1-6, 6-4 win over Denis Yevseyev of Kazakhstan in a first-round match in China.

Zhang, of China, recorded seven aces and benefited from six double faults by his opponent to win the match in just over 2 hours.

In other action, No. 8 seed Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan, unseeded Mattia Bellucci of Italy, Roberto Carballes Baena of Spain, Russia's Alexander Shevchenko and Yasutaka Uchiyama of Japan each recorded a straight-set victory to move onto the second round. Chak Lam Coleman Wong of Hong Kong advanced with a walkover win over Yibing Wu of China.

Women Korea Open

On her seventh match point, Great Britain's Emma Raducanu ousted No. 8 seed Yuan Yue of China 6-4, 6-3 on Thursday to reach the Korean Open quarterfinals in Seoul.

Yue fought off five match points in the penultimate game against the former U.S. Open champion and one more

in the finale before Raducanu advanced in just over 2 hours. Raducanu's next opponent is No. 1 seed Daria Kasatkina of Russia, a 6-4, 6-2 winner over Hailey Baptiste.

No. 3 seed Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil eliminated Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic 6-3, 6-4 and Bulgaria's Viktoriya Tomova was leading 7-5, 4-1 when Amanda Anisova retired from the match.

Thailand Open

Nadia Podoroska of Argentina cruised to a 6-3, 6-3 upset of No. 2 seed Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic to reach the quarterfinals in Hua Hin, Thailand.

Podoroska saved three of four break points and converted four of her five break opportunities to set up a meeting with either No. 6 seed Katie Volynets or Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek.

Spain's Rebeka Masarova knocked off No. 3 Xinyu Wang of China 7-6 (6), 3-6, 7-5, while Croatia's Jana Fett moved into the final eight with a walkover win against No. 8 Varvara Gracheva of France. Japan's Mai Hontama rallied for a 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 win against Thailand's Lanlana Tararudee.

LIV GOLF TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

Matchup draft sorts out quarterfinal opponents

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

The top three seeds have a bye into the semifinals of the 2024 LIV Golf Team Championship, leaving the other 10 teams to determine the quarterfinal matchups in a draft on Thursday at Maridoe Golf Club in Carrollton, Texas.

A \$50 million purse is on the line for the 13 teams in the event Friday through Sunday in the Dallas area. Top seed and defending team champion Crushers GC, second seed Legion XIII featuring individual champion Jon Rahm, and the all-Australian Ripper GC will be joined by Friday's five winning squads in head-to-head matches on Saturday. The four winning teams on Saturday advance to 18 holes of stroke play on Sunday.

Brooks Koepka, captain of fourth-seeded Smash GC, had the first draft pick and could have chosen any of the nine other teams as its opponent. Koepka went with 13th-place Iron Heads GC.

"Just went from the bottom up," Koepka said. "I think that's the way we did it. I just felt like we've got a good chance. We'll see what happens."

When the draft was complete, the teams revealed their lineups for the quarterfinals of two singles and one foursome for their four players. Each of the three matches is worth one point.

Though this is the first time in the three-year history of the event that captains aren't required to play singles, Koepka is holding to form and will face Kevin Na, captain of the Iron Heads.

Na said that's what he expected.

"I thought about throwing a curveball in there, but I talked to the guys, and everybody actually wanted to play singles, which is a good sign," Na said.

"I think everybody wants to show what they can do and what they're capable of."

"I know Brooks is obviously a tough opponent, going against a five-time major champion. But in match play, I've taken down some people in match play and I can make a few putts. Hopefully that happens."

HyFlyers captain Phil Mickelson was among several captains to play in the foursome for their teams. Mickelson will partner with Brendan Steele against Torque GC, while teammates Andy Ogletree and Cameron Tringale are playing singles.

"Andy Ogletree won the '21 Amateur," Mickelson explained. "He's a very tough match-play competitor. Cam Tringale won all his matches last year. I wanted them both in singles. Steele and I are really annoying to play against. I'm annoying, but when you put me and Steele, it goes to another level, and I feel like that could be a challenge just dealing with that."

Quarterfinals:

Smash GC vs. Iron Heads GC – Singles, Brooks Koepka (S) vs. Kevin Na (IH); Talor Gooch vs. Danny Lee. Foursome, Jason Kokrak/Graeme McDowell vs. Jinichiro Kozuma/Scott Vincent.

Torque GC vs. HyFlyers GC – Singles, Joaquin Niemann (T) vs. Andy Ogletree (HF); Sebastian Munoz vs. Cameron Tringale. Foursome, Mito Pereira/Carlos Ortiz vs. Phil Mickelson/Brendan Steele.

Fireballs GC vs. Majesticks GC – Singles, Eugenio Chacarra (F) vs. Henrik Stenson (M); David Puig vs. Ian Poulter. Foursome, Sergio Garcia/Abraham Ancer vs. Lee Westwood/Sam Horsfield.

Stinger GC vs. Cleeks GC – Singles, Branden Grace (S) vs. Adrian Meronk (C); Dean Burmester vs. Kalle Samooja. Foursome, Louis Oosthuizen/Charl Schwartzel vs. Martin Kaymer/Richard Bland.

RangeGoats GC vs. 4Aces GC: Singles, Peter Uihlein (RG) vs. Dustin Johnson (4A); Thomas Pieters vs. Patrick Reed. Foursome, Bubba Watson/Matthew Wolff vs. Harold Varner III/Pat Perez.



Rahm



Na



Mickelson

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Odds available as of print deadline.

NFL			
Sunday			
FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
CLEVELAND	6.5	38.5	NY Giants
INDIANAPOLIS	1	43.5	Chicago
Houston	2	46	MINNESOTA
NEW ORLEANS	2.5	49.5	Philadelphia
PITTSBURGH	1.5	36	LA Chargers
TAMPA BAY	6.5	41	Denver
TENNESSEE	1.5	38	Green Bay
LAS VEGAS	5	40	Carolina
SEATTLE	4.5	41.5	Miami
Detroit	3	51.5	ARIZONA
Baltimore	1	48	DALLAS
San Francisco	7	44.5	LA RAMS
Kansas City	3.5	46.5	ATLANTA

Monday			
FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
BUFFALO	5	45.5	Jacksonville
CINCINNATI	7.5	47	Washington

CFB			
Friday			
FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
SYRACUSE	8.5	57.5	Stanford
NEBRASKA	7.5	42.5	Illinois
WASH. ST.	12	55.5	San Jose St.

Saturday			
FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
ARMY	6.5	43	Rice
INDIANA	29	49	Charlotte
Tulane	3	54.5	LOUISIANA
Florida	6	60	MISS. ST.
N. CAROL.	10.5	48	James Madison
OHIO STATE	40	52.5	Marshall
CINCINNATI	3.5	47.5	Houston
WEST VA.	2	57	Kansas
CLEMSON	20.5	44	NC State
KENTUCKY	20	42.5	Ohio
C. MICH.	6.5	53	Ball State
Utah State	6	54	TEMPLE
Virginia	3.5	55.5	CSFL CAROL.
IOWA STATE	21.5	51.5	Arkansas ST.
JCKSNVLL ST.	2	50.5	Sthern Miss
Memphis	9.5	49	NAVY
AUBURN	3	56.5	Arkansas
LSU	24	56.5	ucla
TEXAS TECH	2.5	58.5	Arizona State
N. ILLINOIS	13.5	43	Buffalo
PENN STATE	49	55.5	Kent State
NOTRE DAME	28	43.5	Miami (OH)
LOUISVILLE	10.5	57.5	Ga. Tech
VA. TECH	3.5	44.5	Rutgers
usc	5.5	44	MICHIGAN
Utah	2.5	52.5	OKLA. ST.
Duke	14.5	52	M. TENN.
MISSOURI	20	53.5	Vanderbilt
COLO. ST.	9.5	49.5	utep
tcu	3	58.5	SMU
LIBERTY	6	54	E. Carolina
UNCOWN	2.5	46	Fla. Atlantic
N. TEXAS	7	55.5	Wyoming
Miami (FL)	16.5	65	S. FLA.
LA. TECH	3	57.5	Tulsa
Toledo	2.5	60	W. KENT.
FLA. ST.	2.5	44.5	California
SAM HSTN	16.5	44.5	NM State
WASHINGTON	10.5	42.5	Northwestern
Tennessee	7	57	OKLAHOMA
S. CAROL.	28	44.5	Akron
TX A&M	22.5	52.5	Bowling Green
Iowa	2.5	35.5	MINNESOTA
OLE MISS	36	67.5	Ga. Southern
COLORADO	44.5	53	La. Monroe
Texas Tech	2	44	BYelor
BOSTN COL.	6.5	45	Michigan ST.
Fresno State	14	59.5	NEW MEXICO
OREGON ST.	4.5	50	Purdue
Kansas State	6.5	48.5	BYU

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All times Eastern			
MLB			
American League			
East Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
N.Y. Yankees	89	64	.582 -
Baltimore	85	68	.556 4
Boston	76	77	.497 13
Tampa Bay	75	78	.490 14
Toronto	73	80	.477 16

Central Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Cleveland	89	65	.578 -
Kansas City	82	71	.536 6½
Minnesota	80	73	.523 8½
Detroit	76	73	.523 8½
Chicago	36	117	.235 52½

West Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Houston	83	70	.542 -
Seattle	78	75	.510 5
Texas	73	80	.477 10
Oakland	67	86	.438 16
L.A. Angels	62	91	.405 21

National League			
East Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Philadelphia	91	62	.595 -
N.Y. Mets	85	68	.556 6
Atlanta	83	70	.542 8
Washington	68	85	.444 23
Miami	56	97	.366 35

Central Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Milwaukee	88	65	.575 -
Chicago	78	75	.510 10
St. Louis	77	76	.503 11
Cincinnati	74	80	.481 14½
Pittsburgh	72	81	.471 16

West Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
L.A. Dodgers	91	62	.595 -
San Diego	87	66	.569 4
Arizona	85	68	.556 6
San Francisco	74	79	.484 17
Colorado	59	94	.386 32

Monday's Scores			
Cleveland 4, Minnesota 3			
N.Y. Mets 2, Washington 1			
L.A. Dodgers 9, Atlanta 0			
Chicago Cubs 9, Oakland 2			
Detroit 7, Kansas City 6			
Milwaukee 6, Philadelphia 2			

St. Louis 4, Pittsburgh 0
Colorado 3, Arizona 2
Chicago White Sox 8, L.A. Angels 4
San Diego 3, Houston 1

Tuesday's Scores
San Francisco 10, Baltimore 0
Cincinnati 6, Atlanta 5
Minnesota 4, Cleveland 1
Miami 11, L.A. Dodgers 9
Tampa Bay 8, Boston 3
N.Y. Mets 10, Washington 1
Oakland 4, Chicago Cubs 3
Detroit 3, Kansas City 1
Philadelphia 5, Milwaukee 1
St. Louis 3, Pittsburgh 1
Texas 13, Toronto 8
Colorado 8, Arizona 2
L.A. Angels 5, Chicago White Sox 0
N.Y. Yankees 11, Seattle 2
Houston 4, San Diego 3

Wednesday's Scores
Oakland 5, Chicago Cubs 3
Arizona 9, Colorado 4
L.A. Angels 4, Chicago White Sox 3
San Francisco 5, Baltimore 3
Atlanta 7, Cincinnati 1
Cleveland 5, Minnesota 4
L.A. Dodgers 8, Miami 4
San Diego 4, Houston 0
Boston 2, Tampa Bay 1
N.Y. Mets 10, Washington 0
Detroit 4, Kansas City 2
Milwaukee 2, Philadelphia 1
St. Louis 10, Pittsburgh 5
Texas 2, Toronto 0
N.Y. Yankees 2, Seattle 1

Thursday's Scores
Baltimore 5, San Francisco 3
Atlanta 15, Cincinnati 3
Cleveland 3, Minnesota 2
Toronto 4, Texas 0
Seattle 3, N.Y. Yankees 2
L.A. Dodgers 20, Miami 4
Tampa Bay 2, Boston 0
Arizona 5, Milwaukee 1
Pittsburgh 3, St. Louis 2
N.Y. Mets 10, Philadelphia 6
Chicago 7, Washington 6
Houston 3, L.A. Angels 1

Friday's Games
Washington (Williams 5-0) at Chicago Cubs (Tailion 10-8); 2:20 p.m.
Pittsburgh (Keller 11-10) at Cincinnati (Martinez 9-6); 6:40 p.m.
Toronto (Berrios 16-9) at Tampa Bay (TBD); 6:50 p.m.
Detroit (TBD) at Baltimore (Burnes 14-8); 7:05 p.m.
Minnesota (Festa 2-6) at Boston (Bello 14-7); 7:10 p.m.
Atlanta (Morton 8-8) at Miami (Bellozo 2-4); 7:10 p.m.
Philadelphia (Sanchez 10-9) at N.Y. Mets (Peterson 9-2); 7:10 p.m.
Seattle (TBD) at Texas (deGrom 0-0); 8:05 p.m.
L.A. Angels (Anderson 10-13) at Houston (Verlander 4-6); 8:10 p.m.
San Francisco (TBD) at Kansas City (Wacha 13-7); 8:10 p.m.
Arizona (Gallen 12-6) at Milwaukee (Hall 1-1); 8:10 p.m.
Cleveland (Lively 12-9) at St. Louis (Gibson 8-7); 8:15 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees (Cole 6-5) at Oakland (Ginn 0-1); 8:40 p.m.
Chicago White Sox (Crocket 6-12) at San Diego (Mugrove 6-5); 9:40 p.m.
Colorado (Freeland 5-7) at L.A. Dodgers (Buehler 1-5); 10:10 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Pittsburgh (Jones 6-7) at Cincinnati (Lowe 1-2); 1:10 p.m.
Washington (Gore 9-12) at Chicago Cubs (Hendricks 4-11); 2:20 p.m.
Detroit (Montero 6-6) at Baltimore (Povich 2-9); 4:05 p.m.
Crawford (Lopez 15-8) at Boston (Minorsford 8-15); 4:10 p.m.
Atlanta (Fried 9-10) at Miami (Oller 1-4); 4:10 p.m.
Toronto (Rodriguez 1-6) at Tampa Bay (Bradley 6-11); 4:10 p.m.
Philadelphia (Suarez 12-7) at N.Y. Mets (Manaea 11-5); 4:10 p.m.
Seattle (Kirby 12-11) at Texas (Scherzer 2-4); 7:05 p.m.
L.A. Angels (TBD) at Houston (Blanco 11-6); 7:10 p.m.
San Francisco (TBD) at Kansas City (Singer 9-11); 7:10 p.m.
Arizona (Kelly 4-0) at Milwaukee (Civale 7-8); 7:10 p.m.
Tulsa (Cleveland (Boyd 2-1) at St. Louis (Mikolas 8-11); 7:15 p.m.
Chicago White Sox (Flexen 2-14) at San Diego (Perez 4-5); 8:40 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees (Rodon 15-9) at Oakland (Sears 11-11); 9:07 p.m.
Colorado (Quattrill 8-10) at L.A. Dodgers (TBD); 9:10 p.m.

Sunday's Games
Pittsburgh (Skenes 10-3) at Cincinnati (TBD); 1:10 p.m.
Detroit (TBD) at Baltimore (Suarez 8-6); 1:35 p.m.
Minnesota (Matthews 1-3) at Boston (Pivetta 5-11); 1:35 p.m.
Atlanta (TBD) at Miami (TBD); 1:40 p.m.
Toronto (Bassitt 10-13) at Tampa Bay (Baz 3-3); 1:40 p.m.
L.A. Angels (Canning 6-13) at Houston (Arrighetti 7-13); 2:10 p.m.
San Francisco (Snell 4-3) at Kansas City (Lugo 16-8); 2:10 p.m.
Arizona (Montgomery 8-7) at Milwaukee (Montas 7-11); 2:10 p.m.
Cleveland (Williams 3-10) at St. Louis (Pallante 7-8); 2:15 p.m.
Washington (Irvin 11-12) at Chicago Cubs (Imanaga 14-3); 2:20 p.m.
Seattle (Woo 8-3) at Texas (Heaney 5-14); 2:35 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees (Gil 14-6) at Oakland (Estes 7-8); 4:07 p.m.
Colorado (Senzatela 0-0) at L.A. Dodgers (Yamamoto 6-2); 4:10 p.m.
Chicago White Sox (Burke 1-0) at San Diego (Darvish 6-3); 4:10 p.m.
Philadelphia (Wheeler 16-6) at N.Y. Mets (Megill 4-5); 7:15 p.m.

Monday's Games
Chicago Cubs (Wicks 2-4) at Philadelphia (Nola 12-8); 6:40 p.m.
Boston (Houck 8-10) at Toronto (Francis 8-4); 7:07 p.m.
Seattle (Miller 11-8) at Houston (Brown 11-8); 8:10 p.m.
San Francisco (Birdsong 3-5) at Arizona (Rodriguez 2-3); 9:40 p.m.

League Leaders
American League
Batting Average – Witt Jr., Kansas City .331; Judge, New York .321; Guerrero Jr., Toronto .319; Alvarez, Houston .305; Rooker, Oakland .304; Altuve, Houston .299; Diaz, Houston .296; Kwan, Cleveland .291; Soto, New York .288; Duran, Boston .285.
Home Runs – Judge, New York 53; Santander, Baltimore 41; Soto, New York 40; Rooker, Oakland 38; Henderson, Baltimore 37; Ramirez, Cleveland 35; Alvarez, Houston 34; Witt Jr., Kansas City 30; O'Neill, Boston 31; Naylor, Cleveland 31.
RBI – Judge, New York 136; Rooker, Oakland 110; Witt Jr., Kansas City 108; Ramirez, Cleveland 107; Naylor, Cleveland 105; Soto, New York 103; Perez, Kansas City 103; Guerrero Jr., Toronto 97; Pasquantino, Kansas City 97; Santander, Baltimore 95.
Stolen Bases – Caballero, Tampa Bay 43; Ramirez, Cleveland 39; Chisholm Jr., New York 36; Garcia, Kansas City 36; Hamilton, Boston 33; Duran, Boston 32; Thomas, Cleveland 32; Gimenez, Cleveland 30; Witt Jr., Kansas City 30; Neto, Los Angeles 30.
Wins – Skubal, Detroit 2.48; Valdez, Houston 2.85; Blanco, Houston 2.88; Lugo, Kansas City 3.05; Burnes, Baltimore 3.06; Miller, Seattle 3.06; Houck, Boston 3.21; Gilbert, Seattle 3.24; Rogan, Kansas City 3.24; Wacha, Kansas City 3.29.
Strikeouts – Skubal, Detroit 221; Rogers, Kansas City 217; Gilbert, Seattle 198; Crochet, Chicago 195; Kikuchi,

Houston 189; Lopez, Minnesota 187; Rodon, New York 186; Ober, Minnesota 180; Bibee, Cleveland 180; Castillo, Seattle 175.

Saves – Clase, Cleveland 46; Yates, Texas 31; Hader, Houston 31; Holmes, New York 29; Jansen, Boston 27; Miller, Oakland 27; Foley, Detroit 25; Kimbrel, Baltimore 23; Fairbanks, Tampa Bay 23; Duran, Minnesota 23.

National League
Batting Average – Arraez, Diego 0.320; Ozuana, Atlanta .306; Turner, Philadelphia .299; Betts, Los Angeles .295; Merrill, San Diego .292; Marte, Arizona .289; Harper, Philadelphia .288; Bohm, Philadelphia .288; Ohtani, Los Angeles .287; Freeman, Los Angeles .283.
Home Runs – Ohtani, Los Angeles 48; Ozuana, Atlanta 38; Schwarber, Philadelphia 35; Alonso, New York 33; Marte, Arizona 32; Adames, Milwaukee 32; Lindor, New York 31; Harper, Philadelphia 29; Machado, San Diego 29; Hernandez, Los Angeles 29.
RBI – Ohtani, Los Angeles 110; Adames, Milwaukee 109; Machado, San Diego 104; Ozuana, Atlanta 100; Suarez, Arizona 97; Schwarber, Philadelphia 97; Steer, Cincinnati 91; Hernandez, Los Angeles 90; Olson, Atlanta 90; Contreras, Milwaukee 90.
Stolen Bases – De La Cruz, Cincinnati 64; Ohtani, Los Angeles 49; Turang, Milwaukee 45; Young, Washington 32; Edwards, Miami 30; Hoerner, Washington 32; Stott, Philadelphia 29; Abrams, Washington 29; Carroll, Arizona 29; Doyle, Colorado 29.
Wins – Sale, Atlanta 17; Wheeler, Philadelphia 16; Imanaga, Chicago 14; Cease, San Diego 14; Gray, St. Louis 13; Rea, Milwaukee 12; Nola, Philadelphia 12; Suarez, Philadelphia 12; Flaherty, Los Angeles 12; Webb, San Francisco 12.
ERA – Sale, Atlanta 2.35; Wheeler, Philadelphia 2.56; Imanaga, Chicago 3.03; King, San Diego 3.04; Sanchez, Philadelphia 3.24; Manaea, New York 3.26; Cease, San Diego 3.42; Fedde, St. Louis 3.45; Fried, Atlanta 3.49; Webb, San Francisco 3.53.

Strikeouts – Cease, San Diego 220; Sale, Atlanta 219; Wheeler, Philadelphia 205; Gray, St. Louis 203; King, San Diego 195; Peralta, Milwaukee 193; Flaherty, Los Angeles 184; Nola, Philadelphia 183; Manaea, New York 177; Imanaga, Chicago 170.
Saves – Helsley, St. Louis 45; Finnegan, Washington 38; Suarez, San Diego 33; Iglesias, Atlanta 31; Diaz, Cincinnati 28; Estevez, Philadelphia 26; Bednar, Pittsburgh 23; Doval, San Francisco 22; Scott, San Diego 21; Megill, Milwaukee 20.

NFL						
American Conference						
	East	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
Buffalo	2	0	0	1000	65	38
N.Y. Jets	2	1	0	667	67	52
Miami	1	1	0	500	30	48
New England	1	2	0	333	39	57

NFL						
	North	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
Pittsburgh	2	0	0	1000	31	16
Cleveland	1	1	0	500	35	46
Cincinnati	0	2	0	000	35	42
Baltimore	0	2	0	000	43	53

NFL						
	South	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
Houston	2	0	0	1000	48	40
Tennessee	0	2	0	000	34	48
Jacksonville	0	2	0	000	30	38
Indianapolis	0	2	0	000	37	45

NFL						
	West	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
L.A. Chargers	2	0	0	1000	48	13
Kansas City	2	0	0	1000	53	45
Las Vegas	1	1	0	500	36	45
Denver	0	2	0	000	26	39

South						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New Orleans	2	0	0	1.000	91	29
Tampa Bay	2	0	0	1.000	57	36
Atlanta	1	1	0	.500	32	39
Carolina	0	2	0	.000	13	73
West						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Seattle	2	0	0	1.000	49	40
Arizona	1	1	0	.500	69	44
San Francisco	1	1	0	.500	49	42
L.A. Rams	0	2	0	.000	30	67

NFL						
	North	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
Minnesota	2	0	0	1000	51	23
Detroit	1	1	0	500	42	40
Chicago	1	1	0	500	37	36
Green Bay	1	1	0	500	45	44

NFL						
	South	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
New Orleans	2	0	0	1000	91	29
Tampa Bay	2	0	0	1000	57	36
Atlanta	1	1	0	500	32	39
Carolina	0	2	0	000	13	73

NFL
