

# Taliban approach outskirts of Kabul

*Associated Press*

KABUL, Afghanistan — Mazar-e-Sharif, the fourth-largest city in Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban on Saturday after a multi-pronged assault launched by insurgents, according to a lawmaker.

Balkh lawmaker Abas Ebrahimzada said the province's national army corps surrendered first, which prompted the pro-government militias and other forces to lose morale and give up in the face of the onslaught.

According to the lawmaker, all of the provincial installations, including the governor's office, are in Taliban hands.

The insurgents have captured much of northern, western and southern Afghanistan in a breakneck offensive less than three weeks before the U.S. is set to withdraw its last troops, raising fears of a full militant takeover or another Afghan civil war.

The Taliban have made major advances in recent days, including capturing Herat and Kandahar, the country's second- and third-largest cities. They now control about 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, leaving the Western-backed government with a smattering of provinces in the center and east, as well as Kabul.

On Saturday, the Taliban captured all of Logar province, just south of the capital, Kabul, and detained local officials, said Hoda Ahmadi, a lawmaker from the province. She said the Taliban have reached the Char Asyab district, just 7 miles south of Kabul.

Insurgents also captured the capital of Paktika, bordering Pakistan, according to Khalid Asad, a lawmaker from the province. He said fighting broke out in Sharana early Saturday but ended after local elders intervened to negotiate a pullout. He said the governor and other officials surrendered and were on their way to Kabul.

The Taliban also took control of Maimana, the capital of northern Faryab province, said Fawzia Raoufi, a lawmaker from the province. Maimana had been under siege for a month, and Taliban fighters entered the city days ago. Security forces finally surrendered Saturday, she said.

Sayed Hussan Gerdezi, a lawmaker from the neighboring Paktia province, said the Taliban seized most of its local capital, Gardez, but that battles with government forces were still underway. The Taliban said they controlled the city.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani delivered

a televised speech Saturday, his first public appearance since the recent Taliban gains. He vowed not to give up the "achievements" of the 20 years since the U.S. toppled the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks.

The U.S. has continued holding peace talks between the government and the Taliban in Qatar this week, and the international community has warned that a Taliban government brought about by force would be shunned. But the insurgents appear to have little interest in making concessions as they rack up victories on the battlefield.

"We have started consultations, inside the government with elders and political leaders, representatives of different levels of the community as well as our international allies," Ghani said. "Soon the results will be shared with you," he added, without elaborating further.

Tens of thousands of Afghans have fled their homes, with many fearing a return to the Taliban's oppressive rule. The group had previously governed Afghanistan under a harsh version of Islamic law in which women were forbidden to work or attend school, and could not leave their homes without a male relative accompanying them.

## More Marines arrive in Kabul to aid embassy airlift

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — A fresh contingent of Marines arrived in Kabul on Saturday as part of a 3,000-troop force intended to secure an airlift of U.S. Embassy personnel and Afghan allies as Taliban insurgents approach the outskirts of the capital.

The last-minute decision to re-insert thousands of U.S. troops into Afghanistan reflects the dire state of security and calls into question whether President Joe Biden will meet his Aug. 31 deadline for fully withdrawing combat forces.

After an advance group of Marines arrived on Friday, more flowed into the Kabul international airport on Saturday, said Navy Capt. William Urban, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command. Citing operational security, Urban declined to provide specific numbers. The Pentagon said on Friday that

the bulk of the 3,000 — comprising two battalions of Marines and one of Army soldiers — are due by the end of the weekend.

Officials have stressed that the newly arriving troops' mission is limited to assisting the airlift of embassy personnel and Afghan allies, and they expect to complete it by month's end. But they might have to stay longer if the embassy is threatened by a Taliban takeover of Kabul by then.

On Saturday, the Taliban seized two more provinces and approached the outskirts of Kabul while also launching a multi-pronged assault on a major northern city defended by former warlords, Afghan officials said.

"Clearly from their actions, it appears as if they are trying to get Kabul isolated," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said, referring to the Taliban's speedy and efficient takedown of major provincial capitals this

past week.

Biden had given the Pentagon until Aug. 31 to complete the withdrawal of the 2,500 to 3,000 troops that were in Afghanistan when he announced in April that he was ending U.S. involvement in the war. That number has dropped to just under 1,000, and all but about 650 are scheduled to be gone by the end of the month; the 650 are to remain to help protect the U.S. diplomatic presence, including with aircraft and defensive weapons at the Kabul airport.

But Thursday's decision to dispatch 3,000 fresh troops to the airport adds a new twist to the U.S. withdrawal. There is no discussion of rejoining the war, but the number of troops needed for security will depend on decisions about keeping the embassy open and the extent of a Taliban threat to the capital in coming days.

# Taliban assault imperils rescue of allies

*The Washington Post*

WASHINGTON — The rapid collapse of security in Afghanistan has turned a slow-building U.S. effort to rescue men and women who have assisted the United States into a full-blown humanitarian crisis, with tens of thousands of people still seeking refuge and potentially little time to relocate them.

The scramble to rescue America's Afghan allies comes after U.S. lawmakers in both parties have pressed the Biden administration for months to move faster on the issue, and as U.S. intelligence officials assess that the capital city of Kabul could fall to the Taliban within one to three months. More than a dozen major cities fell to the Taliban in the last week as the U.S. military's 20-year mission in Afghanistan barrels toward the Aug. 31 departure set by President Joe Biden.

The U.S. government has transported about 1,200 Afghans to the United States in recent days, State Department spokesman Ned Price said. But the Biden administration has committed to temporarily relocating another 4,000 applicants and their families to other countries while their immigration paperwork is finalized and assessed,

and there are many thousand more who are earlier in the process and face a stark outlook.

"I'm really upset and heartbroken," said Ismail Khan, an Afghan who served as an interpreter for U.S. troops and now advocates for other interpreters through the nonprofit No One Left Behind. "I don't understand. What are they waiting for? Are they waiting for everyone to be dead, and then they'll bring them out?"

Responding to the crisis, the Biden administration announced on Thursday that it was deploying 3,000 combat troops to Kabul to harden security at the airport as embassy personnel depart and the administration jump-starts its effort to evacuate Afghans aboard civilian and military aircraft.

But the withdrawal at the embassy in Kabul threatens to further impair the Biden administration's ability to evacuate vulnerable Afghans, some of whom are still waiting on paperwork to be completed so they may flee.

Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman held closed-door briefings with lawmakers on Thursday and informed them that a core embassy team would remain in Kabul but their status could change depend-

ing on the rapidly shifting security environment, according to three people familiar with the discussion. Like some others, they spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the issue's sensitivity.

The core team consists of the political section to coordinate with the Afghan government, the diplomatic security team and the consular affairs team, which processes the special immigrant visas.

"There is a rush to get them processed so as not to leave them," Sherman told lawmakers, according to people familiar with her briefing.

A second category of Afghans also need assistance, a bipartisan group of about 40 members of Congress said in a letter to Biden on Friday. They advocated evacuating not only SIV applicants, but journalists, civil servants, activists and others who may qualify as refugees under another category known as "P2."

"With the collapse of Kabul an imminent possibility, we should view this as a Dunkirk moment," the congressmen wrote, referring to the daring rescue of Allied troops from the French city before they were annihilated by Nazi forces.

## Honorable discharges proposed for vaccine refusal

BY SARAH CAMMARATA  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A member of the House Armed Services Committee is urging the Defense Department to give honorable discharges to troops who choose not to get the coronavirus vaccine and face disciplinary action.

Rep. Mark Green, R-Tenn., introduced a resolution to that effect on Friday.

The resolution comes after Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced he will require all troops get the shots. Austin said Monday that regardless of whether the shots obtain full federal approval — expected to happen in the fall — he plans to seek President Joe Biden's permission by mid-September to

require all troops to receive the coronavirus vaccine.

"Having gone into battle myself, I strongly believe punishing those who refuse this vaccine, which has only been available for less than a year, is antithetical to the values of our military," said Green, a 24-year Army veteran who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Troops can apply for an exemption to the coronavirus vaccine mandate for certain health conditions or religious reasons, chief Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said last week.

A commander has the authority to decide what punishment troops will get if they decline to get the shot. Kirby said Austin expects commanders "to treat the administration of that vac-

cine with ... professionalism, skill and compassion."

"Commanders have a range of tools short of using the [courts] available to them to try to help individuals make the right decisions" without issuing punishments, Kirby said.

Rebecca Galfano, a spokeswoman for Green, said the lawmaker had been vaccinated.

The resolution has nine Republican co-sponsors including Reps. Chip Roy and Dan Crenshaw of Texas, Andy Harris of Maryland, Kat Cammack of Florida, Greg Murphy of North Carolina, Mike Garcia of California, Thomas Massie of Kentucky, Tim Burchett of Tennessee and Tom Tiffany of Wisconsin.

Ahead of the Defense Depart-

ment announcement of the pending vaccine mandate, Green, along with other lawmakers, wrote a letter to Austin arguing mandatory vaccination for military personnel prior to full approval from the Food and Drug Administration is illegal.

He wrote the Defense Department does not have the authority to mandate the vaccine for troops as long as the shots are authorized under emergency use.

"To be clear, we believe [the coronavirus] vaccines are not only a testament to American ingenuity but are also safe and effective ... Despite that, it is clear that the mandate that you are considering is an unprecedented violation of federal law," Green wrote in the letter, signed by 15 other GOP lawmakers.

# More US cities want vaccination proof

*Associated Press*

Hold on to that vaccination card. A rapidly growing number of places across the U.S. are requiring people to show proof they have been inoculated against COVID-19 to teach school, work at a hospital, see a concert or eat inside a restaurant.

Following New York City's lead, New Orleans and San Francisco will impose such rules at many businesses starting this week, while Los Angeles is looking into the idea.

The new measures are an attempt to stem the rising tide of COVID-19 cases that has pushed hospitals to the breaking point, including in the Dallas area, where top officials

warned they are running out of beds in their pediatric intensive care units.

On Friday, the Chicago school system, the nation's third-largest district, with more than 360,000 students, announced it will require all its teachers and other employees to be fully vaccinated by mid-October unless they qualify for a medical or religious exemption.

Philadelphia has decreed that health care workers and college students and staff members must get their shots by mid-October.

New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell called proof of vaccination the best way to protect businesses. She said she is not imposing capacity limits or contemplating a shutdown

similar to the one that devastated businesses in 2020. "Unlike this time last year, we have a tool that we did not have," she said, referring to vaccines.

Critics say that requiring people to be vaccinated to enter a business violates their rights and their privacy.

At least 18 states led by Republican governors or legislatures prohibit the creation of so-called vaccine passports or ban public entities from demanding proof of vaccination. Several of those — including Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Montana, North Dakota and Texas — also bar most businesses from denying service to those who aren't vaccinated.

## NY Legislature won't try to impeach Cuomo

*Associated Press*

ALBANY, N.Y. — The New York state Assembly will suspend its investigation of Gov. Andrew Cuomo once he steps down after its leader concluded the Legislature didn't have the clear authority to impeach a departed official, the chamber's top Democrat said Friday.

Cuomo announced Tuesday he planned to resign over sexual harassment allegations as it became clear he was almost certain to be impeached by the Legislature. He said his resignation was effective in 14 days, at which point he'll be replaced by Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul.

Some lawmakers have urged the Assembly to press on with an impeachment proceeding, perhaps to bar Cuomo from holding state office in the future if he at-

tempted a political comeback.

But Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie said Friday that lawyers had advised the body's judiciary committee that the state constitution doesn't authorize the Legislature to impeach an elected official no longer in office.

Heastie had provided reporters a less definitive legal memorandum saying Assembly lawyers and outside counsel had concluded lawmakers "probably" lack the constitutional authority to do so, though the matter hasn't been settled definitely.

"Let me be clear — the committee's work over the last several months, although not complete, did uncover credible evidence in relation to allegations that have been made in reference to the governor," said Heastie, a New York City Democrat.

He said that included evidence related to

the sexual harassment claims, possible misuse of state resources in conjunction with the publication of the governor's book on the pandemic and "improper and misleading disclosure of nursing home data."

"This evidence — we believe — could likely have resulted in articles of impeachment had he not resigned," Heastie said.

When asked whether lawmakers could still release a report with findings to the public as originally planned, Heastie said: "I guess it could."

"The concern behind that is, if you're in the middle of an investigation and other law enforcement areas are looking at this, I don't know if we can; I don't want to have us step on their toes while there are criminal investigations going on," he said Friday on the news program "Capital Tonight."

## Bulletin warns 9/11 anniversary could inspire attacks

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — The upcoming 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks as well as approaching religious holidays could inspire extremist attacks, the Department of Homeland Security said in a terrorism alert issued Friday.

DHS did not cite any specific threats in the National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin. But it noted that the U.S. is in a "heightened threat environment," fueled by factors that include violent extremists motivated by racial and ethnic hatred and resentment of restrictions imposed during the pandemic.

The bulletin is an extension of a similar one

issued in May that expired on the day the new one was issued. DHS says domestic extremists remain a national threat priority for U.S. law enforcement and will for at least the remainder of the year.

The agency noted that al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula recently released the first English-language edition of its Inspire magazine in four years, apparently to mark the upcoming anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The anniversary and the approaching holidays "could serve as a catalyst for acts of targeted violence," it said.

DHS also noted that domestic extremists motivated by religious and ethnic hatred have

in the past attacked houses of worship and other gatherings, but it said there aren't any "credible or imminent threats identified to these locations."

As in previous bulletins, DHS expressed concern about both domestic extremists, motivated by "personal grievances and extremist ideological beliefs," and foreign influences.

The agency said Russian, Chinese and Iranian government-linked media outlets have helped spread conspiracy theories about the origins of COVID-19 and the effectiveness of vaccines and have in some cases amplified calls for violence against people of Asian descent.



# Western wildfires strain resources

*Associated Press*

WESTWOOD, Calif. — A month-old wildfire burning through forestlands in Northern California lurched toward a small lumber town as blazes across U.S. Western states strained resources and threatened thousands of homes with destruction.

Crews were cutting back brush and using bulldozers to build lines to keep the Dixie Fire from reaching Westwood east of Lake Almanor, not far from where the lightning-caused blaze destroyed much of the town of Greenville earlier this month.

The entire town of about 1,700 people was placed under evacuation orders Aug. 5 as the blaze inched closer.

To the northwest, the Monument Fire — one of at least three large blazes sparked by lightning last month — continued to grow after destroying a dozen homes and threatened about 2,500 homes in a sparsely populated region. U.S. Forest Service officials said Friday that flying embers ignited

spot fires as far as a mile ahead of the main blaze in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

They were among more than 100 large wildfires burning in a dozen Western states seared by drought and hot, bone-dry weather that has turned forests, brushlands, meadows and pastures into tinder.

The U.S. Forest Service said Friday it's operating in crisis mode, fully deploying firefighters and maxing out its support system.

The roughly 21,000 federal firefighters working on the ground is more than double the number of firefighters sent to contain forest fires at this time a year ago, and the agency is facing "critical resources limitations," said Anthony Scardina, a deputy forester for the agency's Pacific Southwest region.

More than 6,000 firefighters alone were battling the Dixie Fire, which has destroyed more than 1,000 homes, businesses and other structures and was the largest wildfire burning in the U.S. Its flames have

ravaged more than 800 square miles — an area larger than the city of London.

There also was a danger of new fires erupting because of unstable weather conditions, including a chance of thunderstorms that could bring lightning to northern California, Oregon and Nevada, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

In southeastern Montana, firefighters and residents were scrambling to save hundreds of homes as flames advanced across the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation.

Smoke from the blazes grew so thick Friday that the health clinic in Lone Deer was shut down after its air filters could not keep up with the pollution, Northern Cheyenne Tribe spokesperson Angel Becker said.

Smoke also drove air pollution levels to unhealthy or very unhealthy levels in parts of Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Northern California, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

## New Mexico school year is off to a deadly start

*Associated Press*

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — It's only a few days into the new school year, but New Mexico's largest district is reeling from a shooting that left one student dead and landed another in custody.

The gunfire at Washington Middle School during the lunch hour Friday marked the second shooting in Albuquerque in less than 24 hours. With the city on pace to shatter its homicide record this year, top state officials said they were heartbroken by what they described as a scourge.

"These tragedies should never occur. That they do tells us there is more work to be done," Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said.

Albuquerque Police Deputy Commander Kyle Hartsock described the shooting as an isolated incident between two students who were believed to be

about 13 years old. He said a school resource officer ran toward the two boys after gunfire erupted and prevented any other violence while tending to the boy who was shot.

Investigators were trying to determine how the student obtained the gun and what may have prompted the shooting, Hartsock said. Other students were being interviewed as detectives tried to piece together what happened, he said.

Dozens of fretful parents gathered outside the school Friday afternoon as they waited for their children to be released.

Friday marked the third day of classes for Albuquerque's public school district. While students won't return until Tuesday, Superintendent Scott Elder said the staff will be making preparations to ensure students have access to counseling and any other support services they need.

## NOAA: July was hottest month on record for globe

*Associated Press*

Earth sizzled in July and became the hottest month in 142 years of recordkeeping, U.S. weather officials announced.

As extreme heat waves struck parts of the United States and Europe, the globe averaged 62.07 degrees Fahrenheit last month, beating out the previous record set in July 2016 and tied again in 2019 and 2020, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Friday. The margin was just .02 degrees.

The last seven Julys, from 2015 to 2021, have been the hottest seven Julys on record, said NOAA climatologist Ahira Sanchez-Lugo. Last month was 1.67 degrees warmer than the 20th century average for the month.

"In this case first place is the worst place to be," NOAA Administrator Rick Spinrad said in a press release. "This new record adds to the disturbing

and disruptive path that climate change has set for the globe."

"This is climate change," said Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann. "It is an exclamation mark on a summer of unprecedented heat, drought, wildfires and flooding."

Last week, a prestigious United Nations science panel warned of worsening climate change caused by the burning of coal, oil and natural gas and other human activity.

July is the hottest month of the year for the globe, so this is also the hottest month on record.

One factor helping the world bake this summer is a natural weather cycle called the Arctic Oscillation, sort of a cousin to El Niño, which in its positive phase is associated with more warming, the NOAA climatologist said.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## Man charged after human head found in freezer

**PA** — A Pennsylvania man was arrested after police pulled a frozen human head out of his freezer, according to the Lancaster Bureau of Police.

Donald Meshey Jr., 32, allegedly told a witness who had shown up at his house that he had a cadaver in one of the beds at his Lancaster home and a human head in the freezer, police said in a statement.

After being taken into custody, Meshey allegedly told detectives he found a “cadaver doll” in his father’s bedroom, “which looked and sounded like his father,” according to the Lancaster Bureau of Police. Meshey admitted to stabbing the “cadaver doll” for two or three minutes with a knife, then dismembering the body.

Police are still working to identify the remains.

Meshey has been charged with criminal homicide, abuse of a corpse and tampering with evidence.

## Toddler fatally shoots mom during video call

**FL** ALTAMONTE SPRINGS — A toddler found an unsecured, loaded handgun inside an apartment and fatally shot a woman while she was on a work-related video call, police in central Florida said.

According to news outlets, the woman was the mother of the toddler who shot her in the head.

Someone on the video call dialed 911 after seeing the toddler in the background and

hearing a noise, Altamonte Springs police said in a news release. The woman, identified as Shamaya Lynn, 21, fell backward and never returned to the video call, the person reported.

An adult in the apartment left the firearm unsecured, police said. Investigators were working with the Seminole County State Attorney’s Office to determine whether charges will be filed.

## Anne Frank Center to open at university

**SC** COLUMBIA — An Anne Frank Center is opening at the University of South Carolina, which will be the first museum in North America and the fourth in the world where visitors can walk through the famed story of the teenage Holocaust victim.

The 1,060-square-foot center on the Columbia campus features a rendering of the attic where the girl’s Jewish family hid from the Nazis for more than two years during World War II. That exhibit includes a reproduction of the desk where Frank wrote what was eventually published as “The Diary of a Young Girl.”

All the artifacts for the museum were provided by the original Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, which preserved the secret annex where the Franks hid. Other partner sites are located in Berlin, London and Buenos Aires.

## Teen arrested in fatal shooting over shoe raffle

**CA** LOS ANGELES — Police arrested a teenager on suspicion of shoot-

ing to death a shoe store employee who tried to break up a dispute over a raffle for a pair of sneakers.

The teen, 16, was taken into custody at in the Los Angeles suburb of South Gate and booked on suspicion of murder, according to a police statement.

The shooting in the Fairfax area of Los Angeles was captured on cellphone video. Investigators worked through the night to track down the killer, the LAPD said.

## Caretaker arrested after killing, burying woman

**NC** NEWLAND — A woman whose body was found buried in concrete in the basement of her western North Carolina home had fired her caretaker in June, but neighbors said the former caretaker was still living in the woman’s home until late July, according to court documents.

Search warrants state Elizabeth Carserino, 53, of Goose Creek, S.C., was hired by family to be Lynn Keene’s live-in caretaker earlier this year after she fell and suffered a traumatic brain injury, WSOC-TV reported.

Court documents state Keene, 70, was strangled with a belt and struck in the head.

Avery County Sheriff Kevin Frye announced Carserino was taken into custody and charged with murder, identity theft, larceny of motor vehicle and financial card theft.

## Police investigating after contractor finds noose

**MO** ST. LOUIS — Police in St. Louis are

investigating after a Black contractor found a noose at the renovation site of a Benton Park home owned by an Asian American woman.

The noose was found in a tree by the contractor, a Black woman who lives in Benton Park and has been visible working on the house for weeks. The incident was brought to light by the homeowner, Julia Ho, and City Alderman Dan Guenther, who has been knocking on neighborhood doors to see if anyone knows who might have hung the noose.

Police are investigating and seeking any surveillance video that could help in determining who left the noose, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

## Police arrest 2 in alleged plot to defraud lottery

**IA** MASON CITY — Two Iowa men accused of using bad checks to buy more than \$800 in lottery tickets saw a total profit of \$134 after winning on some of the tickets, Cerro Gordo County authorities said.

Richard Lee Pierce II, 29, of Ventura, faces charges of attempting to defraud the Iowa lottery and forgery, while Joey Henry Allen, 31, of Clear Lake, faces similar charges plus a felony theft count, the Globe Gazette reported.

Court documents say Allen went to a Ventura convenience store on six different occasions, buying a total of \$824 worth of lottery tickets and paying with a check that bounced.

Police said Pierce later took the winning tickets back to the store, cashing out for \$958 in winnings.

— From wire reports

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# More mature Mayfield leading Browns

*Associated Press*

CLEVELAND — Baker Mayfield has grown up. There was no other option.

“I had to hit rock bottom for a little bit,” he said.

He’s rising, and judging by last season, so are the Browns.

As he picked at lunch during a break last month while shooting commercials at FirstEnergy Stadium, Mayfield exuded some of that chip-on-his-shoulder confidence that transported him from college walk-on to NFL starting quarterback.

That will always be on display, defining him, driving him. The brashness, though, has been muted.

While discussing the stuttering start to his pro career, his future in Cleveland and expectations for this season during a sit-down interview with The Associated Press, there was something noticeably different about Mayfield.

He’s changed.

It’s not a 180-degree turn by any means, but Mayfield is

more measured with his actions and words: business Baker. More of a leader, a role model, franchise quarterback.

“Experience,” he said, “definitely teaches you.”

Mayfield crashed after a record-setting rookie year, only to bounce back in 2020 under first-year coach Kevin Stefanski. On the eve of his fourth training camp, he was relaxed and reflective as he prepared for a season Browns fans have awaited for a generation.

Mayfield helped Cleveland end the playoff drought. Next challenge: the Super Bowl, which the Browns never have reached.

He’s physically fit, having dropped “bad weight,” and in a good place mentally. He’s found inner peace, and the 25-year-old feels a strong connection with this football-crazed city and its fans. Cleveland is where he wants to play his entire career.

“We’ve talked about it, Emily and I,” Mayfield said, referring to his wife, who co-stars with

him in those TV ads for Progressive Insurance. “It wouldn’t be the same if we lived in a city where they didn’t live, breathe and die football. That’s the atmosphere we want — and it’s here.”

There’s an unmistakable bond between this Ohio city and this Oklahoma quarterback. Both underdogs, they’ve been through good years and bad ones. Knocked down and counted out, they’ve fought back.

“When I say that my work ethic and mentality fits right in here,” he said, “I genuinely mean that.”

Even before being drafted first in 2018, Mayfield sensed Cleveland was where he belonged.

“If anybody’s going to turn that franchise around it would be me,” he boasted at the combine that year.

He was right.

The Browns went 1-31 in two seasons before he arrived and spent two decades discarding quarterbacks and coaches at

dizzying speed. In Mayfield, they have seemingly found the leader missing since Bernie Kosar led Cleveland to three AFC title games from 1986-89.

After breaking Peyton Manning’s rookie record for TD passes and going 7-8-1, Mayfield took things for granted. He didn’t spend nearly enough time working on his craft, got heavy and threw nearly as many interceptions (21) as TDs (22) in 2019.

Picked to contend for the AFC North title, the Browns disintegrated. They went 6-10, fired coach Freddie Kitchens and Mayfield’s critics circled with sharpened knives.

“For the first time in my life, I was kind of listening to the outside noise and I let that affect me too much,” he said. “I was so worried about what type of picture I needed to portray as a franchise QB because everybody was telling me I had to be a certain way, instead of just doing how I’ve always done it — which is how I’m here.”

## Oft-injured Jets LB Cashman betting on himself

*Associated Press*

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Blake Cashman’s right forearm tells his story in black ink.

Tattooed images and words are sources of inspiration, with the most recent addition providing a constant reminder:

“Always Bet On Yourself.”

The New York Jets linebacker got that one this past offseason and it’s especially fitting as he pushes through his third NFL training camp following two injury-marred seasons.

“I keep telling myself my bad luck ran out,” Cashman told The Associated Press after a recent practice, “and only good things will come moving forward.”

To some, the 25-year-old Cashman is a forgotten man, already phased out in their minds and replaced by newer, younger players. He’s competing for a role and a roster spot, but embraces the doubters.

It’s what he has been doing all his life.

“I felt like ever since I graduated high school,” Cashman said, “I was left out until I wasn’t.”

And that’s a big reason the former Minnesota star is even here.

He wasn’t the best, fastest or most talented. But he’s resilient, tough and determined. Cashman’s blue-collar approach on the field made him a fan favorite with the Golden Gophers. Same thing when he was drafted in the fifth round by the Jets in 2019.

Plenty of negativity has come along the way, much of it beyond his control. That includes the people who laugh and say he’s brittle and injury-prone.

“You can’t let that get to you,” he said. “I’m somebody that’s, I’m relentless. I block out the negativity. And to get by, even if you have to put on a fake smile, that’s what you’ve got to do.”

Cashman would ideally like his play to do all the talking — and silence the naysayers.

But he has had trouble staying on the field to do so.

“It has been upsetting,” Cashman acknowledged. “I would be lying if I said it hadn’t gotten me down at times and had me frustrated. But those things are just another roadblock, another challenge where you’ve just got to overcome. And I’ve never been someone to quit on myself.”

Even if seemingly everyone else has.

He had shoulder issues in college at Minnesota and then another landed him on injured reserve as a rookie with the Jets. Cashman appeared poised to be a major contributor last season as a fill-in for C.J. Mosley, who opted out because of the coronavirus pandemic, but injured his groin during punt coverage when his ankle was stepped on.

He came back from that, but ended up back on IR a few weeks later with a hamstring injury — relegated to being a spectator as New York trudged through a 2-14 season.



# Tribe top Tigers; Cabrera stuck at 499

Associated Press

DETROIT — Cleveland rookie Ernie Clement hit the first two homers of his career while Miguel Cabrera stayed one drive short of No. 500 as the Indians beat the Detroit Tigers 7-4 on Friday night.

"It was obviously a great feeling to hit my first one, but I was in complete shock when the second one went out," said Clement, who only had three homers in 268 minor league games.

"My game is about trying to hit the ball hard and get on base for the guys behind me. I'm not a home-run hitter," he said.

Cabrera went 0-for-4, leaving him at 499 career home runs and disappointing a crowd of 22,107. Fans were crammed into Comerica Park's outfield seats at where the milestone drive might land.

"It was electric every time Miggy came up to the plate," Indians starter Zach Plesac said. "The ground was shaking — that was a play-off atmosphere. I just didn't want to be the one who gave it up."

Cabrera struck out in the first inning, flied out twice and grounded out.

"Miggy is fine," Tigers manager A.J. Hinch said. "As great as he is, he can't just will a home run whenever he wants one. He's swinging well and it will come."

Cabrera homered Wednesday night at Baltimore and sat out Thursday against the Orioles. The Tigers then returned to Detroit to open a six-game homestand.

"We know the fans are here for Miggy, but we're all feeding off this energy," Tigers catcher Eric Haase said. "We've been a winning team for a couple months now, and it is

fun seeing the crowd respond to that."

Yu Chang homered and tripled for the Indians, who improved to 11-5 against Detroit this season.

Plesac (7-4) allowed two runs on five hits in seven innings. He struck out nine without a walk after giving up five runs in four innings against the Tigers Sunday.

"I knew I had good stuff in that game, but I didn't do a good job of executing my pitches," he said. "That's been something I've been dealing with, but today was a lot better."

Tyler Alexander (2-2) gave up four runs in five innings.

"The top of Cleveland's order is really tough against lefties and he did a really good job against them," Hinch said. "But the bottom of the order had three homers and a triple. That's just how it goes some days."

# Marlins score 11 in second inning, beat Cubs

Associated Press

MIAMI — Bryan De La Cruz hit a grand slam and Alex Jackson added a three-run homer as the Miami Marlins tied a team record by scoring 11 times in the second inning Friday night during a 14-10 win over the Chicago Cubs.

The Cubs lost their ninth straight and have allowed 41 runs in the past three games. Chicago is 2-12 since the trade deadline departures of stars Kris Bryant, Anthony Rizzo, Javier Báez and Craig Kimbrel.

The 11 runs tied a Marlins mark set in the fifth inning at Milwaukee on June 4, 2019.

"There are no words to describe it," De La Cruz said. "I saw a motivated club with every pitch. It was very enjoyable."

For Miami, the win coincided with the return of manager Don Mattingly. The 60-year-old Mattingly missed the previous 12 games after testing positive for COVID-19.

The four hour and 14 minute duration was the longest 9-inning game in Miami's history.

The Marlins' second-inning outburst erased a three-run deficit. De La Cruz's drive against Adalberto Alzolay (4-13) put Miami ahead 5-4.

"We get down 4-1 early and De La Cruz's homer got us going," Mattingly said. "Honestly, the offense was on point all night long."

Alzolay, who lost his ninth straight decision, was removed because of left hamstring tightness after 1 1/3 innings. Winless since June 2, Alzolay allowed six runs.

"That guy is so competitive," Cubs catcher Robinson Chirinos said. "He wants to give his team a chance to win a game. You can see the pain through his eyes and how he felt when he came out of that game."

Dan Winkler relieved Alzolay and failed to retire any of the seven batters he faced. He allowed Lewis Brinson's two-run double and hit Jorge Alfaro with the bases loaded to force in a run.

Brinson scored from third on a passed ball before Jackson connected off Winkler to give the Marlins a 12-4 lead.

Jesús Aguilar also homered for Miami, a two-run shot in the third, giving him 21 in the season and an NL-leading 82 RBIs.

Miami starter Jesús Luzardo (4-5) benefited from the offensive support and allowed five runs and six hits in five innings. He struck out six, walked four and hit a batter.

**Braves 4, Nationals 2:** Austin Riley homered in the seventh inning of a weather-delayed game, and Atlanta beat host Washington to move into a first-place tie in the NL East with Philadelphia.

**Dodgers 6, Mets 5 (10):** Will Smith hit a two-run homer to start the 10th inning and visiting Los Angeles bounced back after blowing a four-run lead to beat New York.

**Reds 6, Phillies 1:** Joey Votto hit a three-run homer and Tyler Mahle tossed seven shutout innings to lead Cincinnati over host Philadelphia.

**Red Sox 8, Orioles 1:** Kyle Schwarber scored twice in his debut with his new team and his new teammates delivered three home runs to lift Boston over visiting Baltimore.

**Rangers 8, Athletics 6:** Yohel Pozo hit a go-ahead, three-run home run in the sixth inning of his major league debut, fellow rookie DJ Peters had a two-run shot and host Texas beat Oakland.

**Rays 10, Twins 4:** Nelson Cruz homered in his return to Minnesota and Tampa Bay moved a season-high 26 games over .500 with the win.

Cruz made his first appearance in Minnesota since being

traded by the Twins to Tampa Bay on July 22. He struck out on three pitches in his first at-bat before sending a line drive into the left-field seats for his 24th home run of the season and fifth for the Rays. Cruz finished 2-for-4 with a walk and two runs scored.

**Cardinals 6, Royals 0:** Jack Flaherty pitched six innings of two-hit ball in his return from an oblique injury, and St. Louis blanked host Kansas City.

**Astros 4, Angels 1:** At Anaheim, Calif., Kyle Tucker hit his first career grand slam, Zack Greinke pitched two-hit ball over seven scoreless innings and Houston beat Los Angeles.

**Diamondbacks 3, Padres 2:** Daulton Varsho hit a game-ending homer in the ninth inning, sending Arizona past visiting San Diego.

**Giants 5, Rockies 4:** Wilmer Flores hit a three-run homer in the first, Thairo Estrada added an RBI single, and host San Francisco extended its winning streak to six games with a win over Colorado.

**Mariners 3, Blue Jays 2:** Jarred Kelenic drew a bases-loaded walk in the ninth inning, and Seattle stretched its winning streak to three games with a win over visiting Toronto.

# BYU deal raises questions of advantage

Associated Press

A deal BYU has made available to its football players could test how much allowing athletes to be compensated by outside companies for name, image and likeness can be used as a competitive advantage.

Last week, BYU announced Built Brands — a Utah-based company that makes protein snacks — will give all 123 members of the Cougars' football team the opportunity to be paid to promote its products.

Scholarship players can earn \$1,000. For walk-ons, players who are not on athletic scholarship, the payment can be equivalent to the cost of a year's tuition at BYU, which ranges from about \$3,000 to \$6,000 per semester.

"This is creative and different," said Blake Lawrence, the CEO of Opendorse, a firm that works with schools on NIL-related matters from brand building to compliance. "The first-move advantage here for both

BYU and Built is very evident."

BYU's arrangement with Built drew national attention for the joyous celebration it sparked among the players and because it seems to provide the Cougars a way to circumvent the NCAA's scholarship-limit rules. Teams that play in the highest division of college football can only have 85 scholarship players on the roster.

BYU athletic director Tom Holmoe told the AP on Friday that he and football coach Kalani Sitake were searching for a way to provide an NIL opportunity to the entire team, not trying to find a workaround to the scholarship limit.

"The whole mindset wasn't to try to get a recruiting advantage or anything," Sitake said. "It was just to do what we thought was right and to help the walk-ons on this team."

But Holmoe didn't refute the idea that this could benefit BYU.

"Are we saying that people in

collegiate football these days are not looking for competitive advantages? That's like the essence of athletics is competitive advantage," said Holmoe, who played seven seasons in the NFL with the San Francisco 49ers in the 1980s. "Competitive advantage exists in life. It's called creativity. You come up with good ideas that give you a competitive advantage."

To satisfy their contracts with Built, BYU football players must wear a decal with the company's logo on their practice helmets and make at least one appearance at a company event.

Walk-ons are required to make two appearances and promote the company on social media.

Holmoe said BYU did not negotiate the deal with Built Brands CEO Nick Greer, who is a friend of Sitake's, but it was vetted by the school's general counsel and president.

The NCAA has taken a hands-

off and permissive approach to NIL, allowing schools in states that do not have NIL laws to set their own policies. Utah has no law, but the NCAA still does not allow NIL payments to be used as recruiting inducements or pay-for-play.

"There are still, I'll say, rules," Holmoe said.

Built Brands is not funding scholarships, but paying athletes directly.

"(The players) don't have to pay for their tuition," Holmoe said. "They can do whatever they want with that money."

For most walk-ons, though, the money can be a game-changer.

"It takes stress off for sure," said Nick Billups, a walk-on quarterback.

The NCAA lifted its longtime ban on athletes being compensated for the use of their names, images and likenesses on July 1, opening the door for all kinds of endorsement opportunities for athletes.

## Henley leads Wyndham Championship by 4 strokes

Associated Press

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Russell Henley shot a 6-under 64 on Friday to open a four-stroke lead halfway through the Wyndham Championship.

Henley was at 14-under 126, tying Stewart Cink at the RBC Heritage in April for the lowest 36-hole score this season in a tournament Cink went on to win.

Olympic silver medalist Rory Sabbatini was tied for second with past champion Webb Simpson and playoff bubble man Scott Piercy.

Sabbatini shot a 64, Simpson 65 and Piercy at 66.

Former FedEx Cup champion Justin Rose, outside the playoffs at the start of the week, continued his surge toward the postseason with a 65 that left him at 9 under in a group with Tyler Duncan and Brian Stuard.

Duncan had the lowest score of the round at 62. Stuard shot 66.

When Henley teed off, the first-round leader had already been passed by Sabbatini, Piercy and Simpson. Henley, who

opened on the back nine, got going with four straight birdies on Nos. 14-17 to regain the lead.

Henley added three more birdies on his final nine. It was a couple of months ago that Henley shared the halfway lead at the U.S. Open. He was among three leaders after 54 holes until falling off with final-round 76.

Henley hopes he can keep the same drive and mentality on the weekend. After all, this is not the U.S. Open and pars here will probably lead you out of contention.

"You have to do everything right," Henley said. "So it's kind of the same way except for I'm just mainly trying to keep committing to every shot off the tee and put myself in the fairway" where he can stay aggressive.

It was a good day for Sabbatini, Piercy and Rose, all who began the week outside the 125-man postseason cutoff, but have played themselves into this week's Northern Trust with 36 holes to go.

Sabbatini, buoyed by his Tokyo experience, has moved from 141st in the FedEx

standings to a projected 95th. He tied his career low 36-hole score of 130, last accomplished in 2003 at the Shriners' Children's Open.

Piercy started last week as first man out at No. 126. His 64-66 start has him projected at 80th for the playoffs.

Rose, who won the 2018 FedEx Cup, was also outside at No. 138 when he teed off Thursday. He's inside the playoffs at 117th after shooting 66-65.

It was not the case for playoff outsider Rickie Fowler, who missed the cut after shooting 71-72. He had needed to finish 21st or better to keep his 11-season streak of advancing to golf's postseason intact. Instead, Fowler will have a few weeks off before next season.

"I know what I'm capable of, I've been up there and played against the best in the world and been a top-five, top-10 player in the world for a number of years in my career," Fowler said. "I'm not in a position where I'm comfortable or where I want to be."