

Lockheed F-35's factory flaws persist

Bloomberg

Lockheed Martin has delivered more than 800 F-35 fighter jets, but production is still marred by excessive defects and rework that risk substantial delivery delays and reduced readiness, according to the Pentagon's Defense Contract Management Agency.

Lockheed, the Defense Department's top contractor, has improved in many regards from the F-35's first production lot through the current 14th batch, but "too many quality assurance defects" aren't found at the initial assembly station only to be discovered either before or after formal acceptance of the warplanes, the agency said.

These are "an issue to the user community and a major concern negatively impacting the fleet," the agency added, referring to deployed units and pilots. Despite some improvement, "substantial Lockheed Martin behind-schedule performance risk remains" until the need to scrap, rework or repair parts is "significantly reduced," it said.

F-35 subcontractors Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems also "have had many manufacturing non-compliances," the contracting agency said in its comments on the costliest U.S. weapons system.

The lingering aircraft production issues

come on top of shortages of engine modules, inadequate depot facilities and cost increases for the hardware processor needed for a key software upgrade. Also pending are possible costly retrofits if major problems are discovered during an often-delayed simulation exercise scheduled for next year to test the aircraft virtually against the most advanced Russian and Chinese threats.

International orders for the F-35 continue to rise, with Finland, Switzerland, Germany and Greece the latest overseas customers. South Korea has indicated it wants more of the jets. The more than 800 F-35s delivered worldwide are out of a potential fleet of more than 3,300 for the United States and partner nations.

The Defense Contract Management Agency said some of the persistent quality issues are being discovered after formal acceptance of aircraft. It said it is working with the Pentagon's Joint Program Office "to identify where these quality issues originate in the production cycle and are making the necessary changes in oversight to mitigate these issues."

The Pentagon's F-35 program office said it couldn't comment on specific defects that affect "fleet readiness for operational security reasons" but said it "continually attacks any quality issues at the plant to avoid issues in the

fielded fleet."

The defense contract agency said Lockheed's facility in Fort Worth, Texas, has substantially improved its parts supply chain management and greatly improved a key reliability metric over the past four to five years: the mean flying hours between failures caused by flawed components. On-time delivery has also improved, as have overall assembly times.

Lockheed said in a statement that it "works closely with our customers and is committed to delivering quality products on time." Specifically, the company said, the need to scrap, rework or repair parts "has continuously improved lot-over-lot since the F-35 program began, and we reduced it by 7.6% in 2021 from 2020."

"During and post-COVID, we hired and trained more than 500 new production line employees on manufacturing and quality processes, we are actively working continued improvements and presented these plans" to the Pentagon's F-35 office and the contracts management agency in April, the Bethesda, Md.-based company said. "Quality escapes" — defects not caught before final delivery — for this year are 0.28 per jet, "a 45% improvement from 2021," the company said.

China keeps up pressure on Taiwan with drills

Associated Press

BEIJING — China said Sunday that it carried out its fourth consecutive day of military drills in the air and sea around Taiwan in the wake of U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the self-ruled island, despite international calls to calm the tensions.

The People's Liberation Army said the exercises focused on testing its long-range air and ground strikes. It did not say if it will continue the drills after Sunday.

Taiwan said it continued to detect several batches of Chinese

aircraft, ships and drones operating around the Taiwan Strait, which separates the island and mainland China, and "simulating attacks on the island of Taiwan and our ships at sea." Taiwan's defence ministry said it detected a total of 66 Chinese aircraft and 14 Chinese warships conducting joint naval and air exercises around the Taiwan Strait. In response, Taiwan deployed air reconnaissance patrols, naval ships, and shore-based missiles, and said it will continue to closely monitor the situation.

Taiwan's official Central

News Agency meanwhile reported that Taiwan's army will conduct live-fire artillery drills in southern Pingtung County on Tuesday and Thursday, in response to the Chinese exercises.

The drills will include snipers, combat vehicles, armored vehicles as well as attack helicopters, said the report, which cited an anonymous source.

China set up no-go areas around Taiwan for the four-day drills it announced immediately after Pelosi's trip to Taipei on Tuesday and Wednesday that infuriated Beijing, which saw it as a violation of the "one-China"

policy. China claims Taiwan and has threatened to annex it by force if necessary. The two sides split in 1949 after a civil war, but Beijing considers visits to Taiwan by foreign officials as recognizing its sovereignty.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense emphasized its military was surveilling the situation and had dispatched aircraft and ships to respond accordingly.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has called on the international community to "support democratic Taiwan" and "halt any escalation of the regional security situation."

Law firm urges Navy to relocate Hawaii families

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — Attorneys representing hundreds of Hawaii residents sickened by petroleum-tainted tap water are urging the Navy to permanently relocate families after University of Hawaii scientists last week unveiled sampling data suggesting that water in some homes could still be tainted with jet fuel.

“The circumstances are dire and immediate,” the attorneys wrote in a letter Thursday to the Navy’s Office of the Judge Advocate General.

“Please provide alternative safe housing off the water line or offer compensation to families

for their move,” wrote the attorneys from the Austin, Texas-based firm Just Well Law. “Many affected families have spent their entire life savings to move off the Navy water line, or off the island. But many of the families who remain are desperate to leave and have no recourse to do so.”

The law firm represents nearly 150 families who have experienced illnesses — some long-lasting — and other hardships stemming from jet fuel contamination discovered in late November at about two dozen military communities on and near Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. Thousands of residents were temporarily relocated to hotels this winter.

The contamination was traced to jet fuel leaking from the Red Hill underground fuel storage facility. State and federal officials are in the process of emptying those tanks and permanently closing the facility.

In their letter, the attorneys cited results of water testing released last week by the University of Hawaii Red Hill Task Force, which was formed in December in response to the contamination.

The task force uses a testing method called fluorescence spectroscopy, which provides rapid, preliminary screening of a large number of samples.

“The caveat is that fluorescence-based methods are not specific to petroleum products,”

the University of Hawaii said in a news release Friday. “Rather, it is measuring the fluorescence produced by one or more chemicals typically present in fuel.”

The task force’s test results found positive indications in samples taken at homes in several military communities as late as May — about two months after the Navy and Hawaii Department of Health declared the water supply to be safe for consumption on March 18 after extensive flushing.

The task force recommends that residents of homes with positive detections follow up with more detailed testing from labs certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Japan’s 3rd monkeypox case appears at US base

By **HANA KUSUMOTO**
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Japan’s third case of monkeypox has appeared at the U.S. airlift hub in western Tokyo, the country’s Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare announced Friday.

A man affiliated with Yokota went to urgent care at the base hospital Thursday with symptoms of headache, chills, malaise and rash, according to the ministry. He tested positive for monkeypox Friday and remains hospitalized on the installation.

The man, who is in his 20s, has not traveled overseas since 2019, but recently had contact with a person visiting Japan for a short time, the ministry said.

The U.S. military reported the case to the Japanese government on Friday, the ministry said.

U.S. Forces Japan confirmed the infection in a statement Sat-

urday morning, saying the patient was immediately placed in quarantine Thursday as a precautionary measure and has not had any known contact with individuals suspected of having monkeypox.

“The precise origin of the infection remains unknown at this time,” the statement said. “The patient will remain in isolation until medically cleared.”

A post-exposure vaccine is being offered to the patient’s close contacts, USFJ said, adding “we continue our commitment to protecting the health and well-being of our personnel, families and the local Japanese community, of which we are a part.”

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said more than 7,500 cases have been confirmed in the United States as of Friday. There are more than 28,000 infections in 88 regions across the world.

African American Marine promoted to 4-star general

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The first African American four-star general in Marine Corps history, Gen. Michael E. Langley, credited his father with telling him to “aim high” and predicted that his promotion on Saturday would have an impact on younger people.

Langley was born in Shreveport, La., and grew up at military bases as his father served in the Air Force. A graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marines in 1985.

“My daddy told me to aim high, so I aimed as high as I could and found the few and the proud,” Langley said during a ceremony at Marine Corps Barracks Washington attended by his father and other family members.

The Marine Corps, which traces its roots to 1775, rejected

accepting Black men in its ranks until 1942, a turnabout that followed the attack on the American air base at Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the U.S. entry into World War II.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced in June that President Joe Biden had nominated Langley for appointment to the grade of general. The promotion came with the assignment of commander of U.S. Africa Command, based in Stuttgart, Germany. The Senate officially confirmed Langley’s appointment Monday.

“The milestone and what it means to the Corps is quite essential,” Langley said during Saturday’s ceremony, according to a Marine Corps report. “Not because of the mark in history, but for what it will affect going forward, especially for those younger across society that want to aspire and look at the Marine Corps as an opportunity.”

Dems push Biden priorities toward Senate OK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats drove their election-year economic package toward Senate approval early Sunday, debating a measure with less ambition than President Joe Biden's original domestic vision but that touches deep-rooted party dreams of slowing global warming, moderating pharmaceutical costs and taxing immense corporations.

Debate began Saturday and by early Sunday morning, Democrats had swatted down over a dozen Republican amendments designed to torpedo the legislation or create campaign ads at-

tacking Democratic senators. Despite unanimous GOP opposition, Democratic unity in the 50-50 chamber — buttressed by Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote — suggested the party was on track for a victory three months from elections when congressional control is at stake.

"I think it's gonna pass," Biden told reporters as he left the White House early Sunday to go to Rehoboth Beach, Del., ending his COVID-19 isolation. The House seemed on track to provide final congressional approval when it returns briefly from summer recess on Friday.

"It will reduce inflation. It will lower prescription drug costs. It will fight climate change. It will close tax loopholes and it will reduce the deficit," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said of the package. "It will help every citizen in this country and make America a much better place."

Republicans said the measure would undermine an economy that policymakers are struggling to keep from plummeting into recession. They said the bill's business taxes would hurt job creation and force prices skyward, making it harder for people to cope with the na-

tion's worst inflation since the 1980s.

"Democrats have already robbed American families once through inflation, and now their solution is to rob American families a second time," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., argued. He said spending and tax increases in the legislation would eliminate jobs while having insignificant impact on inflation and climate change.

Nonpartisan analysts have said Democrats' "Inflation Reduction Act" would have a minor effect on surging consumer prices.

Alex Jones' \$49.3M verdict alters path of misinformation

Associated Press

Alex Jones is facing a hefty price tag for his lies about the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre — \$49.3 million in damages, and counting, for claiming the nation's deadliest school shooting was a hoax — a punishing salvo in a fledgling war on harmful misinformation.

But what does the verdict, the first of three Sandy Hook-related cases against Jones to be decided, mean for the larger misinformation ecosystem, a social media-fueled world of election denial, COVID-19 skepticism and other dubious claims that the Infowars conspiracy theorist helped

build?

"I think a lot of people are thinking of this as sort of a blow against fake news, and it's important to realize that libel law deals with a very particular kind of fake news," said Eugene Volokh, a First Amendment professor at the UCLA School of Law.

U.S. courts have long held that defamatory statements — falsehoods damaging the reputation of a person or a business — aren't protected as free speech, but lies about other subjects, like science, history or the government, are. For example, saying COVID-19 isn't real is not defamatory, but spreading lies about a doctor treating coro-

navirus patients is.

That distinction is why Jones, who attacked the parents of Sandy Hook victims and claimed the 2012 shooting was staged with actors to increase gun control, is being forced to pay up while Holocaust deniers, flat-earthers and vaccine skeptics are free to post their theories without much fear of a multimillion-dollar court judgment.

"Alex Jones was attacking individuals," said Stephen D. Solomon, a law professor and founding editor of New York University's First Amendment Watch. "And that's important. A lot of disinformation does not attack individuals."

Visitors seek safety after floods close Death Valley roads

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Hundreds of hotel guests trapped by flash flooding at Death Valley National Park were able to drive out after crews cleared a pathway through rocks and mud, but roads damaged by floodwaters or choked with debris were expected to remain closed into next week, officials said Saturday.

The National Park Service said Navy and California Highway Patrol helicopters have been conducting aerial searches in remote areas for stranded vehicles, but had found none. However, it could take days to assess the damage — the park near the California-Nevada state line has over 1,000 miles of

roadway across 3.4 million acres.

No injuries were reported from the record-breaking rains Friday. The park weathered 1.46 inches of rain at the Furnace Creek area. That's about 75% of what the area typically gets in a year, and more than has ever been recorded for the entire month of August.

Since 1936, the only single day with more rain was April 15, 1988, when 1.47 inches fell, park officials said.

Nikki Jones, a restaurant worker who is living in a hotel with fellow employees, said rain was falling when she left for breakfast Friday morning. By the time she returned, rapidly pooling water had reached the room's doorway.

"I couldn't believe it," Jones said. "I hadn't seen water rising that fast in my life."

Fearful the water would come into their ground-floor room, Jones and her friends put their luggage on beds and used towels at the bottom of doorways to keep water from streaming in. For about two hours, they wondered whether they would get flooded.

While their room was spared, five or six other rooms at the hotel were flooded. Carpet from those rooms was later ripped out.

Most of the rain — just over an inch — came in an epic downpour between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. Friday, said John Adair, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Las Vegas.

Ships cleared to leave Ukraine marks shift

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Four more ships carrying agricultural cargo held up by the war in Ukraine received authorization Sunday to leave the country's Black Sea coast as analysts warned that Russia was moving troops and equipment in the direction of the southern port cities to stave off a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

The loaded vessels were cleared to depart from Chornomorsk and Odesa, according to the Joint Coordination Center, which oversees an international deal intended to get some 20 million tons of grain out of Ukraine to feed millions going hungry in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia.

Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and the United Nations signed the agreements last month to create a 111-nautical-mile sea corridor that would allow cargo ships to

travel safely out of ports that Russia's military had blockaded and through waters that Ukraine's military had mined. Implementation of the deal, which is in effect for four months, has proceeded slowly since the first ship embarked on Aug. 1.

Three of the carriers cleared to leave Ukraine on Sunday were transporting more than 171,000 tons of corn. The fourth was carrying more than 6,600 tons of sunflower oil, the Joint Coordination Center said.

Three other cargo ships that left Friday passed their inspections and received clearance Sunday to pass through Turkey's Bosphorus Strait on the way to their final destinations, the Center said.

However, the vessel that left Ukraine last Monday with great fanfare as the first under the grain exports deal had its scheduled arrival in Lebanon delayed

Sunday, according to a Lebanese Cabinet minister and the Ukraine Embassy. The cause of the delay was not immediately clear.

Ukrainian officials were initially skeptical of a grain export deal, citing suspicions that Moscow would try to exploit shipping activity to mass troops offshore or send long-range missiles from the Black Sea, as it has done multiple times during the war. The agreements call for ships to leave Ukraine under military escort and to undergo inspections to make sure they carry only grain, fertilizer or food and not any other commodities. Inbound cargo vessels are checked to ensure they are not carrying weapons.

In a weekend analysis, Britain's Defense Ministry said the Russian invasion that started Feb. 24 "is about to enter a new phase" in which the fighting

would shift to a roughly 217-mile front line extending from near the city of Zaporizhzhia to Russian-occupied Kherson.

That area includes the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Station, which came under fire late Saturday. Each side accused the other of the attack. Russian forces have occupied the power station for months. Russian soldiers there took shelter in bunkers before Saturday's attack, according to Energoatom.

For the last four months of the war, Russia has concentrated on capturing the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, where pro-Moscow separatists have controlled some territory as self-proclaimed republics for eight years. Russian forces have made gradual headway in the region while launching missile and rocket attacks to curtail the movements of Ukrainian fighters elsewhere.

'Nuclear disaster' feared amid shelling near plant

The Washington Post

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's nuclear power firm warned Sunday that rocket attacks on the site of Europe's largest nuclear power plant risked a "nuclear disaster" as the governments of Russia and Ukraine traded blame for the explosions at the facility.

For days, experts have warned that intensive fighting around the Zaporizhzhia plant in southeastern Ukraine posed a grave threat but purported strikes on Saturday near the plant's spent fuel storage facility prompted even more alarm.

"This is particularly dangerous because these buildings are not built with the same kind of reinforced concrete that the reactor containment building is," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association. "These places were not designed as fortresses against external missile or artillery

strikes."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged a "stronger response from the international community" following the attacks and said that he had spoken with Charles Michel, president of the European Council, to seek further sanctions on Moscow's nuclear industry. He accused the Kremlin of conducting "nuclear terror."

The Russian-installed local government of Enerhodar, where the plant is located, accused Ukraine of hitting the facility using a 220-mm Uragan multiple rocket launcher system.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Mariano Grossi, said the situation presented a dire threat to public health and the environment in Ukraine and far beyond its borders. On Sunday, he demanded he be allowed to visit the site with a team of nuclear experts.

Israeli airstrike kills 2nd Islamic Jihad commander

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Israel said Sunday that it killed a senior Islamic Jihad commander in a crowded Gaza refugee camp, the second such targeted attack since it launched its high-stakes military offensive against the militant group just before the weekend.

The Iran-backed militant group has fired hundreds of rockets at Israel in response, and the risk of the cross-border fighting turning into a full-fledged war remained high.

Gaza's ruling Hamas group, which fought an 11-day war with Israel in May 2021, appeared to stay on the sidelines for now, possibly because it fears Israeli reprisals and undoing economic understandings with Israel, including Israeli work permits for thousands of Gaza residents, that bolster its control.

The Islamic Jihad command-

er, Khaled Mansour, was killed in an airstrike on an apartment building in the Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza late Saturday.

Two other militants and five civilians were also killed in the attack, bringing the Palestinian death toll to 31 since the start of the Israeli offensive on Friday. Among the dead were six children and four women. The Palestinian Health Ministry said more than 250 people were wounded since Friday.

Israel said some of the deaths were caused by errant rocket fire, including one incident in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza in which six Palestinians were killed Saturday. On Sunday, a projectile hit a home in the same area of Jebaliya, killing two men. Palestinians held Israel responsible, while Israel said it was investigating whether the area was hit by an errant rocket.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Wife arrested, allegedly poisoned her husband

CA IRVINE — Police have arrested a Southern California woman for allegedly poisoning her husband.

Police in the Orange County city of Irvine said a man reported that he believed he was being poisoned by his wife of 10 years after he grew ill over the course of a month.

The man had video evidence he also provided to authorities, police said in a statement. He had internal injuries but is expected to recover, the statement said.

Yue Yu, 45, was arrested after investigators interviewed her and searched the couple's home, the statement said.

Explosive material in fire was improperly stored

NC WINSTON-SALEM — Hundreds of tons of a potentially explosive fertilizer ingredient was improperly stored at a North Carolina plant when it was destroyed by a fire that burned for days earlier this year, a state investigation found.

The North Carolina Department of Labor levied \$5,600 in fines on Winston Weaver Co. based on information from interviews with company employees, The Winston-Salem Journal reported.

The massive fertilizer plant fire that started on Jan. 31 and the threat of explosion forced thousands of area residents from their homes. The potential for what Winston-Salem Fire Chief Trey Mayo feared could be "one of the worst explosions in U.S. history" prompted re-

sponders to retreat.

In a citation issued July 18, the agency reported that 500 tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive substance used as an ingredient in fertilizer, was exposed to water leaking into the building, the Department of Labor reported in a citation issued to the company July 18. Investigators also found that wooden storage bins weren't adequate to keep ammonium nitrate from escaping or other substances from entering.

Man charged after 7 pellet gun attacks

CA SAN JOSE — A man in Northern California has been charged with using a pellet gun to shoot people at random, including a 15-year-old girl who suffered a collapsed lung and a fractured rib, authorities said.

Nicholas Montoya, a resident of Campbell, was charged with seven felony counts of assault with a deadly weapon after he allegedly shot at least seven people, most of them girls and women, between April and June in both Campbell and San Jose, authorities said.

"These were not childish pranks with a low-power weapon, these were deliberate snipe attacks on innocent victims," Santa Clara County Supervising Deputy District Attorney Marisa McKeown said.

Detectives were able to link Montoya to the crimes after surveillance video showed his car at the scene of some of the attacks and after finding a pellet gun during a search of his home.

The victims included a man and six women and girls, including a 9-year-old girl who was

walking with her mom up a flight of stairs at their San Jose apartment building when she was shot in the back by a high-powered pellet gun. Robert Lara said physicians were unable to remove the pellet from the body of his daughter, Maria Elena, because removing it would cause more complications.

Fair canceling poultry shows amid bird flu fear

AK ANCHORAGE — Officials with the Alaska State Fair have decided against the usual array of poultry exhibits this year amid avian flu concerns.

Fair CEO Jerome Hertel in a statement said officials believed it was best "to err on the side of caution."

The fair in Palmer usually has poultry exhibits with birds such as geese, turkey and ducks, the Anchorage Daily News reported. The fair will still include a baby chick exhibit, officials said.

State officials announced the first confirmed case in Alaska of a strain of a highly pathogenic avian flu virus. More than 100 cases have been confirmed so far, according to the state veterinarian's office. Most states have reported cases.

Teen charged, brought loaded gun to campus

MS GULFPORT — A teenage student was taken into custody after bringing a loaded handgun to a south Mississippi campus.

The teen, 15, is a student at Harrison Central High School in Gulfport, WLOX-TV reported.

Harrison County Sheriff Troy

Peterson said the school resource officer received a tip from a teacher that the teen had a weapon. School officials located the student on campus and found the gun tucked into the teen's waistband. Police took the student into custody minutes later as he entered the school building.

The student told officials that he brought the handgun for protection from another student, the news station reported.

The juvenile has since been charged as an adult with possession of a weapon on school property.

Former police chief gets 15 1/2 years for bribery

TX SAN ANGELO — A former West Texas police chief was sentenced to 15 1/2 years in prison for taking bribes for a multimillion-dollar contract for a city vendor.

A federal judge sentenced former San Angelo police Chief Timothy Ray Vasquez, 52, in San Angelo after a jury convicted him of bribery and mail fraud. U.S. District Judge James Wesley Hendrix also fined Vasquez \$35,000.

Vasquez was police chief from 2004 to 2016 before losing a bid for reelection while targeted by federal investigators.

Federal prosecutors presented evidence that Vasquez used his position as police chief to help a radio system vendor land a city contract worth almost \$6 million. In return, the vendor paid more than \$175,000 to Vasquez and provided him with the use of luxury suites at sporting events and a rock concert, as well as a San Antonio condo.

— From wire reports

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Taylor-made: Colts expect to rely on RB

Associated Press

WESTFIELD, Ind. — Matt Ryan first noticed Jonathan Taylor's natural instincts on Indianapolis Colts game film.

One play proved Taylor is even more impressive in person.

At Indy's first training camp practice last week, Ryan got a glimpse into this season's possibilities when his new running back caught a screen pass, quickly turned up the field and left defenders in his wake.

Even Ryan, who has seemingly seen everything over a 14-year career, did a double take.

"He made a cut that you just don't see and his explosion out of the cut, to me, was an eye-opener," Ryan said. "You can watch as much tape as you want, but it's different to see it in person. You think he's really good, then you show up and you think he's better than you thought."

Turning heads, drawing raves and surprising teammates has become an annual tradition for Taylor since he won the starting job at Wisconsin in 2017.

The true freshman started 13 of 14 games and finished with 1,977 yards that year before topping the 2,000-yard mark each of the next two seasons. He's one of three major college players with multiple entries in the 2,000-yard club and could become the first to do it three times in their combined college and pro careers.

Still, Taylor slid into the second round of the 2020 draft as critics warned about his lack of vision, penchant for fumbling and the toll 926 college carries could take on his body.

Colts general manager Chris Ballard, also a Badgers alum, didn't buy it.

He saw Taylor as a smart, workhorse back, capable of making home run plays

and becoming a strong voice in the locker room. It didn't take Taylor long to make Ballard look like a genius.

Taylor replaced the injured Marlon Mack in Indy's 2020 season opener and finished the season by rushing for a single-game franchise-record 253 yards as he went over the 1,000-yard mark.

Last season, even with defenses loading up against Taylor, he still rushed for a league-high 1,811 yards and 18 touchdowns while adding another 360 yards and two scores through the air — including the 76-yard screen pass he turned into a TD at Baltimore.

The question now is what will Taylor do for an encore?

He'll continue battling two-time NFL rushing champ Derrick Henry to claim the title of best back in the league and the AFC South. And the Colts believe Ryan's presence could back defenses off the line of scrimmage.

"That's the thought, but you never really know what teams are going to do," Taylor said this spring. "So you need to prepare in the offseason to face eight, nine, in your case, 16-man boxes. You need to prepare for those things in the offseason, during camp so no matter what happens — whether we face those loaded boxes or not — we're equipped and prepared and ready to handle them."

Numbers and honors don't motivate the 23-year-old Taylor, though. He's a perfectionist, always looking for a way to stay ahead of the competition.

During previous offseasons, he focused on refining his pass-catching and pass protection skills. This year, he prepared for a heavier workload than the 372 touches he had last season.

Of course the guy once admitted to Harvard also gets innovative with his workouts.

Yoga became part of his college workout routine and last year he added cold-weather training.

This year, Taylor invested in Strive, a technology company that helps athletes achieve and maintain peak performance with workouts based on muscle data. The hope is it will make him more productive and healthier.

"You always prepare, I don't want to say for the worst, but the most you can possibly do," Taylor said. "My parents always say better to have and not need rather than to need and not have. So if you come into this building at camp time, fully ready to go for any situation, you'll be prepared for your workload to increase."

Taylor would like to expand the schedule to include a championship run.

It's the one glaring omission on Taylor's resume. Despite winning two New Jersey state titles in track and field, he never won a Big Ten title with the Badgers, never appeared in the College Football Playoff and still has not won an NFL playoff game.

So while Taylor spent the offseason reviewing game film to see what he could have done better in 2021 to continue improving this season, Ryan was watching to figure out how he could best utilize Taylor's uncanny talent.

"My brother was up here at practice Saturday and he was like, 'Man, it was amazing to watch that guy go through the little ropes they run through at the beginning,'" Ryan said. "He's like, 'It's just different, you watch him and the movement is different. Those other guys are doing great behind him but he (Taylor) is another level.' He's special."

Middle men: Tomlinson, Phillips are key to Vikings' D

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. — The switch in schemes by the Minnesota Vikings and their edge rushing potential has dominated the narrative around their defense this season.

With new addition Za'Darius Smith and healthy returner Danielle Hunter, the Vikings are well-stacked at the outside linebacker spots as long as the duo can stay out of injury trouble.

The rebound they're seeking in 2022 likely won't amount to much, though, without a consistent effectiveness by Dalvin Tomlinson and Harrison Phillips at the interior positions.

"If you don't get the run stops, it's not going to be a lot of fun. They're going to dictate everything they want," Vikings defensive coordinator Ed Donatell said.

There will be another starter in the base alignment, with fourth-

year defensive tackle Armon Watts the leading candidate for the minority of situations when the team isn't in its typical three-cornerback nickel package. Tomlinson and Phillips, though, will have vital roles, and they'll be asked to produce a pass rush, too. The current NFL demands more from interior defensive linemen than simply plugging a gap.

Phillips had one sack last year for Buffalo, before coming to

Minnesota as a free agent. Tomlinson had 2½ sacks in his first season with the Vikings in 2021.

"After we continue to build the chemistry up front, the sky is the limit because we have so much talent across the board," Tomlinson said. "Especially with those guys on the edge, you can't ignore both of them. That frees up a lot of us on the inside. It's going to be super exciting."

Boselli is first Jaguar in Hall of Fame

Associated Press

CANTON, Ohio — Tony Boselli looked out at all the teal-colored jerseys in the crowd and screamed: “Duuuuuval!”

Finally, the Jacksonville Jaguars have a player in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Boselli, the first pick in Jaguars history, was among eight members of the Class of 2022 enshrined Saturday at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium.

“I thank God for football and I thank God for the people of Jacksonville,” Boselli said before shouting the fans’ rallying cry, the name of their county.

The Jaguars played the Las Vegas Raiders in the NFL preseason opener Thursday night, so No. 71 Boselli jerseys filled the seats.

A five-time Pro Bowl selection and three-time All-Pro left tackle in seven seasons in Jacksonville, Boselli saw his career cut short by injuries. But his dominant performance earned him a gold jacket.

“It’s a profound honor,” Boselli said.

Linebacker Sam Mills, defensive back LeRoy Butler, defensive linemen Bryant Young and Richard Seymour, wide receiver Cliff Branch, coach Dick Vermeil and longtime head of officiating Art McNally joined Boselli in a class of guys who waited several years — some decades — to get the call.

Young delivered the most emotional speech when he broke down honoring his son, Colby, who died of pediatric cancer at age 15 in 2016.

“We assured Colby we would keep his memory alive and we would continue speaking his name,” Young said. “Colby, you live long in our hearts.”

Young, who excelled at defensive tackle in

an era filled with talented players at the position, had 89½ sacks and earned four Pro Bowl selections in a 14-year career spent entirely with the San Francisco 49ers.

Vermeil gave the longest speech, blowing past the 8-minute limit by 15. The former Philadelphia Eagles, St. Louis Rams and Kansas City Chiefs coach seemed to thank everyone who helped him reach the stage.

He credited players for his success and specifically pointed out fellow Hall of Famers Kurt Warner and Isaac Bruce, who were on Vermeil’s “Greatest Show on Turf” Super Bowl championship team in St. Louis.

“Gosh darn, I just wish I had time to go through everyone,” Vermeil said.

And then he did, anyway.

Vermeil wrapped up the ceremonies. Butler kicked everything off.

The four-time All-Pro safety leaped in with the same enthusiasm he celebrated big plays at Lambeau Field.

“DJ Khaled said it best: ‘God did,’” Butler began, referencing the song. “When you play for the Green Bay Packers, a lot of doors open up. When you win a Super Bowl, more doors open up. When you’re picked for the Hall of Fame, football heaven opens up. It’s rare company.”

Butler drew cheers from Jaguars fans in attendance to see Boselli’s induction when he mentioned growing up in Jacksonville.

“Thank you, Duval,” Butler said. “My mom, growing up in poverty, she made us think rich every day because it’s not about what you have on or what you have, it’s how you act.”

Butler helped restore Green Bay’s glory days during a 12-year career. His versatility

as a safety set the standard for a new wave at the position and earned him a spot on the league’s All-Decade team of the 1990s.

Butler originated the “Lambeau Leap” and had a key sack in Green Bay’s Super Bowl victory over New England. He fell just short of becoming the first player in league history to finish his career with 40 interceptions and 20 sacks.

Mills, the 5-foot-9 linebacker nicknamed “Field Mouse” during his 12-year career with the New Orleans Saints and Carolina Panthers, and Branch were inducted posthumously. An inspirational figure, Mills overcame tremendous odds to even reach the NFL.

Mills played Division III college football and was not drafted. He was cut by the Cleveland Browns and Toronto Argonauts of the CFL and began his professional career with the USFL’s Philadelphia Stars. Jim Mora, who coached the Stars, brought him to New Orleans in 1986 and Mills never looked back.

“He was told he wasn’t good enough to play college football or big enough to play professional football, and at the age of 27 he wasn’t young enough to play in the NFL, and yet here we are today celebrating,” said Melanie Mills, Sam’s widow.

Mills became an assistant coach with the Panthers after his retirement. He was diagnosed with intestinal cancer before the 2003 season but kept coaching during his treatment and made what is known as his “Keep pounding” speech on the eve of the club’s Super Bowl matchup with New England at the end of that season.

Mills died in April 2005 at age 45. His “Keep pounding” remains the Panthers’ tag line.

Browns RB Hunt sits out drills, seeks an extension

Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — Cleveland Browns running back Kareem Hunt has stayed out of team drills during practice the past two days in protest because he’s asking the team for a long-term contract extension.

Hunt is the final year of a two-year, \$12 million deal he signed two years ago. The 27-year-old has been productive during his three seasons for Cleveland, but he missed nine games last season with calf and ankle injuries.

Hunt’s situation adds more drama for the Browns, who are waiting to see how long quarterback Deshaun Watson will be suspended for violating the NFL’s personal conduct policy.

Cleveland coach Kevin Stefanski was expected to address Hunt’s situation before Sunday’s practice.

There’s no doubt the Browns value Hunt, who led the league in rushing as a rookie for Kansas City in 2017, but he wasn’t healthy a year ago and the team

has better depth now at that position.

The team signed Hunt, who is from the Cleveland area, as a free agent in 2019. He came with his own baggage: suspended by the league for the first eight games of 2019 for off-field behavior, which included him shoving and kicking a woman while he played for the Kansas City Chiefs.

Running ferociously every time he touched the ball, Hunt rushed for 841 yards in 2020 and

added 304 yards receiving. He led the team with 11 touchdowns and was a perfect complementary piece for Pro Bowl back Nick Chubb.

There’s been speculation about Hunt’s future because the Browns have Chubb (1,259 yards in 2021) as their primary back and another solid backup in D’Ernest Johnson, who had 534 yards while filling in last season.

Cleveland also drafted Jerome Ford in the fifth round from Cincinnati.

Scherzer, Lindor lead Mets' DH sweep

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Max Scherzer tied a season high with 11 strikeouts in seven innings and the New York Mets beat the sloppy Atlanta Braves 6-2 Saturday night to complete a doubleheader sweep.

Francisco Lindor had three hits and three RBIs as New York took the opener 8-5, and the Mets stretched their NL East lead to 5½ games.

New York fans taunted the second-place Braves in the ninth inning of Game 2 by performing the tomahawk chop, a tradition at games in Atlanta despite complaints from some Native American groups that the chant is degrading.

Pete Alonso had three singles, including one with the bases loaded to match Yankees star Aaron Judge for the major league lead with 93 RBIs. The Mets swept their second doubleheader against the Braves this season and opened their biggest division lead since June 21. They are 11-3 in seven twinbills this year, including four sweeps.

New York (69-39) is 30 games over .500 for the first time since finishing 97-65 in 2006.

Lindor reached twice in the late game and scored on shortstop Dansby Swanson's throwing error as Max Fried (10-4) was nearly injured on the play.

Scherzer (8-2) allowed four hits in his 198th career win. The three-time Cy Young Award winner pulled into a tie for 14th place on the career strikeouts list with former Tigers teammate Justin Verlander at 3,140.

Lindor had three hits in the first game, including an RBI single during a two-run first inning against Jake Odorizzi (4-4). His double stretched the Mets' edge to 5-0.

Dodgers 8, Padres 3: Will Smith homered and drove in three runs, and host Los Angeles continued to sprint away from the rest of the NL West with its seventh consecutive victory.

Max Muncy hit a three-run homer for the Dodgers, who boosted their division lead to a season-high 14½ games with their 16th win in the past 18 meetings with second-place San Diego.

Los Angeles has won six straight series against the Padres and has outscored San Diego 16-4 in back-to-back big victories at Chavez Ravine.

The Padres are 1-3 since adding Juan Soto, Brandon Drury and Josh Bell to the lineup at Tuesday's trade deadline.

Cardinals 1, Yankees 0: Jordan Montgomery blanked his old teammates for five

innings and Nolan Arenado drove in the lone run as host St. Louis grabbed sole possession of the NL Central lead by handing New York its season-high fourth straight loss.

Making his first start for the Cardinals since being acquired at the trade deadline earlier in the week, Montgomery (4-3) was taken out after five innings for precautionary reasons due to cramping. He gave up two hits and a walk with one strikeout.

Reds 7, Brewers 5: José Barrero hit his first two major league home runs and visiting Cincinnati dropped Milwaukee into second place in the NL Central.

Joey Votto and Donovan Solano each had a solo homer for the Reds, who hadn't scored more than three runs since an 8-2 win July 30 over Baltimore.

Phillies 11, Nationals 5: Rhys Hoskins homered in the first inning for the third straight game — the first Philadelphia player to do it since at least 1900 — in a rout of visiting Washington.

J.T. Realmuto and Matt Vierling also went deep for the surging Phillies, who have won nine of 10 to move a season-best 11-games over .500.

Luke Voit homered and Lane Thomas had three hits and an RBI for the Nats, who are an MLB-worst 36-73.

Orioles 6, Pirates 3: Ryan McKenna hit a two-run double in the fifth inning, and host Baltimore won its fifth straight game.

Oneil Cruz hit a two-run homer for Pittsburgh in the fourth, but McKenna came through as a pinch-hitter the following inning, putting the Orioles up 5-2 with a big two-out hit to left.

Baltimore, which entered the day 1½ games out of the final wild card in the American League, has now won 21 of its last 28 games. The Orioles (56-51) have already reached their highest win total in five years.

Twins 7, Blue Jays 3: Jorge Polanco had a pair of two-out RBIs and Jose Miranda homered for host Minnesota, which beat Toronto behind a stellar bullpen performance.

All-Star Luis Arraez went 3-for-5 with an RBI, doubled twice and scored on both of Polanco's clutch hits for the first-place Twins.

Trevor Megill (3-1) led off a relief parade with a perfect fifth, and newly acquired closer Jorge López finished up with a hitless ninth.

Royals 5, Red Sox 4: Rookie Nick Pratto hit a game-ending home run in the ninth inning, lifting host Kansas City over Boston.

Mariners 2-1, Angels 1-7: Reid Detmers pitched seven smooth innings, Mickey Mo-

niak hit his second home run in three days before getting injured, and visiting Los Angeles defeated Seattle in the second game to split their doubleheader.

David Fletcher homered and drove in three runs for the Angels, who dropped the opener 2-1 as Ty France hit a two-run homer and George Kirby (3-3) struck out eight in six innings for the Mariners.

Tigers 9, Rays 1: Harold Castro drove in two runs and scored twice as host Detroit ended a three-game skid by roughing up All-Star Shane Bieber on Lou Whitaker Night.

Playing in front of their first sellout crowd since opening day, the Tigers won for the fifth time in 16 games on the night they retired Whitaker's No. 1.

Rockies 3, Diamondbacks 2: Ryan McMahon hit a tiebreaking homer in the ninth, Antonio Senzatela threw seven quality innings and visiting Colorado rallied for a win over Arizona.

The Rockies rallied twice from one-run deficits in the late innings. Colorado rookie Elehuris Montero hit the first homer of his big league career to tie it 2-all in the eighth.

Rangers 8, White Sox 0: Dane Dunning allowed one hit in seven dominant innings against his former team for his first win since April, and Adolis García drove in five runs as host Texas shut out Chicago.

Dunning (2-6) struck out six and walked one, winning for the first time in 16 starts since a 3-1 victory April 30 over Atlanta. The White Sox traded the right-hander to the Rangers in a December 2020 deal for pitcher Lance Lynn.

Guardians 4, Astros 1: Cal Quantrill tossed six scoreless innings and Amed Rosario had a two-run single, lifting host Cleveland over AL West-leading Houston.

All-Star José Ramírez added two hits and an RBI as the Guardians pulled within 1½ games of first-place Minnesota in the AL Central with the combined six-hitter.

Giants 7, Athletics 3: LaMonte Wade Jr. and J.D. Davis homered on consecutive pitches in the sixth inning, Joey Bart also connected, and slumping San Francisco beat host Oakland.

Carlos Rodón (10-6) allowed one run in 5½ innings for his team-leading 10th victory as the Giants won for the fourth time in 16 games since the All-Star break.

Cubs 4, Marlins 0: Drew Smyly tossed shutout ball into the seventh inning for his first win at Wrigley Field as Chicago blanked Miami.