

# STARS AND STRIPES®

MONDAY, AUGUST 15, 2022

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

## Navy to give \$14.9M to protect watershed

BY WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The Navy has pledged to contribute \$14.9 million to help foster protection of the groundwater aquifer that serves Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and much of greater Honolulu in response to a disastrous jet fuel leak last year.

The Navy's cooperative agreement with the state of Hawaii would provide funding through the Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program Challenge, the service said in a news release Thursday.

The move is an effort by the Navy to regain public trust after jet fuel from its Red Hill underground fuel storage tank leaked late last year into a well that supplied water to thousands of residents in military housing communities on and near the joint base.

The state and Defense Department have ordered the storage facility to be emptied and permanently shut down. One of the three wells used by the Navy for its water distribution system remains contaminated.

A Navy investigation made public in July

cataloged a host of deficiencies by the service that led to the groundwater contamination, including poor training, a culture of not complying with procedures and slow response times.

Some island residents are no longer willing to give the Navy the benefit of the doubt when it comes to the water issue and fear the full extent of the contamination is not yet known.

Hawaii's Board of Water Supply said in an Aug. 4 news release it had detected low-level petroleum contamination in a monitoring well about 1,500 feet southeast of the Red Hill facility.

The detection of chemicals associated with hydrocarbons "significantly heightens the [Board of Water Supply's] concern that fuel contamination from the Red Hill facility is traveling through O'ahu's sole-source aquifer," Ernest Lau, the board's manager and chief engineer, said in the news release.

The new Navy funding is intended to "implement landscape-scale watershed protection, restore native forests to replenish the Pearl Harbor Aquifer, and provide long-term protection in the Koolau Mountains,"

the Navy said in the Thursday release.

The aim is to protect roughly 7,155 acres of the upland forest in the watershed directly above the joint base, the service said.

"These native forests protect the source of drinking water for [the joint base] and the surrounding local community, provide a buffer from major storm events that cause erosion and flooding, and subsequently minimize impacts to mission operations," the Navy said.

"The Navy sees itself as part of the community, and with that role comes a responsibility to protect and preserve the land, water, and other natural resources which Hawaii's people have honored and depended upon," Meredith Berger, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment, said in the release.

The watershed funding is dwarfed by the \$1.1 billion that Congress has approved to deal with the contamination crisis, which displaced thousands of residents for several months and sickened many.

Congress is considering spending another \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 2023 to pay for emptying and shuttering the fuel facility.

## China responds to US visit to Taiwan with new drills

*The Washington Post*

TAIPEI, Taiwan — China announced new military drills around Taiwan on Monday, as a delegation of U.S. lawmakers met with Taiwanese officials at a time of heightened tensions in the region, with Beijing accusing the United States of "playing cheap political tricks" by strengthening its unofficial relationship with the self-governing democracy.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office also warned Taiwan's leaders that they would be "severely punished" if they continued to provoke Beijing.

The delegation of five members of Congress, led by Sen. Edward Markey, D-Mass.,

were expected to meet with President Tsai Ing-wen during an overnight stop in Taipei as part of a larger tour of Asia, according to a statement from the American Institute in Taiwan. Taiwan had not released details of the meeting by mid-afternoon Monday local time.

In a statement Monday, Ma Xiaoguang, a spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office in Beijing, said China opposes the lawmakers' trip and warned of unspecified consequences if Taiwan's leaders "failed to restrain themselves."

"Certain individuals in the United States haven't learned that lesson from the consequences of Pelosi's visit," he

said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin also criticized the delegation, saying it was sending "seriously wrong signals" toward "separatist forces" in Taiwan.

Beijing's reaction on Monday was less fiery than its response to the visit of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., two weeks earlier, which sparked the largest display of Chinese military saber rattling since the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis.

On Monday afternoon, however, the People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theater Command announced drills involving multiple branches of the

military near Taiwan, which it said were a warning to the United States and Taiwan against "playing cheap political tricks." China's Defense Ministry said in a statement that the latest visit by U.S. lawmakers showed that the United States was the "true agitator and breaker of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait." It added that the Chinese military continues to perfect its ability to repel any foreign interference in the region.

The initially muted response differed starkly from the flurry of angry statements that Beijing released as soon as Pelosi's plane touched down in Taipei on Aug. 2.

# S. Korea leader offers to improve North

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — South Korea will provide economic incentives to North Korea if it halts its nuclear program, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said in the annual Liberation Day speech on Monday.

He also promised closer cooperation on regional security with Japan, the end of whose 35-year colonial rule in the previous century the holiday celebrates. The two nations, though regional partners through the United States, sometimes clash over leftover historic issues.

The president's speech on Liberation Day is traditionally viewed as a blueprint for upcoming policies and pays homage to revolutionary figureheads who helped free the country from Japanese rule.

Yoon used his speech to float

an "audacious initiative" that he said would improve North Korea's economy if it stops developing its nuclear program and takes earnest steps toward denuclearization. Yoon held out to Pyongyang several incentives, including a large-scale food program, power generation assistance and modernization of ports and airports.

"We will also help enhance North Korea's agricultural productivity, offer assistance to modernize hospitals and medical infrastructure, and implement international investment and financial support initiatives," he said.

Yoon mentioned no repercussions if the North fails to scrap its nuclear arsenal, but he previously threatened a unified response with the U.S. if the North continues its "provocations" and called for strengthening the South's missile defense systems.

North Korea so far this year has conducted 17 rounds of missile tests. South Korean government officials also believe the North is preparing for its seventh underground nuclear test and its first since 2017.

South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup in a news conference on Thursday said a North Korean nuclear test would prompt an "entirely different" response from the South.

Pyongyang, he said, must denuclearize to achieve "sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula, in Northeast Asia and around the world."

Yoon, who was inaugurated in May, campaigned on bridging the divide between Seoul and Tokyo after diplomatic relations ebbed under former South Korean President Moon Jae-in and former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The persisting issues include territorial disputes

over nearby islets and differences over the reparations for Korean women forced into sexual slavery.

Yoon took note of atrocities inflicted on the Korean Peninsula during Japan's colonial rule from 1910, but he also pledged to find common ground with Tokyo and "move toward a common future."

"In the past, we had to unshackle ourselves from the political control imposed upon us by Imperial Japan so that we could regain and defend our freedom," Yoon said in his speech. "Today, Japan is our partner as we face common threats that challenge the freedom of global citizens."

In North Korea, leader Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, in a televised speech Thursday blamed the South for spreading COVID-19 through its border and threatened "deadly" measures against its neighbor.

## Okinawa prefecture sues to block USMC runway

By MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND HANA KUSUMOTO  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Okinawa prefecture on Friday sued the Japanese government to again try to block further construction of a Marine Corps runway into Oura Bay at Henoko.

The prefecture's suit, filed in Fukuoka High Court in Naha, seeks to reinstate Okinawa's decision to reject a construction change application by the runway builders, a spokesman for the prefecture's Henoko Base Construction Countermeasures Division told Stars and Stripes on Monday.

Tetsuo Saito, Japan's minister of land, infrastructure, transport and tourism, overruled the prefecture earlier this year at the request of the Ministry of Defense.

The central government's appeal to the minister was "illegal," according to a statement from Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki on Friday. The prefecture's lawsuit demands that Saito annul his decision, the statement said.

The quarrel with Tokyo began in November when Tamaki withheld approval of updated construction plans for the site. Japan's Ministry of Defense then appealed to Saito, who ruled for the ministry in April.

The runway at Camp Schwab, a Marine base on Okinawa's rural northern coast, is decades in planning and behind schedule. It is meant to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Ginowan, which Japanese officials consider inherently dangerous due to its location in a densely packed area.

## Festive ending for Super Garuda Shield festivities

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

BATURAJA, Indonesia — Music and dance took the place of artillery and airlifters over the weekend as Indonesians bid farewell to thousands of U.S., Australian and Singaporean troops after two weeks of strenuous military training in Southeast Asia's most populous nation.

The largest installment yet of Super Garuda Shield, a 16-year-old annual training event, officially concluded Sunday but not before a let-your-hair-down official party for the troops who took part in the exercise.

Indonesian junior high school students performed traditional dances, twirling colorful umbrellas in front of a pair of rocket launchers and a Jumbotron.

Hundreds of soldiers watched leaping tribesmen in traditional dress, armed with bows and arrows, a warmup to Indonesian troops displaying their martial arts skills by smashing concrete blocks with their heads.

A day earlier, Spc. Keegan McCaffery, 22, of Missoula, Mont., had been training on a sniper rifle. He compared Saturday's performance to what he'd seen Native Americans do in the States.

"It's a little different to back home," he said. "It's pretty cool to see other walks of life and different cultures."

Super Garuda Shield involved 2,000 U.S., 2,000 Indonesian and a smaller number of troops from a handful of other nations. It began Aug. 1 on the island of Sumatra.

# Taliban mark year in power amid mixed feelings

*The Washington Post*

KABUL, Afghanistan — Chants of “Victory! Freedom!” rang out from central Kabul as dozens of Taliban fighters and commanders gathered to mark a year since the group swept into the Afghan capital, ending a long, brutal war and upending the lives of millions.

Cars packed with families slowed to take pictures and video of the scene on Monday. Some drivers honked their horns as they shouted their support, others blasted Quranic recitations. Young men and boys draped in freshly printed Taliban flags joined the crowd, posing for selfies.

“For us this is a day of libera-

tion,” said Muhammad Zubair Shahab, a 22-year-old Taliban fighter who was among the first units to enter Kabul. “By the grace of God in a single year we have brought security to Kabul and eliminated corruption,” he said.

The Taliban takeover of Kabul did bring an end to over two decades of war, but it has also shattered lives, gutted an already struggling health care system and thrown the country into uncertainty amid harsh crackdowns on women’s rights and a spiraling economic crisis.

As the crowd in central Kabul grew, young children dressed in stained, threadbare clothing appeared at the sidelines, begging

onlookers and members of the Taliban for pocket change. “Please, I haven’t eaten, I just want to buy once piece of bread,” they said, moving through the crowd. Some gave them money; others shooed them away.

The Taliban fighters celebrating atop a roundabout admitted they have seen the Afghan capital slip deeper into poverty during their year in power.

“When you are liberated you must endure hardship,” Shahab said. He claimed the group has a plan to improve Afghanistan’s economy and that the country will eventually rebound.

“The invaders were never going to improve the economy,” he said, referring to the high levels of

poverty that existed in Afghanistan for years during the presence of foreign forces before the Taliban takeover.

“They were just here for their own interests, we are here for the Afghan people,” he said.

Elsewhere in Kabul, Taliban checkpoints blocked roads, effectively preventing any counter demonstrations and leaving some feeling trapped inside their own homes on the recently declared national holiday.

Groups of women hoping to publicly protest bans on education for girls frantically exchanged messages trying to find a safe place to gather. A small protest was held indoors after they were unable to assemble outside.

## With war nearby, US supports Poland on its military holiday

*Associated Press*

WARSAW, Poland — The Polish president and other officials marked their nation’s Armed Forces Day holiday Monday alongside the U.S. army commander in Europe and regular American troops, a symbolic show of support for NATO members on the eastern front as Russia wages war nearby in Ukraine.

Gen. Darryl Williams, the new commanding general of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, attended the ceremony in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in downtown Warsaw.

Nearby Polish children climbed on top of a U.S. and other NATO tanks, helped by smiling American, British and Romanian soldiers.

Despite the festive atmosphere, Williams told The Associated Press that the U.S. presence was meant to deliver a message of “strength and resilience.”

“It is about deterrence, about being strong, NATO is strong, the Polish people are strong, and we are standing shoulder to

shoulder with them,” he said.

The holiday commemorates Poland’s victory in 1920 over Soviet Russia in the Battle of Warsaw, which stopped the Bolshevik army’s westward advance.

President Andrzej Duda in a speech recalled how Soviet commanders at the time were sure of victory, drawing a obvious parallel to Russian assumptions when it launched its full-scale war on Ukraine on Feb. 24.

“For 74 years of its existence, Soviet Russia lost only one official war, and it was that war 102 years ago,” he said.

Duda accused Russia of breaking a taboo in force since World War II that held that nations do not attack sovereign nations seeking to deprive them of their territory or independence.

Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak ahead of the ceremony told reporters: “Years pass, but one thing is constant — when Russia tries to rebuild its empire, it is always an evil empire. It always commits war crimes.”

## US: Drone attack targets base in Syria, no losses

*Associated Press*

BEIRUT — An attack with drones hit a compound run by American troops and U.S.-backed Syrian opposition fighters in eastern Syria on Monday, the U.S. military said, adding that there were no casualties or damage.

The military said the attack took place in the vicinity of al-Tanf base near where Syria, Jordan and Iraq meet. There was no claim of responsibility for the attack.

U.S. and coalition troops are based at al-Tanf to train Syrian forces on patrols to counter militants from Islamic State. The base is also located on a road serving as a vital link for Iranian-backed forces, stretching from Tehran all the way to Lebanon.

The military statement said coalition troops in coordination with opposition fighters — known as Maghawair al-Thowra — “responded to an attack by multiple unmanned aerial systems in the vicinity of al-Tanf Garrison” on Monday

morning.

It said the troops successfully engaged one of the drones preventing its impact while a second one detonated within the opposition forces’ compound, “resulting in zero casualties or reported damage.” The other attempted drone strikes were not successful, it added.

Maj. Gen. John Brennan, the commander of Combined Joint Task Force, condemned the drone strike. “Such attacks put the lives of innocent Syrian civilians at risk and undermine the significant efforts by our Partner Forces to maintain the lasting defeat of ISIS,” he said.

The attack occurred hours after Israeli airstrikes on western and central Syria killed three soldiers, wounded three others and caused material damage.

A Syrian opposition war monitor, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said the Israeli strikes hit Syrian army positions where Iran-backed fighters are based.

# Judge: Graham must testify in vote probe

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A federal judge on Monday said U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham must testify before a special grand jury in Atlanta that is investigating whether then-President Donald Trump and his allies broke any laws while trying to overturn his narrow 2020 general election loss in Georgia.

Attorneys for Graham, R-S.C., had argued that his position as a U.S. senator provided him immunity from having to appear before the investigative panel and asked the judge to quash his subpoena. But U.S. District Judge Leigh Martin May wrote in an order Monday that immunities related to his role as a senator do not protect him from having to testify. Graham's subpoena instructs him to appear before the special

grand jury on Aug. 23, but he is expected to appeal the judge's ruling.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis opened the investigation last year, and a special grand jury with subpoena power was seated in May at her request. Last month she filed petitions seeking to compel testimony from seven Trump advisers and associates.

Prosecutors have indicated they want to ask Graham about phone calls they say he made to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and his staff in the weeks following Trump's election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Graham had argued that a provision of the Constitution provides absolute protection against a senator being questioned about legislative acts.

But the judge found there are "considerable areas of potential grand jury inquiry" that fall outside that provision's scope. The judge also rejected Graham's argument that the principle of "sovereign immunity" protects a senator from being summoned by a state prosecutor.

Graham also argued that Willis, a Democrat, had not demonstrated extraordinary circumstances necessary to compel testimony from a high-ranking official. But the judge disagreed, finding that Willis has shown "extraordinary circumstances and a special need" for Graham's testimony on issues related to alleged attempt to influence or disrupt the election in Georgia.

May, the judge, last month rejected a similar attempt by

U.S. Rep. Jody Hice, R-Ga., to avoid testifying before the special grand jury.

A Graham spokesperson, Kevin Bishop, said Monday that the senator had no comment but referred to what Graham said when asked about the probe last week. During a news conference in Columbia, S.C., Graham said, "We will take this as far as we need to take it" when asked about his efforts to fight his subpoena.

In calls made shortly after the 2020 general election, Graham "questioned Secretary Raffensperger and his staff about reexamining certain absentee ballots cast in Georgia in order to explore the possibility of a more favorable outcome for former President Donald Trump," Willis wrote in a petition.

## Drugmakers hunt for vaccine to target all COVID variants

Bloomberg News

Scientists fear the omicron shots coming this fall won't be much better at keeping people from getting COVID-19 than what's come before. That's pushing drugmakers to start working on next-generation vaccines that don't have to be updated that often, if at all. Testing shows that omicron-specific vaccines under development at Moderna and the partnership of Pfizer and BioNTech will be "little or no better" than the currently available boosters, according to John Moore, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Weill Cornell Medical College.

Both Moderna and Pfizer said their omicron-specific vaccines raised more antibodies to the BA.4 and BA.5 omicron subvariants than current formulations. Even so, the United States needs to focus efforts on next-generation vaccine technology to give more durable protection, said Anthony Fauci, President Joe

Biden's chief medical adviser.

"Even with the highly flexible platform of mRNA, which is more flexible than virtually anything we've had before, it's going to be very difficult to keep up with the pace of newly evolving variants," Fauci said in an interview. "Which gets us to the question: What about a pan-coronavirus vaccine?"

Pfizer's leaders had earlier suggested that they weren't focusing on development of an all-encompassing shot. But laboratory evidence has raised the stakes.

The original vaccines remain protective against severe disease and hospitalization. But as new variants continue to emerge, the shots have become less effective at preventing infections because they're different from variants circulating.

"We're pretty much screwed," Poland said, unless drugmakers come up with shots offering stronger protection.

## Navajo Code Talker marks early days 80 years later

Associated Press

PHOENIX — It's been 80 years since the first Navajo Code Talkers joined the Marines, transmitting messages using a code based on their then-unwritten native language to confound Japanese military cryptologists during World War II — and Thomas H. Begay, one of the last living members of the group, still remembers the struggle.

"It was the hardest thing to learn," the 98-year-old Begay said Sunday at a Phoenix ceremony marking the anniversary. "But we were able to develop a code that couldn't be broken by the enemy of the United States of America."

Hundreds of Navajos were recruited by the U.S. Marines to serve as Code Talkers during the war. Begay is one of three who is still alive to talk about it.

The Code Talkers partici-

pated in all assaults the Marines led in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945 including Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu and Iwo Jima.

They sent thousands of messages without error on Japanese troop movements, battlefield tactics and other communications crucial to the war's ultimate outcome.

President Ronald Reagan established Navajo Code Talkers Day in 1982 and the Aug. 14 holiday honors all the tribes associated with the war effort.

It's also an Arizona state holiday and Navajo Nation holiday on the vast reservation that occupies portions of northeastern Arizona, northwestern New Mexico and southeastern Utah.

Begay and his family came from Albuquerque, N.M., to Phoenix for Sunday's event at the Wesley Bolin Plaza where a Navajo Code Talker statue is displayed.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

### Man accused of killing man over parking fight

**AZ** MESA — A suspect is accused of fatally running over an east Mesa man with his vehicle over a parking dispute, according to authorities.

Mesa police said 61-year-old John Lagana remains jailed on suspicion of first-degree murder.

Police said 63-year-old Christopher Heimer was pronounced dead at the scene Friday after being run over twice for allegedly refusing to allow Lagana to park near his home.

Court records show that Lagana told police Heimer had allowed him to park his vehicle in Heimer's driveway until six months ago. Lagana is reportedly homeless and lives out of his vehicle.

### Plane accidentally backs into another at airport

**MA** BOSTON — An airplane bumped into another plane while backing up at Logan International Airport in Boston, prompting an investigation.

No one was injured when the two Delta Airlines planes collided at low-speed on Friday night, according to the Federal Aviation Administration, which said it is investigating. The Boston Globe reported.

One of the planes, which was headed for Los Angeles, clipped the other as it pushed back from its gate at the airport. The other plane was empty and parked at an adjacent gate at the time.

The FAA said the left winglet of the moving plane clipped the horizontal stabilizer of the other. A spokesperson for the Massachusetts Port Authority described

the collision as minor, but added it had the ability to cause damage that could keep planes out of service.

### Man cut 3 with machete after trying to buy guns

**NY** PATCHOGUE — A Long Island man is facing assault and weapons charges for allegedly attacking three people with a machete at a sporting goods store.

Suffolk County police said Saturday that the attack occurred the previous afternoon at a Dick's Sporting Goods store in Patchogue, about 30 miles east of New York City.

Treyvius Tunstall allegedly asked to buy rifles but walked away after he was asked to provide identification. According to police, he then slashed a store manager with a machete and attacked two other people as he fled.

The store manager suffered wounds to the torso, arms and head, Suffolk County Police Commissioner Rodney Harrison said Saturday.

### Officials: Loud 'boom' heard likely a meteor

**UT** SALT LAKE CITY — A loud "boom" heard across areas of northern Utah was likely a meteor, officials said Saturday.

Reports of the loud noise circulated at about 8:30 a.m., with people from Orem to southern Idaho posting that they heard the "boom," The Salt Lake Tribune reported.

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox tweeted that his office confirmed it was not related to any seismic activity or military installations.

The National Weather Service's Salt Lake City office wrote in a tweet that its lightning detection mapper likely picked up the meteor's trail flash, which officials said seemed to be confirmed by witness video in Roy.

### Charges in alleged fatal hit-and-run boat crash

**MD** ANNAPOLIS — A Maryland man has been charged in connection with the death of a woman last month after the boat she was in was struck by another vessel on a river, authorities said.

Brownell Edds Jr., 48, of Cape St. Claire, was arrested Friday by Maryland Natural Resources Police and charged with negligent manslaughter by a vessel as well as criminal negligent manslaughter by a vessel, news outlets reported.

Laura Slattery, 63, of Pasadena, and her husband were on a boat on the Magothy River on the evening of July 3, returning from watching fireworks. That's when police said another boat struck their vessel from behind and left without stopping.

Slattery was critically injured and died a short time later. Her husband wasn't injured.

### Over 12 injured when car crashed into pub

**VA** ARLINGTON — Two people remained in critical condition on Saturday among the more than a dozen who were injured after a vehicle crashed into a northern Virginia pub and restaurant, according to authorities.

The crash at the Ireland's Four Courts establishment in Arlington, which happened early Fri-

day evening, also caused a fire that was quickly extinguished, media outlets reported.

Authorities said nine people in all were taken to hospitals, according to the Arlington County Police Department.

Arlington police said a preliminary review shows the vehicle's driver was working as a rideshare driver and had a passenger at the time of the crash. They said the driver ran off busy Wilson Boulevard and into the restaurant. The driver and passenger were among those taken to hospitals, a police news release said.

### Ex-presidential yacht to be restored at shipyard

**ME** BELFAST — A private shipyard is preparing for a painstaking stem-to-stern restoration of a floating piece of presidential history.

The Sequoia is a 1925 motor yacht that served eight presidents before being sold by President Jimmy Carter in 1977.

French & Webb, a custom boat building company, was tapped for the restoration by the current owner. Strict guidelines must be followed because the vessel is on the National Register of Historic Places.

For now, the 104-foot vessel remains under a white tarp. Behind the scenes, workers have created a three-dimensional model because the original design plans couldn't be found, and assembled materials including longleaf pine from the Southeast and white oak from Denmark.

Once the physical work begins, likely in the spring, the restoration of the Sequoia should be a three-year project, said Todd French.

— From wire reports

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# Realignment may cut back funds for Group of 5 teams

Associated Press

Cincinnati set itself up to become the first Group of Five team to make the College Football Playoff by winning at Notre Dame.

While the Bearcats fulfilled their playoff aspirations last year — they had to win every regular-season game to even be in consideration for the four-team CFP — the games most G5 and Football Championship Subdivision schools play against the Power Five teams are about the paycheck they get to help finance their programs.

“The obvious reason is financially. It’s a good payday,” said Middle Tennessee State coach Rick Stockstill, whose Blue Raiders have played 38 games against current P5 teams over the past 16 seasons, first in the Sun Belt and now Conference USA.

But with the Southeastern Conference and Big Ten both set to expand to at least 16 teams over the next few seasons, and the other Power Five leagues going through their own transitions that include the addition of some current G5 teams, there could be fewer openings for such games.

“I’d hate for those to go away because I think to keep college football going and keep it where it is ... that level’s important too,” said Pittsburgh coach Pat Narduzzi, whose team will play FCS Rhode Island, his alma mater. “It may go away. I think it depends on how many teams are in these conferences. ... That’s way down the road, I guess. I don’t know how far down the road.”

Of the 60 teams now in the Group of Five leagues — American, Conference USA, Mid-American, Mountain West and Sun Belt — only FIU and North Texas aren’t scheduled to play a Power Five team this season, while 26 of them will play multiple P5 opponents. MAC team Kent State is the only one with three, making trips to Washington, Oklahoma and defending national champion Georgia.

There are 85 scheduled P5 vs. G5 games this season, five more than last year but fewer than the 92 played in 2019. The Big Ten, Pac-12 and SEC played conference-only schedules in 2020 because of COVID-19, with the ACC and Big 12 limited to one non-league game.

The SEC and Big Ten could go from eight to nine conference games when they get their new teams. Oklahoma and Texas will be in the SEC no later than the 2025 season, with Pac-12 teams UCLA and Southern California set to join the Big Ten in 2024.

Even with two departures, the Big 12 will grow with the additions next summer of independent BYU, along with Cincinnati, Houston and UCF from the American.

The Big 12 has played a round-robin schedule as a 10-team league, but might cut from nine to eight conference games, as could the revised Pac-12, with those extra spots potentially used for other P5 games. The ACC, which among major conferences plays the highest percentage of non-league P5 games and lowest percentage of G5 opponents, plans to maintain its eight-game conference slate through at least 2026.

Middle Tennessee, which has played as many as three SEC teams in the same season, goes to Miami on Sept. 24.

“I haven’t seen anybody say they’re going to play 12 conference games. ... So there’s three, there’s four slots available that we can still have the opportunity to play those Power Five schools,” said Stockstill, who still relishes the opportunity for his guys to show they can compete against the “so-called best players” in those games.

Miami’s opener with new coach Mario Cristobal is against instate FCS school Bethune-Cookman. The Hurricanes also play at SEC team Texas A&M between home games against G5s Southern Miss and Middle Tennessee before ACC play.

“I like to show a tremendous amount of respect to Group of Five teams too because there’s been some great ones. Everything is cyclical, right? And you never know when a team is going to hit its stride,” Cristobal said. “So there’s a lot of quality football teams out there that may not be Power Five teams.”

An undefeated record alone wouldn’t be enough for Cincinnati to make the playoff. But the Bearcats had the opportunity to play Notre Dame for the first time since 1900, and Big Ten team Indiana — and beat both on the road.

Only 15 of the 131 FBS teams won’t play an FCS team this season. The SEC is the only P5 league with all of its teams playing at least one G5 school and a game against a lower-division FCS team.

Bethune-Cookman is one of five SWAC teams that will play a P5 team, but Commissioner Charles McClelland said his growing league of historically black colleges and universities doesn’t necessarily have to play those step-up games because of corporate and media partners that have improved the league’s financial position.

# Alabama tops AP preseason poll, followed by Ohio State

Associated Press

With two of the best players in the country leading the way — and a championship game loss as motivation — Alabama is No. 1 in The Associated Press preseason college football poll for the second consecutive season and ninth time overall.

Heisman Trophy winner Bryce Young, national defensive player of the year Will Anderson Jr. and the Crimson Tide received 54 of 63 first-place votes and 1,566 points in the Top 25 released on Monday.

Ohio State is No. 2 with six first-place votes (1,506 points) from the media panel and defending national champion Georgia is third with three first-place votes (1,455 points). Clemson is No. 4. Notre Dame rounds out the top five, setting up a tantalizing opener at Ohio State on Sept. 3.

The Tide’s preseason No. 1 ranking is the seventh in 15 years under coach Nick Saban. Since the preseason rankings started in 1950, only Oklahoma with 10 has been No. 1 in the initial poll more often than Alabama.

The Crimson Tide started last season No. 1 and finished ranked No. 2 after losing the national championship game to the Southeastern Conference rival Bulldogs.

Alabama coach Nick Saban recently called 2021 a rebuilding season for his Tide dynasty, which has won six national titles over the last 13 years. He has a point.

Young was in his first season as a starter last year, playing behind an inexperienced offensive line. He was unfazed, throwing for 4,872 yards and 47 touchdowns.

Anderson was a force on the other side ball as Alabama broke in a back seven with mostly new starters. The sophomore led the nation in tackles for loss with 33½, 11½ more than No. 2 on the list. Ohio State brings back a Heisman Trophy finalist at quarterback in C.J. Stroud while at Georgia, most of the key players from one of the best college defenses of the last 25 years are now in NFL. Still, quarterback Stetson Bennett and All-America tight end Brock Bowers return to a Bulldogs offense that could be even more explosive in 2022.

Texas A&M, which finished last season unranked despite handing Alabama its only regular-season loss, starts this season No. 6.

Defending Pac-12 champ Utah is seventh, the best preseason ranking in school history.

# Zalatoris claims 1st PGA Tour victory

*Associated Press*

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — The 10-foot par putt in regulation was so crucial and the moment so important that Will Zalatoris doesn't remember screaming out when he made it, "What are they gonna say now?"

It took three playoff holes to get the answer Sunday in the FedEx St. Jude Championship, and it was more along the lines of what they won't say.

Zalatoris is no longer the best on the PGA Tour without a victory.

Already a force in the majors, Zalatoris got that first win out of the way with clutch putts and smart decisions to beat Sepp Straka and capture the first FedEx Cup playoffs event.

"It's hard to say, 'About time,' when it's your second year on tour, but it's about time," Zalatoris said. "Considering all those close finishes, it means a lot."

He could have been referring to his runner-up to Hideki Matsuyama in the Masters last year, playoff losses at Torrey Pines and at Southern Hills in the PGA Championship, and most recently the putt that burned the edge of the cup that kept him from a U.S. Open playoff.

This one could have gone either way, a

playoff that featured three penalty drops in three holes, neither player making birdie and Zalatoris winning on the par-3 11th with a bogey.

Zalatoris looked to be in trouble from a fairway bunker on the 18th in regulation until he made that 10-footer for par at a 4-under 66. He was in the trees, close to a boundary fence on the 18th on the second playoff hole when he wisely chipped out and made a 15-foot par putt.

Nothing was more wild than the final hole.

His tee shot hit the bank and then bounced seven times on the rocks before coming to rest. Straka followed with a shot that hit the bank, took one bounce off the rocks and went into the water. A huge break for Zalatoris? Not really. He had no realistic shot.

Straka went to the drop zone and his wedge went into the back bunker. He played his fourth shot out to 4 feet as Zalatoris was still going over his options.

"Considering where Sepp was and he had 4 feet for 5, there's no reason for me to try that shot and make it bank right into the grass and go back in the water and all of a sudden I've lost the golf tournament," Zalatoris said.

He went to the drop zone, hit to 7 feet and let his raised hands drop over his head in relief when he made the winning putt.

Zalatoris moves into the top 10 in the world for the first time and takes the No. 1 spot in the FedEx Cup, assuring him a reasonable shot at the \$18 million prize in two weeks.

Straka, a winner this year in the Honda Classic, narrowly missed a 20-foot birdie putt for the win on the 18th for a 67. He had a 25-foot putt for the win on the 18th on the first playoff hole and had to make a 7-footer the second time around to stay in the game.

"This course is where every shot you hit you're on the edge of your seat," Straka said. "Add the nerves of competing for a tournament to that, especially for a playoff event and yeah, it can get a little crazy."

They finished at 15-under 265.

Straka, who played bogey-free over the final 13 holes in regulation, moves to No. 8 in the standings and is assured his first trip to the Tour Championship at East Lake.

Lucas Glover came away with a consolation prize. The former U.S. Open champion came into the FedEx Cup playoffs at No. 121, knowing that only the top 70 advance to the next tournament.

## Raiders defeat Vikings, improve to 2-0 in preseason

*Associated Press*

LAS VEGAS — One of the biggest questions facing Las Vegas Raiders first-year coach Josh McDaniels was where he would find the right pieces for his offensive line.

McDaniels may not have all the answers after a 26-20 preseason win over the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday, but he's pleased with what he's seen in two preseason games.

"I think we have some depth at tackle and some competition," McDaniels said. "We've told them since the first day they got here that this was going to be a situation where guys earn their opportunities and they'll determine their role."

Using numerous rotations for nearly every offensive series, the Raiders (2-0) were able to sustain second-half drives of 10

and 15 plays, both resulting in touchdowns, to seize control of the game and keep the Vikings (0-1) at arm's length.

"We talked a lot about being productive on first down," said quarterback Nick Mullens, who completed 7 of 9 passes for 94 yards and one touchdown. "And I think if you just look at the stats overall in the NFL, if you're productive on first down it's going to keep you on schedule to establish good drives. Everybody banded together, our O-line did a really good job, we ran the ball, and played productive as a unit."

After gaining just 23 yards on 12 first-down plays in the first half, Las Vegas gained 64 yards on 15 first-down plays in the second half.

Of their 12 first-down plays in the first two quarters, the Raid-

ers gained more than four yards just one time. They gained five or more yards on seven of their 15 first-down plays in the second half.

"You got so many different guys on the O-line group right now, kind of rotating through, so you got to kind of get used to everyone because not everyone fits rotations and double-teams the same," center Andre James said. "It's good to get this in right now and learn how everyone's fitting in."

Las Vegas finished with 300 yards of offense, and an average of 4.3 yards per play, with starter Jarrett Stidham completing 10 of his 15 passes for 68 yards. He also ran for 16 yards on four carries, including a touchdown. Chase Garbers finished the game under center for the Raiders and was 2-for-3 through the

air for 19 yards. Brittain Brown ran for 54 yards on 14 carries, including one touchdown.

Kellen Mond threw for 119 yards on nine completions, including two touchdowns, for the Vikings in their preseason opener. Sean Mannion finished 8-for-12 for 79 yards.

Veteran wideout Albert Wilson caught two passes for Minnesota, both for touchdowns.

"There was a lot of really, really positive things that I took out of it across the board," Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell said. "I thought our run game and some of our physicality I saw up front were real positives. We're obviously allowing these quarterbacks to compete, so sometimes we may feature a little bit more in the pass game to see kind of how those guys do in certain normal-down situations."

# Rays' Rasmussen nearly perfect in win

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Drew Rasmussen took a perfect game into the ninth inning, and the Tampa Bay Rays expanded their lead over Baltimore for the final AL wild card to 1½ games with a 4-1 victory over the Orioles on Sunday.

Rasmussen allowed his first baserunner when Jorge Mateo doubled down the left-field line on the first pitch of the ninth. Mateo, who went 5-for-5 on Friday night, later scored on a Rasmussen wild pitch.

The right-hander struck out seven in the longest outing of his career. He threw 62 of 87 pitches for strikes.

"I'll take it," Rasmussen said. "It helps our

team's chance of winning. When our team has a chance to win a game, that's first and foremost, the most important thing."

Jason Adam got two outs for his sixth save, finishing a one-hitter.

Rasmussen (7-4) struck out Rougned Odor on a 2-2 pitch to end an eight-pitch at-bat for the second out in the eighth.

"It was just a really cool outing, a really cool environment to be in," Rasmussen said.

Baltimore's Adley Rutschman flew out to the warning track in center in the first. Former Ray Brett Phillips had a hard drive buzz Rasmussen with two outs in the sixth, but shortstop Taylor Walls fielded the ball and threw to first for the out.

"They started hitting balls at our guys," Rasmussen said. "You look back even in the first inning, that ball Rutschman hit to center was well struck. Felt really good when the day starts off that way, giving up some hard contact and it finds a glove."

Walls called Rasmussen's performance "extremely fun."

"Any outing like that is incredible to watch," Walls said. "I wish he could have got through it, done it, but still such a great outing."

Rasmussen was coming off three no-hit innings in his previous start Aug. 7 at Detroit, an abbreviated outing to manage his workload for the season.

## Red Sox, returning Wacha make easy work of Yanks

Associated Press

BOSTON — Michael Wacha and the last-place Red Sox made short work of the AL East-leading New York Yankees.

Pitching for the first time in almost seven weeks, Wacha returned from a shoulder injury to limit New York to a pair of singles in seven innings, and Boston beat the Yankees 3-0 on Sunday night.

It all lasted 2 hours, 15 minutes — tying for the shortest game between the two teams since 1994.

"I feel like I work better that way," said Wacha, who took a perfect game into the fifth inning. "That's the mentality that I was facing: Get back in the dugout as quick as possible and let the guys keep getting a crack at their guy."

Rafael Devers homered and Tommy Pham had three hits for the Red Sox, who took two of three from New York — their first win in a multigame series against a division foe in 13 tries.

**Royals 4, Dodgers 0:** Brady Singer pitched six dominant innings and host Kansas City ended Los Angeles' 12-game winning streak. A day after hitting six home runs in a romp, the Dodgers were held to just two hits.

Los Angeles was trying to

match their longest winning streak since moving to Los Angeles, having won 13 straight in both 1962 and 1965. The franchise record is 15 in a row set in 1924 while the team played in Brooklyn — the club moved to West Coast for the 1958 season. Singer pitched one-hit ball against the team with the best record in the majors. He struck out seven and walked three. Vinnie Pasquantino homered among his three hits and drove in two runs.

**Cardinals 6, Brewers 3:** Albert Pujols homered twice and Miles Mikolas tossed eight effective innings, leading host St. Louis to the win.

Dylan Carlson and Tyler O'Neill also connected for the Cardinals, who pushed their NL Central lead over second-place Milwaukee to 1½ games.

Carlson broke a 2-all tie with his eighth homer of the season, a drive to left against Taylor Rogers (1-6) in the eighth.

Pujols hit a solo shot in the second and a three-run drive in the eighth to give him 689 career homers.

Mikolas (9-9) permitted two runs and four hits.

**Mets 6, Phillies 0:** Chris Bassitt pitched five innings of four-hit ball, and host New York beat

Philadelphia for its 17th win in 20 games.

Daniel Vogelbach homered and Mark Canha had two hits for the Mets, who moved 35 games over .500 for the first time since September 2006.

They posted their second straight shutout and kept 5½ games ahead of Atlanta atop the NL East. New York and the Braves open a four-game series in Atlanta beginning Monday.

The Phillies have dropped three of four after winning seven straight.

**Guardians 7, Blue Jays 2:** Cleveland ace Shane Bieber pitched seven innings to win his fourth straight start, matching the longest winning streak of his career in a win at Toronto.

Amed Rosario homered and scored three times as the visiting AL Central leaders won for the seventh time in eight games. Austin Hedges had two hits and two RBIs.

**Braves 3, Marlins 1:** Rookie Michael Harris II hit a tying homer in the ninth and William Contreras had a go-ahead single, helping visiting Atlanta finish a sweep of the four-game series.

**Padres 6, Nationals 0:** Blake Snell struck out 10 in six sharp innings, Juan Soto reached base three times and visiting San Die-

go wrapped up a hectic weekend with a victory.

**White Sox 5, Tigers 3:** AJ Pollock and Andrew Vaughn homered, helping host Chicago complete a three-game sweep.

**Astros 6, Athletics 3:** Cristian Javier threw six shutout innings, Alex Bregman hit a two-run homer and host Houston swept Oakland.

**Rangers 5, Mariners 3:** Texas star Corey Seager doubled twice and scored twice, including the tiebreaking run in the seventh inning as the host Rangers took the series from Seattle.

**Diamondbacks 7, Rockies 4:** Christian Walker had four hits, including a 460-foot homer, and drove in four runs, leading rookie Tommy Henry and visiting Arizona to the victory.

**Reds 8, Cubs 5:** Jose Barrero hit a tiebreaking RBI single in a three-run fifth inning and host Cincinnati stopped a five-game slide.

**Giants 8, Pirates 7:** Thairo Estrada hit a two-run homer with one out in the ninth inning and host San Francisco Giants edged Pittsburgh in a back-and-forth game.

**Angels 4, Twins 2:** Tucker Davidson pitched six innings of four-hit ball for his first win for host Los Angeles.