

## NATO allies gather for Australia drills

By SETH ROBSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

DARWIN, Australia — An armada of warplanes deployed to the Indo-Pacific by the United Kingdom, France and Germany signals European commitment to reinforce the region in a crisis, even during the challenge posed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, according to security experts.

The NATO members sent 13 Typhoon and Rafale fighters, seven tankers or cargo planes and more than 350 airmen to Australia's northern city of Darwin. They're part of the biennial Pitch Black airpower drills involving 2,500 airmen and over 100 planes from 17 nations, including the United States, underway until Sept. 8.

The presence of the European jets demonstrates "capability to deploy quickly to the Indo-Pacific and then conduct combat operations promptly," according to Ross Babbage, a former Australian assistant defense secretary.

The deployments are welcomed in Australia because they

underline the commitment of key European countries to quickly reinforce the region in a crisis, he told Stars and Stripes in an email Friday.

The deployments come as Australia grapples with a security challenge from China, its largest trading partner. Beijing has been building influence with Australia's neighbors, including the Solomon Islands, which inked a security pact with China in April and denied a port call request by a U.S. Coast Guard cutter this month.

Australia will continue maritime surveillance flights over the South China Sea despite "robust" encounters with Chinese military planes, the chief of the Royal Australian Air Force told reporters on Wednesday in Canberra. In May, a Chinese fighter intercepted an RAAF surveillance plane in international airspace claimed by Beijing, prompting intimidation accusations from Canberra.

The deployment of the European fighters to the region "sends a strong signal to those who might

wish to challenge the free and open Indo-Pacific that most major powers across the globe stand united in defending national sovereignty and international law," Babbage said.

The Europeans are showing they're ready and able to work with allies and partners anywhere in the world, despite pressures at home resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ian Chong, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, said in an email Saturday.

It's the first time the German air force has participated in Pitch Black, according to an Aug. 15 Australian defense department statement. They arrived with 250 airmen and six Typhoons, three A330 multirole tanker transports and an A400M transport aircraft.

On the way, they stopped at Abu Dhabi and Singapore, 1st Lt. Pascal Stieg, 26, a technical officer with the 74th Tactical Fighter Wing out of Neuburg, Germany, told Stars and Stripes at RAAF Darwin on Saturday.

The 10-week mission had been planned for 18 months, he said.

"We want to show the flexibility of the German armed forces," he said. "We were in Singapore within 24 hours."

The Indo-Pacific is of great importance to Germany, according to German air force Lt. Gen. Ingo Gerhartz, who is flying a Typhoon during Pitch Black.

"We share the same values with many partners in this region," he said in the Australian statement. "Defending those values in case of a war emergency and being able to support our partners is something that needs to be practiced."

The German government recently agreed to purchase the F-35 Lightning II fighter to replace its Tornado aircraft.

"Since the Royal Australian Air Force is already flying this combat aircraft, we will be able to learn from them as well," Gerhartz said.

After the Australia training, the German planes will head to Japan and South Korea.

## Russia to hold joint war games with China in Sea of Japan

*Associated Press*

MOSCOW — Russia said Monday that it will launch sweeping military drills in the country's east that will involve forces from China—a show of increasingly close defense ties between Moscow and Beijing amid tensions with the West over the Kremlin's action in Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the Vostok 2022 (East 2022) exercise will be held Sept. 1-7 in various locations in Russia's Far East and the Sea of Japan and involve more than 50,000 troops, over 5,000 weapons units, including 140 aircraft and 60 warships.

The ministry released a video of Chinese troops arriving in Russia in preparation for the exercise.

The drills will be conducted at seven firing ranges in far eastern Russia and will engage troops from several ex-Soviet nations, China, India, Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua and Syria.

The ministry said units of Russian Airborne troops, long-range bombers and military cargo planes will take part in the drills along with other forces.

While first announcing the exercise last month, the Russian military emphasized that it's part of planned combat training which is continuing despite Moscow's military action in Ukraine. It hasn't disclosed the number of troops engaged in what the Kremlin calls the "special military operation" there.

The ministry noted that as part of the ma-

neuvres, the Russian and Chinese navies in the Sea of Japan will "practice joint action to protect sea communications, areas of marine economic activity and support for ground troops in littoral areas."

The drills reflect increasing defense ties between Moscow and Beijing, which have grown stronger since Russia sent its troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24. China has pointedly refused to criticize Russia's action, blaming the United States and NATO for provoking Moscow, and has blasted punishing sanctions imposed on Moscow.

Russia, in turn, has strongly backed China amid the tensions with the U.S. that followed a recent visit to Taiwan by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

# US, S. Korea begin phase 2 of joint drills

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — American and South Korean forces on Monday commenced the second phase of their largest joint exercise in five years, marking another milestone in Seoul's attempts to take wartime control of its military.

Ulchi Freedom Shield, the 11-day military drill ending Thursday, has entered the “counterattack operations” phase, a South Korean Ministry of National Defense official told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday.

The second phase aims “to ensure [South Korea’s] safety in response to enemy attacks,” the ministry official said.

North Korea condemns the exercises as rehearsals for invasions of its territory; U.S. and South Korean military chiefs say

they are preparations for defense against a North Korean attack.

The communist regime has made preparations for its first nuclear weapons test since 2017, U.S. and South Korean defense officials have warned since July.

The training sites, troop numbers and other details have not been publicly disclosed by the United States and South Korean military. U.S. Forces Korea, the military command responsible for the roughly 28,500 troops on the peninsula, has said it does not comment on ongoing training as a matter of policy.

Military units are taking part in field exercises and in computer simulations “all over the country,” the ministry official said.

South Korean officials customarily speak to the media under the condition of anonymity.

Media access to Ulchi Free-

dom Shield has been scant. Publicly released information has been limited to a few news releases and photographs of USFK commander Gen. Paul LaCamera and South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup discussing the operations at a command bunker near Seoul.

Information about the counterattack training is unavailable, but in previous exercises the two allies have focused on a central theme, said Yang Uk, an associate research fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul.

“It could be a limited attack or a full-scale attack” from an adversary, he told Stars and Stripes by phone Monday. “There’s many aspects to war that you cannot train for all at once; each year, you have to specify and have a theme.”

Exercises like Ulchi Freedom Shield are one of many requirements South Korea’s military must satisfy for the U.S. to relinquish its wartime authority, according to the numerous, evolving bilateral agreements spanning several presidential administrations, including most recently between Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his South Korean counterpart, Suh Wook, in 2021.

Seoul retains control of its military in peacetime; however, that authority will be superseded by Washington in the event of war.

USFK announced in a news release Aug. 23 that a South Korean army general would lead the large-scale exercise alongside the command’s chief for the first time, one of the requirements set out by the defense leaders from both countries.

## Okinawa police say drunken US troops caused collisions

By MATTHEW M. BURKE  
AND KEISHI KOJA  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japanese police on Okinawa arrested two U.S. service members in separate incidents for alleged drunken driving after a pair of crashes over the weekend, one involving injuries to Japanese drivers.

Air Force Capt. Crosby Shaver, 27, assigned to Kadena Air Base, and Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Cervantes, 20, were detained early Saturday, an Okinawa police spokesman told Stars and Stripes on Monday.

Police said Shaver struck two other vehicles in Okinawa city and sent both drivers to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Cervantes left the scene after colliding with and scratching another vehicle, according to the spokesman.

Both men were still in custody Monday afternoon after police forwarded their cases Sunday to Japanese prosecutors in the Naha District Public Prosecutors Office. It is unclear if Shaver and Cervantes have been charged. A spokesman for the prosecutors office declined to comment when reached Monday by Stars and Stripes.

Shaver denied the allegations and said he did not believe he had alcohol in his system, the police spokesman said.

Cervantes is not cooperating with police and the investigation is ongoing, the spokesman said.

Information on Cervantes’ duty station was unavailable Monday.

Representatives for Kadena’s 18th Wing and Marine Corps Installations Pacific did not respond to emails Monday seeking comment.

## Soldiers bring serious skills to Army Ten-Miler

By NANCY MONTGOMERY  
*Stars and Stripes*

VICENZA, Italy — The two fastest Army women in Europe start their day at 6 a.m. with some speed workouts or maybe some tempo runs, a little CrossFit or a “relaxing” 10-mile run.

“I just love getting out running,” said Sgt. Eva Perry, a Seattle-area native who was a pole vaulter at the University of Washington and brings Arabic and Swahili proficiency to her Army role as a cryptologic linguist.

In June, she won the European command’s qualifier for the Army Ten-Miler, an annual October race that attracts more than 35,000 runners from around the world.

Spc. Samantha Hengehold, who finished second to Perry in the qualifying run, said the racers’ morning routine is “a good

way to start the day.”

Both women are stationed at Vicenza. Perry, 25, serves in the 207th Military Intelligence Brigade, and Hengehold, 20, is in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. They bested a field of 18 women in the qualifying race, which Perry completed in one hour, two minutes and 14 seconds. Hengehold’s time was 1:05:52.

Perry first ran the Army Ten-Miler in 2017.

For Hengehold, this will be the first Army Ten-Miler, but she has no shortage of experience.

“I ran cross-country and track in high school,” the St. Louis native said. “I’ve just always been running.”

There are 10 slots from Europe for the contest in Washington, D.C. Perry and Hengehold are hoping to win honors in the five-person team competition.

# NASA calls off rocket launch due to engine

*Associated Press*

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA called off the launch of its mighty new moon rocket on its debut flight with three test dummies aboard Monday after encountering a last-minute cascade of problems culminating in unexplained trouble involving an engine.

The next launch attempt will not take place until Friday at the earliest and could be delayed until mid-September or later.

The mission will be the first flight in NASA's Artemis project, a quest to put astronauts back on the moon for the first time since the Apollo program ended 50 years ago.

As precious minutes ticked away Monday morning, NASA repeatedly stopped and started the fueling of the Space Launch System rocket because of a leak of highly explosive hydrogen, eventually succeeding in reducing the seepage to acceptable levels. The leak happened in the same place that saw seepage during a dress rehearsal in the spring.

The fueling already was running nearly an hour late because of thunderstorms off Florida's Kennedy Space Center.

Then, NASA ran into new trouble when it was unable to properly chill one of the rocket's four main engines, officials said. Engineers continued working to pinpoint the source of the problem after the launch postponement was announced.

"This is a very complicated machine, a very complicated system, and all those things have to work, and you don't want to light the candle until it's ready to go," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson.

Referring to launch delays, he said: "It's just part of the space business and it's part of, particularly, a test flight."

The rocket was set to lift off on a flight to propel a crew capsule into orbit around the moon.

The six-week mission was scheduled to end with the capsule returning to Earth in a splashdown in the Pacific in October.

The 322-foot spaceship is the most powerful rocket ever built by NASA, out-muscling even the Saturn V that took the Apollo astronauts to the moon.

The dummies inside the Orion capsule were fitted with sensors to measure vibration, cosmic radiation and other conditions during the shakedown flight, meant to

stress-test the spacecraft and push it to its limits in ways that would never be attempted if humans were aboard.

As for when NASA might make another liftoff attempt, launch commentator Derrol Nail said engineers were still analyzing the engine problem and "we must wait to see what shakes out from their test data."

Even though no one was on board, thousands of people jammed the coast to see the rocket soar. Vice President Kamala Harris and Apollo 10 astronaut Tom Stafford were among the VIPs who arrived.

Assuming the shakedown flight goes well, astronauts will climb aboard for the second Artemis mission and fly around the moon and back as soon as 2024. A two-person lunar landing could follow by the end of 2025.

NASA officials spotted later in the morning what they feared was a crack or some other defect on the core stage — the big orange fuel tank with four main engines on it — but they later said it appeared to be just a buildup of frost in a crevice of the insulating foam.

Launch director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson and her team also had to deal with a communication problem.

## Donors give \$70K to vets charged in attack on Capitol

*The Kansas City (Mo.) Star*

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Fundraising campaigns for two Kansas City-area Proud Boys charged with multiple felonies in connection with the Capitol riot have taken in nearly \$70,000 from more than 1,100 donors.

Though donations continue to come in, the totals are more than \$700,000 short of the goals set by their families.

Family members of William Chrestman and Christopher Kuehne, both of Olathe, Kan., said they created the sites to help pay for legal fees and other expenses as the men's cases wind their way through federal court.

Many of the donors see the men — both military veterans — as patriots, freedom fighters and heroes, not criminals.

But federal authorities describe the men as nothing close to patriots. A federal judge said in a court hearing that "Mr. Chrestman was much more — much, much more — than someone who merely cheered on the violence or who entered the Capitol after others cleared the way."

Chrestman has been in jail since his arrest Feb. 11, 2021.

His fundraising site, "Help Patriot Father," was set up by his daughter. More than 680 donors have given a total of \$38,530, in amounts ranging from \$5 to \$1,000.

Kuehne's site, "Fight for Freedom," was created by his wife, Annette. It shows that 430 donors have contributed \$31,375. The top donation was \$1,850, with a dozen contributions of \$500.

## Houston police: Evicted man sets building on fire, kills 3

*Associated Press*

HOUSTON — A man evicted from a Houston apartment house set fire to the building to lure tenants from their homes then shot five of them — killing three — before officers fatally shot him as firefighters battled the blaze, authorities said.

The attack happened at about 1 a.m. Sunday in a mixed industrial-residential neighborhood in southwest Houston. Police and fire crews responded to the apartment house after reports of the fire, police Chief Troy Finner said. The gunman opened fire, possibly with a shotgun, on the other tenants as they emerged from the house, Finner said. Two were dead at the scene, and one died at a hospital. Fire teams rescued two other wounded men, who were hospitalized with non-life-

threatening injuries, he said.

Michael James told Houston TV station KPRC that he was returning home from work when he was shot in the back.

"I saw the house was on fire, and I saw flames, so I called 911," James said. "I didn't get through, so I turned my back and headed back out the driveway. And all of a sudden, boom."

The man opened fire as the firefighters battled the fire, forcing them to take cover until police officers spotted the prone gunman and fatally shot him, Finner said.

Finner said no firefighters or officers were wounded.

"I've seen things I have not seen before in 32 years, and it has happened time and time again," Finner said. "We just ask that the community come together."

# US forces mindful of nuclear plant risk

By JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTT GART, Germany — U.S. European Command is assessing potential health risks for American forces along NATO's eastern flank as international fears of a far-reaching radiation disaster soar amid fighting near a Ukrainian nuclear power plant.

"Personnel train and prepare for operations in a variety of environments, to include mitigation of health risks," EUCOM spokesman Chuck Prichard said in a statement Friday. "EUCOM continues to closely monitor and appropriately respond to any potential health risks that may be associated with the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in Ukraine."

Prichard stopped short of detailing what types of preparations U.S. forces have made or saying whether service members operating in places such as Poland, the Baltic states and Romania have been issued potassium iodine tablets as a precaution.

In 2011, U.S. personnel in Japan were issued such tablets as a precaution after the

nuclear power plant disaster at Fukushima. The tablets prevent radioactive iodine from entering the thyroid.

Fears about a possible disaster at the Zaporizhzhia plant, Europe's largest nuclear facility, have increased in recent days amid Russian shelling in the area.

Concerns intensified last week when, for the first time, Zaporizhzhia was briefly cut off from Ukraine's power grid, raising the risk of a nuclear meltdown should the plant's cooling system fail.

In the aftermath of Russia's full-fledged invasion of Ukraine in February, Russian troops have occupied the plant while Ukrainian workers keep the site operating.

A major accident there would have ramifications for much of Europe. How a radioactive cloud might spread at the outset of such a disaster would depend on weather conditions at the time.

Earlier this month, the Hydrometeorological Institute in Ukraine released a map showing how such a cloud could spread west, traveling across Ukraine and in a matter of days reaching Poland, Latvia and

Lithuania.

The U.S. has several thousand troops based in Poland and a mix of rotational forces operating in the Baltic states at any given time.

Current weather conditions, however, would send such radiation in the opposite direction.

Energoatom, Ukraine's energy agency, said Sunday that if an accident occurred now, the radioactive cloud would move across southern Ukraine and travel south-east into Russia based on weather conditions projected for Monday-Wednesday.

Bonnie Denise Jenkins, U.S. undersecretary for arms control and international security, said in a call Thursday with reporters that combat around a nuclear plant is unprecedented in history.

Russia's actions "have created a serious risk of a nuclear incident, a dangerous radiation release, that could threaten not only the people and environment of Ukraine but also affect neighboring countries and the entire international community," she said.

## Violent clashes follow resignation of cleric al-Sadr from Iraq politics

*Associated Press*

BAGHDAD — An influential Shiite cleric announced Monday he would resign from Iraqi politics, prompting hundreds of his angry followers to storm the government palace and sparking clashes with security forces in which at least five protesters were killed.

Protesters loyal to cleric Muqtada al-Sadr pulled down the cement barriers outside the government palace with ropes and breached the palace gates. Many rushed into the lavish salons and marbled halls of the palace, a key meeting place for Iraqi heads of state and foreign dignitaries.

Iraq's military announced a nationwide curfew and the caretaker premier suspended Cabinet sessions in response to the violence. Medical officials said at least 15 protesters were wounded by gunfire and a dozen more were injured by tear gas and physical altercations with riot police.

Iraq's government has been deadlocked since al-Sadr's party won the largest share of seats in October parliamentary elections but not enough to secure a majority government. His refusal to negotiate with his Iran-

backed Shiite rivals and subsequent exit from the talks has catapulted the country into political uncertainty and volatility amid intensifying intra-Shiite wrangling.

To further his political interests al-Sadr has wrapped his rhetoric with a nationalist and reform agenda that resonates powerfully among his broad grassroots base who hail from Iraq's poorest sectors of society and have historically been shut out from the political system. They are calling for the dissolution of parliament and early elections without the participation of Iran-backed groups, which they see as responsible for the status quo.

Protests also broke out in the Shiite-majority southern provinces with al-Sadr's supporters burning tires and blocking roads in the oil-rich province of Basra and hundreds demonstrating outside the governorate building in Missan.

This is not the first time al-Sadr, who has called for early elections and the dissolution of parliament, has announced his retirement from politics — and many dismissed the latest move as another bluff to gain greater leverage against his rivals.

## Man gored, killed by large antelope at animal park

*Associated Press*

STOCKHOLM — An employee of an animal park in southwestern Sweden was gored to death by a large antelope, the attraction's owner said Monday.

Richard Berglund told reporters that he witnessed the incident involving an eland as he was helping the victim take the animals into stables after the park had closed. He didn't give details.

"It was a friend ... we're all grieving," Berglund said.

The goring happened late Sunday at the Oland Animal and Entertainment Park on the southwestern island of Oland. Police said the case is being considered a "workplace accident."

It was not known precisely what happened inside the enclosure. The identity and citizenship of the deceased employee was not given.

The eland is the world's largest antelope.

As of Monday, the park had closed for the season, according to its website.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

**2-year-old abducted from home, returned**

**CA** SAN BERNARDINO — Authorities on Saturday rescued a 2-year-old girl who had been taken at gunpoint by her father from her mother's Southern California home.

San Bernardino police said on Twitter that officers responded Saturday to a call by a woman who reported that her ex-boyfriend had broken into her bedroom window, dragged her across the house by her hair and beaten her before taking out a gun and threatening to kill her. The man then took the couple's 2-year-old daughter and left, police said.

Police obtained a search warrant for a possible hiding location for the man and arrested him and returned the girl unharmed to her mother, authorities said.

The man is being held for investigation of crimes including burglary, domestic violence, assault with a deadly weapon and kidnapping.

**Man killed in mountains after 'speed flying' crash**

**CO** BRECKENRIDGE — A man was killed in the mountains of central Colorado after crashing while speed flying, which involves descending from heights using a specialized canopy that's similar to a paraglider.

The speed flyer was reported missing Saturday by a friend who was supposed to meet the victim in the Copper Mountain Resort parking lot, KUSA-TV reported. The victim had reportedly launched from Peak 6 at Breckenridge Ski Resort.

A search team from the Summit County Rescue Group found the victim with assistance from a helicopter and recovered his body. His canopy was found entangled with the broken-off top of a tree. The victim's name has not been released.

**Man falls off North Rim of Grand Canyon, dies**

**AZ** GRAND CANYON — Park rangers said they have recovered the body of a man who fell to his death Friday afternoon at Grand Canyon National Park.

The name and hometown of the 44-year-old who fell west of the Bright Angel Point Trail on the canyon's North Rim were not released.

Rangers found his body about 200 feet below the rim. The man was reportedly off trail when he accidentally slipped off the edge.

The National Park Service and the Coconino County Medical Examiner's Office are investigating.

**US agents seize shipped ancient Egyptian artifact**

**TN** MEMPHIS — Federal agents in Memphis seized a potentially 3,000-year-old ancient Egyptian artifact that was shipped in from Europe.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said they intercepted the Egyptian canopic jar lid of the funeral deity named Imsety on Aug. 17. The jars were used to hold the internal organs of mummies.

The agency said the item was sent from a dealer to a private buyer in the United States, and the shipper made contradicting

statements about its value.

Experts at the University of Memphis Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology helped determine the artifact's authenticity. The agency said the lid is likely from 1069 B.C. to 653 B.C.

Authorities said the item is protected by bilateral treaties and is an archaeological import subject to seizure under the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act of 1983. The artifact was turned over to Homeland Security Investigations for further examination.

**Man chased in stolen fire department vehicle**

**CA** YREKA — A man was arrested after stealing a California fire department vehicle and leading officers on an erratic high-speed chase, officials said.

Authorities said deputies were notified Friday about a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection utility vehicle that had been stolen near the community of McCloud.

Deputies joined other officers pursuing the vehicle, which sped up to 100 mph on a freeway before it exited in the Northern California city of Yreka, authorities said.

The driver stopped, fled on foot and was arrested for investigation of auto theft and resisting arrest, authorities said.

**Man arrested in armed Mall of America robbery**

**MN** BLOOMINGTON — A man with a rifle was arrested at the Mall of America on Friday after what police said was an armed robbery, just three weeks after the

mall was locked down after shots were fired near a store.

The mall said in a statement that security "immediately became aware of the situation" and arrested the man without incident. It said the mall wasn't locked down because the arrest was immediate.

Police in Bloomington, the Minneapolis suburb where the mall is located, said the man had just robbed an athletic apparel store when he was arrested by mall security. The statement said security officers had been alerted by a caller who saw the man enter the mall. It also said the 28-year-old man was also suspected of robbing a Minneapolis pawn shop earlier Friday.

Police and mall security escorted the man away. Martin said there was no lockdown alert and no shoppers fled in panic.

**Supervisor arrested for having sex with inmate**

**WI** STURTEVANT — A female prison supervisor was arrested for allegedly having repeated sexual encounters with an inmate in her office.

The Racine Journal Times reported Saturday that sheriff's investigators received allegations Wednesday that the 37-year-old Racine Correctional Institution supervisor was having an inappropriate relationship with an inmate.

Investigators learned she had given the inmate a cellphone and seized the device. They found photos and messages that supported the allegations.

The inmate told investigators he had sex with the supervisor between 20 and 40 times since April.

— From wire reports

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# 1984 high court decision led to college football TV deal changes

*Associated Press*

Andy Coats isn't a coach or athletic director. When it comes to the seismic changes to the landscape of major college football, though, he is a seminal figure.

Coats, the former dean of the University of Oklahoma law school, successfully argued before the Supreme Court in 1984 that the NCAA's control of football television rights violated federal antitrust law. Justice Byron "Whizzer" White, a former running back and Heisman Trophy runner-up at Colorado, told Coats back then that even though he may end up winning the case, he would regret it.

"I never did exactly regret it," said Coats, who continues to teach at Oklahoma in a building bearing his name. "But certainly, a lot of the things that have happened have cast a dark cloud, I think, over college football."

It's been nearly 40 years since that pivotal case and the shock waves continue to come. The Big Ten Conference in late June announced the additions of Southern California and UCLA in 2024, setting the stage for last week's announcement of a seven-year rights deal with Fox, NBC and CBS that will see the conference eventually receiving at least \$1 billion annually.

In 2020, the SEC sold a package of football and basketball broadcast rights to the Walt Disney Co., making ESPN/ABC the home of SEC football. The 10-year deal, starting in 2024, is worth at least \$3 billion and is an addition to the original 20-year, \$2.25-billion agreement that began in 2014. The increased revenues helped the SEC lure Texas and Oklahoma from the Big 12, another big change set to take effect in 2025.

The Big Ten and SEC's latest salvos have ignited the debate of whether it is media companies or the conferences that are most responsible for the economic arms race. The case can be made that it's neither and that NCAA vs. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma 38 years ago was the catalyst.

Coats said rights fees declined for a couple of years after the Supreme Court ruling. But as more networks became interested, the competition for dollars increased.

"I guess it was inevitable it would happen. But it has some very distressing aspects to it," Coats said.

Both the Big Ten and SEC also saw the power of expansion. The Big Ten set the ta-

ble in 1990 when Penn State joined. The SEC went a step further by adding Arkansas and South Carolina, which allowed them to split into divisions and hold a championship game beginning in 1992.

Like the NFL, revenue for the Power Five conferences is dominated by money flowing from media rights deals (conference, NCAA basketball tournaments, College Football Playoff and bowl games).

The Big Ten on Saturdays will soon look like the NFL. It will have teams from coast to coast, including the nation's top three media markets of New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, and it will have an early game on Fox, late afternoon on CBS and prime-time on NBC.

"Linear TV may be dying in certain aspects — you could say things like scripted dramas or sitcoms — but for sports and news, it's never been stronger," said former Fox Sports President Bob Thompson. "If you want to gather a large collection of eyeballs to a singular event, for the benefit of advertisers, live sports is still the way to go."

ESPN has been one of the largest carriers of college sports, but it has found increased competition from Fox, which has made the Noon Eastern Saturday time slot one of the most watched.

Fox had the Bowl Championship Series from 2006-10 but little coverage during the regular season. That has changed in recent years. Besides becoming the lead carrier of the Big Ten, Fox also airs games from the Big 12 and Pac-12.

"I would say there's no question that they put a stake in the ground in creating Big Noon Saturday. They have proven that if you put the resources, muscle and quality programming behind something, you can create a very important franchise that is poised for success for many years to come," said Tag Garson, Wasserman's senior vice president of properties. "They don't make decisions without a lot of debate. And when they go after something, they put the weight behind it."

According to a database run by the Knight Commission and Syracuse University, 33% of the Big Ten's revenue in 2005 came from ticket sales (\$202.4 million), followed by media rights (22% or \$133.5M) and donor contributions (21%, \$129.6M).

In 2020, media made up 40% (\$722.3 million) followed by ticket sales (\$378.2M) and donor contributions (\$129.6M).

# Hawaii hammers Curacao to earn the LLWS title

*Associated Press*

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — No team came close to Hawaii for a week and a half at the Little League World Series. The championship Sunday was no different.

Hawaii got back-to-back homers from Keoko Payanal and Kama Angell in the first inning, sparking a 13-3 win in just four innings over Curacao.

The LLWS title is Hawaii's fourth. It won in 2018 and this same Honolulu team finished third last year, when COVID-19 travel restrictions prevented international teams from participating.

How good was Hawaii? In six games, all victories, the closest margin was four runs. Hawaii outscored opponents 60-5.

"We're fortunate that everything clicked at the right moment," Hawaii Manager Gerald Oda said. "I'm very grateful that these kids played loose and relaxed."

Part of that run was without Oda, who missed several games with COVID-19. Oda also managed Hawaii's 2018 team.

"After 2018, I thought the next time I came to Williamsport was going to be as a spectator," he said. "I never thought in my wildest dreams I'd be back in 2022 coaching a team."

Hawaii starter Jaron Lancaster was dominant again Sunday as he threw all four innings, while only allowing three runs, three hits and striking out 10 Curacao hitters.

"I knew Curacao was going to be a great team," Jaron said. "My mindset was to go out there, do my best and do my thing. I know my offense and defense got my back."

Jaron's father, James Lancaster, said all the work that went into the title run was worth it.

"It's been a rough ride," said Lancaster, whose family lives about 4,800 miles from central Pennsylvania. "We haven't been home in over a month."

Curacao took the first lead of any team over Hawaii in the tournament when Davey Jay-Rijke led off the game with what looked like a bloop single, but he bolted on to second when neither middle infielder was covering that bag. Jay-Rijke eventually came around to score on a wild pitch.

Hawaii only trailed for a few minutes. A home run from leadoff hitter Keoko to left field, and a shot by Kama that barely cleared the wall in center, reignited the Hawaii side and put the team from the West region up 2-1. It also chased Curacao starter Shemar Jacobus.

# McIlroy rallies for FedEx Cup win

Associated Press

ATLANTA — This year it became easy to overlook Rory McIlroy's four majors, 30 wins on four continents and two years at No. 1 in the world. He has been viewed mostly as the strongest voice and staunchest defender of the PGA Tour in its battle against Saudi-funded LIV Golf.

So perhaps it was only fitting that a most tumultuous year for the PGA Tour culminated Sunday with McIlroy holding its biggest prize.

He had the final say with his clubs.

Six shots behind before the Tour Championship started, 10 shots back after two holes, McIlroy rallied from a six-shot deficit in the final round against the No. 1 player in the world and closed with a 4-under 66 to become the first three-time winner of the FedEx Cup.

"It's been a tumultuous time for the world of men's professional golf in particular," he said. "I've been in the thick of things. I guess every chance I get, I'm trying to defend what I feel is the best place to play elite professional golf in the world.

"It's in some ways fitting that I was able to get this done today to sort of round off a year that has been very, very challenging and different."

It came at the expense of Masters champion Scottie Scheffler, the No. 1 player in the world who birdied four of six holes Sunday morning to finish the storm-delayed third round at 66 and build a six-shot lead. Not

even McIlroy, who birdied the last two holes in the morning to get into the final group, thought he had a great chance.

But then Scheffler never regained his groove, missing fairways and greens and par putts. He made only one birdie in a closing round of 73 and tied the PGA Tour record for losing a six-shot lead in the final round.

"I just didn't get off to a good start early, but after that I grinded as hard as I could," Scheffler said. "For whatever reason my swing wasn't where it had been the first few days this week."

McIlroy had a 17-under 263 for his raw score, the best of the week. He started at 4 under as the No. 7 seed and finished at 21 under to capture the \$18 million bonus.

Sungjae Im fell back with a double bogey on the 14th hole and still managed a 66 to tie for second with Scheffler. They earned \$5.75 million.

McIlroy referred to the final round as a "spectacle," and not just because of the pro-McIlroy crowd that chanted his name along the closing holes.

"Two of the best players in the world going head-to-head for the biggest prize on the PGA Tour, and I hope everyone at home enjoyed that," he said.

McIlroy needed plenty of help from Scheffler, who never trailed until the 70th hole. Scheffler looked out of sorts early, and McIlroy capitalized. With three straight birdies, he tied him on the seventh hole. And

then it was a nail-biter to the end.

It was a stunning display at East Lake that turned on two shots.

McIlroy holed a 30-foot birdie putt on the par-3 15th hole to tie for the lead.

After he flew the green by some 20 yards on the 16th, his pitch was running fast and headed off the front of the green when it hit the pin and settled 7 feet away. He saved par. Scheffler blasted out of a bunker to just inside 10 feet and missed, making bogey that put him behind for the first time all week.

Scheffler badly misread a 10-foot birdie chance on the 17th to tie, sending the Tour Championship to the final hole with \$18 million on the line.

Scheffler's 4-iron on the par-5 18th sailed short and right and into a bunker, and he blasted out over the green. McIlroy went left against the grandstand, took relief and got onto the green for an easy par.

McIlroy won the FedEx Cup in 2016 in a playoff. He won the FedEx Cup again in 2019, the first year of a staggered start. This might have been the sweetest of all, coming off a year in which the PGA Tour has been in a nasty battle with LIV Golf.

It was McIlroy who has declared fierce loyalty to the PGA Tour over the last few years when rival leagues were coming into a view. And it was McIlroy who joined Tiger Woods in leading a momentous player-only meeting last week that led to significant changes ahead for the tour.

## Dillon, Blaney nab last playoff spots, Truex out

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Austin Dillon's wife was doing a rain dance during a lengthy weather delay in hopes of getting the skies to open up again and wash out the rest of the race.

"I got upset," Dillon said. "I said, 'Don't be doing that.'"

There was no jinxing this one. Dillon avoided a massive wreck in the rain to take the lead before a red flag and returned more than three hours later to finish off an improbable victory at Daytona International Speedway and snag a playoff spot in the Cup Series' regular-season finale Sunday.

Dillon passed Austin Cindric with three laps to go and was unchallenged down the stretch. It was an aggressive move that capped a drama-filled race and set off a wild celebration for a team that's usually a factor at Daytona.

"It's crazy," said Dillon, whose fourth career Cup victory ended a 78-race winless streak. "You just never give up and have faith. We had some tough finishes this year, like Charlotte. I beat myself up over that. I made a good move and just didn't finish it off. Today we finished it off."

Martin Truex Jr. was the big-

gest loser. Truex looked like he would secure the final post-season berth when rain halted the race with 21 laps remaining, but he faded after the restart and allowed Ryan Blaney to make up ground in a points scramble.

Blaney finished seven spots behind Truex in the race but three points ahead in the standings.

"You just try to stay optimistic," Blaney said. "Definitely a roller-coaster of emotions that ended on a high note."

Added Truex: "We gave away plenty of points throughout the season. It is what it is."

Dillon's victory in the No. 3

Chevrolet was as stunning as Blaney's comeback. Running 16th at the time of the crash, he turned onto the apron to avoid the 15-car melee between Turns 1 and 2 that was caused by a summer shower everyone saw coming. Cars started sliding sideways heading into the high-banked turn, a result of slick tires losing grip on wet asphalt.

Daniel Suarez and Denny Hamlin were running 1-2 when the pack drove into the rain with 23 laps remaining.

"Just throw the caution before the rain came," Hamlin said, adding that "better officiating" is needed.

# Rockies' Márquez outduels Scherzer

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Germán Márquez out-pitched Max Scherzer, allowing one hit in seven sparkling innings and denying the New York Mets' ace his 200th career win as the Colorado Rockies eked out a 1-0 victory Sunday to prevent a four-game sweep by the NL East leaders.

Márquez, an All-Star last season, lowered his ERA to 4.97.

"Germán's had his ups and downs this year," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "But had a feeling he was going to rise to the occasion in New York against one of the premier pitchers in the game. And he did. Very proud of him."

Brian Serven's sacrifice fly off Scherzer in the seventh gave Colorado its second 1-0 win over the Mets. The other one came at Citi Field in August 2012.

Márquez (7-10) struck out five and walked two, improving to 2-1 with a 1.42 ERA in three road starts against New York. The right-hander threw a seven-inning complete game in his previous start at Citi Field on April 17, 2021.

"I think there's certain ballparks that you feel comfortable in, whether it's the mound, the visuals, how the plate and the batter's box looks, how the backstop (looks)," Black said. "All those things are visually pleasing to pitchers' eyes at certain ballparks. And maybe this is for Germán."

Scherzer (9-4) gave up four hits and racked up 11 strikeouts over seven innings in his 110th double-digit strikeout game — tying Roger Clemens for third on the career list behind Nolan Ryan and Randy Johnson.

The three-time Cy Young Award winner was trying to join former teammate Justin Verlander (242) and Zack Greinke (223) as the only active pitchers with 200 wins.

"Max is one of the best and I like to face guys like that," Márquez said. "I like to pitch a game like that."

**Angels 8, Blue Jays 3:** Shohei Ohtani and Mike Trout homered, and Los Angeles completed a three-game sweep at Toronto.

Ohtani had three hits and scored twice one day after he pitched seven crisp innings in a 2-0 victory. Trout went 2-for-5 with two RBIs and also scored twice.

Ohtani's two-run drive made it 6-1 in the seventh, and Trout added a solo shot in the ninth. It was the 28th homer for each slugger.

Luis Rengifo and Kurt Suzuki also connected for the Angels, who had lost six straight and nine of 10 before facing the Blue

Jays. Andrew Wantz (2-0) got the win.

George Springer hit his 19th homer for Toronto. Ross Stripling (6-4) allowed three runs and seven hits in six innings.

**Astros 3, Orioles 1:** Astros ace Justin Verlander pitched three scoreless innings before departing because of right calf discomfort as Houston beat visiting Baltimore.

Alex Bregman homered for the AL West-leading Astros, and Yuli Gurriel had a two-run single. The team dropped the first two games of the weekend set after winning four in a row.

It was the shortest outing of the season for Verlander, one of the front-runners for the AL Cy Young Award. Manager Dusty Baker said Verlander was going in for imaging Monday.

Houston's bullpen then allowed one run and four hits over six innings. Ryne Stanek (2-1) tossed a perfect seventh for the win, and Rafael Montero worked a rocky ninth for his ninth save.

Orioles starter Austin Voth (4-2) allowed one run and one hit in six-plus innings.

**Cardinals 6, Braves 3:** Tyler O'Neill hit a three-run homer to break an eighth-inning tie and host St. Louis rallied past Atlanta.

Tommy Edman pulled the Cardinals even with a leadoff homer in the eighth against A.J. Minter (5-4), who also gave up O'Neill's two-out drive to center field. Lars Nootbaar went deep with two outs in the sixth for the first hit off Braves starter Jake Odorizzi.

**Mariners 4, Guardians 0:** Robbie Ray tossed seven dominant innings for host Seattle, and Dylan Moore and Ty France homered.

The Mariners took three of four from Cleveland in a potential postseason preview. All four games were tight and well-pitched, and Seattle squeezed out just enough offense to earn a series victory.

**Athletics 4, Yankees 1:** Minor league call-up Adrián Martínez held New York hitless into the fifth inning to lead host Oakland.

One night after the vaunted Yankees lineup managed one hit in 11 innings against Adam Oller and the Athletics bullpen, New York wasn't much better against another starter who entered the game with an ERA above 6.00.

**Royals 15, Padres 7:** Michael A. Taylor homered and drove in four runs, sending host Kansas City to the victory.

Salvador Perez also went deep for the Royals and Hunter Dozier had four of the team's 18 hits. Nick Pratto drove in three runs, including a two-run double off Josh

Hader during a six-run eighth.

**Rays 12, Red Sox 4:** Isaac Paredes homered over the Green Monster in each of his first two at-bats, and Tampa Bay avoided a three-game sweep at Boston.

Randy Arozarena hit three doubles off the left-field wall at Fenway Park and drove in two runs. David Peralta had three hits for the Rays, who came to town on a six-game winning streak before losing two straight.

**Pirates 5, Phillies 0:** Oneil Cruz, Tucupita Marcano and Bryan Reynolds all tripled and scored, and Pittsburgh's Roansy Contreras struck out seven over five innings in a win at Philadelphia.

The Pirates stopped a seven-game slide and snapped the Phillies' six-game winning streak.

**Dodgers 8, Marlins 1:** Mookie Betts homered for the third straight game, powering visiting Los Angeles to the victory.

Justin Turner and Max Muncy had three hits apiece for the NL West-leading Dodgers, who are 28-8 since the All-Star break. Julio Urías (14-7) pitched six innings of one-run ball.

**Tigers 9, Rangers 8:** Adolis García struck out during a Texas rally that fell short in the ninth inning, ending his 23-game hitting streak in a loss to visiting Detroit.

García's streak was the longest in the American League this season. He went 0-for-3 with two walks and fell one game short of matching the longest hitting string ever by a Cuban-born big leaguer, set by Rafael Palmeiro in 1994 for Baltimore.

**Twins 8, Giants 3:** Jake Cave homered and drove in four runs, and host Minnesota finished a three-game sweep.

Cave gave the Twins a 3-2 lead with his second homer of the season in the fourth inning. He added a two-run double in the fifth.

**Diamondbacks 3, White Sox 2:** Jake McCarthy hit a tiebreaking double in the ninth inning, and Arizona completed a three-game sweep at Chicago.

Stone Garrett launched his first major league home run and Sergio Alcántara also went deep for the Diamondbacks, who earned their first interleague sweep since 2019.

**Brewers 9, Cubs 7:** Christian Yelich and Kolten Wong each homered for the second straight game, leading host Milwaukee to the victory.

**Nationals 3, Reds 2:** Major league losses leader Patrick Corbin ended Washington's record 43-game drought without a starting pitcher earning a victory.