

Hawaii governor warns more dead likely

Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii — Hawaii's governor warned that scores more people could be found dead following ferocious wildfires on Maui, as search and rescue crews scoured neighborhoods street by street and prepared to comb through buildings charred by flames that galloped a mile a minute.

The blazes, which consumed most of the historic town of Lahaina, are already the deadliest in the United States in more than a century, with a toll of 96. Two fires have not yet been completely contained, according to an update from Maui County late Sunday.

"We are prepared for many tragic stories," Gov. Josh Green told "CBS Mornings" in a recorded interview that was aired Monday. "They will find 10 to 20 people per day, probably, until they finish. And it's probably going to take 10 days. It's impossible to guess, really."

As cell phone service has slowly been restored, Green had said that the number of people missing dropped to about 1,300 from over 2,000.

Twenty cadaver dogs and dozens of people are making their way through blocks reduced to ash.

"Right now, they're going street by street, block by block between cars, and soon they'll start to enter buildings," Jeff Hickman, the director of public affairs for the Hawaii Department of Defense, said Monday on NBC's "Today."

Such crews had covered just 3% of the search area, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said Saturday.

The blaze that swept into centuries-old Lahaina nearly a week ago destroyed nearly every building in the town of 13,000, leaving a grid of gray rubble wedged between the blue ocean and lush green slopes. That fire has been 85% contained, according to the

county, while the Upcountry fire has been 60% contained.

"There's very little left there," Green said about Lahaina in a video update Sunday, adding that "an estimated value of \$5.6 billion has gone away."

Even where the fire has retreated, authorities have warned that toxic byproducts may remain, including in drinking water, after the flames spewed poisonous fumes. And many people simply have no home to return to — so authorities plan to house them in hotels and vacation rentals.

The cause of the wildfires is under investigation, and Green said authorities would also examine their response. One fire, for instance, was thought to be out but later flared again. Before the blaze engulfed Lahaina, Maui County officials also failed to activate sirens that would have warned the entire population and instead relied on social media posts.

Fueled by a dry summer and strong winds from a passing hurricane, the flames on Maui raced through parched brush — one moving as fast as 60 mph, according to Green.

"With those kinds of winds and 1,000-degree temperatures, ultimately all the pictures that you will see will be easy to understand," he said.

The fires are Hawaii's deadliest natural disaster in decades, surpassing a 1960 tsunami that killed 61 people. They also surpassed the 2018 Camp Fire in northern California that left 85 dead and destroyed the town of Paradise.

Many gathered Sunday to mourn the dead. Maria Lanakila Church in Lahaina was spared from the flames that wiped out most of the surrounding community, but with search-and-recovery efforts ongoing, its members attended Mass up the road. The Bishop of Honolulu, the Rev. Clarence "Larry" Silva, presided.

Russian attacks target Ukrainian city of Odesa again

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russia launched three waves of nighttime air attacks against the southern Ukraine port city of Odesa, officials said Monday, though the Ukrainian air force said it intercepted all 15 incoming Shahed drones and eight Kalibr missiles.

Falling debris from the interceptions damaged the dormitory of an educational facility in the city, a residential building and a supermarket, Odesa Gov. Oleh Kiper said.

Two employees of the supermarket were hospitalized, Kiper said. Video showed a huge blaze at the supermarket dur-

ing the night and, the next day, the large building's charred and mangled wreckage.

Meanwhile, the Dutch Defense Ministry said it scrambled two F-16s early Monday when two Russian bombers were tracked flying toward Dutch airspace.

"This doesn't happen often, but today's incident demonstrates the importance of rapid deployment," the ministry said. "The F-16s are on standby 24 hours a day and can take off within minutes and intercept an unidentified aircraft."

The two planes were identified by Danish F-16s in international airspace over the Baltic

Sea but did not enter Danish airspace, the Danish air force said.

In March, British and German fighter jets were scrambled to intercept a Russian aircraft flying close to Estonian airspace, officials said, amid mounting concerns about aerial standoffs near Russia and Ukraine.

A day earlier, the U.S. said a Russian fighter jet struck a U.S. surveillance drone over the Black Sea. Russia insisted its warplanes didn't hit the MQ-9 Reaper drone, arguing the drone maneuvered sharply and crashed into the water.

The Kremlin's forces have

pummeled Odesa in recent times, aiming at facilities that transport Ukraine's crucial grain exports and also wrecking cherished Ukrainian historical sites.

The stepped-up barrage followed Moscow's decision to break off a landmark agreement that had allowed grain to flow from Ukraine to countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia and help reduce the threat of hunger.

Following that withdrawal, Russia carried out repeated strikes on Ukrainian ports, including Odesa, and declared wide areas of the Black Sea unsafe for shipping.

Tuberville blocking 301 military promotions

The Washington Post

From Alabama to Asia, the scope of senior military officers frozen in place by a dispute between Sen. Tommy Tuberville and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is vast, including not only the incoming leaders of the Joint Chiefs of Staff but generals and admirals focused on China policy, arming Ukraine and modernizing U.S. combat forces after 20 years of war.

Data obtained and verified by The Washington Post reveals that, as of Aug. 12, 301 high-level positions were ensnared in Tuberville's hold. That number is expected to more than double by the end of the year, officials have said, unless the impasse, which stems from the Pentagon's abortion policy, is resolved. By year's end, The Pentagon estimates that about three-quarters of the generals and admirals in the Defense Department — 650 of 852 — will be affected by Tuberville's hold.

Each of the Defense Department's five branches of service is affected, as is President Joe Biden's nominee to assume the military's top role, Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. The prospective heads of the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps are all in limbo, too, along with each service's No. 2 position. Yet those roles represent only a sliver of the controversy's global reach.

Tuberville, an Alabama Republican, implemented the hold in February to protest Austin's response to last year's Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark ruling that for nearly 50 years guaranteed a fundamental right to abortion. The policy provides paid leave and reimburses travel expenses incurred by military personnel who must leave the state where they are assigned because the procedure

was banned or otherwise restricted there after the high court ended federal protections.

Those in the military, Austin has argued, do not get to choose where they serve and deserve access to reproductive care. Tuberville's view is that federal money should not be used to cover abortion and anything connected to it.

His hold is not absolute, but it gums up the usual process in which well-qualified, noncontroversial nominees are approved by the Senate in batches. It's possible to vote on them individually, but doing so would take months, Democrats have said.

A spokesman for Tuberville, Steven Stafford, said Republicans and Democrats alike have used holds on both civilian officials and military officers in the past.

"The Senate has a right and duty to advise and consent to the President's nominations and to conduct oversight over the Pentagon," Stafford said in an email. For not bringing individual names to the Senate floor for a vote, he said, Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) is to blame.

Previous holds have been resolved relatively quickly, however, making this case uniquely troubling and destructive over time, said Peter Feaver, a professor who studies civil-military relations at Duke University. Feaver, a national security official during the presidential administration of George W. Bush, said the nation is now in "rare and uncharted territory" given the sweep and significance of the roles affected.

What the data show:

Air Force: 98 on hold

Air Force generals affected by the hold begin at the very top, where Brown is expected to be

elevated this fall to become the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Gen. David Allvin has been nominated to replace Brown at the top of the Air Force.

Other frozen nominees include Lt. Gen. Kevin Schneider, who is expected to be promoted to four-star general and become the next commander of Pacific Air Forces, a post central to U.S. policy toward China and North Korea; Lt. Gen. Gregory M. Guillot, slated to be the next four-star general overseeing U.S. Northern Command, central to homeland defense; and Gen. Kenneth S. Wilsbach, a four-star general expected to take over at Air Combat Command, which directs the service's fleet of fighter aircraft.

Army: 91 on hold

Among the Army officers affected are Biden's nominees for the service's top two jobs: Gen. Randy George and Gen. James Mingus.

Others include Maj. Gen. John W. Brennan Jr., who is expected to be promoted and become the next deputy commander at U.S. Africa Command as it prosecutes an expansive counterterrorism mission on the continent; and Lt. Gen. Laura Potter, who is slated to take over as the director of Army Staff, coordinating work between the service and Austin's office.

Marines: 18 on hold

Gen. Eric M. Smith, the Marines' assistant commandant, has served as the service's acting chief since early July. It's the first time since 1910 that there has been no Senate-confirmed commandant.

Smith's would-be successor, Lt. Gen. Christopher Mahoney is also on hold.

So is the presumed next com-

manding general of Marine forces in Japan, Maj. Gen. Roger Turner, another job vital to the Pentagon's China and North Korea strategies, and the next deputy commandant for plans, policies and operations, Lt. Gen. James "Chip" Bierman.

Navy: 86 on hold

The Navy's frozen nominees include Adm. Lisa Franchetti, who will make history as the first woman on the Joint Chiefs if confirmed as chief of naval operations. Others on hold include Vice Adm. James Kilby, who is expected to be promoted and replace Franchetti as vice chief of naval operations; Adm. Samuel Paparo, who is slated to become the next commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, a core joint assignment responding directly to the Chinese military; and Vice Adm. Stephen T. Koehler, tapped for promotion and to become the next four-star commander at U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Space Force: 8 on hold

The Pentagon's smallest and youngest service has fewer nominees caught in the hold, but there are still several significant jobs involved.

They include Lt. Gen. Stephen Whiting, nominated to become the next four-star commander of U.S. Space Command, and Lt. Gen. Michael A. Guetlein, tapped to be the next four-star vice chief of space operations.

Feaver said he was struck by the number of "warfighting" positions affected, notably in the Pacific. Leaving jobs like the chief of Indo-Pacific Command without a confirmed successor, he said, undermines U.S. messaging that it considers Beijing its chief competitor.

"This is a gift to China, and it's a gift that keeps giving day in and day out," Feaver said.

Police on Okinawa jail 2 Marines after car crashes

By KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japanese police arrested two Marines on Okinawa on suspicion of drunken driving after a separate pair of crashes over the weekend, one involving injuries to a Japanese driver and child passenger.

Cpl. Eduardo Sebastian, 22, of Camp Courtney, was arrested at 12:51 p.m. Sunday after his Honda Edix collided with another vehicle at a Route 75 intersection in the Higashi district of Okinawa city, a spokesman for Okinawa prefectural police said by phone Monday.

The other driver, a woman, 41, and her daughter, 9, were treated for minor injuries at a hospital, the spokesman said. The woman injured her knee, back and neck, and the girl suffered a facial abrasion, according to the spokesman.

A Breathalyzer measured Sebastian's blood-alcohol content at 0.15%, five times Japan's legal driving limit of 0.03%, the spokesman said.

Police said Sebastian told them that he drank "two highball cans" before driving.

By comparison, all 50 U.S. states have set 0.08% as the legal limit for driving under the influence or driving while impaired.

Also in Okinawa city, police arrested Cpl. Mike Moncoeur, 21, of Camp Schwab, at 7:49 a.m. Saturday, the spokesman said.

Police said Moncoeur was northbound on Route 224 in a

black Nissan Infinity when he strayed into the opposite lane and collided with another vehicle at around 6:47 a.m. in the Noborikawa district.

A breath test at the scene measured Moncoeur's blood-alcohol content at 0.12%, four times the legal limit, the spokesman said.

Neither Moncoeur nor the other driver were seriously injured, according to police.

Police forwarded Moncoeur's case to prosecutors on Sunday and plan to forward Sebastian's on Tuesday, the spokesman said.

If convicted of violating Japan's traffic law, Moncoeur faces a maximum five years and three months in prison or a \$7,400 fine.

If convicted of violating traffic law and of negligent driving resulting in injury, Sebastian faces a maximum of 12 years and three months in prison or a \$14,800 fine.

Both Marines were still in police custody Monday, the police spokesman said. Some government spokespeople in Japan are required to speak to the media only on condition of anonymity.

A spokesman for the III Marine Expeditionary Force said the command is aware of the incidents and is cooperating with local authorities.

"The alleged behavior does not reflect the core values of the U.S. Marine Corps, nor does it represent the conduct of the vast majority of Okinawa-based Marines," said Capt. Brett Dornhege-Lazaroff.

Navy, USMC help volcano-damaged Papua New Guinea

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Sailors and Marines aboard the amphibious assault ship USS America are flying emergency relief to parts of Papua New Guinea hit by recent volcanic eruptions, the U.S. Agency for International Development announced recently.

Eruptions from Mount Bagan on the island of Bougainville over the past five weeks have produced ashfall, gas, lava flows and steam plumes, according to a USAID news release.

"The volcano has adversely affected more than 6,300 people living in Torokina and Wakunai districts and could impact up to 17,000 people total living near the volcano's crater," the statement said. "Ongoing volcanic activity continues to restrict people's access to food and water and families from returning home."

The USS America diverted from a planned port call to lend assistance in Papua New Guinea, ship's commander Capt. Manuel Pardo wrote in a letter to the crew and their families Aug. 7. The America, with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, was just south of Papua New Guinea following

the conclusion Aug. 4 of the Talisman Sabre military exercises in eastern Australia.

"The Team is flexing to prepare for our next mission without missing a beat — in true AMERICA style," Pardo wrote.

Bougainville already holds historic significance for the two services, which fought the Japanese there from November 1943 to April 1944 during World War II.

Now the Marines are using CH-53 Super Stallion heavy-lift helicopters and MV-22 Osprey tiltrotors along with Navy SH-60 Seahawks to haul supplies to remote locations in the island nation of 10 million people, USAID said.

The aid is delivered at the request of the Papua New Guinea government.

The U.S. has sought to boost ties with Papua New Guinea amid Chinese efforts to gain influence in the region. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met with Prime Minister James Marape in the islands July 27 and discussed the Defense Cooperation Agreement signed by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Port Moresby in May.

Marine charged with assaulting girl, 14, found in barracks

New York Daily News

A Marine stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif., has been charged with sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl, who was discovered in his barracks two weeks after she was reported missing.

The Marine is now facing one count of sexual assault of a minor and another count of violating li-

berty restriction from an earlier, unrelated case, said Capt. Charles Palmer, a spokesman for the 1st Marine Logistics Group at Camp Pendleton. A preliminary hearing has been scheduled for Thursday, which will allow for commanding officers to determine whether the case should be tried by court-martial.

"To protect the integrity of the

ongoing investigation and the rights of the subject, further information is unavailable until this decision is made," Palmer explained. "As a reminder, charges remain allegations, and all service members are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty."

Neither the teen nor the Marine have been identified, though au-

thorities previously said the suspect is with the Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 1st Marine Logistics Group. Other details — including when and how the pair met, how the teen got onto the base and how long she spent there — are also still unclear.

Military police at Camp Pendleton near Oceanside found the teenager on June 28.

Coup leaders vow to prosecute president

Associated Press

NIAMEY, Niger — Niger's mutinous soldiers said they will prosecute deposed President Mohamed Bazoum for "high treason" and undermining state security, in an announcement hours after the junta said they were open to dialogue with West African nations to resolve the mounting regional crisis.

If found guilty, Bazoum could face the death penalty, according to Niger's penal code.

Spokesman Col. Maj. Amadou Abdramane said on state television Sunday night that the military regime had "gathered the necessary evidence to prosecute before competent national and international authorities the ousted president and his local and foreign accomplices for high treason and for undermining the internal and external security of Niger."

The announcement said high-ranking West African politicians and "their international mentors" have made false allegations and attempted to derail

a peaceful solution to the crisis in order to justify a military intervention.

It said Bazoum was being charged following his exchanges with these people. The statement did not identify specific Western countries and did not specify a date for the trial.

Bazoum, Niger's democratically elected president, was ousted by members of his presidential guard on July 26 and has since been under house arrest with his wife and son in the presidential compound in the capital, Niamey.

People close to the president as well as those in his ruling party say the family's electricity and water have been cut off and they're running out of food. The junta dismissed these reports Sunday night and accused West African politicians and international partners of fueling a disinformation campaign to discredit the junta.

International pressure is growing on the junta to release and reinstate Bazoum. Immedi-

ately after the coup, the West African regional bloc ECOWAS gave the regime seven days to return him to power and threatened military force if it did not happen, but that deadline came and went with no action from either side.

Last week, ECOWAS ordered the deployment of a "standby" force, but it's still unclear when or if it would enter the country. The African Union Peace and Security Council is meeting on Monday to discuss Niger's crisis and could overrule the decision if it felt that wider peace and security on the continent was threatened by an intervention.

But as time drags on there's growing uncertainty and mixed messages are mounting.

On Sunday evening, before the military accused Bazoum of treason, a member of the junta's communication team told journalists that the regime had approved talks with ECOWAS, which would take place in the coming days. That same day, a mediation team of Islamic

scholars from neighboring Nigeria who had met with the junta on the weekend, said the regime was open to dialogue with ECOWAS.

Previous attempts by ECOWAS to speak with the junta have foundered, with its delegations being barred from entering the country.

The newfound openness to talks could be a result of ECOWAS pressure, including severe economic and travel sanctions that are already taking a toll on the impoverished country's some 25 million people, but it doesn't mean they'll go anywhere, say Sahel experts.

"Let's see what these negotiations actually look like, because it's also in the junta's benefit to in the least entertain talks. That doesn't mean they'll be serious about them," said Aneliese Bernard, a former U.S. State Department official who specialized in African affairs and is now director of Strategic Stabilization Advisors, a risk advisory group.

States expect schools to keep trans girls off teams

Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. — As children across the U.S. head back to classes and practices for fall sports, four more states are expecting their K-12 schools to keep transgender girls off their girls teams.

Kansas, North Dakota and Wyoming had new laws in place restricting transgender athletes before classes resumed, and a Missouri law takes effect at the end of this month, bringing the number of states with restrictions to 23.

North Carolina could enact a ban later this month, and Ohio could follow in the fall. A few laws, including ones in Arizona and West Virginia, are on hold because of federal lawsuits.

This year's new restrictions are part of a larger wave of legislation across the U.S. against transgender rights. Republican legislators in some states have banned gender-affirming care for minors, restricted transgender people's use of school and public

restrooms, limited what public schools can teach about gender and sexuality and barred schools from requiring the use of a transgender student's preferred pronouns.

The sports laws have been imposed since 2020, and most are aimed at transgender girls.

A majority cover less formal intramural contests organized within a single school's student body as well as contests among different schools, and some restrict transgender boys as well.

Almost all say other students and their parents can sue schools that don't enforce the restrictions.

Lawmakers expect a child's earliest birth certificate to determine which sports teams they can join. Principals and coaches are expected to be the enforcers.

"Those are uncomfortable conversations," said Jeanne Woodbury, interim executive director of the LGBTQ+ rights group Equality Arizona. "Everyone is going

through that process."

She added: "For trans kids, it's never been a walk in the park, but now they have this law to contend with on top of everything else."

In Oklahoma, where a law has been in place since 2022, athletes or their parents must file an annual affidavit "acknowledging the biological sex of the student at birth."

Kansas and other states expect school officials to review a child's earliest birth certificate if questions arise about an athlete's eligibility.

Bill Faflick, executive director of the Kansas State High School Activities Association, said his state's law has been greeted by a "matter of fact" acceptance in rules seminars for administrators and coaches.

"It has not been met with any resistance and has not been met with any outpouring of support or opposition, one way or the other," Faflick said.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Woman found live frog inside spinach container

MI SOUTHFIELD — A woman in suburban Detroit said she got a scare when she discovered a live frog in a container of spinach purchased from a grocery store.

Amber Worrick, of Southfield, said she bought the sealed Earthbound Farm spinach package last week from a Meijer store, WJBK-TV reported. When she got home, her daughter found a live frog in the container and screamed, Worrick said.

Worrick said she immediately returned the package and the frog to the store. Workers there released the frog and gave her a refund, she said.

Jennifer Holton, a spokesperson with the Michigan Department of Agricultural and Rural Development, told the Detroit Free Press that the store shouldn't have released the frog because authorities now don't know whether it's native to the state.

Officials at California-based Taylor Farms, which owns Earthbound Farm, apologized in a statement and promised to continue to provide "the freshest, finest quality veggies for consumers."

High court upholds state ban on semiautomatics

IL SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Supreme Court has upheld the state's ban on the sale or possession of the type of semiautomatic weapons used in hundreds of mass killings nationally.

In a 4-3 decision Friday, the high court found that the Protect

Our Communities Act does not violate the federal Constitution's guarantee of equal protection of the law nor the state constitution's bar on special legislation.

The court also decreed that state Rep. Dan Caulkins, a Decatur Republican, and like-minded gun-owners who brought the lawsuit had earlier waived their claims that the law infringes on the Second Amendment to own firearms and could not raise it before the Supreme Court.

The Second Amendment claim is alive, however, in several federal lawsuits filed in southern Illinois, later consolidated and awaiting appeals court action.

Officer trapped in car shoots, kills suspect

CT WEST HARTFORD — A Connecticut police officer, trapped inside a moving stolen vehicle, shot and killed the suspect who was behind the wheel, the local police department's chief said Wednesday.

"Repeated efforts and orders to stop the vehicle" were made by the officer before he ultimately shot the suspect, West Hartford Police Chief Vernon Riddick Jr. said during a news conference. The chaotic scene occurred during rush hour Tuesday afternoon on a busy street in the Hartford suburb.

"He was inside the vehicle. The vehicle took off across the street and inside the vehicle he discharged his weapon," Riddick said of the officer, who sustained head injuries after the vehicle finally struck a telephone pole.

The suspect, who received CPR at the scene, was pro-

nounced dead at a local hospital.

The incident is being investigated by the state's Office of Inspector General.

Shooting at trampoline park leaves 1 injured

MD BALTIMORE — One adult was injured in a shooting at a trampoline park in Maryland on Saturday, police said.

Baltimore County Police said via social media that they responded to a report of a shooting around 7 p.m. at the Sky Zone in Timonium, north of Baltimore, and one person was taken to a hospital. Police said there was no ongoing threat to the public.

Detective Anthony Shelton told The Baltimore Sun that no suspects were in custody. Shelton said no children were injured.

Dominic Sinclair, of Baltimore, told the newspaper that he was at the cash register with his 10-year-old son when he heard multiple noises that sounded like balloons popping. He grabbed his son and ran to his car as others also sought safety.

Classes delayed due to bus schedule debacle

KY LOUISVILLE — Louisville schools will remain closed early this week to allow for more time to fix bus routes whose redesign left some children at home on the first school day this year and others getting home hours late.

The Jefferson County Public Schools had already canceled classes Thursday and Friday in response to Wednesday's route fiasco. Now there will be no school Monday and Tuesday "as

we continue to work on short and long-term changes to ensure the reliability of our bus services," the district said Saturday on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Kentucky's largest district, with 96,000 students, had retooled its bus system through a Massachusetts-based consulting company that uses computer algorithms to map out courses and stops. It was a response to a chronic bus driver shortage. The redesigned plan reduced the number of routes.

An apologetic Superintendent Marty Pollio had signaled Friday that classes may have to be delayed into this week to fix the problems. He said the district should have anticipated the new plan didn't leave enough time for buses to get from stop to stop and transport its 65,000 riders.

Dog finds woman after she vanished in crash

MI BRIGHTON — A woman who was missing after being seriously injured in a car crash was finally discovered two days later by a police dog in a dense cornfield in southeastern Michigan, authorities said.

The 45-year-old woman, whose name wasn't released, was involved in a crash Sunday in Livingston County's Deerfield Township, 45 miles northwest of Detroit.

Her car was found but she was not at the vehicle. By Tuesday, two days later, the state police got involved. Troopers searched for nine hours among mature corn plants.

The woman was initially in critical condition at a hospital but was upgraded to stable.

— From wire reports

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Cavs' Hollins moves on after shooting

Associated Press

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Virginia running back Mike Hollins knows he will never be the same, and admits that the position of football on his priorities list “has shrunk.” He still can’t wait to run onto the field with his Cavaliers brothers for their opener this season.

“I can only imagine the emotions that’ll be flowing through my body. I just — I literally can’t. I have no words because the spring game hit me like a sack of rocks, and I didn’t expect it at all, so I can only imagine,” he said. “I’m ready, though. I’m ready for it.”

Hollins, from Baton Rouge, La., was one of two survivors of a shooting last November that left three teammates dead. He was shot in the back, needed several surgeries and spent a week in the hospital before beginning a long rehabilitation.

The shootings, which also left student Marlee Morgan injured, rocked the team and the community and caused the Cavaliers to cancel their final two games.

Hollins uplifted his teammates when he returned for spring practices four months later, even though he wasn’t cleared for full contact yet. That came about midway through the 15 sessions, and he scored on a 1-yard touchdown run in the spring game.

On that day, Hollins said, “I just felt free

from my mind,” and all the horror planted there that November night. “I mean, it was a lot easier just to play ball.”

He celebrated the touchdown by placing the ball on the name of D’Sean Perry, painted in the end zone along with those of Lavel Davis Jr. and Devin Chandler, those killed on a school bus returning from a field trip to Washington, D.C. A former Virginia player, Christopher Jones Jr., is accused of the shootings and awaiting trial.

Throughout his recovery, which he admits is more complete physically than mentally, Hollins “has been a superhero,” roommate and fellow running back Perris Jones said. “Experiencing what he experienced and carrying himself with as much grace and perseverance as he does is inspirational to see day in and day out. His spirit is truly unbroken, and he embodies that every day.”

Jones and his teammates aren’t the only ones benefiting from Hollins’ return.

“He’s been a big-time inspiration. He’s been an inspiration for me, you know, on the strength of that young man to come back out and play,” defensive line coach Chris Slade said. “And he came back in the spring, and that’s big.”

Hollins knows no one would have questioned him, or any member of last year’s team, had they decided not to play again or

to move to another school.

He also knows to keep things in perspective as they play to honor their fallen teammates.

“Us being here and being able to play again and touch the field and just come together as a team is doing that legacy justice in itself. We don’t have to go out and try to ... go undefeated or win a championship,” he said.

That desire to honor their teammates has been cited by several players that decided to return, including defensive lineman Chico Bennett and Perris Jones.

“It’s a shame it has to happen in this way,” Bennett said, “but now that we’re given a platform, we’re going to make the most of it. I look forward to being able to do that and honoring them through our play and doing that to the best of our ability.”

Said Jones: “I have a debt to pay to those guys, and I plan to pay it.”

When Hollins suits up for Virginia’s game against Tennessee in Nashville on Sept. 2, he said, he will be “carrying something with me.”

“It’ll always weigh on you,” he said. “There will never be a day where you won’t remember it or feel something missing from your heart when thinking about it.”

Getting back on the field, though, sure might help.

Georgia starts season No. 1 in college football Top 25

Associated Press

Georgia will begin its drive for an unprecedented college football championship threepeat as the No. 1 team in The Associated Press preseason Top 25.

The Bulldogs received 60 of 63 first-place votes in the poll released Monday to easily outpoint No. 2 Michigan, which received two first-place votes and has its best preseason rankings since being No. 2 in 1991. The Wolverines’ Big Ten rival, Ohio State, is No. 3 with one first-place vote.

Two more Southeastern Conference teams join Georgia in the top five. Alabama is No. 4, the Crimson Tide’s lowest preseason ranking in more than a

decade, and LSU starts at No. 5, its best preseason ranking since 2016.

The Bulldogs have won the last two national titles while going 29-2, but this will be only the second time in program history they have been preseason No. 1. The first was in 2008.

Georgia started the 2021 season No. 5, before going on to win its first national title since 1980. The Bulldogs followed up with a perfect season in 2022 after being preseason No. 3.

The Bulldogs have had 25 players drafted by NFL teams the past two years, including quarterback Stetson Bennett and All-America defensive tackle Jalen Carter this past April. Coach Kirby Smart has

built a program to rival Nick Saban’s Alabama dynasty so voters are now giving Georgia the Crimson Tide treatment.

Alabama had been preseason No. 1 each of the past two seasons, and five of the previous seven. Clemson was preseason No. 1 in the other two seasons, making Georgia the first team other than the Tide or Tigers to be preseason No. 1 since Ohio State in 2015.

Alabama is also the last team to win back-to-back major college football national championships, doing so in 2011 and ’12.

No team has won three straight national titles during the AP poll era, which dates to 1936. For the record, Minnesota, the first official AP champion,

was retroactively crowned champion for the 1934 and ’35 seasons by a couple of organizations.

The Bulldogs are reloading on the defensive front and at quarterback, but do not lack for stars. Tight end Brock Bowers is one of the nation’s best players; linebacker Jamon Dumas-Johnson was a second-team All-American; and center Sedrick Van Pran anchors one of the country’s most talented offensive lines.

Rounding out the top 10 is Southern California at No. 6, which is the Trojans’ best preseason ranking since 2017, followed by Penn State, Florida State, Clemson and Washington.

Spain moves past turmoil before semifinal

Associated Press

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Spain is just one win away from the Women's World Cup final, less than a year after more than a dozen players staged a mutiny and stepped away from the team.

La Roja will face Sweden in a semifinal match on Tuesday at Auckland's Eden Park, with the winner advancing to play either England or co-host Australia in the championship match.

It is just the third time Spain has played in the tournament and the furthest it has advanced. La Roja reached the knockout round four years ago in France, but they were eliminated by the eventual champion U.S. team. The only other time Spain has reached the final four at a major tournament was the 1997 Euros.

Spain's success this time comes despite a turbulent recent history. Last September, 15 players signed letters that said they were withdrawing from the national team to protect their

emotional health and called on the Spanish federation to commit to a more professional environment. The players insisted they did not ask for coach Jorge Vilda's dismissal.

Jennifer Hermoso was not among the those who protested, but she did support her colleagues on a social media post. On Monday, the Barcelona forward shrugged off a question about the conflict.

"I'm here today, I'm very happy," Hermoso said. "I hope to continue making history with my team."

Vilda, who has coached La Roja since 2015, was ultimately backed by the federation in the conflict. In the run-up to the World Cup, there appeared to be at least some reconciliation: Three of the 15 players who stepped down were on the roster.

Vilda maintains there is "great unity" within the team at the World Cup.

Captain Ivana Andres said the players have a "very good rela-

tionship with our coach."

"We are a team. We all win, we all lose," Andres said, "and we all have the same responsibility,"

Spain secured a spot in the semifinals with a 2-1 quarterfinal win in extra time over 2019 runner-up Netherlands. Two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas went on as a substitute again as she continued to return from an ACL tear sustained just before the European Championship last July.

Putellas, who has 28 goals in 102 appearances for Spain, is considered among the best players in the world and has led Spain's climb on the national stage. Vilda said the team is pleased with her recovery.

"Alexia is ready for anything," Vilda said.

Spain, No. 6 in the FIFA global rankings, was considered among the favorites going into the tournament despite the turmoil last fall. Hermoso, Aitana Bonmati and Alba Redondo lead the team with three goals apiece.

The Swedes advanced by knocking off previously undefeated Japan 2-1 in the quarterfinals. Japan won the 2011 World Cup title and was the last remaining past champion left in the tournament.

Before that, Sweden eliminated the two-time defending champion United States on penalties in the Round of 16 for the Americans' earliest exit ever.

The Swedes were runners-up at the World Cup in 2003 and they've finished in third place three times, but they've never won soccer's biggest trophy. Two years ago, Sweden lost to Canada in the gold-medal match at the Tokyo Olympics.

"I'm particularly pleased with how we've come this far, the way we've done it, the way we've won our matches in different ways. And it shows the breadth of this team and that games can pass out very differently, but at the end of the day, it's the result that counts," Sweden midfielder Kosovare Asllani said.

McDowell adds 2nd NASCAR crown jewel victory

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Michael McDowell knelt down at Indianapolis Motor Speedway's yard of bricks and delivered the sweetest kisses of his racing career Sunday.

The 38-year-old Arizona driver became a Brickyard champ — and a member of an elite club.

McDowell inherited the lead on Lap 53 and never trailed again as he drove the most dominant race of his career, beating Chase Elliott to the yard of bricks by 0.937 seconds for his second NASCAR crown jewel victory while securing a playoff spot. Pole-winner Daniel Suarez was third.

McDowell's only other win was the 2021 Daytona 500.

"That's a big deal," he said when asked about his second playoff appearance in three years. "When we won the Daytona 500, that was one of the coolest moments we ever had. We cherry-pick the races, my family comes to the ones we think we can win, and we thought we could win this one."

As a result, McDowell's wife and children

also celebrated by kissing the bricks after his 453rd career Cup start. They weren't at Daytona for his first win.

While his first win came by navigating traffic following a crash at Daytona, there was no doubt Sunday. McDowell won the first stage, finished behind only Denny Hamlin in Stage 2 and closed it out by leading a career-high 54 laps to give Front Row Motorsports its fourth Cup win.

McDowell's victory put him on the short list of Cup drivers to reach victory lane at Daytona and Indy, a list that includes names such as the late Dale Earnhardt, Jeff Gordon, Kevin Harvick, Jimmie Johnson and Dale Jarrett, who introduced the kissing tradition.

And on the annual crossover weekend with the IndyCar Series, McDowell also fittingly joined two of IndyCar's greatest drivers on the list — Mario Andretti and A.J. Foyt, the only winners of the Daytona 500 and Indianapolis 500.

The significance struck McDowell almost immediately as he finished the 82-lap race on Indy's 14-turn, 2.439-mile road course.

"We did it, we won Indy," he shouted into the radio. "We had the fastest car. I don't know if it was dominant, but it felt dominant."

Elliott, the 2020 series champion, spent the final 20 laps trying to chase McDowell. He trimmed the deficit from nearly three seconds to less than one, but couldn't close enough to mount a charge.

So he settled for a runner-up finish that gave him some extra points — but not the playoff-clinching win. He'll have two more chances to as the regular season winds to a close.

"I just lost too much ground in that mid-cycle," Elliott said.

Suarez also spent most of the afternoon up front in a race that had only one yellow flag and 77 laps of green flag racing. He finished 5.75 seconds behind McDowell, the byproduct of a hose getting caught underneath the car's left front tire during a pit stop.

Defending champion Tyler Reddick and Alex Bowman, who also is fighting to make the playoffs, finished fourth and fifth, respectively.

Mullins leads Orioles over Mariners

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Cedric Mullins robbed Ty France of a homer in the ninth inning and hit a two-run homer in the 10th, and the AL-best Baltimore Orioles beat the Seattle Mariners in extra innings for the second straight day, 5-3 on Sunday.

"It's crazy," Mullins said. "There's always that scenario of what's better, to rob a home run or hitting one, but to do it basically within an inning is pretty cool."

Mullins, who entered in the sixth as a defensive replacement, leaped and reached over the wall in center field to snag France's deep drive off Mike Baumann. Mullins fell face-first to the warning track with the ball in his glove and pumped his fist as he jumped to his feet.

Mullins said it was among the best defensive plays of his career.

Two pitches after Mullins' catch, Dominic Canzone hit a 96 mph fastball from Baumann 402 feet to right and flipped his bat as he admired the homer that tied the game at 3-all.

Mullins had been 0-for-9 since his return from the injured list when he came up with one out in the 10th. He hit a long drive just outside the right-field foul pole on a 2-1 pitch from

Trent Thornton (0-1) and then, two pitches later, sent a drive over the wall in right to score Gunnar Henderson.

Marlins 8, Yankees 7: Jake Burger's game-ending single capped a five-run, ninth-inning comeback against Clay Holmes and Tommy Kahnle, giving host Miami the win over struggling New York.

The Yankees, who led 7-1 in the sixth inning behind ace Gerrit Cole, dropped five games back of the AL's last wild card berth and are on track to miss the playoffs for the first time since 2016. New York is 3-8-1 in its last 12 series and has lost six straight rubber games of three-game series.

Pirates 4-5, Reds 2-6: Stuart Fairchild drove in the tying run in the eighth inning and the go-ahead run in the 10th, helping visiting Cincinnati split a doubleheader against Pittsburgh.

Pirates rookies Jared Triolo hit his first major league home run in the opener, a three-run drive as a pinch hitter in the seventh inning. Cincinnati had lost nine of 11 before winning the nightcap.

Angels 2, Astros 1: Shohei Ohtani hit his AL-leading 41st homer and visiting Los Angeles beat Houston to avoid a three-game sweep.

Chase Silseth (4-1) allowed four hits and struck out five in five scoreless innings. Carlos Estévez struck out two in the ninth for his 25th save.

Nationals 8, Athletics 7: Jeter Downs capped a six-run ninth with an RBI single, and host Washington rallied past Oakland to complete a three-game sweep.

Twins 3, Phillies 0: Sonny Gray tossed two-hit ball for six shutout innings, reliever Caleb Thielbar pitched out of a bases-loaded jam in the seventh and Jordan Luplow homered to lead visiting Minnesota past Philadelphia.

Giants 3, Rangers 2 (10): Patrick Bailey hit a two-run homer in the 10th inning and host San Francisco overcame a blown save by All-Star Camilo Doval, beating Texas to stop a four-game skid.

The Giants, who struck out a season-high 17 times, had lost six of seven. Texas had won 10 of 11.

Blue Jays 11, Cubs 4: Daulton Varsho homered and had five RBIs, Hyun Jin Ryu pitched five innings to win for the first time since returning from elbow surgery and host Toronto beat Chicago to avoid a three-game sweep.

Dodgers 8, Rockies 3: Julio Urías matched his career high

with 12 strikeouts in seven innings of four-hit ball, and Miguel Rojas homered and drove in four runs as host Los Angeles won its season-high eighth straight and completed a four-game sweep of Colorado.

Red Sox 6, Tigers 3: Adam Duvall had four RBIs that included a three-run homer, Justin Turner added a solo shot and host Boston beat Detroit.

Brewers 7, White Sox 3: Carlos Santana hit a three-run homer, Freddy Peralta pitched six scoreless innings and visiting Milwaukee completed a three-game sweep of Chicago.

Diamondbacks 5, Padres 4: Lourdes Gurriel Jr. hit a tying, two-run homer in the seventh inning, Alek Thomas hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly in the eighth against Robert Suarez (1-2), and host Arizona rallied past sinking San Diego.

Guardians 9, Rays 2: Tanner Bibee won his seventh consecutive decision, giving up two runs, seven hits and striking out five in seven innings, and visiting Cleveland beat Tampa Bay to avoid a three-game sweep.

Mets 7, Braves 6: Rafael Ortega had two hits during a six-run fifth inning, and host New York beat majors-best Atlanta to avoid falling into last place in the NL East.

Glover makes it two straight with FedEx Cup opener

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Mostly from the stifling heat, maybe from the pressure, Lucas Glover needed to keep his hands from sweating and he learned a trick long ago from not wearing a glove.

On the 17th tee Sunday, tied for the lead with Patrick Cantlay, he dunked his hands in the ice water of a cooler for as long as he could stand it and then quickly dried them.

"It literally stops them from

sweating for a little while," Glover said.

And it did nothing to cool him off.

Glover won the FedEx St. Jude Championship, his second title in two weeks, this time by making three big putts — one of them for bogey — on the back nine, closing with a 1-under 69 and then beating Cantlay in a playoff with what ultimately was the most important shot.

His tee shot on the 18th hole in the playoff found dry land. Can-

tlay's did not.

Glover won with a par to extend a most amazing run. Just 10 days ago, he started the PGA Tour's postseason at No. 112 in the FedEx Cup — No. 119 in the world rankings — and was looking at an early end to the season.

He won the Wyndham Championship to get into the FedEx Cup playoffs. He won at the TPC Southwind and now already has locked up a spot in the Tour Championship. He is No. 30 in the world. He has earned just

short of \$5 million in two weeks.

The playoff effectively ended with one shot. Cantlay hit 3-wood that was about a foot from being perfect. Instead, it hopped down the bank and into the water. Glover found the fairway with his 3-wood and two-putted for par. Cantlay took a penalty drop and his 20-foot par putt just slid by the right edge.

"Just hooked the ball a little too much off the tee," Cantlay said. "Bad shot, obviously, and paid the price."