

## 8 Marines left in hospital after crash

*Associated Press*

CANBERRA, Australia — Eight U.S. Marines remained in a hospital in the Australian north coast city of Darwin on Monday after they were injured in a fiery crash of a tiltrotor aircraft that killed three of their colleagues on an island.

All 20 survivors were flown from Melville Island 50 miles south to Darwin within hours of the Marine V-22 Osprey crashing at 9:30 a.m. Sunday during a multinational training exercise, Northern Territory Chief Minister Natasha Fyles said.

All were taken to the Royal Darwin Hospital, and 12 had been discharged by Monday, she said.

The first five Marines to arrive at the city's main hospital were critically injured and one underwent emergency surgery.

Fyles said she would not detail the conditions of eight who remained in the hospital out of respect for them and their families.

"It's ... a credit to everyone involved that we were able to get 20 patients from an extremely remote location on an island into our tertiary hospital within a matter of

hours," Fyles told reporters.

The Osprey that crashed was one of two that flew from Darwin to Melville on Sunday as part of Exercise Predators Run, which involves the militaries of the United States, Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines and East Timor.

All 23 Marines aboard the lost aircraft were temporarily based in Darwin as part of the Marine Corps' annual troop rotation.

Around 150 U.S. Marines are currently based in Darwin and up to 2,500 rotate through the city every year.

They are part of a realignment of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific that is broadly meant to face an increasingly assertive China.

The bodies of the three Marines remained at the crash site, where an exclusion zone would be maintained, Northern Territory Police Commissioner Michael Murphy said.

The cause of the crash had yet to be explained and investigators would remain at the site for at least 10 days, Murphy said.

Emergency responders were surprised

the death toll from Sunday's crash was not higher.

"For a chopper that crashes and catches fire, to have 20 Marines that are surviving, I think that's an incredible outcome," Murphy said.

Defense Minister Richard Marles was also grateful that the toll was not worse.

"It's remarkable that in many ways, so many have survived," Marles told Nine News television. "This remains a very tragic incident and the loss of those lives are keenly felt," Marles added.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin paid tribute to the fallen Marines.

"These Marines served our country with courage and pride, and my thoughts and prayers are with their families today, with the other troops who were injured in the crash, and with the entire USMC family," Austin tweeted.

The U.S. Embassy in Australia issued a statement offering condolences to the families and friends of the fallen Marines and thanking Australian responders for their help.

## Group aims to find more medical jobs for spouses

**BY ALISON BATH**

*Stars and Stripes*

Medical professionals on Okinawa who have joined forces seeking to shatter employment barriers for spouses of American service members see the grassroots effort as a way to relieve chronic staffing shortages at the Japanese island's U.S. military hospital.

An online workshop Tuesday aims to identify impediments to putting more spouses to work at Naval Hospital Okinawa and its associated base clinics. At least 38 participants have agreed to attend the workshop, Hire Oki Spouse Project organizers said.

"There are so many issues that are happening with health

care that if we could get some administrative rules changed, it would really ease the burden on the hospital," said Julia Whitaker, an unemployed nurse practitioner who is married to an active-duty Marine. "But we're not taking advantage of the things that are free to do that would help the system, and that is problematic."

Located at Camp Foster, the hospital serves a military population of 47,000, including active-duty service members and their families, Defense Department civilian workers and their dependents, and retirees, according to the Navy.

A second meeting next month will identify solutions, and a re-

sulting report will be shared with advocacy groups and perhaps with congressional leaders, organizers said earlier this month.

The group's efforts highlight the systemic problems that keep many military spouses overseas unemployed. Many of those issues were highlighted in a Stars and Stripes report last month.

Barriers in Europe and elsewhere resulted in the reliance of a sizable number of military families on a Defense Department program ensuring that pregnant women, infants and children have enough to eat.

The report also showed how military medical facilities bene-

fit from rules that keep spouses from working overseas, encouraging them to volunteer as nurses or perform other unpaid duties.

Organizers of Tuesday's meeting in Okinawa point to inflexible hiring requirements and a lack of part-time or on-call positions.

Those hurdles sideline spouses, who need more flexible work schedules that account for the requirements of active-duty military families, they say.

The meeting could lead to a rise in the number of qualified medical professionals available to the hospital and base clinics, thus addressing staffing problems, advocates say.

# Deal with officers looks set in 'Fat Leonard' case

*The San Diego Union-Tribune*

SAN DIEGO — Four former Navy officers who have been aggressively challenging their convictions in the notorious "Fat Leonard" Navy bribery case appear to have reached a deal with prosecutors.

Rather than continue to argue motions that allege prosecutorial misconduct in the government's handling of the case, a date has been set for Sept. 6 for the four defendants to enter new pleas and be sentenced, according to a docket entry filed Friday in San Diego federal court.

The record does not detail which crime the men may plead to. But the plea deals would almost certainly put an end to the post-trial legal challenges that have embroiled the U.S. Attorney's Office since the men were convicted by a jury last summer.

Former Capt. David Newland, James Dolan and David Lausman and former Cmdr. Mario Herrera have been fighting their convictions on multiple felony charges — conspiracy to commit bribery, receiving bribes and conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud — stemming from their involvement with military contractor Leonard Glenn Francis. Lausman was also convicted of obstruction of justice for destroying a computer hard drive.

The jury deadlocked on charges against a fifth defendant, former Rear Adm. Bruce Lovelless.

Of the 32 people who have been convicted or pleaded guilty in the bribery scandal — the Navy's worst in modern history — they were the only ones to take their case to a jury.

The trial depended heavily on emails, messages, receipts, records and cooperating witnesses to detail corruption that has become familiar in the long-running investigation. The officers are accused of accepting bribes — swanky hotel stays, fine dining and in some cases the services of prostitutes — from Francis.

Nicknamed "Fat Leonard" for his size, Francis was a larger-than-life presence in Southeast Asian ports. His contracting company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, serviced visiting Navy ships, providing everything from security to water to trash removal.

Francis relied on officers such as the defendants to slip him proprietary information — tips on ship schedules, operational needs and competitors — and often asked them to pull strings behind the scenes to give him an edge. Francis, in turn, dominated contracting in the region and overcharged the Navy by at least \$35

million, according to his own plea agreement.

The four-month-long trial in downtown San Diego took an extraordinary turn when defense attorneys alleged prosecutorial misconduct, specifically whether the government knowingly withheld information about a prostitute that was favorable to the defense.

For two days, prosecutors and investigators were asked to take the witness stand to explain their actions. The judge ruled later that the lead prosecutor in the case had committed "flagrant misconduct" by withholding the information, but it was not enough to throw out the case.

Other misconduct allegations and legal challenges have bubbled up, including contentions the government failed to disclose that a lead case agent made inaccurate statements in a sworn arrest warrant affidavit in a similar case, and questions over the chain of custody of hard drives belonging to Francis which were used by the prosecution as evidence.

The situation grew more complicated when, a little more than two months after the verdict, Francis escaped from house arrest in San Diego. He was captured in Venezuela, where he remains.

In their many motions, defense

attorneys have requested U.S. District Judge Janis Sammartino to either grant a new trial or dismiss the case outright.

Prosecutors — a different team than those accused by defense lawyers of "cumulative error and misconduct" — still have not filed their written responses to the defense motions, telling the judge the amount of the information to review has been immense. The judge recently granted a filing extension of Sept. 1, once prosecutors asked for time "to address matters that would materially affect litigation of the motions."

If the pleas go as scheduled, the case could be wrapping up as the office's leadership changes hands. Confirmation of President Joe Biden's U.S. attorney nominee, Tara McGrath, was hung up at the U.S. Senate before its August recess, though it's expected her supporters will continue to work to move her through before the end of the year.

Randy Grossman, who has held the position for the past two and a half years, departed earlier this month, and an acting U.S. attorney has been named in the meantime.

A major component of the case remains unfinished: The United States is still trying to negotiate Francis' return to San Diego so he can finally be sentenced.

## Military identifies Marine pilot killed in crash

*Associated Press*

SAN DIEGO — The U.S. military has identified the Marine Corps pilot who was killed Thursday when his combat jet crashed near a San Diego base during a training flight.

Maj. Andrew Mettler was piloting an F/A-18D Hornet when it went down at 11:54 p.m. Thursday near Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing said in a statement from its headquarters in Cherry Point, N.C.

Searchers recovered Mettler's body at the

site, and the crash remains under investigation.

Known as "Simple Jack," Mettler was a native of Georgia and stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in South Carolina. He was commissioned in 2007 and was a leader in his squadron, the Fighting Bengals, at the time of his death.

"I had the great honor of flying in an F/A-18D with Simple Jack and will always remember his skill piloting the Hornet and his wry smile," Maj. Gen. Scott Benedict, the

commanding general of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, said in a statement.

Mettler's career awards include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Korea Defense Service Medal.

The crash site was described as government property east of the air station. The site about 10 miles north of downtown San Diego is an area of largely vacant land.

# Poll: Americans say Trump 'corrupt,' while Biden 'old'

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is “old” and “confused,” and former President Donald Trump is “corrupt” and “dishonest.” Those are among the top terms Americans use when they’re asked to describe the Democrat in the White House and the Republican best positioned to face him in next year’s election.

Unflattering portraits of Biden and Trump emerge clearly in a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, which asked an open-ended question about what comes to mind when people think of them.

For Biden, the largest share of U.S. adults — including both Democrats and Republicans — mentioned his age. At 80, Biden is just three years older than Trump, but many Americans expressed concerns about his ability to continue as president.

Trump, meanwhile, has been indicted in four cases featuring

91 total criminal counts and elicited words such as “corrupt” and “crooked” (named by 15%), along with “bad” and other generally negative comments (11%). Not far behind are words like “liar” and “dishonest” (8%). Another 8% offered generally positive comments like “good,” though.

A deeper look doesn’t improve things much for Biden or Trump. And while many of the criticisms reflect a familiar partisan divide, the poll shows neither man is immune to criticism from within his own party.

“He looks like he needs to be someone’s kindly grandpa on the arm, not someone at the wheel of power,” Justin Campbell, a 27-year-old Democrat and security guard in the Brookhaven area of Mississippi, said of Biden. He was even more negative about Trump, though, saying that the former president “acts like a kindergartner when people tell him ‘no.’”

Campbell suggested that

Trump reads so little about policy and national security that he might be “functionally illiterate.” He said he plans to vote for Biden next year and, “I eagerly await Donald Trump being in jail.”

Such sentiments were common. Fully 26% of respondents use words like “old” or “outdated” to describe Biden, and another 15% mention things like “slow” and “confused.”

Another 10% give generally negative comments about the president, and 6% use words like “corrupt” and “crooked.” Just 6% offer words like “president” and “leader,” and 5% use those like “strong” and “capable” — the top positive comments made about Biden.

Biden’s age was referenced frequently even among Democrats, 28% of whom mention it — a significantly higher percentage than those who point to the presidency or leadership (11%) or strength and capability (11%).

## March trial date now set for Trump

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A judge on Monday set a March 4, 2024, trial date for Donald Trump in the federal case in Washington charging the former president with trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

The decision from U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan denied a defense request to push the trial back until April 2026, about a year and a half after the 2024 election, but also sets it later than the January date proposed by special counsel Jack Smith’s team.

“The public has a right to prompt and efficient resolution of this matter,” she said.

If the date holds, it would come right in the middle of the Republican presidential nominating calendar and the day before Super Tuesday, a crucial voting day when the largest number of delegates are up for grabs.

Trump was charged earlier this month in a four-count indictment with scheming to undo his loss to Joe Biden, a Democrat, in the 2020 election.

The federal election subversion prosecution is one of four criminal cases against Trump. Smith’s team has brought a separate federal case accusing him of illegally retaining classified documents at his Palm Beach, Fla., property, Mar-a-Lago, and refusing to give them back.

Trump also faces state cases in New York and Georgia. Manhattan prosecutors have charged him with falsifying business records in connection with a hush money payment to a porn actor who has said she had an extramarital affair with Trump, while prosecutors in Fulton County, Ga., have charged Trump and 18 others in a racketeering conspiracy aimed at undoing that state’s 2020 election.

## DeSantis booed at vigil mourning killings

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Hundreds of people gathered Sunday at prayer vigils and in church, in frustration and exhaustion, to mourn yet another racist attack in America: this one the killing of three Black people in Florida at the hands of a white man who authorities say left behind white supremacist ramblings that read like “the diary of a madman.”

Following services earlier in the day, about 200 people showed up at a Sunday evening vigil a block from the Dollar General store in Jacksonville where officials said Ryan Palmer opened fire Saturday using

guns he bought legally despite a past involuntary commitment for a mental health exam.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis — who is running for the GOP nomination for president, who has loosened gun laws in Florida and who has antagonized civil rights leaders by deriding “wokeness” — was loudly booed as he addressed the vigil.

Ju’Coby Pittman, a Jacksonville city councilwoman who represents the neighborhood where the shooting happened, stepped in to ask the crowd to listen.

“It ain’t about parties today,” she said. “A bullet don’t know a

party.”

DeSantis said that on Monday the state would be announcing financial support for security at Edward Waters University, the historically black college near where the shooting occurred, and to help the affected families.

He called the gunman a “major league scumbag.”

Sheriff T.K. Waters identified those killed as Angela Michelle Carr, 52, who was shot in her car; store employee A.J. Laguerre, 19, who was shot as he tried to flee; and customer Jerald Gallion, 29, who was shot as he entered the store in a predominantly Black neighborhood.



# Fla. braces for possible major hurricane

Associated Press

MIAMI — Tropical Storm Idalia intensified and was expected to be a major hurricane when it reaches Florida's Gulf Coast later this week, the National Hurricane Center said Monday, as officials declared states of emergencies in dozens of counties and ordered some evacuations in preparation for potentially life-threatening storm surges.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis warned of a "major impact" to the state, noting that what was originally forecast to be nothing stronger than a tropical storm

was now predicted to become a Category 3 hurricane.

Idalia would be the first storm to hit Florida this hurricane season and a potentially big blow to the state, which is still recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Ian almost a year ago.

DeSantis declared a state of emergency in 46 counties, a broad swath that stretches across the northern half of the state from the Gulf Coast to the Atlantic Coast. The state has mobilized 1,100 National Guard members, who have 2,400 high-water vehicles and 12 aircraft

at their disposal for rescue and recovery efforts.

Large parts of the western coast of Florida are at risk of storm surges and floods anytime a storm of this magnitude approaches.

"Now, the property — we can rebuild someone's home," DeSantis said during a news conference Monday. "You can't unring the bell, though, if somebody stays in harm's way and does battle with Mother Nature. This is not something that you want to do battle with."

President Joe Biden spoke to DeSantis on Monday morning,

telling the Florida governor that he had approved an emergency declaration for the state, the White House said. DeSantis is running for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024.

At 11 a.m. Monday, the storm was about 80 miles off the western tip of Cuba with maximum sustained winds of 65 mph the hurricane center said. Idalia was moving north at 8 mph.

On Tuesday, it was expected to turn northeast at a faster pace, reaching Florida's western coast as a dangerous major hurricane on Wednesday.

## Kurdish, Arab US-allied fighters clash in Syria

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Clashes broke out Monday between two U.S.-backed groups in eastern Syria, leaving three gunmen dead and raising tensions in the region where hundreds of American troops are deployed, opposition activists said.

The clashes raise concerns of more divisions between U.S.-backed Kurdish and Arab fighters in eastern Syria that borders Iraq and where Islamic State once enjoyed wide presence. U.S.-backed fighters play a major role in targeting sleeper cells of ISIS that still carry out deadly attacks.

Monday's clashes came a day after the U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces detained the commander of a formerly allied group and several other members of his faction after they were invited to a meeting in the northeastern city of Hassakeh on Sunday.

The SDF did not confirm the detention of Ahmad Khbeil, better known as Abu Khawla. He heads the Deir el-Zour Military Council, which was allied with the SDF in its yearslong battle against ISIS in Syria. SDF offi-

cials did not immediately respond to questions by The Associated Press about the arrest.

Rami Abdurrahman, head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said that the SDF was concerned that Khbeil was opening links with the Syrian government as well as Turkey, whose troops have carried out incursions targeting Kurdish fighters in Syria since 2016.

Khbeil's arrest could increase tension between Kurds and Arabs because most of his supporters who were also detained belong to a powerful tribe in eastern Syria. In July, a clash between the two sides left at least one Arab fighter dead.

On Monday, several opposition activists reported clashes between the sides in villages in Deir el-Zour. The Observatory and Omar Abu Layla, a Europe-based activist who follows events in the region, said three members of the Deir el-Zour Military Council were killed.

On any given day, there are at least 900 U.S. forces in eastern Syria, along with an undisclosed number of contractors.

## Poland, Baltic states warn they could seal border with Belarus

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — NATO members Poland and the Baltic states will seal off their borders with Russia's ally Belarus in the event of any military incidents or a massive migrant push by Minsk, the interior ministers warned Monday.

The ministers said they were seeing growing tensions on NATO's and the European Union's borders with Belarus, which has taken in thousands of Russia's military mercenaries and is pushing Middle East and African migrants into Europe, despite barriers having been put up.

They warned of swift and concerted reaction in the case of a military incident or large migrant push.

The ministers of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia addressed the media following their talks.

In a joint statement they demanded that the government of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko immediately remove from its territory the Wagner Group mercenaries. They also demanded the removal of migrants from border areas and their return to their home countries.

The four countries, which are also European Union members, support Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion.

The sudden death of mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin in a plane crash in Russia last week has raised questions about the future of the Wagner Group, which Poland's Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski branded as "extremely dangerous" and "demoralized." He also said the mercenaries pose a threat to the citizens of Belarus and the entire region.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin has ordered the Wagner fighters to sign an oath of allegiance to the Russian state, according to a decree published on the Kremlin's website late Friday and effective immediately.

The ministers held talks about joint ways of reacting to the increasingly difficult situation on their borders with Belarus and Russia.

Also last week Poland's President Andrzej Duda confirmed that Russia has begun shifting some short-range nuclear weapons to neighboring Belarus, a move that he said will change the security architecture of the region and the entire NATO military alliance.

## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## US sues SpaceX over hiring discrimination

**DC** WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Justice on Thursday sued SpaceX, the rocket company founded and run by Elon Musk, for alleged hiring discrimination against refugees and people seeking or already granted asylum.

The complaint, filed in an administrative court within the department, asserts that SpaceX wrongly claimed that federal export control laws barred it from hiring anyone but U.S. citizens and permanent residents. As a result, it discouraged refugees and asylum seekers and grantees from applying for jobs at the company, according to the complaint.

Export controls typically aim to protect U.S. national security and to further national trade objectives. They bar the shipment of specific technologies, weapons, information and software to specific non-U.S. nations and also limit the sharing or release of such items and information to “U.S. persons.” But the Justice Department noted that the term includes not only U.S. citizens, but also permanent U.S. residents, refugees and those seeking or granted asylum.

## Town renames square for freed Black woman

**GA** SAVANNAH — Georgia’s oldest city, steeped in history predating the American Revolution, made a historic break with its slavery-era past Thursday as Savannah’s city council voted to rename a downtown square in honor of a Black woman who taught for-

merly enslaved people to read and write.

Susie King Taylor is the first person of color whose name will adorn one of Savannah’s 23 squares. It’s the first time in 140 years Savannah has approved a name change for one of the picturesque, park-like squares that are treasured features of the original plan for the city founded in 1733.

The oak-shaded square that will bear Taylor’s name had spent 170 years named for John C. Calhoun, a former U.S. vice president from South Carolina who was a vocal supporter of slavery in the decades preceding the Civil War.

## City proposal would ban ‘military-grade weapons’

**MO** ST. LOUIS — As St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones has pushed legislation that would prohibit “military-grade weapons” on city streets and make it a crime for “insurrectionists” and those convicted of hate crimes to possess firearms, Missouri’s attorney general Andrew Bailey has warned that such a law would violate the state constitution.

Jones announced the wide-ranging legislation Tuesday, noting support from several members of the Board of Aldermen. The board could begin considering the measure at its next meeting, on Sept. 15.

Specific details of the measure have not yet been released, such as how “insurrectionists” would be identified and what “military-grade weapons” would be banned.

Still, the proposal drew immediate rebuke from Bailey, who wrote in a letter to Jones that he

will “resist any effort to infringe on the right of the people of Missouri to keep and bear arms.”

## Ex-postal manager jailed for taking at least \$1.7M

**IN** INDIANAPOLIS — A former customer servicemanager at a U.S. Postal Service office in Indianapolis has been sentenced to 40 months in federal prison after pleading guilty to stealing hundreds of checks worth about \$1.7 million that businesses had mailed.

James Lancaster, 42, fought back tears Wednesday after U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Walton Pratt sentenced him, saying the Indianapolis man’s actions warranted a significant sentence, including prison time, WTHR-TV reported.

“The defendant really has no excuse for his actions,” she told the court after announcing Lancaster’s sentence. Pratt added that Lancaster was in a position of trust at a busy post office, but had shown “nothing other than greed and disregard of the victims.”

She also ordered Lancaster to pay more than \$88,000 in restitution to his victims.

## Student fatally shot trying to enter wrong house

**SC** COLUMBIA — A University of South Carolina student was shot and killed as he apparently tried to enter the wrong home on his off-campus street early on Saturday, police said.

Nicholas Anthony Donofrio, 20, of Connecticut, was dead by the time police responded to reports of a home burglary and shooting, according to a Colum-

bia Police Department news release. Officers found Donofrio’s body on a front porch around 2 a.m., and he had a gunshot wound to his upper body, the release said.

Police said preliminary information indicated that Donofrio, a sophomore, lived on the same street as where he was shot but was apparently attempting to enter another home.

The statement didn’t say who shot the student or whether any charges were immediately filed. In an email on Saturday afternoon, a department spokesperson said the investigation “remains active” but didn’t release more information.

## State OKs killing 2 wolves following cattle attacks

**WA** ASOTIN — Washington wildlife officials have authorized killing one or two wolves in the southeastern part of the state in response to attacks on cattle.

Fish and Wildlife Director Kelly Susewind on Wednesday announced the plan, saying attempts by ranchers to prevent the attacks haven’t stopped them.

Since May, wolves in the WA139 group in Asotin County have killed about a half-dozen cattle belonging to four ranchers, officials said.

The pack formed in January when a female wolf collared as WA139 left the Tucannon pack, officials said. Wildlife managers in Oregon said that pack killed seven cattle in the spring in northeast Oregon and that a rancher in the area shot one wolf in March after obtaining a permit from the state.

— From wire reports

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# Biles finds her way back to US title

*Associated Press*

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Simone Biles is not going to explain herself. Part of this is by design. Part of this is because she simply can't.

When the gymnastics star is at her best, as she was on Sunday night while winning her record eighth U.S. championship, she feels like she's in a "fever dream." It's not autopilot exactly. It's more of a vibe. A flow.

It's in those moments that the doubts that still plague her almost daily even now, a decade into a run of unprecedented excellence, fade away.

There is no thinking. No over-analyzing. No "twisties." All of it recedes into the background. Her coach Laurent Landi calls it a skill. Biles, even at 26, won't go that far. Maybe because she simply doesn't want to.

She spent a long time, far too long, getting caught up in her head. She's intent on not doing it this time around.

So yeah, she was smiling

midway through a floor routine that made almost every other competitor on the floor stop what they were doing to watch and drew a standing ovation from a portion of the sellout SAP Center crowd. No, she can't explain why. When her coaches told her she'd nailed every tumbling pass, she was clueless.

"It just doesn't feel real for some reason," Biles said.

It is. Remarkably.

Ten years ago she was a teenage prodigy who doesn't remember much from her ascension to the top of her sport. She was always fixated on the next thing. World championships. Team camps. The Olympics.

Now she's a newlywed determined to enjoy this. For real. Six months ago she wasn't sure she was all in. Three weeks ago she returned to competition in Chicago feeling as if she was going to "throw up" every time she saluted the judges.

The woman who posted a two-day all-around total of

118.40 this weekend in northern California — four points clear of runner-up Shilese Jones and well ahead of Florida junior Leanne Wong in third place — is not ready to hit fast forward. She won. She's letting herself be happy this time. That didn't always happen before.

"We really try to celebrate our success individually and as a team just so that in a couple of years you can remember this," she said. "Because I really don't remember a lot from the past."

She knows that gymnastics won't last "forever" even if, for her in a way it has.

Peaks aren't supposed to last this long. Most elite gymnasts at 26 — at least the ones who haven't retired — are simply hoping to hold on to what they have.

The athlete who became the oldest woman to win a national title since USA Gymnastics began organizing the event in 1963 is not interested in that. Landi called Biles' floor routine in the finals the best he'd ever seen

her do.

"I think it's maturity," he said.

Biles' eight crowns moved her past Alfred Jochim, who won seven between 1925-33 when the Amateur Athletics Union ran the championships and the men's competition included rope climbing.

Yes, really.

The sport has come a long way over the last century. No one has spent more time at the far end of the Bell curve than Biles, whose singular talents continue to push boundaries.

She's training smarter these days, her only real acquiescence to the miles she's put on it for the last 20 years. While she remains one of the most visible active athletes in the Olympic movement, she's also made it a point not to let the world in on every single little thing as she eyes a trip to Paris next summer.

Biles joked it's because people are "nosy." The reality is, she'd just like a little privacy.

## US eases into second round of Basketball World Cup

*Associated Press*

MANILA, Philippines — The first required step at the Basketball World Cup for the Americans is now complete. They're going to the tournament's second round.

An achievement, technically — but one barely worth acknowledging.

Winning gold is the only goal for the Americans on this end-of-summer trip to Manila, and Monday was just another step, they hope, toward getting there. Austin Reaves led a balanced scoring effort with 15 points and the U.S. topped Greece 109-81 to clinch a spot in the second round that starts Friday.

"There's only really one thing that gets us excited out here," U.S. guard Tyrese Haliburton

said. "We've got to take care of business every night to be able to do that."

Jalen Brunson and Anthony Edwards each scored 13 for the Americans (2-0), who haven't lost in seven games overall this summer. Brunson made all five of his shots, Bobby Portis had 10 points and Josh Hart grabbed 11 rebounds for the winners.

The win, combined with New Zealand's 95-87 overtime victory over Jordan earlier Monday, ensured that the U.S. is moving on. The Americans will finish group play against Jordan on Wednesday, then play Lithuania and Montenegro — in some order — on Friday and Sunday in Round 2.

"We're really excited to win the first two and to guarantee

ourselves moving to the next round," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "But we just keep on, one game at a time — and, hopefully, six more."

Georgios Papagiannis led Greece (1-1) with 17 points. Nikos Rogkavopoulos added 14.

"We couldn't compete the way we wanted to," Greece coach Dimitrios Itoudis said. "We wanted them to feel us a little bit on the court."

Getting to the second round isn't exactly a surprise for the U.S., the current tournament favorite and a team seeking a sixth World Cup gold medal. There was no real gold-medal contender in Group C along with the U.S., and the Americans followed up a 27-point win over New Zealand in Saturday's

opener with a 28-point victory that was never in doubt Monday.

But France — the reigning Olympic silver medalist — getting eliminated in Round 1 of this World Cup served as a reminder: Even for basketball superpowers, nothing is guaranteed anymore. And the U.S. took a businesslike approach to get past Greece.

"All respect to Greece," Brunson said. "That team over there, they play hard, they're well-coached. A lot of respect for that squad. And for us, we're still getting better."

Greece is playing this summer without its best player, two-time NBA MVP and 2021 NBA Finals MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo of the Milwaukee Bucks.



# Dixon wins, ending Newgarden's streak

Associated Press

MADISON, Ill. — IndyCar ironman Scott Dixon capitalized on needing to make only three pit stops and kept his championship hopes alive in winning Sunday's Bommarito Automotive Group 500.

The victory was the 55th of Dixon's career, and it came in his record-extending 320th consecutive start. He set the record two weeks ago at the Gallagher Grand Prix in Indianapolis.

"They're all special, right?" Dixon said. "These last few races I think have been good on all fronts, right? We've had to cover all bases whether it was speed, strategy, consistency throughout, great pit stops."

Dixon held the lead for 82 laps before making his final pit stop on lap 196. With all the cars on the lead lap having to pit after he made his final stop, the 43-year-old took the checkered flag, finishing more than 22 seconds ahead of second-place Pat O'Ward.

"He's just Scott Dixon," O'Ward said. "I feel like that's what he's best known for. He

knows how to do it better than anybody with a great combination that he has with his team and car and everything. It's a bummer that we weren't even close to kind of even race him."

The 22-second margin of victory broke Juan Pablo Montoya's 23-year-old track record when he finished almost 12 seconds ahead of Patrick Carpentier at the Motorola 300 in 2000.

"Ross (Bunnell), the engineer, did an amazing job ... and had a car that enabled me to kind of save the fuel that we needed," Dixon said. "When I had 10 to go, I asked him, 'How much heat are we getting from behind?' They're like, 'It's over 20 seconds, so just cruise it.' I'm like, 'Oh, that's pretty sweet.' It's been a long time since I've had the race like that."

Josef Newgarden started in the top spot with pole-sitter Scott McLaughlin serving a nine-position grid penalty and led 101 of the first 104 laps.

His quest to become the first IndyCar driver to win six consecutive races on ovals since A.J. Foyt in 1964 came to an end

when his No. 2 Honda made contact with the wall in turn two on the 211th lap.

Newgarden had won three consecutive races at World Wide Technology Raceway and four overall at the track.

McLaughlin earned his fifth career IndyCar pole ahead of the race, but started in the No. 10 position due to his penalty. He finished fifth.

McLaughlin is one of six drivers who were penalized for unapproved use of a fifth engine this season.

Qualifying was pushed back to Sunday morning after rain kept drivers off the track until 6 p.m. Saturday night.

## Championship chase

Dixon's victory pulled him to within 74 points of Chip Ganassi Racing teammate and IndyCar leader Alex Palou with two races remaining. Dixon is Palou's only challenger for the season title as Newgarden dropped to 125 points behind Palou, falling out of championship contention.

"Going into the last few rac-

es, to only have a Ganassi driver able to win the championship is very cool and very, very good for this team and the amount of effort," Dixon said.

## Bad breaks

Marcus Ericsson fell behind a lap after his left rear tire fell off on the pit road after not being properly secured during a pit stop on a caution on the 128th lap. Ericsson was competing in teammate Palou's backup car after wrecking his primary car in a crash with Will Power during Saturday night's practice.

## Penalized

Chip Ganassi Racing and points leader Palou were assessed a nine-position starting grid penalty for unapproved engine changes after Saturday's practice. Teammates Dixon and Takuma Sato, McLaughlin, Andretti Autosport's Kyle Kirkwood and Juncos Hollinger Racing's Agustin Canapino were also penalized for unapproved changes after the Gallagher Grand Prix on Aug. 12.

# Verstappen poised to make F1 history next week

Associated Press

What better place than the "The Temple of Speed" for Max Verstappen to set a new Formula One record with 10 straight wins.

A victory at the Italian Grand Prix in Monza next weekend would break the mark he shares with Sebastian Vettel. Perhaps fittingly, it would be on the track where Vettel clinched the first of his 53 GP wins in 2008.

The now-retired Vettel went on to dominate F1 and won four consecutive world titles with Red Bull, the last of them in 2013 — the year he won nine straight races.

Vettel was Red Bull's first superstar in its first ultra-dominant era, but Verstappen is now leaving him in his tracks. Vettel looked unstoppable only when at his very best, but Verstappen looks untouchable most of the time.

Verstappen's victory at the rain-soaked Dutch GP on Sunday matched Vettel's mark of nine straight wins in a season, and moved

him onto 46 overall. With so many years left ahead of him, the 25-year-old Dutchman is set to crush Vettel's career tally for wins.

Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton holds F1 records with 103 wins and 104 pole positions. But even the seven-time F1 champion never managed more than five straight wins during his heyday with Mercedes, doing so twice during title-winning campaigns in 2014 and 2020.

It is a point seemingly not lost on Verstappen.

For while some observers have said it's easier for him because he has such a fast and reliable car, he has countered that argument with a pointed reminder of years gone by.

"I think there have been more dominant cars in the past than what we have at the moment and they haven't been able to do so, to win nine in a row," said Verstappen, who alluded to Mercedes without mentioning the team. "It's never that straightforward."

Verstappen's march toward a third straight title does look straightforward now, considering he has a 138-point lead over Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez in second place. He leads Perez 11-2 for wins this year, underlining the gulf in performance between them.

Verstappen was only nine years old and just getting to grips with racing in karts when Fernando Alonso clinched his second F1 title in 2006 — achieving a career-best four wins along the way.

The 42-year-old Spaniard is considered one of the greatest of his generation, a refined craftsman, shrewd tactician and master of all conditions.

Alonso has spoken in glowing terms about Verstappen.

"It is underestimated sometimes what Max is achieving," said Alonso, who has been stuck on 32 race wins for 10 years. "I think to win in such a dominant manner in any of the professional sports, it is so complicated."

# California wins LLWS on walk-off homer

Associated Press

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — Little Leaguers everywhere dream of a moment like this.

Louis Lappe hit a walk-off homer and California beat Curaçao 6-5 in the Little League World Series championship on Sunday, despite giving up a four-run lead.

Louis flipped his bat and threw his arms in the air as he trotted around the bases, leaping onto home plate as he was greeted by his teammates surrounding the batter's box. The leadoff hitter in the bottom of the sixth inning, Louis lofted the second pitch he saw just beyond

the left-field fence.

"This is a unique feeling that maybe only five or less people experience in their lifetime," said Louis, who finished the tournament with five homers, the most of any player. "I feel great. It's hard to beat this feeling. I don't know what would make me feel happier."

Curaçao tied the game in the fifth on Nasir El-Ossais's grand slam to center, setting off a frenzied celebration by the players, coaches and Curaçao fans down the third-base side of Lamade Stadium. Nasir also drove in a run in the third.

Jaxon Kalish and Lucas Kel-

dorf drove in two runs each for California.

"The five guys that I have in the top of the lineup, they're as good as anyone in this tournament," El Segundo manager Danny Boehle said. "I stand by that full heartedly."

It was the first trip to the final for the team from El Segundo, a community in the Los Angeles area. California's eight titles are the most by any U.S. state.

Curaçao, a small island off the coast of Venezuela that is home to just 150,000 residents, has represented the international side of the bracket in the championship the last three times

non-U.S. teams have competed — in 2019, 2022 and this year — but has lost each time.

There was no tournament in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 tournament was limited to American teams because of travel restrictions.

Curaçao returned five players and its coaching staff from the team that lost 13-3 to Hawaii in the 2022 final.

"I ate the cake already last year. I ate the cake this year, too, but I ain't take the cherry home," Curaçao manager Zaino Everett said after the game with tears in his eyes.

## Mariners beat Royals, take AL West lead over Rangers

Associated Press

SEATTLE — Luis Castillo pitched seven shutout innings and the Seattle Mariners grabbed sole possession of first place in the AL West, beating the Kansas City Royals 3-2 on Sunday to complete a three-game sweep.

Teoscar Hernández and Julio Rodríguez homered as Seattle won for the 11th time in 12 games. The Mariners also improved to a major league-best 36-14 since July 1 for their best 50-game stretch since they also went 36-14 from April 23-June 18, 2003.

Seattle (74-56) and Texas were tied for the AL West lead going into the day, but the Rangers lost 7-6 to the Twins. Seattle trailed Texas by 7½ games on Aug. 15.

It's the latest the Mariners have had sole possession of first place since Aug. 24, 2003.

"We have a lot of baseball to go," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "There's no question about it. But we have played extremely well, really since the first of July. And it's a testament to our players. They just keep their head down and focus on getting better."

**Twins 7, Rangers 6 (13):** Jonathan Hernández (1-2) walked three batters in the 13th inning, among a season-high 10 walks by Texas pitchers. The loss for the visiting Rangers combined with a win from the Mariners took Texas out of first place in the AL West for the first time since April 8.

Texas wasted a 5-0 lead built with Jonah Heim's grand slam and J.P. Martinez's solo homer, and Royce Lewis started host Minnesota's comeback with a fourth-inning slam. Donovan Solano hit a tying single in the ninth

against Aroldis Chapman.

**Astros 17, Tigers 4:** Justin Verlander (10-6) struck out seven and allowed two hits over five scoreless innings against his first team and got his 254th win.

Kyle Tucker hit his 26th homer in the third against Alex Faedo (2-5). Mauricio Dubon and Martin Maldonado hit back-to-back homers off Tyler Holton.

**Dodgers 7, Red Sox 4:** Mookie Betts capped his return to Boston with a second straight three-hit game, hitting a two-run homer against the team he led to the 2018 World Series title.

Freddie Freeman also had three hits, and James Outman homered to help the Dodgers improve to 21-4 in August. Gavin Stone (1-0) earned his first career victory.

**Rays 7, Yankees 4:** Brandon Lowe homered and drove in four runs, and visiting New York (62-68) dropped a season-high six games under .500.

**Giants 8, Braves 5:** Patrick Bailey hit a tie-breaking three-run double in the fifth inning, fellow rookie Casey Schmitt hit his first homer in 3½ months and host San Francisco avoided a three-game sweep.

**Rockies 4, Orioles 3:** Hunter Goodman had two hits and an RBI, scoring the tiebreaking run in the ninth inning of his major league debut as visiting Colorado stopped a six-game losing streak.

**Brewers 10, Padres 6:** William Contreras homered and doubled, Sal Frelick drove in three runs and host Milwaukee won its eighth straight game.

**Cubs 10, Pirates 2:** Cody Bellinger had three hits and five RBIs, raising his total to 53 since July 1 and 75 this season. Nico Hoerner added three hits and scored three times, helping visiting Chicago close out a 5-2 trip.

**Phillies 3, Cardinals 0:** Aaron Nola (12-8) allowed one hit and struck out nine in seven innings, Kyle Schwarber homered on the first pitch of the game from Drew Rom (0-2) and NL wild-card leading Philadelphia completed a three-game sweep of visiting St. Louis.

**Guardians 10, Blue Jays 7 (11):** Kole Calhoun hit a tiebreaking double in the 11th off Jay Jackson (3-1), and José Ramírez and Ramón Laureano hit two-run home runs in a win for visiting Cleveland.

**Marlins 2, Nationals 1:** Jorge Soler hit his 35th homer, a two-run drive in the third against Trevor Williams (6-8) after a leadoff single by Luis Arraez, whose .350 batting average tops the major leagues, as host Miami beat Washington.

**Diamondbacks 5, Reds 2:** Christian Walker hit a sacrifice fly off Lucas Sims to break a 2-2 tie in the eighth as host Arizona took three of four and remained in the NL's last wild-card spot, 1½ games ahead of Cincinnati.

**Mets 3, Angels 2:** Pete Alonso hit a tying double in the eighth inning and Rafael Ortega a winning single in the ninth off Reynaldo López (2-7) as host New York stopped a four-game losing streak.

**White Sox 6, Athletics 1:** Mike Clevinger (6-6) struck out 10 in seven innings, his 13th career double-digit strikeout game, as host Chicago beat Oakland.