

Families wait for Korean War MIA updates

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Pinned to Robin Piacine's scarf was a black and white photo of a man she has never met.

"When I was young, my mother had a picture of him on her vanity. I asked her to tell me about him and she just broke down crying," she said, gently touching the photo.

Piacine's uncle, Army Sgt. William Charles Bradley, is presumed to be in an unmarked grave along a prisoner of war route in North Korea. He is among the remains of 5,300 troops who went missing in action while in North Korea in the 1950s.

"I don't know that we will ever get him back," Piacine said Thursday.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, the Pentagon operation that oversees the recovery and identification of missing troops, hosted its annual government briefing on the Korean War and Cold War last

week in Arlington, Va. More than 300 families in attendance represented a fraction of the 7,500 presumed missing from the Korean War. Another approximately 130 represented those missing from the Cold War.

To date, the DPAA has accounted for almost 700 soldiers missing during the Korean War. On Wednesday, the agency identified Army Cpl. Frederick Higgins, 20, of Bremerton, Wash. Higgins was killed during the Korean War and was accounted for on June 22, 2023. His remains were identified at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, also known as the Punchbowl, in Hawaii.

Families came to Arlington in hopes of receiving an update on the disinterment and identification of unknown remains suspected to be their loved ones, though most will never have the answers that they are seeking, said Kelly McKeague, director of the DPAA.

"We are at the mercy of geopolitics," he said.

The U.S. worked with North Korea in the 1990s and 2000s to disinter and exchange the remains of unknown troops. John Byrd, director of scientific analysis for DPAA, estimated 92% of the remains that the agency has received from North Korea have been identified.

"The bad news is that these are finite resources," he said. "As we have success with the remains that we're disinterring and bringing into the lab, we will eventually successfully get through all of those."

Byrd estimated that will happen in the next several years.

"We would love an opportunity to get another unilateral turnover or to see a breakthrough in diplomacy," he said.

The last time that the DPAA had access to North Korea was in 2005. But in 2018, the agency received 55 boxes of remains from North Korea.

The DPAA has been unsuccessful in communicating with North Korea since then to coordinate additional exchanges.

"Will the majority of the families continue to be disappointed? Absolutely," McKeague said.

But he said, if China is evidence, there is hope.

In January, China resumed cooperating with the DPAA. There was an archival exchange in May of remains believed to be from World War II. Now, there is a DPAA team working at an excavation site in Hunan, a providence in southern China.

Additional sites in Yangon, a Chinese providence near the border of North Korea, have been identified as the resting grounds for U.S. Air Force troops lost during the Korean War.

McKeague said it is the DPAA's hope that this "people-to-people" cooperation with China will translate to North Korea.

"At the very core of each of us, our humanity is this need to connect and this need to be whole," McKeague said.

2 Dem lawmakers stress need for apolitical military

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Members of Congress are pressing the Pentagon's top two leaders to ensure the military is not swept up in politics during the presidential election and that active-duty troops are not used illegally as a domestic police force.

The concerns come as the campaign heats up — the first presidential vote since the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, aimed at preventing Joe Biden's victory from being certified.

Former President Donald

Trump, this year's Republican presidential nominee, continues to claim that fraud cost him the 2020 election even though his own attorney general, recounts and investigations found no evidence of that. And he still faces charges of illegally conspiring to undo the results of the election.

In a letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Air Force Gen. Charles "CQ" Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, lawmakers asked the defense leaders to reaffirm that U.S. law prohibits forces from

being used for civilian law enforcement and that they should not carry out unlawful orders.

The letter, written by Democratic Reps. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan and Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey, mirrors questions posed in the run-up to the 2020 election when Trump was already suggesting that he might not accept the results of the election if he lost.

They point to Project 2025, the ultraconservative blueprint for the next Republican White House, in underscoring fears the military will be used to actively

police the southern border.

The nearly 1,000-page document includes startling proposals such as firing large swaths of the federal government workforce and disassembling longstanding agencies, including the Justice Department.

While the document was organized by many of Trump's former aides, it is not a part of his campaign, which has its own series of proposals.

Trump and his campaign have distanced themselves from the project and he's called some of the proposals extreme.

INDOPACOM chief: Future of Taiwan vital

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

WAIKIKI BEACH, Hawaii — Preventing a forceful takeover of Taiwan by China is strategically important to America because the “knock-on” effects of such a conflict would foment global chaos and misery, the commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said Thursday.

“The interconnectedness of the world economy and its knock-on effects is a matter of importance to all of us,” Adm. Samuel Paparo said during a symposium hosted by the Global Special Operations Forces Foundation at Waikiki Beach.

“And this is why the matter of the Taiwan question and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is important to all of us,” Paparo told an audience on the final day of the Indo-Pacific Irregular Warfare Symposium.

China regards the democratically governed island as a renegade province that must, at some point, accede to Beijing’s control.

China’s military in recent years has increasingly encroached on Taiwan’s air defense identification zone, the area just beyond its airspace.

In May, China simulated bomber attacks and ship-boardings during two days of military exercises around Taiwan.

U.S. Pacific Fleet, which Paparo commanded until May when he took the reins at INDOPACOM, routinely sends warships through the Taiwan Strait to demonstrate U.S. support for Taiwan and for freedom of navigation.

At the symposium, attended by personnel from special operations units from more than two dozen nations, Paparo offered up brief opening comments before

fielding a range of questions that began with, “Why should we care about Taiwan?”

The question reflected the debate over American involvement in Ukraine, which is defending itself against an invasion by Russia, as well as other global hot spots.

An isolationist wing of the Republican Party opposes providing further shipments of arms to Ukraine.

Former president and this year’s Republican nominee Donald Trump has long questioned American involvement with NATO. Trump’s vice-presidential running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, said shortly after the Russian invasion in 2022 that he didn’t “really care what happens to Ukraine one way or another.”

Some observers have expressed concern that the U.S. abandoning Ukraine would only

embolden Beijing to take Taiwan by force.

The Taiwan Relations Act, passed by Congress in 1979, however, instituted a policy of maintaining “the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan.”

Paparo also cited events in Ukraine in arguing that Taiwan’s security is of strategic consequence.

“It is important to all nations that matters not be settled by force,” Paparo said. “This is the matter at hand in Ukraine. This is the matter at hand in the Middle East.”

The “knock-on effects” of unsettling the so-called international rules-based order “results in tremendous disorder and tremendous misery,” he said.

New monument honors those who fled N. Korea

By **YOO KYONG CHANG**
AND **LUIS GARCIA**
Stars and Stripes

PAJU, South Korea — Oh Eun Jeong, a poet who fled North Korea in 2009, left behind a younger sister for whom she still longs.

Oh, profiled by The Washington Post in 2018 as one of many young North Korean defectors thriving with new lives in the South, said that longing motivated her to write poetry.

“I think about my sister every day,” she told Stars and Stripes by phone Aug. 8. “Knowing she’s still there while I’m here makes my heart heavy.”

Oh and other former North Koreans now have a place to bring those sentiments. On Aug. 1, the South Korean Ministry for Unification unveiled a monument to those who escaped the North or

lost their lives in the attempt.

“This monument gives me a place to express that longing, even if I can’t be with her,” Oh said.

More than 33,000 North Koreans have successfully reached the South since 1998, according to an Associated Press report in October.

The monument is in Paju and overlooks the Demilitarized Zone that divides the two countries.

“The sculpture installed at the Odusan Unification Observatory symbolizes the longing and courage of North Korean defectors in their pursuit of freedom as well as their hope for the future, along with the memory of those who sacrificed their lives during the escape process,” Unification Minister Kim Yung Ho said during the unveiling ceremony.

10 sailors injured in Seahawk helo training mishap in Nev.

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

Ten crew members from two U.S. Navy helicopters involved in a training mishap Thursday evening in Nevada were treated and released from a nearby hospital, the Navy said in a news release Friday.

The Navy is investigating the incident involving two MH-60S Seahawk helicopters during routine training on ranges at Naval Air Station Fallon, Nev.

The Seahawks, each carrying a crew of five, are assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 12.

Security personnel from the air station secured the mishap site, which is on the Fallon Range Training Complex in a remote location, the Navy said. No details were provided as to the nature of the mishap.

The squadron, assigned to Car-

rier Air Wing 5, is currently at Naval Air Station Fallon for comprehensive training, the Navy said.

Carrier Air Wing 5 is part of Forward-Deployed Naval Forces-Japan at Yokosuka.

It will remain the carrier wing as the aircraft carrier USS George Washington becomes the Navy’s forward-deployed carrier in the Pacific, swapping places with the USS Ronald Reagan, the Navy said.

The Navy’s Seahawk helicopters have in recent years been involved in a number of mishaps, one deadly. In August 2021, five sailors died when their Seahawk flipped off the deck of the carrier USS Abraham Lincoln off the coast of San Diego. Another five sailors were injured in the incident. Two separate incidents in October 2018 involved MH-60s in the Indo-Pacific.

Convention to highlight Harris' rise amid turbulent '24 race

The Washington Post

One month ago, Democrats watched with envy and dismay as Republicans demonstrated their energy and unity with a lively party convention that showcased Donald Trump's dominant position in the race against President Joe Biden.

Now, after one of the most momentous shifts in political atmospherics in modern history, Democrats have been buoyed by a new standard-bearer and sense of optimism as they prepare to begin their own nominating convention Monday in Chicago.

Biden will speak on the first day of the convention before leaving town, a symbolic changing of the guard that highlights how his decision to abruptly end his reelection bid upended the race.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who has ridden a wave of enthusiasm in a party that had been riven by angst over Biden's weak poll numbers,

will cap the programming Thursday with a speech designed to introduce herself to the nation and highlight the historic nature of her unexpected candidacy. The unprecedented turn of events has added to the sense of unpredictability that has marked an election already rocked by a history-changing debate, one candidate's felony convictions and an assassination attempt during a political rally.

"It is remarkable," said Julian Zelizer, a presidential historian at Princeton University. "An incredibly important election, which made the Democratic convention interesting from the start, is now truly distinct. The entire ticket has changed, the energy is different, and what the party is putting forth as the faces of the party has transformed the terms of the competition."

While much about the convention has changed in recent weeks, the party gathering will no doubt feature a steady

dose of criticism of Republican nominee Trump, who has seen his campaign upended since he rose from the ground and shouted "fight, fight, fight!" after surviving an assassination attempt last month. In recent days, he has been flailing in public as polls show him ceding his advantage in the race to Harris.

Democrats hope to use the four-day convention to build on their momentum, balancing their attacks on Trump with a push to boost Harris and her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, in the minds of millions of voters who remain undecided.

But even as Democrats plan to celebrate their sense of unity around Harris' ascension, the area outside the convention hall will showcase some persistent divisions. Protesters have promised to bring tens of thousands of people to Chicago to denounce the war in Gaza and the Biden administration's support for Israel.

Trump veers from economy to insults at rally in Penn.

Associated Press

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. — Former President Donald Trump on Saturday repeatedly swerved from a message focused on the economy into non sequiturs and personal attacks, including thrice declaring that he was better looking than Vice President Kamala Harris. Trump wound back and forth between hitting his points on economic policy and delivering a smattering of insults and impressions of President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron as he held a rally in northeastern Pennsylvania.

The former president has seemed to struggle to adjust to his new opponent after Democrats replaced their nominee. Over the past week, he has diverged during campaign appearances away from the policies he was billed to speak about and instead diverted to a rotation of familiar attack lines and insults.

As he attacked Democrats for inflation at the top of his speech, Trump asked his crowd of supporters, "You don't mind if I go off teleprompter for a second, do you? Joe Biden hates her."

Joseph Costello, a spokesperson for the Harris campaign, responded to Trump in a statement by saying, "Another rally, same old show" and that Trump "resorts to lies, name-calling and confused rants," because he can't sell his agenda.

"The more Americans hear Trump speak, the clearer the choice this November: Vice President Harris is unifying voters with her positive vision to protect our freedoms, build up the middle class and move America forward — and Donald Trump is trying to take us backwards," Costello said.

New COVID vaccines slated for approval

The Washington Post

Federal authorities are preparing to approve updated coronavirus vaccines targeting the latest virus variants this week, a move that could make shots available before Labor Day, according to a federal health official and a person familiar with the plans who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a confidential process.

The mRNA shots manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna designed to target the KP.2 variant can hit the market within days of approval by the Food and Drug Administration. A third protein-based vaccine made by Novavax, preferred by

people who are cautious about mRNA vaccines or who have had bad reactions to them, will probably take longer to be approved and will be distributed in subsequent weeks, according to the federal health official.

Consumers should be able to start getting shots at pharmacies within a week after approval and at doctor's offices soon after.

FDA spokespeople said the agency is prohibited from disclosing the timing of a regulatory action.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends updated shots for everyone 6 months and older.

The arrival of new vaccines comes three months after the start of a summer COVID wave that is receding in some places.

The timing of the release is too late for Americans who were looking to shore up their immunity before summer travel and the return of the school year, or for those who face heightened risk because of their age or underlying conditions. In recent weeks, some people weighed whether to get an outdated vaccine for partial protection more quickly or to hang on for the updated version. And those who didn't want to wait discovered existing shots were no longer easy to find.

Blinken visits Israel to work on cease-fire deal

Associated Press

DEIRAL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli strikes across Gaza killed 29 people overnight and into Sunday, including young quintuplets, local health officials said, as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel on Sunday to try to seal a cease-fire deal after months of negotiations.

The United States and fellow mediators Egypt and Qatar said they were closing in on a deal after two days of talks in Doha, with American and Israeli officials expressing cautious optimism. But Hamas has signaled resistance to what it called new demands by Israel.

The evolving proposal calls for a three-phase process in which Hamas would release all hostages abducted during its Oct. 7 attack, which triggered the deadliest war fought between Israelis and Palestinians.

In exchange, Israel would withdraw its forces from Gaza and release Palestinian prisoners.

The war has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, displaced the vast majority of the territory's 2.3 million residents and led experts to warn of famine and the outbreak of diseases like polio.

"It is as if we live a primitive life," said Sanaa Akela, a dis-

placed Palestinian now in the central town of Deir al-Balah, where sewage flooded some streets.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7 attack and abducted around 250. Of those, some 110 are still believed to be in Gaza, though Israeli authorities have said around a third are dead. More than 100 hostages were released in November during a weeklong cease-fire.

The latest Israeli bombardment included a strike on a home in Deir al-Balah that killed a woman and her six children, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. An Associated Press

reporter there counted the bodies.

Mohammed Awad Khatab, the children's grandfather, said his daughter was a teacher, and the youngest child was 18 months. The others were 10-year-old quintuplets, the hospital said.

"The six children have become body parts. They were placed in a single bag," he told reporters. "What did they do? Did they kill any of the Jews? ... Will this provide security to Israel?"

Another strike east of Deir al-Balah killed at least four people, according to an AP journalist at the hospital.

Ukraine strikes 2 key bridges in Kursk area

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine destroyed a key bridge in Russia's Kursk region and struck a second one nearby, less than two weeks into its stunning cross-border incursion, disrupting Russian supply routes and possibly signaling that its troops are planning to dig in.

Russia's pro-Kremlin military bloggers have acknowledged that the destruction of the first bridge, which spanned the Seim River near the town of Glushkovo, will impede deliveries of supplies to Russian forces repelling Ukraine's incursion, although Moscow could still use pontoons and smaller bridges in the area. Ukraine's air force chief, Lt. Mykola Oleshchuk, on Friday released a video of a Ukrainian airstrike that split the bridge in two.

Less than two days later, Ukrainian troops hit a second bridge in Russia, according to Oleshchuk and the Russian regional governor, Alexei Smirnov.

As of Sunday morning, there

were no official reports on where exactly the second bridge attack took place. Russian Telegram channels claimed that a second bridge over the Seim, in the village of Zvanoe, had been struck.

According to Russia's Mash news site, the attacks left the area with just one intact bridge. The Associated Press could not immediately verify these claims, but if confirmed, the Ukrainian strikes would further complicate Moscow's attempts to replenish its forces in Kursk and evacuate civilians.

Glushkovo lies some 7.5 miles north of the Ukrainian border, and approximately 10 miles northwest of the main battle zone in Kursk. Zvanoe is located a further 5 miles northeast.

Kyiv has been tight-lipped about the planned scope and goals of its lightning push into Russia, the largest attack on the country since World War II, which took the Kremlin by surprise and saw scores of villages and hundreds of prisoners fall into Ukrainian hands.

Congo's mpox spiraling again into global crisis

Associated Press

GOMA, Congo — Sarah Bagheni had a headache, fever, and itchy and unusual skin lesions for days, but she had no inkling that her symptoms might have been caused by mpox and that she might be another case in a growing global health emergency.

She also has no idea where to go to get medical help.

She and her husband live in the Bulengo displacement camp in eastern Congo, a region that is effectively ground zero for a series of mpox outbreaks in Africa.

This year's alarming rise in cases, including a new form of the virus identified by scientists in eastern Congo, led the World Health Organization to declare it a global health emergency Wednesday. It said the new variant could spread beyond the five African countries where it had already been detected — a timely warning that came a day before Sweden reported its first case of the new strain.

In the vast central African nation of Congo, which has had more than 96% of the world's roughly 17,000 recorded cases of mpox this year — and some 500 deaths

from the disease — many of the most vulnerable seem unaware of its existence or the threat that it poses.

While the disease originated in animals, the virus has in recent years been spreading between people via close physical contact, including sex.

The humanitarian crisis in eastern Congo has almost every possible complication when it comes to stopping an mpox outbreak, said Dr. Chris Beyrer, director of Duke University's Global Health Institute.

That includes war, illicit mining industries that attract sex workers, transient populations near border regions and entrenched poverty. He also said the global community missed multiple warning signs.

"We're paying attention to it now, but mpox has been spreading since 2017 in Congo and Nigeria," Beyrer said, adding that experts have long been calling for vaccines to be shared with Africa, but to little effect. He said the WHO's emergency declaration was "late in coming," with more than a dozen countries already affected.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Bill targeting owners of vessel in bridge collapse

MD BALTIMORE — A new bill in Congress would alter an 1851 shipping law to force the owners of the Dali to pay up.

U.S. Reps. John Garamendi, D-Calif., and Hank Johnson, D-Ga., introduced the Justice for Victims of Foreign Vessel Accidents Act last week. The bill would retroactively increase the liability rate for damages by foreign vessels starting March 25, the day before the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed when it was struck by the cargo vessel, according to a news release from Garamendi's office.

In the days after the bridge collapsed, Grace Ocean Private Ltd., the Singapore-based owner of the Dali, invoked the Limitation of Liability Act of 1851, a maritime law that allows shipping companies to seek to limit their liability to the value of the vessel's remains after a casualty, asking the federal court in Maryland to limit the damages it pays to \$43 million, based on a \$90 million valuation of the vessel.

The law was passed in 1851 to protect the nascent U.S. shipping industry from claims for such incidents as piracy or storms, which owners could not control by vessel owners' liability to the value of the ship and its freight bill.

Tiny South American deer debuts at NYC zoo

NY NEW YORK — A tiny South American deer is making its debut at the Queens Zoo in New York City.

The southern pudu fawn weighed just 2 pounds when it

was born June 21, the Wildlife Conservation Society, which runs New York City's zoos, said in a news release Thursday. It is expected to weigh 15 to 20 pounds in adulthood.

The southern pudu, one of the world's smallest deer species, is listed as near threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. It is native to Chile and Argentina, where its population is decreasing because of factors including development and invasive species.

The fawn will share a Queens Zoo habitat with its parents.

Suit: Lawyer groped handcuffed inmate

AL MONTGOMERY — An Alabama lawyer and former state senator has been accused of groping and sexually assaulting an incarcerated woman and trying to coerce her into being his "sex slave," according to a lawsuit filed last week.

The lawsuit accuses Douglass Ghee of sexual assault, battery, extortion, intentional inflicting of emotional distress, false imprisonment and wantonness. Ghee's law firm — Ghee, Draper and Alexander — is also named in the complaint.

The lawsuit said that Ghee, 78, met with a 29-year-old woman in July as a public defender while she was incarcerated at the Calhoun County Jail, in the eastern part of the state. During the meeting, Ghee allegedly promised to use his friendship with the judge and assistant district attorney on her case to help her get a better deal, as long as she agreed to be his "sex slave" and pay him \$2,500.

Five days later, Ghee and the

woman had a second meeting in the same room, according to the lawsuit, and he is accused of groping and forcibly kissing her. A corrections officer intervened and removed the woman from the room, the lawsuit said.

Democrats try to block Green Party from ballot

WI MADISON — An employee of the Democratic National Committee filed a complaint last week seeking to remove the Green Party's presidential candidate from the ballot in Wisconsin, arguing that the party is ineligible.

It's the latest move by the DNC to block third-party candidates from the ballot. Democrats are also seeking to stop independent Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in several states.

The Green Party's appearance on the presidential ballot could make a difference in swing state Wisconsin, where four of the past six presidential elections have been decided by between 5,700 votes and about 23,000 votes. Jill Stein was expected to officially become the Green Party's presidential nominee.

Stowaway groundhog elevated to local icon

PA HOLLIDAYSBURG — A Pennsylvania groundhog is making a name for himself for something other than predicting an early or late spring.

An intrepid varmint dubbed Colonel Custard — so named for the frozen custard shop and mini-golf outlet where he was discovered — was found stowed away with a passel of stuffed animals prizes in an arcade game

two weeks ago. Players were maneuvering a mechanical claw to pluck toys from the glass game case when they suddenly realized a real live groundhog was blinking back at them.

Staff and owners at The Meadows frozen custard shop made T-shirts that read "Respect the Groundhog," held the online naming campaign that drew an avalanche of responses and are working on more promotional ideas, such as naming one of their frozen treat flavors for Colonel Custard.

Emails: Staff did political work while still on clock

DE DOVER — Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long's office staff was in regular communication last year with her husband and other people involved in her campaign for Delaware governor and worked during office hours to help facilitate the use of campaign funds, according to emails obtained by The Associated Press.

The emails, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, show that Hall-Long enlisted her office staff, working with her husband, to help with matters bearing little if any relevance to her role as lieutenant governor.

They include renewing her memberships in various women's groups and making donations to community groups. Some of those expenditures were made with campaign funds.

State employees are prohibited from engaging in any political activity during work hours. As an elected official, Hall-Long is exempt from that provision, but her office staff is not.

— From wire reports

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Expectations high for Ohio State's Smith

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Jeremiah Smith was being called the next big thing at Ohio State long before he arrived on campus.

The pass-catching prodigy from Miami Gardens, Fla., was the country's top-rated recruit when he got to Columbus as an early enrollee in January amid a frenzy of hype.

Since then, the 6-foot-3, 215-pound Smith has shown flashes of being what everybody expects he'll be for the No. 2 Buckeyes.

He's impressed coaches and teammates with his route running, acrobatic catches and trash talking against the Buckeyes' experienced defensive backs.

He entered Ohio State lore as the first freshman ever to be named an "Iron Buckeye" as one of the 10 strongest and toughest performers in off-season workouts.

"Rare to find someone who's as talented as he is but who has

really good discipline and skill at that age," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said. "We haven't played a game yet, but he's building a lot of respect among his teammates for sure.

"He's strong, he's powerful and he's big, but it's his work ethic to me that just jumps out," Day said. "He's physically tough—I mean physically, he'll get after you. He takes his game very, very seriously. He puts the work in off the field."

Smith, a cousin of Seattle Seahawks quarterback Geno Smith, compiled over 3,000 receiving yards and 45 touchdowns while leading the Hollywood, Fla., private school Chaminade-Madonna to three straight state championships.

During the recruiting process, Buckeyes fans started showing up at his high school games.

"I never had that happen with any other school," Smith said.

In other words, he's used to the attention he's getting now.

"I know it's big expectations

for me because, you know, the No. 1 player in the country coming in and all the hype around me," Smith said. "I just try to block out all that stuff and focus on the main things, just the team, and our receiver room and the locker room. I know that if the first game comes and I don't exceed the expectations that you have for me, I don't really care. I just want to go out there and win a game. That's it."

The Buckeyes already have a presumptive No. 1 receiver in Emeka Egbuka, who passed up the NFL Draft to return for a fourth season and a chance to showcase his talent out of the shadow of superstar Marvin Harrison Jr. Egbuka is the only receiver on the roster with significant experience.

Smith will likely be a starter right away, but he said he's prepared to be patient. He noted that Harrison played behind future first-round draft picks Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave before breaking out with 1,263

yards and 14 touchdowns in 2022.

Smith committed to Ohio State in 2022. He continued to talk to other schools, creating some anxious moments for Day before he signed in December. Excitement has surrounded him ever since.

"It's a blessing," Smith said of all the attention. "But you don't want that hype to affect you and all this other stuff that's going around me. I just keep my head down and find ways to get better each and every day."

His teammates are impressed with how hard he works at it.

"He has all the physical tools you might need, so it's catching up on that mental game," Egbuka said. "It can be hard for a freshman because there's so much stuff flying over your head, especially with all the praise he's receiving. But he's taking it the best way he can, and he's doing great."

The Buckeyes open at home Aug. 31 against Akron.

Du Plessis retains middleweight title in UFC 305

Associated Press

PERTH, Australia — South African Dricus du Plessis took a flurry of body hits across four rounds before defeating Israel Adesanya by submission to retain his middleweight championship at UFC 305 on Sunday.

After scoring some early takedowns, du Plessis (22-2) had to withstand a flurry of body strikes from Adesanya through the middle rounds which appeared to be taking a toll on the 30-year-old South African as the fight progressed.

But a left hook followed by three rights helped bring Adesanya down, which gave du Plessis the opening he wanted as he swiftly got the choke hold which forced the Nigerian-born New Zealander to tap out at

3:38 into the fourth round.

"This man is the king of getting back up," du Plessis said of Adesanya, who was bidding to become a middleweight champion for the third time. "I'm still alive. That's a bonus.

"I came here to die for this belt and to take a life. I'm still champion, baby."

Tensions ahead of Sunday's fight at the sold out RAC Arena at Perth, Australia, had escalated after du Plessis, in response to Adesanya saying he'd take the belt back to Africa if he won, asked whether he would take his servants with him.

Despite the simmering animosity heading into the fight, which saw both fighters refrain from touching each others gloves at the start, the pair appeared to reconcile immediate-

ly after the contest.

"I'm really sorry that it came across that I disrespected the fact that he's from Africa," Du Plessis said. "That was never my intention. Africa would have won regardless, but tonight South Africa was the victor."

Liberty 1st WNBA team to clinch playoff berth

LAS VEGAS — Sabrina Ionescu had 23 points, Breanna Stewart scored 18 and Jonquel Jones added a double-double as the New York Liberty cruised to a 79-67 victory over the Las Vegas Aces on Saturday to earn their fourth consecutive trip to the playoffs.

Ionescu made 9 of 21 shots — 3 of 10 from 3-point range — and grabbed six rebounds as

New York (23-4) maintained the best record in the league with its second road win over Las Vegas this season. The Liberty posted a 90-82 win in Las Vegas on June 15. The Aces beat the Liberty in last season's Finals to win their second straight championship.

Stewart added seven rebounds for New York, which earned its sixth straight victory. Jones scored 10 points and snagged a season-high 17 rebounds. Leonie Fiebich pitched in with 12 points and seven rebounds.

A'ja Wilson finished with 24 points and 11 rebounds to pace Las Vegas (16-9). Kelsey Plum scored 11 of her 13 points in the first quarter. Chelsea Gray totaled 13 points, six rebounds and six assists.

Matsuyama takes 5-shot lead in Memphis

Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Hideki Matsuyama felt his lower back starting to act up. On a whim, he decided to put a new putter in his bag for the start of the PGA Tour postseason. And now the Japanese star has a five-shot lead going into the final round of the FedEx St. Jude Championship.

"I am surprised," Matsuyama said through his interpreter, breaking into a big smile when he added, "but I did play well today."

He played well enough for a second straight 6-under 64 that enabled him to pull away from a crowded field and put plenty of distance between him and Nick Dunlap.

Matsuyama quickly atoned for an early bogey by drilling a 3-wood over the water to 15 feet and making the eagle putt. He kept adding birdies the rest of the day in more steamy weather, and no one could stay with him.

Denny McCarthy, who was tied for the 36-hole lead with

Matsuyama, put four bogeys on his card before registering his first birdie. Sam Burns had only five pars — and a broken driver — in his round of 70 to fall back. Scottie Scheffler lost ground with a few suspect chips and was seven shots behind after a 69.

"I felt like I got away with some stuff, so hopefully clean it up a little bit and give myself a lot more opportunities," Scheffler said.

Scheffler was at 10-under 200 along with Burns, who slammed his driver to the ground on No. 9 and the head broke off. He made double bogey to go with five bogeys and seven birdies. It was quite a day.

Dunlap did his best to stay close and was within three shots until one wild drive too many. He went so far right on the 12th that he cleared the water and landed on the other side, and then managed to save par. But he hit right again on the 13th in deep grass, couldn't reach the green and took bogey.

Dunlap shot 66 and will be in the final group, extending his remarkable run. A year ago, he was winning the U.S. Amateur at Cherry Hills. He won The American Express in January as an amateur, turned pro, and then won the Barracuda Championship last month.

"I should be playing the U.S. Am this week, and I just got done playing a round of golf with Scottie. It was pretty cool," Dunlap said.

Dunlap is among five players with multiple wins this year and was still a long shot to extend his season. He was No. 67 in the FedEx Cup because he was an amateur for his first PGA Tour title and received no points.

Even if he can't catch Matsuyama, Dunlap has a chance to not only be among the top 50 who advance to the BMW Championship next week, but lock up a spot in the Tour Championship for the top 30.

Matsuyama was at 17-under 193 and in position to capture his first FedEx Cup playoff event.

But this postseason opener was all about moving on. The top 50, along with getting to the next playoff event outside Denver, are assured of getting into all eight of the \$20 million signature events next year.

Viktor Hovland, the defending FedEx Cup champion who started this postseason at No. 57, took a big step toward advancing with a 66. He was alone in third, six shots behind.

"The ball is starting to behave like I'm expecting it to," Hovland said. "The misses are way smaller than they used to be. Before they would be off the planet, whereas now it's manageable and I can make a nice up-and-down or make a long putt or whatever it is."

Jordan Spieth's season effectively ended when he made two double bogeys in his round of 74, leaving him in 69th place against a 70-man field.

Will Zalatoris came into the postseason at No. 49 and shot 67 on Saturday. He was tied for sixth and all but assured of staying well inside the top 50.

Newgarden gets fifth IndyCar win at WWT Raceway

Associated Press

MADISON, Ill. — Josef Newgarden won for the fifth time at World Wide Technology Raceway on Saturday night, taking the lead during a late pit stop and holding off teammate Scott McLaughlin on two restarts.

Newgarden survived a partial spin-out on Lap 196 in the 260-lap race, keeping his No. 2 Chevrolet out of the wall as he turned sideways coming out of Turn 2.

"I pushed a little hard in that moment, made a mistake and then I was so thankful that we didn't wreck because I knew we could gather this up and still win this race," Newgarden said.

Newgarden's incident brought comparisons to Danny Sullivan's "spin and win" in the

1985 Indianapolis 500.

"Certainly not as beautiful as Danny's," Newgarden said. "I mean, he pirouetted."

Newgarden has been dominant on the track just outside St. Louis, winning for the fourth time in the past five years. His winning streak ended last year, when he crashed with 49 laps to go.

It was a sweep for Team Penske's No. 2 cars at the track, after Austin Cindric won the NASCAR Cup race this year. The crowd was much smaller for the IndyCar race, with empty swaths of seats in the main grandstand.

Cindric's father, Tim, is the Penske president and was in the team box for Newgarden's victory.

"You can't ignore that final pit stop was a big deal for us," Newgarden said. "It's hard to say if it works out if we don't get that done, but it certainly was a key ingredient to us winning the race."

Newgarden has 31 career victories, also winning the Indianapolis 500 this year.

Defending series champion Alex Palou extended his points lead after his closest pursuer, Will Power, was knocked out in a late crash after leading more laps than anyone else.

Power was in fourth place coming to a restart with nine laps to go when Alexander Rossi rear-ended him. Power faulted teammate Newgarden for getting in and out of the gas while rounding Turn 4 to pre-

pare for the restart.

"I don't know why — I do not know why — he would just keep backing up and going, not going," said Power, who ended up 18th and fell to fourth in the points race. "I do not understand it."

Newgarden admitted he "was trying to go as late as I could" but insisted it was within the rules and consistent with other restarts across his career.

"The last thing I'm trying to do is cause a wreck," Newgarden said, suggesting race control may have hit the green light a moment before he actually accelerated. "Believe me, the last thing I want is for Will to get hit."

Palou entered with a 49-point lead over Power.

Severino helps Mets shut down Marlins

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Luis Severino pitched a four-hitter for his second career shutout, and the New York Mets got home runs from Francisco Lindor and Pete Alonso in a 4-0 victory Saturday over the Miami Marlins.

After losing his previous three starts, Severino (8-6) was in complete control against the last-place Marlins on a rainy afternoon at Citi Field. He struck out eight and walked one in the first shutout by a Mets starter since Jacob deGrom blanked Washington in April 2021.

"It was amazing," Severino said. "That was really fun to go out and compete for this fan base."

Severino's only other complete game in the majors was a five-hit shutout for the New York Yankees at Houston in May 2018.

The right-hander plunked Jake Burger with his first pitch of the ninth inning, bringing a visit from manager Carlos Mendoza. But after a discussion on the mound, Mendoza left Severino in the game to loud cheers from the crowd of 34,744.

He retired the next three batters and finished with a flourish, screaming and pumping his fist after striking out Derek Hill to end it with his 113th pitch — the most by a member of the Mets this season.

Pirates 7, Mariners 2: Isiah Kiner-Falefa had three hits, including a first-inning homer, and host Pittsburgh beat skidding Seattle.

Rowdy Tellez and Jared Triolo also connected for the Pirates, who have won the first two games of the three-game series following a 10-game losing streak. Joey Bart added a pair of doubles.

Tigers 4, Yankees 0: Spencer Torkelson doubled and tripled in his return to the majors, and host Detroit beat New York.

Torkelson, who turns 25 on Aug. 26, was batting .201 with

four homers when he was demoted to Triple-A on June 2. The No. 1 overall pick in the 2020 amateur draft was called up this weekend, along with Jace Jung and Trey Sweeney — two of Detroit's top infield prospects.

Cubs 3, Blue Jays 2: Ian Happ homered in the first inning and Michael Busch added a two-run triple as host Chicago beat Toronto.

Dansby Swanson added two hits for the Cubs, who won their second straight after losing three consecutive games to the American League Central-leading Cleveland Guardians.

Rays 6, Diamondbacks 1: Jeffrey Springs (1-1) got his first win in 16 months, allowing one run and four hits while striking out seven over five innings, Brandon Lowe hit a two-run homer and host Tampa Bay beat Arizona.

Tampa Bay manager Kevin Cash became the sixth active manager with 800 wins as the Rays returned to .500 at 61-61.

Phillies 5, Nationals 1: Christopher Sánchez pitched his second complete game of the season, and host Philadelphia defeated Washington.

Sánchez (9-8) faced two batters over the minimum, allowing two hits with just 99 pitches. The only blemish in his outing was a solo homer by Alex Call to lead off the fourth inning. Call hit a 1-1 slider into the front-row seats in right-center field.

Royals 13, Reds 1: Dairon Blanco homered twice — including his first career grand slam — and drove in seven runs as visiting Kansas City routed Cincinnati.

The offensive fireworks by the Royals overshadowed a fine start by Michael Wacha (10-6), who allowed just four hits and struck out nine through six shutout innings as Kansas City beat the Reds for the second straight night.

Cardinals 5, Dodgers 2: Maysyn Winn, Alec Burleson and

Nolan Arenado homered and host St. Louis beat Los Angeles to snap a five-game losing streak.

Andre Pallante (5-6) allowed two runs on four hits in seven innings. JoJo Romero pitched a scoreless eighth inning, and Ryan Helsley had a perfect ninth inning for his major league-leading 38th save.

Twins 5, Rangers 2: Willi Castro drove in two runs with a bases-loaded single and another run scored on the play due to a throwing error as visiting Minnesota rallied to beat slumping Texas.

Trailing 2-1 heading into the eighth, the Twins got singles from Edouard Julien and Christian Vázquez off Nathan Eovaldi (8-7). Austin Martin loaded the bases by beating out a sacrifice bunt that was initially ruled an out before being overturned following a Twins challenge. Castro's single to center off David Robertson scored Julien and Vázquez. Texas center fielder Leody Taveras' throw to third base bounced past Josh Jung, allowing Martin to score and giving the Twins a 4-2 lead.

Astros 6, White Sox 1: Jose Altuve drove in a pair of runs, Yainer Diaz registered his team-leading 68th RBI, Hunter Brown struck out six and host Houston defeated Chicago.

Brown registered his ninth-straight quality start as he allowed one run over seven innings. This marks his 11th win of the year, tying a career high, and he is 10-2 in his 14 starts since June 1.

Athletics 2, Giants 0: Oakland right-hander Osvaldo Bido retired the first 14 batters in order and carried a no-hit bid into the sixth inning, shutting down visiting San Francisco in the second-to-last game of the Bay Bridge Series.

Bido's bid ended when he gave up Grant McCray's one-out infield single in the sixth on which the ball traveled about two feet at 67.3 mph off the bat.

Bido wound up with just that one hit allowed over six innings. He struck out six and walked two.

Brewers 2, Guardians 1: Freddy Peralta pitched six effective innings and William Contreras hit a tiebreaking homer that sent host Milwaukee past Cleveland for its fourth straight victory.

Gary Sánchez had an early RBI double and Milwaukee maintained its 10-game lead in the NL Central, the largest of any division leader.

Red Sox 5, Orioles 1: Brayan Bello took a no-hitter into the sixth inning and Jarren Duran delivered a tiebreaking two-run single in the seventh to carry visiting Boston past Baltimore.

Rafael Devers hit his team-high 27th homer for the Red Sox, who moved within seven games of the first-place New York Yankees in the AL East. Baltimore is one game out despite losing four of six.

Padres 8, Rockies 3: Manny Machado had four hits to help spark his team's offense, Dylan Cease (12-9) took a one-hitter into the sixth inning and visiting San Diego rebounded from a loss to beat Colorado.

Luis Campusano homered and singled to drive in a pair of runs and Bryce Johnson added two hits and two RBIs for San Diego. Jake Cronenworth also drove in a pair of runs for the Padres, who had a chance to win their franchise-record ninth consecutive series since the All-Star break with a victory Sunday.

Braves 11, Angels 3: Chris Sale struck out 10 in his 14th win and Marcell Ozuna went 3-for-3 with an early three-run homer as visiting Atlanta blew out Los Angeles.

Whit Merrifield and Ramón Laureano also went deep for the Braves, who improved to 5-3 since a six-game losing streak. They remained a game ahead of the New York Mets for the final National League playoff berth.