

Harris battles Trump on a convention high

New York Daily News

Vice President Kamala Harris left the wildly successful Democratic National Convention this weekend with a strong political wind at her back, capping a charmed month in which she grabbed the presidential nomination and completely upended a race that had been former President Donald Trump's to lose.

The Democratic nominee now turns to an important 2½-week stretch through the Labor Day holiday and leading up to the expected Sept. 10 debate with Trump, the next big milestone in the race.

Harris needs to build on the enthusiasm of the party's base that was clear to all at the Chicago convention, lay the foundations of a successful race, especially in the seven battleground states, and maintain at least a narrow lead in polls, analysts on both sides of the political aisle say.

"Harris should ride the wave

of emotion that has lifted her party and attracted at least the open-minded curiosity of some undecided swing voters," said Lawrence Levy, a Hofstra professor who studies political trends in suburbia.

Tom Watson, a New York-based Democratic strategist, warned that Harris should remain laser-focused on building an edge in the handful of swing states that will almost certainly determine the winner of the White House.

"Trump (could still) either eke out a slim victory in some of those states or corrupt the counting and certification process," Watson said. "Democrats have to fight hard on every front. To me, that's what the tougher-than-you-are Harris speech signified: a deadly seriousness of purpose."

Political experts traditionally expect each candidate to get a bounce in polls during and after their party's convention. But the calculus was scrambled this

year by the political earthquakes of the assassination attempt on Trump, which caused a brief but intense flood of sympathy, and President Joe Biden's unprecedented decision to pull out of the race on the weekend after the Republican National Convention ended.

Harris quickly blunted any momentum Trump may have held with a lightning-quick consolidation of party leaders followed by a series of crowd-pleasing rallies. She struck political gold by picking Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz to be her vice presidential running mate, as he has wowed supporters with his folksy small-town charisma.

Then Democrats pulled off a political masterstroke with their convention, deftly managing Biden's departure from the campaign and enlisting Democratic heavyweights like Hillary Clinton and Barack and Michelle Obama to back Harris.

Harris leaves Chicago with a 2-3% edge in polling averages

and slight leads in the Rust Belt's blue-wall battleground states of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin that she needs to win.

The race is a dead heat in the Sun Belt swing states of Arizona and North Carolina, with Trump narrowly ahead in Nevada and Georgia.

While ecstatic Democrats may hope the trend will continue, political pros say it's more likely that the race will settle back into a near dead heat as Harris' bounce fades.

Harris remains behind the polling benchmarks set by Biden in 2020 and Clinton in 2016, when Trump stormed back to win.

"Harris had a spectacular week, culminating a remarkable month," tweeted Democratic strategist David Axelrod.

"But this is a closely divided country and the race now will be a pitched struggle for every inch of terrain in the battleground states."

US carrier equipped with first drone operations hub

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT

Stars and Stripes

The Navy recently outfitted an aircraft carrier with the first drone operations center, furthering the service's high-tech pursuit into remotely piloted aircraft.

The MQ-25 Stingray warfare center was installed aboard the USS George H.W. Bush, which is based at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., according to an Aug. 15 announcement from Naval Air Systems Command. The MQ-25 Stingray, built by Boeing, is a tanker drone designed to refuel manned fighter jets in midair.

Early next year, the Bush will put the warfare center to the test, leading the first at-sea trial of the center's networks. The crew won't operate a Stingray but will instead use the software to communicate with a simulated aircraft in a lab in Patuxent River, Md.

The carrier-based warfare center lays the foundation for how the Navy will operate unmanned aircraft, said Capt. Daniel Fucito, manager of the service's unmanned carrier aviation program.

"These systems will initially support the MQ-25 but also fu-

ture unmanned systems such as collaborative combat aircraft that comprise the air wing of the future," he said.

The Navy plans to install unmanned warfare centers on all Nimitz- and Ford-class carriers, making them Stingray-capable. Some systems necessary to operate the refueling drone already are being fabricated for the USS Carl Vinson, USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Ronald Reagan, with installation scheduled to begin in fiscal 2025.

"Our program is accomplishing things on a much faster timeline than any other normal

startup program," said Gordon Carlon, acting team lead for the installation of carrier-based warfare centers.

Boeing was awarded the contract to develop the Stingray, first testing a prototype in 2019. In 2021, the drone was tested aboard the Bush, conducting the first air-to-air refueling of an F-18 Super Hornet and F-35 Lightning II, both fighter jets, and an E-2 Hawkeye.

The goal of the Stingray, Boeing said, is to extend the flight range of manned combat aircraft, thus extending the striking range of carrier air wings.

US Raptors arrive for combat, fuel exercises with Singapore

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

Air Force F-22 stealth fighters arrived in Singapore on Wednesday for several days of combat and air-to-air refueling exercises over the South China Sea, according to U.S. and Singaporean officials.

"The Raptors have landed!" Singapore's air force said that day on social platforms X and Facebook.

The high-tech planes were in the Southeast Asian city state to train alongside Singapore's F-15SG Eagle and F-16 Fighting Falcon fighters and an A330 MRTT aerial tanker, according to the posts.

"F-22s are training with the Singapore Air Force, boosting our interoperability & strengthening ties," Pacific Air Forces said in its own X post that day. Interoperability for the military means the ability of one coun-

try's military to use another country's equipment and training methods.

The training was to take place over the southern reaches of the South China Sea within international airspace and allow aircrew to glean useful tactical insights, according to the Singaporean Facebook post.

PACAF did not immediately provide answers Thursday to emailed questions about the Raptors' unit and mission in Singapore.

"Being able to operate smoothly with Singaporean air force has benefits for both sides and sends a useful message about the strength of the mil-mil relationship," Ralph Cossa, a retired Air Force officer and former president of the Pacific Forum think tank in Hawaii, said Friday.

China claims sovereignty over nearly the entire South

China Sea, a claim disputed by surrounding countries Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Taiwan, itself subject to a territorial claim by China, also asserts territorial rights in the area.

Philippine and Chinese coast guard ships collided Monday in contested South China Sea waters, with each government blaming the other for the incidents. Singapore's proximity to the potential flashpoint makes it a good place for the stealth jets to fly from, and there are advantages operating from additional bases in the Pacific, retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Dan Leaf said Friday.

It's not the first time the U.S. stealth fighters have been in Singapore. Air Combat Command's F-22 Raptor Demonstration Team performed at the Singapore Airshow in February 2020.

S. Korea has come long way in assembling its fighter jets

The Washington Post

SUWON, South Korea — South Korea, an industrial and tech powerhouse, was once so poor that its citizens donated money so the government could buy five American fighter jets in case of a North Korean invasion.

Now, South Korea is a global weapons producer and seller. It is the third-largest arms supplier to NATO countries, with affordable weapons for nations seeking to refill their stockpiles of K2 battle tanks, K9 self-propelled howitzers and other items.

Its ascent underscores the nation's dramatic economic and diplomatic evolution since that 1975 national fundraising drive for the American F-4 Phantoms.

South Korea retired those Cold War-era jets in June after more than five decades in use — making way for a new generation of homegrown fighter aircraft that will make South Korea one of the few nations to develop its own supersonic jet.

South Korea hopes its KF-21 Boramae will be a cheaper alternative to the U.S.-made F-35. The prototype was unveiled in 2021, and mass production is set to begin in 2026.

"South Korea is making a big push to engage globally," said Peter Layton, a military analyst and visiting fellow at the Griffith Asia Institute in Brisbane, Australia. "They're going from a big buyer to not just a maker but a designer of aircraft."

South Korea is flying other American-made jets, including the F-5 and F-35 as well as jets developed jointly by the United States and South Korea.

South Korea, US targeting North's disinformation during joint exercise

By DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States and South Korea for the first time are developing plans for combating wartime disinformation as part of a broader military exercise underway throughout the country.

U.S. Forces Korea, the National Intelligence Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Korea Communications Commission met at an unspecified command center Tuesday to respond to North Korea's "gray zone provocations," or the spread of false information, ac-

cording to a Ministry of National Defense news release Thursday. Officials discussed potential threats, including spoofed government messages and viral, manipulated videos, the release said. USFK did not immediately respond Friday to an emailed request for comment about the meeting.

The disinformation conference was one element of Ulchi Freedom Shield, 11 days of air, land and sea training between the U.S. and South Korea. The exercise kicked off Aug. 19 and includes roughly 2,000 sorties by 200 aircraft, counterterro-

rism drills in Seoul and tests of the country's ability to respond to a cyberattack, according to the National Defense Ministry.

Tuesday's meeting was "an important steppingstone" for a government-wide response to disinformation, particularly in light of real-world cases from the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars, the ministry said.

The State Department and Defense Department have long accused the Russian government and Hamas of spreading disinformation to advance their interests on their respective fronts.

RFK Jr. suspends campaign, backs Trump

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Robert F. Kennedy Jr. suspended his independent campaign for the White House and endorsed Donald Trump on Friday, a late-stage shakeup of the race that could give the former president a modest boost from Kennedy's supporters.

Hours later, Kennedy joined Trump onstage at an Arizona rally, where the crowd burst into "Bobby!" cheers.

Kennedy said his internal polls had shown that his presence in the race would hurt Trump and help

Democratic nominee Kamala Harris, though recent public polls don't provide a clear indication that he is having an outsized impact on support for either major-party candidate.

Kennedy cited free speech, the war in Ukraine and "a war on our children" as among the reasons he would try to remove his name from the ballot in battleground states.

"These are the principal causes that persuaded me to leave the Democratic Party and run as an independent, and now to throw my support to President Trump,"

Kennedy said at his event in Phoenix.

He made clear that he wasn't formally ending his bid, however, and said his supporters could continue to back him in the majority of states where they are unlikely to sway the outcome. Kennedy took steps to withdraw his candidacy in at least two states late last week, Arizona and Pennsylvania, but election officials in the battlegrounds of Michigan, Nevada and Wisconsin said it would be too late for him to take his name off the ballot even if he wants to do so.

Kennedy said his actions fol-

lowed conversations with Trump over the past few weeks. He cast their alliance as "a unity party," an arrangement that would "allow us to disagree publicly and privately and seriously." Kennedy suggested Trump offered him a job if he returns to the White House, but neither he nor Trump offered details.

Kennedy's running mate, Nicole Shanahan, last week entertained the idea that Kennedy could join Trump's administration as secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Walz's Guard exit left opening for critics to pounce on record

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — John Kolb, a retired Minnesota National Guard colonel, knew Tim Walz by reputation as an "excellent leader" who capably guided the enlisted troops in his field artillery battalion. But Kolb was stunned by what he saw when Walz left the military and entered politics.

Walz retired from the National Guard in 2005 to run for Congress just before his unit received an order to mobilize for the war in Iraq. Then during the campaign, Walz overstated the rank he held at the point he left the service.

"That is not the behavior I would expect out of a senior non-commissioned officer," Kolb said in an interview.

Those two sides of Walz's service have been in the spotlight now that the Minnesota governor is the Democratic nominee for vice president. Supporters have lauded Walz's 24 years of service in the National Guard, where he rose through the enlisted ranks and received an honorable discharge.

"What I know about Tim Walz is he did his job diligently," said retired Minnesota National Guard Brig. Gen. Jeff Bertrang. "He was in charge of troops under him, and he made sure they were

taken care of."

Republicans have seized on criticism by Guard veterans as a major line of attack on Walz and Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris. Some of that criticism, like Kolb's, is measured. Others offer harsher appraisals.

The criticism stems not so much from Walz's service record but from how he has characterized his time in uniform and how he ended his tenure.

An Associated Press review of Walz's statements as a congressional candidate, congressman and governor shows he has toggled between being precise and careless about key details.

In a speech this past week at the Democratic National Convention, Walz said he "proudly wore our nation's uniform for 24 years." He made no reference to his rank or the circumstances of his retirement, framing his service as part of a larger urge to "contribute" to the nation.

"I'm a retired command sergeant major," Walz said in 2006 as he campaigned to unseat the six-term Republican incumbent in Minnesota's 1st Congressional District. But while he served briefly as a command sergeant major, that was not the rank he held at retirement.

Astronauts won't return until February amid Boeing issues

Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA decided Saturday that it's too risky to bring two astronauts back to Earth in Boeing's troubled new capsule, and they'll have to wait until next year for a ride home with SpaceX. What should have been a weeklong test flight for the pair will now last more than eight months.

The seasoned pilots have been stuck at the International Space Station since the beginning of June. A cascade of vexing thruster failures and helium leaks in the new capsule marred their trip to the space station, and they ended up in a holding pattern as engineers conducted tests and debated what to do about the flight back.

After almost three months, the decision finally came down from NASA's highest ranks Saturday. Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams will come back in a SpaceX capsule in February. Their empty Starliner capsule will undock in early September and attempt to return on autopilot with a touchdown in the New Mexico desert.

As Starliner's test pilots, the pair should have overseen this critical last leg of the journey.

"A test flight by nature is neither safe nor routine," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. The decision "is a result of a commitment to safety."

Nelson said lessons learned from NASA's two space shuttle accidents played a role. This time, he noted, open dialogue was encouraged rather than crushed.

"This has not been an easy decision, but it is absolutely the right one," added Jim Free, NASA's associate administrator.

It was a blow to Boeing, adding to the safety concerns plaguing the company on its airplane side. Boeing had counted on Starliner's first crew trip to revive the troubled spacecraft program after years of delays and ballooning costs. The company had insisted Starliner was safe based on all the recent thruster tests both in space and on the ground.

Boeing did not participate in Saturday's news conference by NASA, but released a statement: "Boeing continues to focus, first and foremost, on the safety of the crew and spacecraft." The company said it is preparing the spacecraft "for a safe and successful return."

Syrian man held in knife attack in Germany

Associated Press

SOLINGEN, Germany — A Syrian man on Sunday was ordered held on suspicion of murder and membership in a terrorist organization in connection with the Solingen knife attack that left three dead and eight wounded at a festival marking the city's 650th anniversary.

A judge at the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe ordered 26-year-old Issa Al H. held pending further investigation and a possible indictment after federal prosecutors said that he shared the

radical ideology of the Islamic State extremist group — and was acting on those beliefs when he stabbed his victims repeatedly from behind in the head and upper body.

The ruling came after the suspect turned himself in, saying that he was responsible for the attack, police said.

The suspect is also suspected of attempted murder and serious bodily injury, prosecutors said. His last name wasn't released in line with German privacy rules.

The suspect, wearing hand-

cuffs and leg shackles, was taken Sunday from the police station in Solingen for the initial court appearance.

He "shares the ideology of the foreign terrorist organization Islamic State" and on the basis of his "radical Islamic convictions" decided "to kill the largest possible number of unbelievers" at the festival, the Office of the Federal Prosecutor said in a statement.

The suspect is a Syrian citizen who had applied for asylum in Germany, police confirmed to The Associated Press.

The dpa news agency reported, without citing a specific source, that his asylum claim had been denied and that he was to have been deported last year.

On Saturday, Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, without providing evidence.

Friday's attack plunged the city of Solingen into shock and grief.

The three people killed were two men aged 67 and 56 and a 56-year-old woman, authorities said.

Ukraine somberly marks 33 years of independence

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine somberly marked its 33rd Independence Day on Saturday, setting the usual fireworks, parades and concerts aside to commemorate thousands of civilians and soldiers killed in the ongoing war with Russia.

Social media was flooded with messages of gratitude and support as Ukrainians greeted each other from around the country and thanked soldiers who are on the front lines.

"Independence is the silence we experience when we lose our people," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared to the nation in a video posted on Telegram. "Independence descends into the shelter during an air raid, only to endure and rise again and again to tell the enemy: 'You will achieve nothing.'"

In the capital of Kyiv, people who had traveled from various regions of the nation paraded in festive "vyshyvankas," shirts of many colors enhanced with adornments, including the traditional white shirt with red embroidery. Some posed for pictures in front of the country's blue-and-yellow flag and an "I Love Ukraine" sign that had been placed near a makeshift

memorial to fallen soldiers.

Ukraine declared independence from the former Soviet Union on Aug. 24, 1991. Russia launched a full-scale invasion on the country on Feb. 24, 2022. More than 11,000 Ukrainian civilians have been killed in the conflict, according to the United Nations, which has indicated that the toll could be higher. In February, the war's second anniversary, Zelenskyy had said that 35,000 soldiers had been killed.

Zelenskyy recorded his address to the nation in the northeastern town of Sumy, near Russia's Kursk region where Ukrainian forces made a surprise incursion earlier this month. The move marked a startling turn to the war and added a new front.

Ukraine quickly seized considerable Russian territory, including scores of small towns, and captured hundreds of Russian soldiers, part of an effort to counter Russia's grinding advances in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region.

The military now claims to hold 480 square miles of territory, and in the past week, has launched drone attacks on strategic bridges and on Russian airfields and drone bases.

Israel, Hezbollah trade fire, jolting region braced for war

Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel launched a wave of airstrikes across southern Lebanon early Sunday in what it said was a preemptive strike to avert a large Hezbollah attack. The militant group responded that it had launched hundreds of rockets and drones to avenge the killing of one of its top commanders last month.

The heavy exchange of fire does not appear to have ignited a long-feared war, but the situation remains tense. Egypt was meanwhile hosting high-level talks aimed at brokering a cease-fire in the 10-month-old Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, which diplomats hope will tamp down regional tensions.

The Israeli military said it struck because Hezbollah was planning to launch a heavy barrage of rockets and missiles. Soon after, Hezbollah then said it had launched an attack on Israeli military positions as an initial response to the killing of Fouad Shukur in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut last month.

By mid-morning, it appeared that the exchange had ended, with both sides saying they had only aimed at military targets. At least three fighters were killed in the strikes on Lebanon, while

there were no reports of casualties in Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the military had eliminated "thousands of rockets that were aimed at northern Israel."

"We are determined to do everything to defend our country, to return the residents of the north securely to their homes and to continue upholding a simple rule: Whoever harms us — we will harm them," he said.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said Hezbollah had intended to hit targets in northern and central Israel. He said initial assessments found "very little damage" in Israel, but that the military remained on high alert. He said around 100 Israeli aircraft took part in Sunday's strikes.

Two Hezbollah fighters and a militant from an allied group were killed, the groups said. The Lebanese Health Ministry said two people were wounded.

Hezbollah said its attack involved more than 320 Katyusha rockets aimed at multiple sites in Israel and a "large number" of drones. It said the operation targeted "a qualitative Israeli military target that will be announced later" as well as "enemy sites and barracks and Iron Dome (missile defense) platforms."

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Corporal punishment banned in all schools

IL SPRINGFIELD — This school year, Illinois will become just the fifth state in the nation to prohibit corporal punishment in all schools.

Legislation that Gov. JB Pritzker signed into law this month bans physical punishment in private schools while reiterating a prohibition in public schools implemented 30 years ago.

When the ban takes effect in January, Illinois will join New Jersey, Iowa, Maryland and New York in prohibiting paddling, spanking or hitting in every school.

State Rep. Margaret Croke, a Chicago Democrat, was inspired to take up the issue after an updated call by the American Association of Pediatrics to end the practice, which it says can increase behavioral or mental health problems and impair cognitive development. The association found that it's disproportionately administered to Black males and students with disabilities.

Court blocks ballot measure on abortion

AR LITTLE ROCK — The Arkansas Supreme Court upheld the state's rejection of signature petitions for an abortion rights ballot initiative Thursday, keeping the proposal from going before voters in November.

The ruling dashed the hopes of organizers, who submitted the petitions, of getting the constitutional amendment measure on the ballot in the predominantly Republican state, where

many top leaders have touted their opposition to abortion.

Election officials said Arkansans for Limited Government, the group behind the measure, did not properly submit documentation regarding the signature gatherers it hired. The group disputed that assertion and argued it should have been given more time to provide any additional documents needed.

Arkansas currently bans abortion at any time during a pregnancy, unless the woman's life is endangered due to a medical emergency.

University of Kentucky to close diversity office

KY LEXINGTON — The University of Kentucky will disband its office promoting diversity and inclusion efforts in response to questions from policymakers that its focus on identity has stifled political discussions, its president said last week.

The action on the Lexington campus comes after state lawmakers debated whether to limit diversity, equity and inclusion practices at public universities. Republican supermajorities in the Kentucky House and Senate were unable to resolve differences on the issue before ending this year's session in April, but the matter has been expected to resurface when lawmakers reconvene early next year.

In the school's preemptive action, units housed in the shuttered Office for Institutional Diversity will be shifted elsewhere on campus, including into a newly created Office for Community Relations, UK President Eli Capilouto said in a campus-wide email. The res-

tructuring won't result in job losses, he said.

23 indicted in schemes to smuggle with drones

GA STATESBORO — Federal prosecutors have indicted 23 people, most of them current and former inmates, in what authorities said were schemes to smuggle drugs and cellphones into Georgia state prisons using drones.

Indictments in two similar cases were unsealed last week in U.S. District Court after being handed down by a grand jury last month. The indictments allege inmates used contraband cellphones to coordinate drone deliveries with defendants outside the prisons.

Drones were used to drop marijuana, methamphetamine and contraband phones into the yards at Smith State Prison in Glennville, Telfair State Prison in McRae-Helena and others over a five-year period beginning in 2019, according to a news release from U.S. Attorney Jill Steinberg's office.

Woman uses AirTag to track mail thief

CA SANTA BARBARA — A Southern California woman fed up with her packages getting stolen from her post office box sent an Apple AirTag to herself and cleverly tracked down the suspected thief, police said.

The woman had several items stolen from her mailbox at the Los Alamos Post Office already when she thought of the idea, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office said Tuesday. Ap-

ple's \$29 AirTags have become popular items since their 2021 release, helping users keep tabs on the location of anything from their lost keys to wallets and luggage.

When it disappeared, she called police, who tracked the AirTag to a block in Santa Maria, about 16 miles from the post office and arrested two suspects — a 27-year-old woman from Santa Maria and a 37-year-old man from Riverside.

The two suspects were booked in jail on charges of possession of checks with intent to commit fraud, conspiracy, and identity and credit card theft.

Veteran pleads guilty to illegal ricin possession

VA VIENNA — A Marine Corps veteran who authorities said tried to fake his own death after a falling out with a militia group pleaded guilty to illegal possession of ricin, a biological toxin.

Russell Richardson Vane IV, 42, of Vienna, Va., had been in jail since his arrest in April.

At a plea hearing Wednesday in federal court in Alexandria, Vane admitted that he used castor beans to create ricin at his home. Ricin is a toxin that occurs naturally in castor beans, and federal law requires anyone in possession of ricin to register and obtain a license.

Vane came to authorities' attention after an online news outlet reported that a militia group, the Virginia Kekoas, had severed ties with him because they were alarmed by what they considered his loose talk about homemade explosives.

— From wire reports

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Georgia Tech stuns No. 10 Florida St.

Associated Press

DUBLIN — Avery Boyd, Chase Lane and Malik Rutherford stepped in front of their Georgia Tech teammates, who were passing around the Aer Lingus College Football Classic trophy, and decided to let loose.

There was one dance fitting for the moment: an Irish jig.

They delivered. It was their second perfect performance of the day at Aviva Stadium.

Aidan Birr made a 44-yard field goal as time expired, and Georgia Tech upset No. 10 Florida State 24-21 on Saturday in the first major college football game of the season.

The win was Georgia Tech's first over a top-10 opponent since a 22-16 victory over the Seminoles in October 2015.

Jamal Haynes ran for 75 yards and two touchdowns for Georgia Tech, while Haynes King threw for 146 yards and ran for 54 yards. The Yellow Jackets (1-0, 1-0 Atlantic Coast Conference) were able to control the line of scrimmage and accumulate 190 rushing yards and 5.3 yards per carry.

"Really proud of the offensive line," coach Brent Key said. "Shocking there, right? Really proud of those guys and how they were prepared."

Coming off an undefeated regular season and with a remade roster, the Seminoles tied the game with 6:33 left in the fourth quarter on a 15-play touchdown drive that

included two fourth-down conversions by DJ Uiagalelei.

Florida State (0-1, 0-1), which was favored to win by 10½ points according to BetMGM Sportsbook, never touched the ball again. Birr came on with 5 seconds left to hit the winner that just stayed inside the left upright.

Uiagalelei completed 19 of 27 passes for 193 yards in his Florida State debut, completing mostly shorter passes until the late fourth-down completions.

Ryan Fitzgerald made a 59-yard field goal, a career long and the second-longest in school history, just before halftime to tie the game at 14. Fitzgerald had a 52-yarder earlier.

The teams had just seven drives apiece. Georgia Tech's final two drives were among the best, an 11-play, 89-yard touchdown drive and then the 12-play, 49-yard drive to set up Birr's kick.

"Very limited possessions," Florida State coach Mike Norvell said. "The importance of every snap in that game was monumental."

Florida State was able to build four scoring drives, but just one in the second half. While Lawrance Toafili and Roydell Williams had rushing touchdowns, the ground attack stalled as Georgia Tech's defense held FSU to 98 yards on 31 carries.

"We're not trying to prove anything to

anyone," Key said. "We're not trying to go out and impress people. All we're trying to do is play as hard as we can possibly play — as a team, as a family."

Coming off a 7-6 season, Georgia Tech certainly impressed, sending quite the message to the rest of the ACC.

Florida State fans packed Aviva Stadium for the Aer Lingus College Football Classic, the third straight Week 0 opener in Dublin.

On alert

GT has been upset-minded in ACC play against Top 25 teams. The Yellow Jackets knocked off two ranked ACC opponents — at Miami and vs. North Carolina — in 2023. In 2022, Georgia Tech won games against ranked opponents at UNC and Pittsburgh.

Poll implications

Florida State will tumble in the next AP Top 25, which will be released after Week 1's games wrap up Sept. 3.

Takeaways

Florida State: The Seminoles' defensive line was viewed as one of the ACC's best, but did not record a sack and allowed Tech to run at will.

Georgia Tech: The Yellow Jackets averaged 203 rushing yards per game (13th in the FBS) in 2023 and picked up right where they left off.

Burton secures playoffs with wild win at Daytona

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Out of his ride and far removed from the playoff picture, Harrison Burton changed his fortunes with a lap to remember Saturday night at Daytona International Speedway.

Burton passed two-time Cup Series champion Kyle Busch on the final lap in overtime to pick up his first career victory and a spot in NASCAR's post-season.

The 23-year-old Burton, who already lost his ride in the famed No. 21 Ford with Wood Brothers Racing next season, took the lead thanks to a huge push from little-known Parker Retzlaff.

Busch fought back and had a chance down the stretch. He even got to Burton's bumper and forced Burton below the double-yellow line. But NASCAR officials ruled the contact caused Burton to cross the line and did not penalize him.

"Besides just flat-out wrecking him, there was nothing else I could do," Busch said.

Busch finished second, followed by Christopher Bell, Cody Ware and Ty Gibbs. It was Burton's first win in 98 career Cup starts, and it was the 100th victory for the Wood Brothers.

"I cried the whole victory lap," Burton said. "I, obviously, got fired from this job. I wanted to do everything for the Wood

Brothers that I could. They've given me an amazing opportunity in life and to get them (No.) 100 on my way out is amazing. We're in the playoffs now. Let's go to Darlington and see what happens."

Burton's dad, former NASCAR driver Jeff Burton, called the race for NBC Sports and radioed down to offer his congratulations. He also hustled down from the broadcast booth to celebrate with his son in victory lane.

"It's been the hardest three of years of my life, obviously the hardest three years for some of these guys' lives," Harrison Burton said. "To win it the way we just did it, to beat

the best in the business — Kyle Busch — across the line, it's pretty fantastic."

No one saw it coming, even though Daytona often provides unique winners. Burton had one top-five finish and five top-10s in his three-plus years driving at NASCAR's top level.

Now, he gets to vie for a championship that would be even more improbable.

Thirteen drivers are locked into the 16-man playoff field thanks to wins: Kyle Larson, Denny Hamlin, Bell, Tyler Reddick, William Byron, Ryan Blaney, Chase Elliott, Brad Keselowski, Austin Cindric, Joey Logano, Daniel Suarez, Alex Bowman and Burton.

Gauff's rise slows ahead of US Open

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Coco Gauff is a Grand Slam champion. She's also been ranked No. 1 in doubles and No. 2 in singles, she's already a big star who transcends her sport and was a flag bearer alongside LeBron James at the Paris Olympics, has a signature shoe, is featured on Wheaties boxes and so much more.

And yet, back in New York for Monday's start of the U.S. Open, which she won a year ago for her first major trophy — the first American teen to do so since Serena Williams in 1999 — Gauff still occasionally might sound like someone who deals with impostor syndrome.

Put simply: She does not quite understand what all the fuss is about.

"I just thought I was nobody," Gauff said. "The whole flag bearer thing is still mind-blowing to me. Like, 'Why am I up there?'"

As she wandered around the athletes village, Gauff was often stopped by other Olympians hoping they could pose with her for a photo.

"I'm like, 'Can I get a selfie with you, too?' I just wasn't

really expecting this," the Floridian said. "Maybe I just don't get it."

When she was asked less than a month ago for her thoughts on the U.S. Open and its importance to her still-nascent career, Gauff replied: "It hasn't been on my mind."

Gauff said she was instead focused on the 2024 Games and soaking up that experience fully.

"She's really embraced her star power, kind of," said Jessica Pegula, a top-10 singles player and Gauff's frequent doubles partner, "but at the same time, she's like a kid."

The off-court aspects of Gauff's Olympics debut were a huge success: meeting James, collecting pins, the college-style getting to know folks of various backgrounds, chatting at breakfast with athletes such as 100-meter dash gold medalist Noah Lyles.

"He's probably the most confident (athlete) I ever met in my life," Gauff said, "other than maybe Serena."

The on-court results in France? Not as gratifying.

Gauff exited in the third round of singles after arguing

with the chair umpire over a late call, then lost her second match in both women's doubles and mixed doubles.

"I'll try to take the positive out of it," Gauff said, "and do better next time."

With her title defense — a term she says she doesn't love — about to begin, Gauff is going through a rough stretch of results.

She was eliminated in the fourth round at Wimbledon while visibly upset at her coach, Brad Gilbert. After the struggles at the Olympics, she moved to the hard courts to prepare for New York and that did not go well: Gauff lost her second match in Toronto and her first in Cincinnati.

Hardly the ideal buildup she enjoyed in 2023 by winning 11 of 12 matches and titles at Washington and Cincinnati before arriving at the U.S. Open for her star-making turn.

"She's getting constant attention, all the time, and that's a lot to deal with," said Emma Navarro, who beat Gauff at Wimbledon and was her U.S. teammate at the Olympics. "I have a lot of respect for her and how she handles that."

It will be fascinating to see how Gauff does when the lights come on in Arthur Ashe Stadium. Her initial opponent is Varvara Gracheva, who lost in the first round the past two years in New York.

"You just don't know — you don't consciously know — the expectations that creep into your cells in your body," said Chris Evert, a six-time U.S. Open champion and now an ESPN analyst. "Everybody, from Day 1, has thought about Coco: 'She's the next Serena Williams. She's going to be the next one that dominates.' That stays with you for a long time."

There will be other story lines of interest, from top-ranked Jannik Sinner's recent doping case to defending champion Novak Djokovic's bid for a 25th Grand Slam title to Iga Swiatek and Aryna Sabalenka vying for a second major championship of 2024.

Gauff could face the most scrutiny of anyone.

"I have a lot more aspirations obviously than just winning one (major)," she said. "I think the start of one just gives you a taste and gives you the belief that you can do it again."

Tomlin still not ready to name Steelers' starting QB

Associated Press

DETROIT — Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin still isn't ready to say who his starting quarterback will be when the season begins.

Russell Wilson and Justin Fields led touchdown drives for the Steelers, who lost 24-17 to the Detroit Lions on Saturday in the preseason finale for both teams.

Jermar Jefferson rushed for two touchdowns for the Lions, including a go-ahead, 7-yard run in the fourth quarter.

"It didn't start pretty, but we finished strong," Detroit coach Dan Campbell said.

Tomlin has said repeatedly that Wilson is in the "pole position" for the starting job, and the 35-year-old veteran didn't do anything in Detroit that would suggest he won't take the first snap when the season kicks off

in two weeks. But Tomlin wouldn't budge.

"We'll make a decision at the end of our work week," he said.

Wilson completed both of his pass attempts, including a 32-yard toss to George Pickens. Two plays later, Cordarrelle Patterson scored on a 31-yard run to cap the game-opening possession.

Wilson spent the rest of the game on the sideline while Fields was given three drives to show what he could do. His performance was uneven.

Fields converted a third down with a run and threw a 22-yard pass to MyCole Pruitt on consecutive plays, setting up La'Mical Perine's 1-yard touchdown run.

In the previous two preseason games, neither quarterback led Pittsburgh to a touchdown.

"We've had a really great training camp and OTAs and we finally put it on the field," Wilson said.

Fields' second possession ended when he was looking to the right in the shotgun formation as the ball was snapped. He recovered the fumble but was sacked. His third possession ended when he took another sack. Fields finished 3-for-4 for 40 yards and ran twice for 4 yards.

The Steelers chose to start over at quarterback this season after Kenny Pickett, Mason Rudolph and Mitchell Trubisky each got starts for a team that went 10-7 and lost to Buffalo in a wild-card game.

Just days apart in March, Pittsburgh signed Wilson after he was released by Denver and acquired Fields in a trade with Chicago.

Blue Jays' Francis loses no-hitter in 9th

Associated Press

TORONTO — Bowden Francis struck out a career-high 12 in a dominant performance for the Toronto Blue Jays, carrying a no-hitter into the ninth inning of a 3-1 victory over the Los Angeles Angels on Saturday.

Francis (7-3) walked three and hit a batter in his third consecutive win. He threw a career-high 117 pitches, 84 for strikes.

"It was his until he gave up a hit," Toronto manager John Schneider said.

Francis' no-hit bid ended when Taylor Ward drove a 3-2 fastball deep to center for a leadoff homer in the ninth. It was Ward's 17th homer of the season.

"I wasn't scared at all," Francis said. "I was just trying to attack. It was just one of those things that didn't go my way, but I felt like I was in attack mode and he put a good swing on it."

The crowd of 34,011 then saluted Francis with a standing ovation when he was replaced by right-hander Chad Green, who earned his 14th save in 14 chances.

Francis said he was touched by the reaction as he exited.

"That was huge," he said. "I have chills now. The crowd here is one of the best."

It was the longest no-hit bid by a Blue Jays pitcher since Brandon Morrow threw 8 $\frac{2}{3}$ hitless innings against Tampa Bay on August 8, 2010. Dave Stieb pitched the only no-hitter in franchise history at Cleveland on Sept. 2, 1990.

"You've got to tip your hat to the kid, he almost threw a no-hitter but I'm glad he didn't," Angels manager Ron Washington said. "We couldn't center him."

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. hit his 27th homer as the Blue Jays won their sixth straight meeting with the Angels.

Rockies 9, Yankees 2: Jake

Cave had four hits and three RBIs and fell a triple shy of hitting for the cycle as visiting Colorado beat New York.

Nolan Jones also drove in three runs as the Rockies snapped a six-game road losing streak and avoided their 50th road loss.

Orioles 3, Astros 2: Jackson Holliday hit a three-run double in the sixth inning — host Baltimore's second big hit with the bases loaded in less than 24 hours — and it rallied past Houston.

Colton Cowser kept the decisive rally going by hustling to first for an infield single, and after Tayler Scott relieved Framber Valdez (13-6), Holliday came up as a pinch hitter and snapped a 0-for-20 slide by lining the first pitch to the gap in right-center field.

Cubs 14, Marlins 2: Seiya Suzuki homered twice and tripled, Shota Imanaga threw seven innings of two-run ball and visiting Chicago beat Miami.

Miguel Amaya had three hits and a walk. The Cubs' catcher is 8-for-12 over his last three games. Patrick Wisdom also homered for Chicago, which finished with 17 hits.

Diamondbacks 4, Red Sox 1: Zac Gallen (10-6) pitched six innings of two-hit ball, and Eugenio Suárez hit a two-run double off the Green Monster to help visiting Arizona beat Boston for its fifth straight victory.

The Diamondbacks have won 23 of their last 29 games to take hold of the top NL wild-card spot. They finished the day three games behind the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL West.

Brewers 9, Athletics 5: Jake Bauers hit a home run and scored three times as visiting Milwaukee beat Oakland.

Willy Adames, Rhys Hoskins and Garrett Mitchell had two hits apiece as the Brewers won their second straight in their final trip to the Coliseum.

Giants 4, Mariners 3: Mike

Yastrzemski homered among his three hits, and visiting San Francisco survived a wild outing by starter Blake Snell to beat Seattle.

Snell walked five batters in the second inning, two with the bases loaded, and issued a season-worst six walks overall. He was pulled after three innings in which he gave up two runs on no hits and threw 74 pitches, 42 for strikes. Spencer Bivens (3-1) worked three efficient innings of scoreless relief, and the fifth Giants pitcher, Ryan Walker, handled the ninth for his third save.

Reds 10, Pirates 2: Elly De La Cruz had three hits and drove in a pair of runs as visiting Cincinnati breezed past sloppy Pittsburgh.

Jonathan India and TJ Friedl added two hits apiece for the Reds, who beat the Pirates for just the third time in nine meetings this season.

Twins 6, Cardinals 0: Pablo López pitched seven innings, Trevor Larnach hit two homers and host Minnesota beat St. Louis.

López (12-8) gave up four hits, struck out nine and walked one while extending his scoreless streak to 13 innings. He has pitched at least six innings in six of his last seven starts, posting a 2.25 ERA with 40 strikeouts in 44 innings over that span.

Guardians 13, Rangers 5: Jhonkensy Noel hit a three-run homer and José Ramírez and Josh Naylor had back-to-back solo shots as AL Central-leading Cleveland routed visiting Texas.

The Guardians plated 11 consecutive runs after falling behind 1-0 in the first and won for just the seventh time in their last 20 games. Cleveland entered the evening one game ahead of Kansas City and two in front of Minnesota in the division.

Phillies 11, Royals 2: J.T. Realmuto hit a pair of three-

run homers and Ranger Suárez (11-5) pitched five innings of one-run ball in his return from the injured list to lead visiting Philadelphia past Kansas City.

Realmuto, who had a career-high seven RBIs, had his first multi-homer game since Sep. 14, 2022.

Tigers 13, White Sox 4: Tarik Skubal earned his major league-leading 15th win, and visiting Detroit handed Chicago its 99th loss.

Matt Vierling, Colt Keith and Zach McKinstry homered for Detroit, which won for the third time in four games. Keith and Jake Rogers each had three RBIs, and Vierling scored three times.

Braves 4, Nationals 2: Travis d'Arnaud had a tiebreaking RBI single in the sixth inning in his first game in a week, and host Atlanta beat Washington for its sixth win in seven games.

Orlando Arcia and Ramón Laureano hit solo home runs, and Whit Merrifield had two hits, two walks and scored a run for the Braves.

Mets 7, Padres 1: Francisco Lindor hit a two-out grand slam in the fourth inning, two batters after Manny Machado committed an error, and added a lead-off shot in the seventh to carry visiting New York to a win against San Diego.

Harrison Bader also connected for the Mets, who have won two of the first three games in this four-game series between NL playoff contenders.

Rays 9, Dodgers 8 (10): José Caballero hit a tiebreaking two-run homer off Joe Kelly in the 10th inning after visiting Tampa Bay blew a 4-0 lead in the first as it rallied past Los Angeles.

Jonny DeLuca began the 10th as the designated runner at second, took third on Josh Lowe's groundout and scored on Caballero's shot to left-center off Kelly (1-1).