

Navy programs help recruiting rebound

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Navy will meet its goal to sign up 40,600 recruits by the end of September thanks to several new recruiting programs, but the crush of last-minute enlistments means it won't be able to get them all through boot camp by next month.

Navy Vice Adm. Rick Cheeseman said the service will fall about 5,000 sailors short of its target to get all of the recruits into the 10-week training course at Great Lakes, Ill., by the end of the fiscal year. While they have signed initial contracts, many are months away from getting into boot camp or into the fleet.

The Navy hasn't been able to hit its total recruiting goal now for two years in a row. And those gaps are hurting its ability to fully staff its warships. The Navy is

short about 22,000 sailors to fill billets on ships, and the vast majority of those — about 20,000 — are in the lowest ranks.

"We have not gotten to the point where we can't do things — I want to make sure that's clear," Cheeseman said in an interview with The Associated Press. "We're all working together to make sure our ships are ready to do the things we ask them to do."

All of the military services have struggled in the past several years to attract recruits in a tight job market, where companies are willing to pay more and provide good benefits without the demands of service and war-fighting. It is also difficult to find young people who can meet the military's physical, mental and moral standards, which have strict limits on drug use and criminal convictions.

Last year, for example, the Navy, Army and Air Force all failed to meet their recruitment goals, with the Navy falling short by about 6,000. The Marine Corps and tiny Space Force have consistently met their targets. This fall, all but the Navy are on track to make their numbers and have largely rebounded without some of the more dramatic steps the Navy has taken, including accepting recruits with very low test scores.

The latest surge in Navy recruiting has given Cheeseman and other leaders optimism that the changes made to bring in more sailors are beginning to work. And he predicts full success next year.

"We have rebounded so significantly over the last four to five months, so that I really have phasing problems," Cheeseman

said. "Because we were short October through February, we're trying to push all these people through at the end."

As a result, he said, boot camp is operating at capacity, and he'll only be able to get about 35,500 through by the end of September.

One of the key recruiting changes was the Navy's decision in December 2022 to greatly expand its pool of applicants by wooing young adults with very low test scores, then bring in recruits who don't have high school diplomas or a GED — both rare steps that the other services greatly limit or avoid.

Cheeseman said that roughly 17% of its recruits this year are so-called category 4 — the lowest end of the test scale. That percentage is much higher than the military norm.

Navy proposal would sideline civilian-crewed ships

BY ALISON BATH

Stars and Stripes

A Navy proposal to put more than a dozen support ships out of service to ease a crippling shortage of qualified civilian mariners could damage U.S. efforts to counter its competitors in Africa and the Middle East, naval analysts say.

The plan calls for putting the expeditionary sea bases USS Hershel "Woody" Williams and USS Lewis B. Puller, along with 15 other Military Sealift Command support ships, on a lengthy hiatus so the civilian crews staffing them can be retasked.

On Monday, the Navy said it would be inappropriate to comment on the plan given a final decision was pending. USNI News reported last week that Military Sealift wants to sideline 17 vessels

in all, citing unidentified officials familiar with the plans.

Sidelineing the ships would help the service better cope with a civilian mariner recruiting and retention problem that experts have likened to a national disaster threatening America's ability to maintain sea power.

Based in Bahrain, Puller has supported missions to disrupt drug and weapons trafficking in the Middle East, among other tasks, as part of the Navy's work to counter Iranian efforts to arm Houthis militants in Yemen.

Williams, assigned to U.S. Africa Command, is one of the few U.S. military vessels to almost continually transit African waters, a continent considered vital to American security interests.

The ship is part of collective U.S. efforts to build and sustain

relationships in Africa, where Chinese interest in building a naval port on the Atlantic Ocean and growing Russian military influence come into play.

"You have to be on the scene where you want to win friends and influence people," said James Holmes, chair of the maritime strategy program at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. "If China is on the scene, it's competing, and it's the only one competing if we're not there. We lose by default."

Absence of the two sea bases also would be a blow to U.S. deterrence efforts, said Steven Wills, a retired Navy officer and research scientist at the Arlington, Va.-based think tank CNA.

He pointed out that the ships also work as evacuation platforms when conventional U.S. amphib-

ious warfare forces aren't available.

For example, Williams became the primary evacuation platform for Americans during the 2023 military coup in Sudan, he said.

In a world where the U.S. Navy cannot guarantee consistent amphibious ready group presence in the Mediterranean and Red Sea/Persian Gulf region, the (expeditionary sea bases) have proven to be valuable stand-in ships and should not be sidelined, Wills said.

The ships in the proposal include two replenishment vessels, an oiler and 12 expeditionary fast transports that, along with Williams and Puller, would be placed into an extended maintenance period. It wasn't clear how long that would be.

IG: Biden heard pushback to pier in Gaza

The Washington Post

President Joe Biden approved the plan for delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza via a floating military pier despite warnings from within the U.S. government that rough waves could pose significant challenges and objections from officials who feared the operation would detract from a diplomatic push to compel Israel to open additional land routes into the war zone, according to an inspector general report published Tuesday.

The watchdog for the U.S. Agency for International Development, which oversees Washington's humanitarian work abroad, cited various "external factors" that it said impaired the agency's effort to distribute food and other supplies brought to Gaza over the pier. Among them, according to the report, were the security requirements imposed by the Pentagon to protect U.S. military personnel working aboard the structure just offshore.

"Multiple USAID staff expressed concerns" that the Biden administration's focus on the pier undercut the agency's advocacy

for opening more land crossings — an approach, the report said, deemed "more efficient and proven."

"Once the President issued the directive," the report states, "the Agency's focus was to use [the pier] as effectively as possible."

The pier was attached to Gaza's coastline in May amid rising concerns of famine that prompted the Pentagon to begin airdropping food into Gaza. But from the start, the mission was dogged by logistical and security setbacks, including rough seas that broke apart the structure, looting of aid trucks on land and a persistent logjam moving food from a staging area ashore due to worries that Israeli bombardment would kill the workers tasked with distributing it. The operation was halted for good last month.

The report is likely to embolden Biden's critics who have questioned why he put U.S. troops in harm's way for a mission that could have been avoided if he had successfully persuaded Israeli officials to curtail their blockade on Gaza established in October after Hamas militants led the deadly

cross-border attack that triggered the war.

A National Security Council spokesman, Sean Savett, said in a statement after the report's publication that the pier was "part of a comprehensive U.S.-led response to the dire humanitarian situation in northern Gaza," one that also included food deliveries made through border crossings and via airdrop.

"From the beginning, we said this would not be easy," Savett said. "We were honest and transparent about the challenges. But the bottom line is that ... the United States has left no stone unturned in our efforts to get more aid in, and the pier played a key role at a critical time in advancing that goal."

Sabrina Singh, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said the Pentagon is aware of the report. The pier, she said, "achieved its goal of providing an additive means of delivering high volumes of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza."

A senior administration official said there was "consistent interagency coordination and communication about the pier" as plans

took shape and that internal concerns were taken into account. Like some others interviewed for this story, the official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Critics have cast the pier project as a national embarrassment. "The only miracle is that this doomed-from-the-start operation did not cost any American lives," Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said earlier this summer as the mission faced one setback after another.

Acting at Biden's direction, USAID requested Defense Department support for a 90-day operation that cost roughly \$230 million, the report said. The pier, ferried to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea by U.S. Army vessels, was attached to the Gaza coast May 16, but within days it broke apart in rough waves, causing about \$22 million in damage and knocking it offline. U.S. troops repaired and reattached the pier days later but faced continued unpredictability about when weather would allow for aid deliveries.

Israel launches large military operation in West Bank

Associated Press

AL-FARAA REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank — Israel launched a large-scale military operation in the occupied West Bank overnight and into Wednesday, with its forces killing at least 10 Palestinian militants and sealing off the volatile city of Jenin.

Israel has carried out near-daily raids in the West Bank since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the ongoing war there. Israel says it is rooting out militants to prevent attacks on its citizens, while Palestinians in the West Bank fear it intends to broaden the war and forcibly displace more of them.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman, said "large forces" had entered Jenin, long a militant stronghold, as well as Tulkarem and the Al-Faraa refugee camp dating back to the 1948 Mideast war, all in the northern West Bank.

He said Israeli forces killed nine militants, including three in an airstrike in Tulkarem and four in an airstrike in Al-Faraa. He said another five suspected militants were arrested, and that the raids were the first stage of an even larger operation.

Hamas announced that 10 of its fighters had been killed in the West Bank on Wednesday. Pales-

tinian militant groups said they were exchanging fire with Israeli troops.

The governor of Jenin, Kamal Abu al-Rub, said on Palestinian radio that Israeli forces had surrounded the city, blocking exit and entry points and access to hospitals, and ripping up infrastructure in the camp.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in the West Bank said Israeli forces had blocked the roads leading to a hospital with dirt barriers and surrounded other medical facilities in Jenin. Shoshani said the military was trying to prevent militants from taking shelter in hospitals.

An Associated Press reporter saw army vehicles blocking all the entrances to Al-Faraa camp. Military jeeps and bulldozers entered the camp and soldiers were seen patrolling its alleyways by foot. Shots rang out every few minutes.

Hamas called on Palestinians in the West Bank to rise up, calling the raids part of a larger plan to expand the war in Gaza and blaming the escalation on U.S. support for Israel. The militant group called on security forces loyal to the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which cooperate with Israel, to "join the sacred battle of our people."

AFN app set to air entire NFL season for free overseas

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

Service members, military civilians and their families stationed overseas who live and breathe NFL football will get to see every moment of the 2024 season all the way to the Super Bowl on American Forces Network's free video-on-demand app.

Coverage on AFN Now will be a combination of livestreaming and previously recorded games. And while die-hard fans will probably already know the outcome of tape-delayed broadcasts, all 272 regular-season matchups and the entire post-season will be shown.

Building on the app's first full season of NFL coverage in 2023, AFN sought to expand access to its most popular content, said Kim Antos, the network's chief of digital platforms.

"Our team said, 'I think we could actually get every game, every touchdown, every moment of the whole season,'" she said.

For die-hard NFL fans wanting more action, the app is getting ready to roll out additional streaming content provided by the league.

"We were able to work with them on obtaining their NFL Channel," Antos said.

Most programming on the NFL Channel, which is owned by the league, includes archived games and game footage, Antos said.

"If you're a football fan, and you want to watch football, it is available to you 24/7," she said.

The 2024 NFL season kicks off Sept. 5 when the Baltimore Ravens host the reigning Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs. That game will air live

on one of AFN's three satellite sports channels and will also stream live on the app.

As they do every year, AFN sports programmers select NFL matchups to air live on AFN Sports, AFN Sports 2 and AFN Prime, said Regina Zhu, the network's chief of television programming.

Broadcast decisions are usually made the week of the game based on team standings, rivalries and other factors, she said.

"Are we going to put the Jacksonville Jaguars up against, say, the Chicago Bears, if they're playing so well this year?" she said. "We're looking at ... viewer draw, what's the most sizzle."

Live or tape-delay games on AFN television will be simulcast on the app, Antos said. Unlike last year, the app will pick up games not shown on AFN television and make them available on demand, as an app-only game, about 24 to 48 hours after the contest ends, she said.

Those games will be available for seven days before the content is refreshed.

"Most of these games are being played at hours that are not convenient to our audience," she said. "The ability to make that available when they wake up or when they're able to watch is really what we're excited about."

The app will stream the same number of college football games this year, but depending on how the expanded NFL coverage goes, that could change in the future, Antos said.

AFN Now is available free to all Defense Department personnel and their families assigned overseas.

Russian missile strikes Zelenskyy's home city

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — A Russian missile slammed into Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's home city on Wednesday, local authorities said, just as Kryvyi Rih was observing an official day of mourning for an attack the previous day that killed four civilians at a hotel.

The latest attack on the city struck civilian infrastructure, wounding eight people, local administration head Oleksandr Vilkul said on social media.

Tuesday's attack was part of a barrage of dozens of missiles and drones across Ukraine that

Russia launched for a second consecutive day.

"When Kryvyi Rih is in mourning, the enemy attacks again. And it once again aims at civilians," regional head Serhii Lysak said Wednesday.

Russia stepped up its bombing of Ukraine on Monday, firing more than 100 missiles and a similar number of drones in its biggest military onslaught in weeks.

The intensified bombing campaign coincided with what could prove to be a decisive period of the war, which Russia launched on Feb. 24, 2022.

Pa. plant boosts production of key shell used by Ukraine

Associated Press

SCRANTON, Pa. — A Pennsylvania ammunition plant that makes a key artillery shell in Ukraine's fight against Russia has managed to boost production by 50% to meet surging demand, with more capacity set to come on line.

Government officials revealed the increase in production this week as they showcased the historic factory's ongoing, \$400 million modernization.

The Scranton Army Ammunition Plant cuts and forges 2,000-pound bars of steel into 155 mm howitzer rounds that are shipped to Iowa to be packed with explosives and fitted with fuses. From there, many make their way to the fight in Ukraine, where they are highly sought.

The Scranton plant, along with two other ammunition plants in nearby Wilkes-Barre, recently increased production from 24,000 rounds per month to 36,000 rounds per month. Three new production lines are under development that will allow the Scranton facility to

churn out even more of the critical munitions, the factory's top official said.

"Right now we're concentrating on 155. That's pretty much all we're concentrating on," Richard Hansen, the Army commander's representative at the plant, said Tuesday while giving news outlets a tour of the sprawling factory grounds. "We're working really hard to ensure that we achieve the goal that the Pentagon has established."

The U.S. has sent more than 3 million 155 mm artillery rounds to Ukraine since Russia invaded the country in 2022, according to government figures. This month the White House announced another \$125 million in weapons to assist Ukraine.

The Scranton factory began life as a locomotive repair shop at the beginning of the 20th century before the Army bought it and converted it into a production facility for large-caliber artillery for the Korean War. It's been operated by General Dynamics since 2006 under contract with the U.S. government, which owns the plant.

New indictment filed in Trump Jan. 6 case

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Special counsel Jack Smith filed a new indictment Tuesday against Donald Trump over his efforts to undo the 2020 presidential election that keeps the same criminal charges but narrows the allegations against him following a Supreme Court opinion that conferred broad immunity on former presidents.

The new indictment removes a section of the indictment that had accused Trump of trying to use the law enforcement powers of the Justice Department to overturn his election loss, an area of conduct for which the Supreme Court, in a 6-3 opinion last month, said that Trump was absolutely immune from prosecution.

The stripped-down criminal case represents a first effort by prosecutors to comply with a Supreme Court opinion that made all but certain the Republican presidential nominee won't face trial before the November election in the case alleging he tried to thwart the peaceful transfer of power.

It comes days before prosecutors and defense lawyers are expected to tell the judge overseeing the case how they want to proceed in light of the Supreme Court's ruling, which said presidents are presumptively immune from prosecution for official White House acts. The high court sent the case back to U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who now must analyze which allegations in the indictment were

unofficial actions — or those taken in Trump's private capacity — that can proceed to trial.

Prosecutors and Trump's legal team will be back in court next week for the first hearing in front of Chutkan in months, given that the case had been effectively frozen since last December as Trump's immunity appeal worked its way through the justice system.

In a statement on his Truth Social platform, Trump called the new indictment "an act of desperation" and an "effort to resurrect a 'dead' Witch Hunt." He said the new case has "all the problems of the old Indictment, and should be dismissed IMMEDIATELY."

The special counsel's office said the updated indictment,

filed in federal court in Washington, was issued by a grand jury that had not previously heard evidence in the case. It said in a statement the indictment "reflects the Government's efforts to respect and implement the Supreme Court's holdings and remand instructions."

The new indictment does away with references to allegations that could be deemed as official acts for which Trump is entitled to immunity in light of the Supreme Court's ruling. That includes allegations that Trump tried to enlist the Justice Department in his failed effort to undo his election loss, including by conducting sham investigations and telling states — incorrectly — that significant fraud had been detected.

Harris victory would defy long history of VP losses

Associated Press

NEW YORK — As Vice President Kamala Harris begins her fall campaign for the White House, she can look to history and hope for better luck than others in her position who have tried the same.

Since 1836, only one sitting vice president, George H.W. Bush in 1988, has been elected to the White House. Among those who tried and failed were Richard Nixon in 1960, Hubert Humphrey in 1968 and Al Gore in 2000.

All three lost in narrow elections shaped by issues ranging from war and scandal to crime and the subtleties of televised debates.

But two other factors proved crucial for each vice president: whether the incumbent president was well-liked and whether the president and vice president enjoyed a productive relationship.

"You really do want those elements to come together,"

says Julian Zelizer, a professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University. "If the person the vice president is working for is popular, that means people like what he's doing and you can gain from that. And you need to have the two principals working together."

In 1988, Bush easily defeated Democrat Michael Dukakis, the Massachusetts governor whom Republicans labeled as ineffectual and out of touch. Bush was otherwise helped by a solid economy, the easing of Cold War tensions and some rare luck for a vice president.

President Ronald Reagan's approval ratings rose through much of the year after falling sharply in the wake of the 1986-87 Iran-Contra scandal, and Reagan and Bush worked well together during the campaign.

Reagan openly backed his vice president, who had run against him in the 1980 primaries.

NH resident dies after testing positive for mosquito infection

Associated Press

A New Hampshire resident infected with the mosquito-borne eastern equine encephalitis virus has died, state health authorities said.

The Hampstead resident's infection was the first in the state in a decade, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services said Tuesday. The resident, whom the department only identified as an adult, had been hospitalized due to severe central nervous system symptoms, the department said.

About a third of people who develop encephalitis from the virus die from the infection, and survivors can suffer lifelong mental and physical disabilities. There is no vaccine or antiviral treatment available for infections, which can cause flu-like symptoms and lead to severe neurological disease along with inflammation of the brain and membranes around the spinal cord.

"When it does cause an in-

fection, it is very, very severe. Although it's a very rare infection, we have no treatment for it," said Dr. Richard Ellison, immunologist and infectious disease specialist at University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center. "Once someone gets it, it's just — all we can do is provide supportive care, and it can kill people."

Nationally, the burden of eastern equine encephalitis can vary from year to year. There are typically about 11 human cases in the United States per year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There were seven cases nationally last year, but more than 30 in 2019, which was a historically bad year in which at least a dozen patients died, according to federal data.

This year, human infections have been confirmed in New Jersey, Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Vermont as well as New Hampshire, according to the CDC.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

State trooper among 11 arrested in sex sting

AL MONTGOMERY — An Alabama state trooper was among those arrested in an undercover sting operation aimed at catching people who were intending to have sex with minors, law enforcement officials said Monday.

The Montgomery County sheriff's office said in a Monday news conference that 11 men were arrested in the sting operation.

Law enforcement officers said the men had communicated in chat rooms with a decoy they believed to be a minor and traveled to a hotel to have sex with the "minor." They were instead met by law enforcement officers and arrested.

The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said in a statement Monday that Ryan Rhodes, a senior trooper, resigned Friday following his arrest. The sheriff's office confirmed that Rhodes was among those arrested early Friday morning.

Rhodes, 26, was charged with electronic solicitation of a child, traveling to meet a child for an unlawful sex act and resisting arrest.

Progress made in foam spill at former Navy base

ME BRUNSWICK — Firefighting foam in a hangar at Brunswick Executive Airport has been removed, and mitigation is underway on four retention ponds following Maine's biggest accidental spill of the fire suppressant on record, officials said Monday.

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention advised the public not to consume or to limit consumption of freshwater fish from four nearby bodies of water following the accidental discharge of firefighting foam containing harmful chemicals known as PFAS.

An investigation is underway into why a fire suppression system discharged Aug. 19 in Hangar 4, releasing 1,450 gallons of firefighting foam concentrate mixed with 50,000 gallons of water at the former Navy base. Federal records show the spill is the biggest accidental discharge in Maine since its recordkeeping began in the 1990s.

Judge: Turn over copies of Wu-Tang Clan album

NY NEW YORK — Martin Shkreli, once dubbed "Pharma Bro" for boosting the price of a life-saving drug, was ordered by a federal judge Monday to turn over all copies of Wu-Tang Clan's unreleased "Once Upon a Time in Shaolin" album to his lawyers by Friday.

Judge Pamela K. Chen in Brooklyn wrote that Shkreli must produce all copies of what is sometimes referred to as the world's rarest album and report the names of anyone he distributed the music to by Sept. 30, along with any revenues he received from it.

In June, Shkreli was sued by a cryptocurrency collective that bought the only known copy of the album for \$4.75 million. The collective, PleasrDAO, accused Shkreli of retaining digital copies of the album in violation of their deal and disseminating

them among his social media followers.

Golf club agrees to repay pandemic loan

MI RICHLAND — A golf club in southwestern Michigan has agreed to pay \$440,000 to settle allegations that it wrongly obtained a loan through a federal program during the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities said Monday.

Gull Lake Country Club, near Richland in Kalamazoo County, was not eligible for a loan, U.S. Attorney Mark Totten said.

A whistleblower filed a lawsuit against the club, and the federal government joined the case. The lawsuit names other Michigan golf clubs. Most documents in the case are sealed in federal court in Grand Rapids.

A phone message seeking comment from the Gull Lake club wasn't immediately returned.

Law that kicked clinics off Medicaid challenged

MO COLUMBIA — Missouri Planned Parenthoods filed legal challenges Monday against a new law that kicked the organizations off the federal Medicaid health insurance program.

Planned Parenthood Great Plains and Planned Parenthood Great Rivers said they are filing complaints with the state's Administrative Hearing Commission, which functions as a court to hear disputes between Missouri government and private organizations.

At issue is a new law banning Medicaid funding from going to Planned Parenthood, a move

Republicans have tried for years in a state where almost all abortions are banned and the procedure is not covered by Medicaid.

The law, signed by Gov. Mike Parson in May, aims to make it illegal for Missouri's Medicaid program to reimburse Planned Parenthood for health care services to low-income patients, such as pap smears and cancer screenings.

LA to pay millions over affordable housing issue

CA LOS ANGELES — The city of Los Angeles will pay \$38.2 million to settle a 2017 lawsuit after "falsely" stating on federal documents that its multifamily affordable housing units built with federal funds were accessible for people with disabilities.

The complaint was filed by the U.S. Department of Justice on behalf of a Los Angeles resident, Mei Ling, who uses a wheelchair and the Fair Housing Council of San Fernando Valley, a disability rights advocacy group. Their share of the settlement has not been determined.

Ling, 57, has used a wheelchair since January 2006 — and has either been homeless or in housing without the accessibility features, the lawsuit said.

It alleged that the city of LA did not make its multifamily affordable housing options accessible to those with disabilities for at least six years. Some issues were slopes that were too steep, counters that were too high and entryways that did not permit wheelchair access, officials said.

— From wire reports

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Boise, Liberty, UTSA top Group of Five

Associated Press

Boise State has won 83 of 100 Mountain West games and five championships since joining the conference in 2011, and the stage is set for the Broncos to take the next step.

The expansion of the College Football Playoff guarantees the Group of Five will be included in the 12-team field. It's opportunity that's ratcheted up the hype surrounding the defending Mountain West champion and preseason favorite.

"There's a lot of great excitement and buzz and our players deserve that," coach Spencer Danielson said, "but we've got to continue to earn it every single day."

The 2021 Cincinnati Bearcats are the only Group of Five team to make the playoff since its inaugural 2014 season. Beginning this year, spots are reserved for the five highest-ranked conference champions.

With the demise of the Pac-12, there are now four power conferences. That leaves the winner of the American Athletic, Conference USA, Mid-American, Mountain West or Sun Belt to receive an automatic bid.

Boise State brings back one of

the country's most dynamic players in Ashton Jeanty, the MWC offensive player of the year after leading the nation with 159.67 yards per game from scrimmage. Defensive end Ahmed Hassanein had 12.5 sacks.

Danielson on Sunday named Maddux Madsen his starting quarterback. Madsen appeared in nine games as a backup before a season-ending knee injury in November. He beat out Malachi Nelson, who transferred from Southern California and was one of the top national recruits in 2023.

The Broncos are three spots out of the preseason Associated Press Top 25 and the highest ranked Group of Five team in the ESPN power index. They have a big opportunity at No. 3 Oregon on Sept. 7, and they also have games against Washington State and Oregon State as part of the scheduling deal between the MWC and Pac-12 holdovers.

Liberty: The defending Conference USA champion Flames were unbeaten last season until their bowl loss to Oregon, and they could be just as good with the return of star quarterback Kaidon Salter and running back

Quinton Cooley.

A prolific offense that put up 38 points and 500 yards per game masked a defense that was, at best, average. The Flames gave up 31 touchdown passes and 49 passes of 20 yards or longer, both among the most in the Bowl Subdivision.

UTSA: The Roadrunners have won nine games three straight seasons to become one of the top Group of Five programs under Jeff Traylor. They bring back 16 starters from the team that went 9-4 overall and 7-1 in its first season in the American Athletic Conference.

Quarterback Frank Harris wrapped up his seven-year college career — yes, seven years — so the competition between Owen McCown and Eddie Lee Marburger will be closely watched.

Memphis: The Tigers are coming off a 10-win season and are the AAC favorite with a bevy of experience on both sides of the ball.

Fourth-year starting quarterback Seth Henigan put up some of the best numbers in the FBS, throwing for 3,883 yards and 32 touchdowns and averaging 319.8 yards per game in total of-

fense. His top four targets are back, led by 1,000-yard receiver Roc Taylor. LB Chandler Martin's 17 tackles for loss ranked second in the conference.

Appalachian State: The Mountaineers have the Sun Belt Conference preseason offensive player of the year in quarterback Joey Aguilar and the core of a defense that intercepted 15 passes.

Aguilar passed for 33 touchdowns, including 10 to returning receiver Kaedin Robinson. Kanye Roberts, who averaged 5.7 yards per carry and scored five TDs, is the top returning running back following Nate Noel's transfer to Missouri.

Tulane: Tulane made a fast ascent in the AAC by going 23-5 the last two years under Willie Fritz, now at Houston. The Green Wave don't expect to regress under Jon Sumrall, the ex-Tulane assistant who went 23-4 the last two years at Troy.

The biggest question is quarterback, where Oregon transfer Ty Thompson is battling returning backup Kai Horton. Maki Hughes returns after rushing for a league-high 1,378 yards, and so do the team's top three tacklers.

Former first-round picks Toney, Farley cut by teams

Associated Press

Kansas City receiver Kadarius Toney and Tennessee cornerback Caleb Farley, both first-round picks in the 2021 NFL Draft, were among the cuts Tuesday as teams trimmed their rosters for the regular season.

Toney, who figured to be on the roster bubble, was on his second team since the New York Giants drafted him 20th overall three years ago. The Titans took Farley two picks later.

Teams had to cut their rosters to 53 players from the training camp maximum of 90. Toney,

Farley and hundreds of others will be eligible to return on practice squads that allow up to 17 players, including a spot allocated for the International Player Pathway Program.

Miami receiver Odell Beckham Jr. will begin the season on the physically unable to perform list, meaning he'll miss at least the first four games. Beckham has not seen the field with the Dolphins since signing a one-year contract in May.

San Francisco's initial roster is missing a big piece with hold-out All-Pro left tackle Trent Williams remaining on the reserve/

did not report list as he seeks a new deal. Star receiver Brandon Aiyuk is on the roster but has refused to practice unless he gets a new contract or is traded.

Injuries shortened both of Toney's first two seasons, and he was traded to the Chiefs during his second year with the Giants. The 25-year-old never displayed his dynamic playmaking skills consistently, but did have a big role in the first of the two Super Bowl rings he got with the Chiefs.

The Titans drafted Farley out of Virginia Tech after he was the

first player from a major college to opt out of the 2020 season because of the pandemic. Farley was drafted weeks after a second surgery to repair a back injury from college.

Farley started just twice as injuries limited him to 12 games over his first two seasons. He had another back procedure in 2023.

The 25-year-old never played last season.

Receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster was cut by the Chiefs after re-signing with them following his release by the Patriots this month.

Osaka earns first top-10 win in 4 years

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A year ago, still on maternity leave and still unsure when she would play elite tennis again, Naomi Osaka visited the U.S. Open to appear with Michael Phelps for a discussion about mental health. While at the site, she sat in the stands to watch one of Coco Gauff's matches.

Osaka also already was thinking about being back on a court at Flushing Meadows, so much so that she was pondering what she might want to wear to compete. And there she was Tuesday at Louis Armstrong Stadium, overpowering No. 10 seed Jelena Ostapenko 6-3, 6-2 while decked out, from her visor to her dress to the bows on her back and attached to her lime-green shoes and playing very much like a two-time champion at the place and a former No. 1-ranked star.

"I feel like being able to be a part of (designing) my tennis outfits gives me, I would say, a different strength, especially the U.S. Open outfits. I feel like they are a little bit more flamboyant. When I was putting on my outfit today, I was, like, 'Ah, I hope this isn't too much,'" Osaka said with a smile. "Because I had the tutu, and then I had the

bow jacket and it was green. I feel like everyone was staring at me."

Another player asked for a photo, Osaka said, adding: "I hope it was a positive picture (and) it wasn't, like, 'Oh, my God, look at her.' For me, when I put on the outfit, it's almost like a super suit, so I try to channel that."

Did that well enough Tuesday to register her first victory against a top-10 opponent in more than four years.

Osaka claimed titles in New York in 2018 and 2020, along with a pair of trophies at the Australian Open in 2019 and 2021, and her matchup against 2017 French Open champion Ostapenko marked the first time two past major champs faced off in the opening round at the U.S. Open since Serena Williams defeated Maria Sharapova five years ago. Another such contest came Tuesday night, when 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin beat 2021 U.S. Open winner Emma Raducanu 6-1, 3-6, 6-4.

"I do remember thinking, 'I need to win this match so I can wear my other color.' That was very important to me," said Osaka, who is ranked 88th and received a wild-card invitation

from the U.S. Tennis Association. "I guess you'll see my other color next time."

Next time will be Thursday against 2023 French Open runner-up Karolina Muchova, a 6-3, 7-5 winner against Katie Volynets of the U.S.

Other women moving into the second round included No. 1 Iga Swiatek, who got past Kamilla Rakhimova 6-4, 7-6 (6) by taking the last five points after needing to erase a trio of set points because she trailed 6-3 in the tiebreaker, and past major champions Elena Rybakina and Caroline Wozniacki.

No. 5 Jasmine Paolini, a finalist at the French Open and Wimbledon this year, beat 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-4, while No. 11 Danielle Collins' Grand Slam singles career ended with a 1-6, 7-5, 6-4 loss to Caroline Dolehide in an all-American matchup. The 30-year-old Collins is retiring after this season.

Another American who recently announced her retirement, Shelby Rogers, lost the final match of her career by a 6-4, 6-3 score to No. 6 Jessica Pegula at night, after four-time major champion Carlos Alcaraz defeated qualifier Li Tu 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 in Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Alcaraz, the No. 3 seed, extended his winning streak to 15 straight Grand Slam matches. He moved on to a second-round matchup Thursday against Botik van de Zandschulp. Pegula meets Kenin next.

Earlier in Ashe, No. 1 Jannik Sinner played his first match since news came out that he was cleared in a doping case involving two failed tests in March, and while he got off to a slow start, the 23-year-old Italian quickly bounced back to eliminate Mackie McDonald 2-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-2.

There were no apparent signs in the stands or disparaging shouts making reference to what no one knew about for months: Sinner tested positive twice for trace amounts of the anabolic steroid Clostebol in an eight-day span in March.

Other seeded men advancing included No. 5 Daniil Medvedev, No. 7 Hubert Hurkacz and No. 25 Jack Draper, but No. 11 Stefanos Tsitsipas and No. 19 Felix Auger-Aliassime both lost, as did No. 23 Karen Khachanov, who came out on the wrong end of the longest U.S. Open match, by time, since tiebreakers were instituted in 1970.

Longest US Open match since at least 1970 goes 5:35

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A few hours into a match that eventually set a U.S. Open record for length, Dan Evans glanced over at the scoreboard.

Not to see how he was doing, but to clarify exactly how long he had been playing.

"In the fourth set, I had to check the set to see what set we were in," Evans said. "I wasn't entirely sure what set we were in."

More than an hour later, Evans won the longest match at

the U.S. Open since tiebreakers were introduced in 1970, beating Karen Khachanov 6-7 (6), 7-6 (2), 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-4 on Tuesday in 5 hours, 35 minutes.

Evans trailed 4-0 in the fifth set before running off the final six games. The final point, fittingly, was a marathon 22-shot rally, with Evans on the defensive for much of the point before hitting a hard shot to the corner that the No. 23-seeded Khachanov couldn't get back over the net with his backhand.

The previous record was 5

hours, 26 minutes, when Stefan Edberg beat Michael Chang in a five-setter in the 1992 semifinals.

"I was hurting all over, really," said the 34-year-old Evans, who was grabbing at his lower legs and resting his hands on his knees in the final set.

"I don't think I've played five hours, that long, in a day, ever — in two sessions, never mind in one. I was actually thinking that on the court. I've never practiced two hours, two hours. It's normally an hour and a

half."

Evans improved to 5-0 against Khachanov, a semifinalist at the 2022 U.S. Open, by emerging in a match in which the sets lasted 68, 67, 72, 67 and 61 minutes.

The British player who played doubles with Andy Murray at the Olympics in the three-time Grand Slam champion's final tournament finished with a 201-191 edge in total points. He advanced to play Mariano Navone of Argentina in the second round.

O'Hearn, Urías lead Orioles past Dodgers

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Ramón Urías hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the fifth inning, Ryan O'Hearn also went deep and the Baltimore Orioles beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 3-2 on Tuesday night in their interleague series opener.

The Dodgers stranded the potential tying and winning runs in the ninth when Chris Taylor lined out. They lead the NL West by three games over Arizona and San Diego.

In the eighth, Mookie Betts singled and stole second, but Teoscar Hernández struck out swinging against Yennier Cano and Will Smith took a called third strike to end the inning.

Los Angeles managed just three hits over the final six innings and didn't advance a runner past second after the third.

Baltimore is a game behind the first-place New York Yankees in the AL East.

"We're in the prime position to get hot," Orioles starter Cole Irvin said. "Good team win. We've got to keep it up."

Urías' second homer in two games landed in the Dodgers' bullpen in left field, scoring Jackson Holliday, who singled, and restoring the Orioles' lead. Urías has five homers this month, tying his career high set in July 2022. He has 15 RBIs over his last 15 games since Aug. 10.

Matt Bowman (1-0) got the win with 1½ innings of relief, retiring Betts and Hernández to end the fifth. Seranthony Domínguez pitched the ninth to earn his seventh save.

"Bowman got the biggest outs of the game in that spot," Hyde said.

Royals 6, Guardians 1: Paul DeJong hit a two-run homer and visiting Kansas City moved into a tie atop the AL Central by beating Cleveland in a game delayed more than two hours by rain.

The Royals, who lost 106 games last season, improved to a league-best 23-13 since the All-Star break, when they trailed the

Guardians by seven games.

Cleveland had been sitting alone in first in the division since April 14 before dropping the first three games in this series, which concluded with a matinee Wednesday. The Guardians have lost nine of 12 and are just 17-21 since the break.

Marlins 9, Rockies 8: Jesús Sánchez hit a three-run homer to cap a five-run rally in the ninth inning that gave visiting Miami an improbable comeback victory against Colorado.

In a matchup between the National League's two worst teams, the Marlins trailed 6-0 early and were down by four entering the ninth. But they got a two-run double from Jake Burger before Sánchez followed with his 17th homer.

Kyle Stowers hit his second home run and first triple of the season for Miami. Griffin Conine, the son of longtime Marlins outfielder Jeff Conine, had his first two career hits, a triple and a double, one day after making his major league debut.

Phillies 5, Astros 0: Aaron Nola (12-6) tossed four-hit ball over seven shutout innings to get his first win since July 11 and Nick Castellanos hit a three-run homer to lead host Philadelphia over Houston.

After struggling for most of the second half, the Phillies have now won four in a row and back-to-back series for the first time since early July. They have won eight of their last 13 and maintained their six-game lead in the NL East.

Nationals 4, Yankees 2: Dylan Crews got the first two hits of his career and Andrés Chaparro and José Tena hit back-to-back homers on a banner night for the team's rookies as host Washington ambushed Gerrit Cole and New York.

Patrick Corbin (4-12) outpitched Cole, using superb command to quiet the Yankees' powerful lineup. The veteran left-hander allowed two hits and struck out six in six innings, his

second and longest scoreless outing of the season.

Braves 8, Twins 6 (10): Matt Olson drove in the go-ahead run on a fielder's choice, Travis d'Arnaud added an RBI single and Ramón Laureano put the game away with a two-run double as visiting Atlanta scored four times in the 10th inning to beat Minnesota.

Olson's grounder to second scored the automatic runner as second baseman Edouard Julien's throw home wasn't in time. D'Arnaud and Laureano followed with one-out hits as Atlanta rallied against Minnesota closer Jhoan Duran (6-8).

Mets 8, Diamondbacks 3: Sean Manaea (10-5) matched a season high with 11 strikeouts, Pete Alonso hit a solo homer and visiting New York won to stop Arizona's winning streak at six games.

The Mets broke open the game in the fifth, sending 12 batters to the plate and scoring six runs for an 8-0 lead. Jeff McNeil started the inning with a double and Francisco Alvarez brought him home with an RBI single, ending an 0-for-17 skid.

Red Sox 6, Blue Jays 3: Jarren Duran led off with a homer, Masataka Yoshida added a two-run single in a three-run first inning, and host Boston ended a four-game losing streak with a win over Toronto.

David Hamilton, Triston Casas and Willyer Abreu also drove in runs for the Red Sox, who had not won since beating Houston last Wednesday.

Cubs 9, Pirates 5: Seiya Suzuki and Dansby Swanson homered during visiting Chicago's five-run fourth inning, and the Cubs beat Pittsburgh to move over .500 for the first time since May 28.

The Cubs (67-66) have won five of six. They are 28-18 since falling nine games below .500 on July 3.

Athletics 5, Reds 4: Max Schuemann and Lawrence Butler each hit a two-run homer in

the seventh inning to propel visiting Oakland past Cincinnati.

Zack Gelof added a solo shot in the eighth and All-Star closer Mason Miller hung on after giving up two runs and four hits in a shaky ninth. With runners at second and third, he struck out pinch-hitter Amed Rosario for his 22nd save.

Padres 7, Cardinals 5: Jake Cronenworth hit a tiebreaking RBI single in his team's two-run seventh inning, and visiting San Diego beat St. Louis for its third consecutive win.

Manny Machado homered for San Diego, and Luis Arraez had three hits. Yuki Matsui (4-2) pitched an inning for the win, and Tanner Scott handled the ninth for his 20th save in 22 chances.

Giants 5, Brewers 4: Mike Yastrzemski hit a two-run homer in the seventh inning to put visiting San Francisco ahead for good in a victory over Milwaukee.

Matt Chapman went 3-for-4 with a homer and Grant McCray also went deep for the Giants. Thairo Estrada nearly homered as well, but Milwaukee's Blake Perkins reached over the center-field wall to catch the Giants second baseman's leadoff drive in the fifth inning.

Tigers 6, Angels 2: Riley Greene and Kerry Carpenter homered in a three-run sixth inning and host Detroit extended its winning streak to five games with a victory over Los Angeles.

Brant Hurter (2-1) picked up his second MLB win in his first start, allowing two runs on four hits in five innings. Jason Foley got the final out for his 18th save.

Rays 3, Mariners 2: Jose Siri hit a go-ahead two-run homer, Jeffrey Springs pitched five scoreless innings and visiting Tampa Bay beat Seattle.

Manuel Rodríguez allowed a two-out single before striking out pinch hitter Luke Raley for his second save of the season as the Rays returned to .500 at 66-66 for the 32nd time this season, which leads the major leagues.